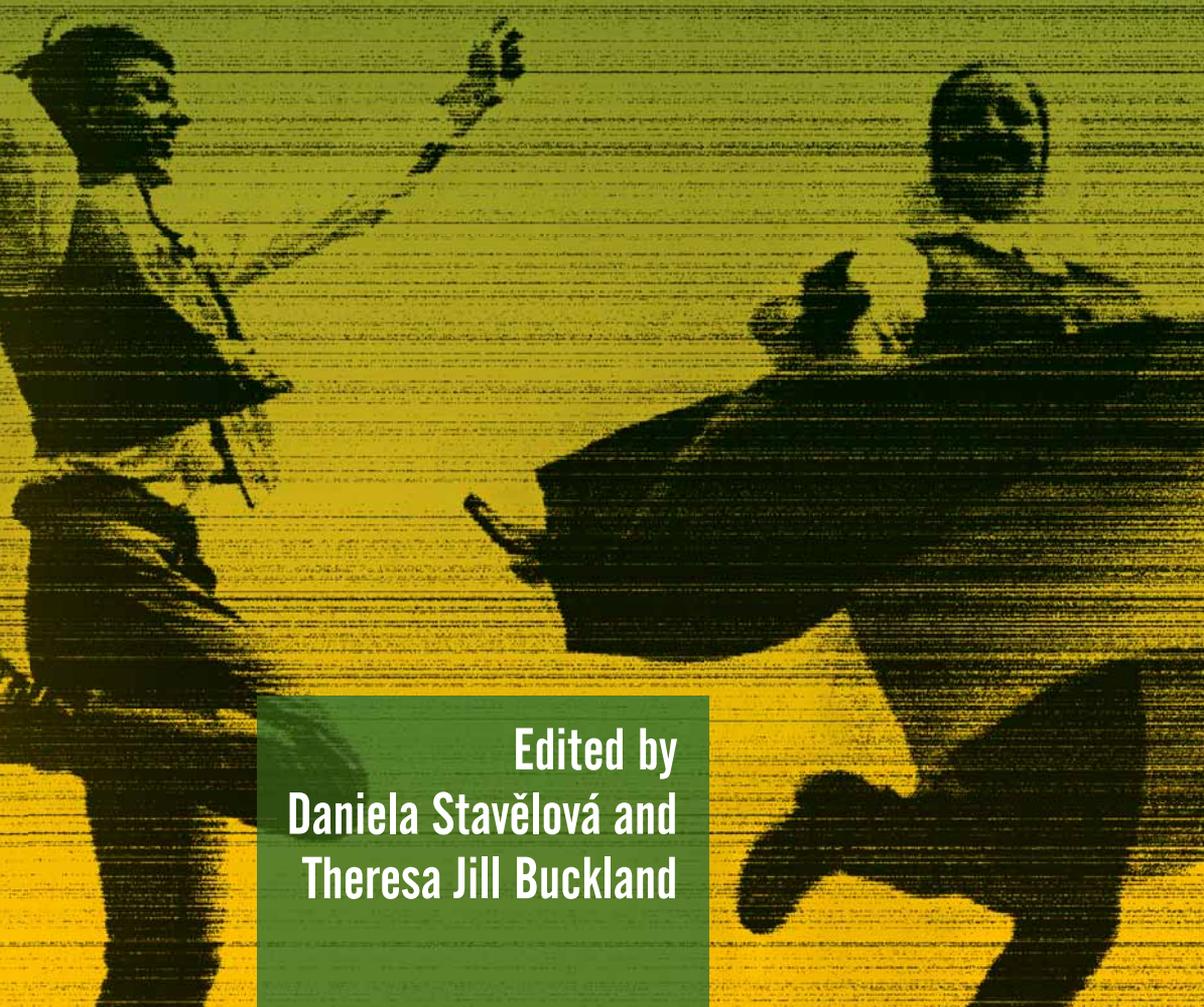


# Folklore Revival Movements in Europe post 1950

Shifting Contexts  
and Perspectives



Edited by  
Daniela Stavělová and  
Theresa Jill Buckland



**Institute  
of Ethnology**  
Czech Academy  
of Sciences



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## Preface

This collection of papers emerges from a symposium on the folklore revival movement of the second half of the twentieth century which was held in Prague in October 2017. Organized by the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, in co-operation with the Institute for Choreology, Music and Dance Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts, the aim of the symposium was to open a window on the folklore revival, as predominantly experienced in the Czech Republic, but with a preliminary view towards similar phenomena in eastern and, to a more limited extent, in western Europe.

The topic brought together ethnochoreologists, anthropologists of dance, ethnomusicologists, folk music scholars and educators, oral historians and anthropologists, some indeed combining these disciplinary fields. What the contributors share in common here is scholarly examination of the folklore revival within their own country of residence. Some indeed have been, and may continue to be, active practitioners in the folklore revival field, combining their role as scholars or educators with those of musicians, dancers, composers and choreographers. This insiders' perspective undoubtedly results in privileged access and insights, but there may also be risks of selection and interpretation; the final paper in the volume addresses such issues of critical distance and offers caveats for future work from a position of reflexive ethnography.

The 2017 conference was itself part of a large research project, undertaken from 2017 to 2019 in the Department of Ethnomusicology of the Institute for Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences. Entitled 'Weight and Weightlessness of Folklore: The Folklore Movement of the Second Half of the Twentieth Century in the Czech Lands', it was funded by the Czech Science Foundation. Czech understanding of the concept of the folklore revival movement refers primarily to the activities of the folklore ensembles active within a Communist regime in the second half of last century. As consequence, the focus of the conference tended towards consideration of music and dance within political contexts of that period and, to a certain degree, its legacies. The majority of articles presented here were formulated as part of that research initiative which brought to light, as principal investigator Daniela Stavelova discusses in her contribution, lived experiences either of the burden or of the opportunity for a kind of inner freedom that the phenomenon of the folklore revival brought. The present collection by no means aims for systematic comparison between the folklore revival movement in the Czech lands and other examples both within and beyond the soviet block; rather, it suggests a pathway for future scholars to tread when in-

vestigating the folklore revival phenomenon and the role of politics at national, regional, institutional and individual levels.

Although the notion of the folklore movement, or folklorism and revivalism, is an international phenomenon, it is increasingly obvious that there is enormous variation in associations of the term, and indeed, there may be different labels for similar practices even within Europe itself. In some European countries, the same term has two meanings, but which are actually dichotomous; and seemingly alternative labels, such as folklorism and revivalism, may also signal distinctive and, often subtly discrete, connotations according to context. For the Prague symposium, the principal term selected proved to provoke varied interpretation. The rationale behind the international symposium was to launch a debate that would take into consideration this diversity and various ways of understanding the phenomenon in different social, cultural and political contexts. The primary purpose was to use this contextualisation to reveal the role and power of folklore practices, whereby traditional folk culture, more specifically music and dance, play a key role in a multiplicity of social and ideological processes.

The folklore revival movement, in its current meaning in the Czech Republic, has its origin in the period after the Second World War when the communist party became the dominant power (after 1948) in the political system of former Czechoslovakia. The term folklore movement encompassed festivals, performances and competitions of staged forms of folk music and dance. On the one hand, the folklore movement was an activity promoted and controlled by the political regime; on the other, considering the lack of opportunities for other similar activities, the folklore movement brought together people of diverse ways of thinking, creating conditions for the development of alternative ideas. As a result, the movement was both a part of official culture and a place for potential independent activities.

The political situation in other European countries, both within the so-called socialist block and outside, also had an impact on folklore movements. The symposium's aim to discuss study in a wider European framework, was expected to provide various perspectives for considering to what extent the folklore revival movement was an instrument of power, and to what extent it was an opportunity to implement people's individual strategy. As particular attention was paid to folk ensembles and their specific role in a particular society, several questions were raised with respect to the following:

- Folk ensembles and their members
- The folk ensemble as a community, institution, or subculture
- Cultural policy versus personal creativity
- Music and dance as a manifestation of cultural heritage

- Explicit and implicit meanings of the folklore revival movement
- Re-traditionalization, postcolonial theory, nationalism and exclusion in the folklore revival movement
- The folklore revival movement and economic, professional, social, educational, age, gender and ethnic characteristics
- Possible methodological approaches to the folklore revival movement – oral history, ethnography, auto-ethnography, and textual analysis of different sources.

In order to better understand the folklore revival movement, the meaning of this phenomenon was reflected upon in a wider context of its historical and local forms and transformations.

A parallel of particular significance is that of the meaning of the English term *revival*, which is used to refer to similar manifestations of cultural production in other European countries and outside Europe. It is important to bear in mind, however, that this term is often used at a conceptual level, i.e. in academic literature and institutionalized media; domestic and folk terminology may, on the other hand, employ other vocabulary. *Revival* has, furthermore, a wider meaning, extending beyond phenomena connected with folklore traditions to include more mainstream and international cultural practices. Therefore, the phenomenon needs to be explored in terms of similarities with different countries. Such an approach results in comparable features which allow *revival* and the folklore movement or folklorism to be studied from a single perspective.

The theoretical and terminological background provided in their introduction to the edited collection on music *revival* by Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill [2014:3–42] suggests that *revival* is characterised in different countries by common features that can be understood as cultural manifestations and, at the same time, as social processes. *Revival* is, first and foremost, about mobilising and resuscitating the past, and the related processes of transmission, preservation, transformation, aesthetization, heritage and negotiation of authenticity. The editors conclude, furthermore, that the past is applied and manipulated selectively, while the selection needs to be legitimised to suit present needs. Thus the mobilisation of the past and selective use of history manifest themselves through music and dance practices, shaped by past experience and – more importantly – by today’s ideas of the past [Hill and Bithell 2014:12]. Music and dance is thus expected to evoke and, simultaneously, transform the past. This act of a reconsidered history often has a counter-cultural nature, its purpose being to compensate for present inadequacies. It can sometimes even be called a peaceful resistance to modernity, or a rebellion against the modern idea of time, history and development.

*Revivalists* often define their position as being in opposition to the cultural mainstream, identifying instead with a different historical tendency and offering a cultural alternative, where references to specific past experience can be emblematic [Livingstone 1999:66]. This way, *revival* can lead to the establishment of new subcultures, although it may become part of mainstream culture as well. The associated dynamic processes include transmission, re-contextualisation, transformation and innovation in order to meet current needs. One of the significant factors is the wish or need to enter into dialogue with the past. *Revival* can also be understood as continuity, keeping alive or making visible what is hidden [Hill and Bithell 2014:4–5]. The movement is often accompanied by activism and efforts at legitimising changes related to the re-contextualisation of the past. For this purpose, certain individuals or groups are considered as culture-bearers or bearers of tradition or, in other words, as authorities who are able to convince others to accept the necessary cultural changes.

Another characteristic feature of *revival* is that it undergoes various stages of transformation from an excessive boom to decline or demise of these tendencies, always in line with the needs of the given socio-cultural environment. At the same time, paradoxically, it is considered as a never-ending process that lies dormant in every society, as something cyclical and as part of the natural flow of the given culture [Jabbour 2014:116–134]. The universalism connected to this appropriation of the past and its further use seems to be the natural tool that people have at their disposal when defining and, more importantly, redefining their cultural environment. The concept of *revival* as a never-ending process is sometimes also characterised as *post-revival*, with new born manifestations of culture continuing to live independently, in symbiosis with their social, political and aesthetic motivations. Their bearers are most often the following generation of revivalists who have inherited the knowledge of the field and can, unlike the previous restrictive generation of guardians of purity, authenticity or originality, pursue these practices more freely [Hill and Bithell 2014:28]. *Post-revival* corresponds, moreover, with the global flows model posited by Arjun Appadurai [1996] to explain the transnational overlapping in globalisation, ethnicity and cosmopolitanism.

The discursive nature of the terms *revival* and folklorism or the folklore movement lies, first and foremost, in that they never lose sight of other related processes – reconstruction, preservation, restauration, resuscitation, revitalisation, regeneration, transformation, dissemination, transfer, innovation and others, including the regular negotiation of these processes in the social context. It is, therefore, primarily a social movement which obtains its meanings through social interaction, becoming an object of communication analysis in social theories [Goffman 1963; 1967; Giddens 1988]. These theories then make it possible to explore this phenomenon as part of a cultural or post-traumatic renewal,

a therapy related to postcolonialism, political oppression, post-war situation or disastrous events; in the context of the ‘Weight and Weightlessness of Folklore’ research project, it can be seen as part of the ideologization process or, in other words, the political normalization of Czechoslovak society.

The symposium demonstrated that the issue is hugely topical and gave participants an opportunity to present many longstanding research projects in this field. The event concluded with discussion on questions concerning the identities and motivations of people involved in folk ensembles, on the meaning and perception of the concept of the folklore revival movement in different countries, and on rethinking revival in relation to notions of recontextualization and transformation. This debate made it obvious that the phenomenon also needs to be studied more thoroughly from an anthropological perspective. The collective thinking and discussion on the problematic terminology and possible methodological approaches have resulted in the present edited volume. Most papers provide a detailed insight into the issue in their respective countries, while placing it in broader cultural, historical and political contexts inherent in the folklore movement in the given country. The publication comprises of several thematic sections, which are themselves evidence of the complexity of the issue, with each paper discussing some of the topics in more detail.

Part 1 *Politicizing Folklore* presents studies from Hungary, the Czech Republic, the German Democratic Republic, Estonia and Norway which variously approach the subject of politics and folklore revival movements primarily at the level of government and institution, whether that be at the level of folk dance group, political party or local community. This part opens with László Felföldi’s overview of cultural policy and its shaping control of the folklore revival movement, particularly dance, during the socialist era in Hungary (1949–1989). Through analysis of a variety of political-legal documents which reflect the aims and objectives of those in power, he reveals not only the significance of such often under-investigated texts on socio-cultural practice, but also how key individuals worked within the confines of ideological policies and directives. Linked to a much wider on-going historical study of Hungarian folk dance from the 1920s onwards, the chapter concludes with discussion of a comparative chart that summarises the principal shifts effected by cultural politics on seven themes often encountered in the political study of other folklore revival movements: the interpretation of what constitutes folklore, ideologies, target beneficiaries, temporal trajectories, objectives behind preservation and contemporization, the direction of political initiatives, and modes of transmission.

Martina Pavlicová’s chapter on the uses of folklore in the Czech Republic also surveys its manipulation by dominant powers in respective historical periods according to their social ideology, whether Nazi or Communist. In the

GDR, as Hanna Walsdorf discusses, the socialist state actively sought to document and preserve folklore but charged its enactors to transform the material to communicate socialist ideology through performances and competitions. As Walsdorf notes, this “restrictive corset of ideologically dictated aesthetics” and physical training for performers of socialist-inspired staged folk dance was never fully embraced by amateur folk performers. For Estonians, according to Iivi Zájedová, folklore became a strategy to strengthen national identity in opposition to Soviet dominance (1944-1991). This nonviolent weapon, as she characterizes its use during this period, was particularly important for Estonians living abroad in exile, and in the political drive towards achieving independence. In the final chapter of this section, Egil Bakka presents an overview of the use of folk dance in Norway from nineteenth-century national romanticism, to early twenty-first century debate on cultural identity. He eschews the often ascribed non-political character of folk dance in Norway to reveal a long established nationalism of Norwegianness that has not been aligned with any single political party. Nonetheless, whether overtly tied or acting as counter to national ideology, it is evident as demonstrated in all the examples in this section and, indeed, throughout the volume, that the overall political climate at any time shapes the ideology and practice of folk revivalism.

Part 2, labelled *Czech Histories*, turns the spotlight onto the central topic of the Weight and Weightlessness of Folklore project. Miroslav Vaněk opens this section with an alternative perspective on the use and value of oral history in gaining a fuller and more nuanced understanding of peoples’ experience of Soviet-led folklore practices. He challenges the overriding view of unreflective controlled actors in the folklore revival movement, indicating the need for historians to hear and learn from their voices to move beyond a one-dimensional account of the movement. Following such a people-focused approach, Daniela Stavělová’s chapter reveals how individuals used the folklore ensemble to escape from the political and social system, finding the folklore movement a place of ‘inner emigration’ where individuals could find a sanctuary and place for creativity. In the next contribution on Czech historiography of the folklore revival movement, Dorota Gremlicová turns to another neglected source for the folklore revival movement – written discourse. She presents an in-depth analysis of a specific issue of a Czech journal from 1963, subjecting texts and images to a critical interrogation that reveals dominant themes, characteristic ideas and ways of thinking on the folklore revival movement and dance. Such findings are positioned in relation to key personnel effecting change and to wider transformations in the socio-political context.

The final three contributions in this section turn specific attention to the treatment of folk music within the movement. Moving from Gremlicová’s exami-

nation of printed source material, Zdeněk Vejvoda's chapter centres on the medium of radio broadcasting. She illuminates the particular role of the Plezn Folk Ensemble from the 1950s to the 1990s in acting as a professional training model for other ensembles. The overtly political aspect of new folk songs created during the folklore revival movement is examined by Lucie Uhlíková. She discusses examples of such 'folk' songs which celebrated and transmitted communist ideology, thus contributing to the negative perception of the folklore revival movement post 1989. Her investigation reveals that the majority of the songs' creators followed the aesthetic framework of traditional folk song composition and, that although influential members of politically active folk ensembles, they were nevertheless closely connected to traditional folk practices. Expanding the theme of dissemination within the Czech folklore revival movement, Matěj Kratochvíl draws upon interviews and his own experiences as a musician to consider changing patterns of musical transmission within the folklore movement. Embraced by the Czech public music education system and influenced by typical practices within other musical genres, the transmission of music within the folklore revival movement has been transformed from earlier modes of informal learning and engaged a higher proportion of girls within the organized ensembles.

In Part 3, the ensemble forms the principal point of investigation in *Folklore as Performance*, with specific chapters focused on examples from Croatia, Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the Czech Republic and Slovenia. The first two contributions are securely located in extensive personal experiences as performers and scholars within their own countries, yet offer contrasting attitudes in their evaluations. Moving between politics and performances of the local, regional and national, Tvrtko Zebec makes the distinctive point that Croatian folklore never died out and consequently it is erroneous to speak of a folklore revival as such in this context. Subject nonetheless to political manipulation, dance practices post World War Two were employed as means to create a kind of new citizen and culture of socialism as part of the aim to manufacture a single unified Yugoslav culture. The aesthetics of folk dance and song correspondingly shifted in response to fresh social and political pressures, but also folk experts operated different aesthetic criteria in presenting folklore on stage. Zebec identifies two streams of folklore as performance in Croatia: the older tradition of presenting rural culture on the stage stems from the 1920s and 1930s, and a newer urban elite that espouses a national culture in employing aesthetic conventions derived from the artistic stage, and judged by influential experts who promote such cultural politics.

Gergana Panova's over-view of the folklore revival movement in Bulgaria details the creation of the specific genre of Bulgarian folk dance in the Peoples Republic of Bulgaria. She traces the transformation from 1945 to 1989 of tradi-

tional folk practices into a professional stage art that was notable for its unusual scale and exceptional role in the construction of national identity. Identifying widely accepted mythological origins of the country and long-established Rusophila, she singles out significant educational institutions, creative pedagogues and key choreographers in the establishment of Bulgarian folk dance. Her positive findings derive from personal relations with leading architects of the genre, extensive interviews over a long period, unique access to rare ephemera and her own experiences of the specific training system and personal career as performer, choreographer and educator of Bulgarian folk dance.

Viewing the focus of inquiry from a greater distance is Theresa Jacobs chapter on folklore ensembles among the officially recognized minority population of Sorbs in the GDR. Jacobs utilises American sociologist Richard Scott's institutionalization theory as an interpretive framework to analyse the formation and operation of amateur groups plus that of the first professional group, the Sorbian National Ensemble founded in 1952. Given the political context of the time, this national ensemble looked towards eastern European models and experts for its cultural policy, resulting in new staged forms and festivals of folklore that differed from quotidian Sorbian practices.

Zita Skořepová case study of the Prague-based folklore ensemble Gaudeamus, emerges from the Weight and Weightlessness research project. Employing an ethnomusicological perspective, she applies theories of Thomas Turino and Mark Slobin to her analysis of oral history interviews which centre upon personal reminiscences and evaluations of involvement in the ensemble over a period which saw a shift in patronage from state to individual.

The theme of model folklore ensembles and their impact is taken up by Rebeka Kunej in the final contribution to this section which offers another in-depth case study. The folklore ensemble in question is that of the France Marolt Students Folk Dance Group in Slovenia which was founded in 1948. Even though it was not a professionalized institution in terms of employment, it became the leading Slovenian ensemble which spawned many artistic leaders. Reflecting critically on cultural policy and its impact on the ensemble, Kunej provides important historical insights into the inter-relations between Slovenian ethnochoreology, performance and research interests.

In Part 4, the focus broadens towards consideration of *Shifting Orthodoxies* within folklore revival movements. Examples of challenges to established conventions are presented from Ireland, the Czech Republic, England, Greece, Sweden, Hungary, and the United States. In the first chapter, Catherine E. Foley examines the issue of approved repertoire within folklore revival movements and considers the case of Irish set dancing. Under British colonialist rule, the Irish cultural nationalist movement excluded this form of dancing as non-Irish. In the

second half of the twentieth century, within the contexts of modernity and globalization, established practice within the folklore revival movement was challenged and set dancing became accepted as an alternative expression of Irishness.

Issues of authenticity and legitimacy also permeate Anežka Hrbáčková's chapter on the folk music revival in Prague. Quoting from her fieldwork on the contemporary soundscape in the city, she foregrounds peoples' feelings and judgments, citing their own voices to reveal how urban folklore participants seek alternative experiences to their perceptions of modernity. In the highly participatory folklore parties, they find a sense of traditional community rooted in cultural expressions linked to the past and which they feel is lacking in their present city lives. The theme of legitimacy and tradition continues in Theresa Jill Buckland's study of the personal politics encountered in the women's morris dancing movement of the last decades of the twentieth-century English folklore revival. Rejecting revivalist orthodoxy of earlier in the century, which claimed that morris dancing was only to be performed by men, the pioneering women re-formulated notions of 'the tradition' in line with contemporary ideas on gender equality.

In Maria I. Koutsouba's case study of a folklore club on the island of Lefkada which hosts the oldest international folk dance festival in Greece, the changes to presentational practices over a twenty year period invite questions on whether such a return to improvisational components in this context can be classified as neo-traditionalist, post-folklore revival or even a combination of such concepts. Similarly, the longitudinal survey presented by Mats Nilsson, but in this instance tracing the trajectory of the folk revival across the whole country, notes a late twentieth-century interest in less codified practices among new participants in the folk revival. The fresh interpretations of the concept of revival that emerged in the 1970s folk revival in Sweden emphasised participation and freedom to improvise, a move that was clearly in opposition to the orthodoxies of the established choreographed presentational style of dances from the earlier folk dance clubs. The impact of both revivals, respectively from the 1880s and the 1970s continues into the twenty-first century, both strands co-existing in various contexts. The 1970s also provide a focus for Colin Quigley's comparative analysis of two geographically distinct revival movements of folk instrumental music, both of which involved associated participatory dance revivals. The 'old time' music and dance revival of capitalist United States and the 'dance-house movement' of late-reform socialist Hungary both championed 'spontaneous and interactive improvisation', providing a cultural space for opposition to the respective dominant political and economic systems.

Concluding this section and, indeed, the whole collection is ethnomusicologist Vít Zdrálek's chapter which returns to the symposium's central focus of the

, Weight and Weightlessness' research project, but is considered here with an explicitly critical outsider's eye. His reflections stem from the acute sense of otherness he experienced within academia and within his own country when researching the Czech folk revival movement. Locating his discussion within the wider context of the post-1989 Czech folklore/ethnology debate and autoethnographic frankness on his own cultural and academic experience, Zdrálek highlights the necessity for all researchers to question their own positionality, especially with respect to disciplinary parameters, identity politics and ethnic nationalism.

Such a challenge to exercise ongoing self-reflexivity in the production of knowledge is especially significant for the scholarly study of folk revivals; for the weight of the political in folklore revivals, as this collection aims to further illuminate, may be hidden from view or even masquerade as weightlessness, if we, as students of and frequently as current or former participants within this diverse and complex phenomenon, fail to interrogate and situate ourselves within the research inquiry. As the current findings of ongoing research in this volume demonstrate, across Europe, the performance and investigation of folklore revival movements, especially music and dance, is of vital interest and relevance to understanding their manifestation in the second half of the twentieth century. This present collection opens the door to further critical examination of the power of such cultural practices, their political salience, whether at national, institutional or individual levels, and their deep-seated impact on people who have encountered and evaluated folk revivalism in their lives.

*December 2018*

*Theresa Jill Buckland and Daniela Stavělová*

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# Part 1 Politicizing Folklore



# On the Legal and Political Framework of the Folk Dance Revival Movement in Hungary in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century

*László Felföldi*

Motto: Teaching *csárdás* in the Hungarian Young Communist League:  
Two to the left and two to the left (Joke from the turn of the 1960s  
and 1970s in Budapest).

## *Abstract:*

In cultural studies, political anthropology and other human sciences, laws (all kinds of legal regulations) and justice are considered to be part of the basic structure of society, mediating between cultural and political interests and the normative order of the society. They are the means of social consensus and control. This paper is part of a wider research project which examines those sources that best represent cultural policy in Hungary during the periods 1918–1948, 1949–1989 and 1990–2010. Here I focus only on the central one, the socialist era, which caused major changes to the way of life of bearers of folk music and folk dance traditions in Hungary. I concentrate on the question of how legal documents mirror the purposes of the decision makers and how they impact on the cultural life they are intended to change. In order to define the most characteristic features of the cultural policy and its consequences I select for discussion the following: interpretation of traditional culture (folk dance and folk music); ideological background; target beneficiaries; the temporal aspect of the documents; objectives of preservation and contemporization of traditions; direction of regulation for cultural modernization (from below or from above), and ways of transmission of traditional knowledge.

## *Keywords:*

legal documents, revival movement, cultural policy, Hungary

## **Preface**

The aim of this paper is to draw attention to research on the political-legal background of folklore revival movements in the twentieth century. To this end, I have selected relevant national and international documents which are a kind of written “mould” for these activities. In social practice, organisations use many kinds of legal documents which differ from each other according to their form, content, purpose, the scope and length of validity and so on. In the field of cultural administration and regulation, the most frequent kinds of legal-political documents are: action plans, programmes; contracts, decisions, regulations; acts, laws; constitutions; declarations, recommendations, and conventions. They form

a kind of hierarchy which has to be taken into consideration in the research process. Here, I regard laws (all kinds of legal regulations) and justice as part of the basic structure of society, mediating between cultural and political, interests and the normative order of the society. They are the means of social consensus and control [Barker 2004:40–41].

## Point of departure

To explore the earlier history of these or similar research topics internationally, it is necessary to survey the fields of political anthropology, sociology of law, sociology of culture or cultural studies. I may, for instance, refer to English sociologist Tony Bennett's ideas about the significance of cultural policy, cultural politics and governmentality in cultural studies [Bennett 1998]. As French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu claims, cultural capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange that includes accumulated cultural knowledge, conferring status and power for the owners [Bourdieu 1984]. Canadian ethnographer and sociologist Sarah Thornton, refers to Bourdieu's "cultural capital" [Thornton 1995] *in her concept of subcultural capital* which she developed mostly through analysis of popular dance culture. These concepts and ideas help in researching the special field of political and legal regulation of culture, but the authors do not deal directly with the legal texts framing the socio-cultural practice.

In Hungary, in sociology and dance history research, there are some publications from the 1960s which touch on this topic as a result of the work of sociologist and dance historian Iván Vitányi and his followers. In the book titled *Tanulmányok a táncházmozgalom történetéből* (Studies on the history of the folk dance movement), Iván Vitányi and dance historian László Maác present an overview of the development of interest in folk dance in Hungary from the beginning of the twentieth century until 1962. In this work they strive to take into account the political-legal background of historical events. In their later work they continue to use this perspective - see, for instance, Vitányi's books: *A kulturális politikák célja, módszerei és eredményei az egyes országok társadalmi fejlődésének tükrében* (The goals, methods and achievements of cultural policies as reflected in the social development of some countries) [Vitányi 1983] and *Egyharmadország. Tanulmányok* (*One third country. studies*) [Vitányi 1985] and László Maác's articles from the 1980s and 1990s: *A magyar néptáncmozgalom a hetvenes években* (The Hungarian folk dance movement in the 1970s) [Maác 1981] and *Rendszerváltások a magyar tánckultúrában* (Regime changes in Hungarian dance culture) [Maác 1992]. Similar ideas can be read in László Siklós's book *Táncház* (Dance house) [Siklós 1977] and Csaba Könczöl's article *Táncház*

*és szubkultúra* (Dance house and Subculture) [Könczöl 1977]. In my study, I rely on these as potential literary sources. In addition, I use documents of the communist party, policy statements related to them, journals of dance, and newspaper articles as significant sources on the topic. Ágnes Eitler's research of 2017 entitled *A 'kónyi verbunk' társadalomnéprajzi vizsgálata* (Research on 'verbunk in Kóny' from a socio-political perspective) deserves attention here. She examines the inner social-power structure of a community, the relationship between power and the local community, and the impact on each through a special cultural phenomenon, that of *verbunk* dance [Eitler 2017].

## Focus of the research

The present paper is part of a wider research project which aims to examine those sources which best represent cultural policy in Hungary during the periods 1918–1948, 1949–1989 and 1990–2010. I focus only on the central period, the socialist era, which caused major changes to the way of life of bearers of folk music and folk dance traditions in Hungary. I concentrate on the question of how legal documents mirror the purposes of the decision makers and how they shape the cultural life they inevitably change.

In order to define the most characteristic features of the cultural policy and its consequences I have selected seven criteria:

1. Interpretation of traditional culture (folk dance and folk music)
2. Ideological background
3. Target beneficiaries
4. Temporal aspect of the documents
5. Objectives of preservation and contemporization of traditions
6. Direction of regulation for cultural modernization (from below or from above)
7. Ways of transmission of traditional knowledge.

## Periodization of the time covered by the socialist regime

The beginning and end of the socialist regime can be clearly indicated by the takeover of power by the communist party in 1949 and by the introduction of political plurality in 1989. But the time periods in between are not so easily definable. I determine the borders as lying between the years from the beginning of the 1960s, the time of the accomplishment of the agricultural modernisation

and the start of consolidation of the political and ideological system up until the 1980s. From the 1980s, a weakening of party control and strengthening of political opposition became evident, but it was not explicitly manifested in cultural policy documents. These tendencies became clearly visible and documented only from the 1990s. Consequently, I do not distinguish the 1980s as a separate period. This may change in the following phase of the research, when more information will emerge to generate a more precise periodization.

## Some documents of the “party state” and their effect from the 1950s until the beginning of the 1960s

In this period of the socialist era, the Hungarian Working People’s Party’s (Magyar Dolgozók Pártja) ambition was to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat, to disseminate the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and to lay down the foundation of the socialist system. Documents of the Second Congress of the party (1951) speak about “cultural revolution” as one of the main programmes of their work. József Révai (1898–1959) an influential, powerful party member and minister of culture (1949–1953) claims in his speech in the congress in 1951:

Mit jelent a kultúrforradalom? (...) Jelenti azt, hogy népünk szocialista átnevelésének szolgálatába kell állítanunk minden eszközt: az iskolát, az agitációt és a propagandát, művészetet, a filmet, az irodalmat, a tömegek kulturális mozgalmának minden formáját. A kultúrforradalom nem szakképzés csupán, nem iskolai tanulás csupán, nem politikai nevelés csupán, hanem mindez együttvéve (What is the Cultural Revolution? (...) It means that we need to put into service all the tools for the socialist re-education of our people: schools, agitation and propaganda, art, film, literature, all forms of the cultural movement of the masses. The Cultural Revolution is not just a professional training, it is not only school learning, it is not just political education, but all these together)<sup>1</sup> [Révai 1952:5].

Révai presents a survey of the fields of arts identifying the most significant achievements during the last three years since the previous congress (in 1949). He does not touch on dance as an art form in his speech, only literature, film, theatre, fine arts and music. But his ideas, mainly about music, must be valid for stage dance as well:

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<sup>1</sup> Translation of the quotations was made by the author of this article.

Zeneszerzőink nagy része kezdi megérteni – ha nem is tudja még művésziileg igazán megvalósítani –, hogy a zenének is realistának kell lennie, népszerűnek és dallamosnak, hogy a magyar népzene és a klasszikus magyar zeneirodalomra, mint alapra építve kell tovább mennie, hogy kifejezhesse a zene nyelvén szocializmust építő népünk új érzelmeit (Most of our composers are beginning to understand – if they can not even really know how to do it artistically – that music must be realistic, popular and melodic, that it is necessary to go to Hungarian folk music and classical Hungarian music as a basis for expressing, in the language of music, the new emotions of our people who build socialism) [Révai 1952:20].

In the documents of the Second Congress it is declared that building the new socialist culture is not a peaceful process. It will be successful only by means of the fight against the old, reactionary ideologies, trends and perceptions, mainly against narodnikism and formalism.<sup>2</sup> The main arenas for this fight were the newly established art unions controlled by the communist party. The first endeavour to organise such union in the field of dance (including ballet and folk dance experts, but excluding modern dance and ball room dancing) occurred in 1949. One of the first tasks of the unions was to make faith with the socialist ideology and to conduct a process of self-examination. The self-critical text entitled *Pártszerű művészetért* (For party art. István Molnár's self-criticism) was written by this outstanding personality (1908–1987) of stage dance and professional folk dance choreography and published in the periodical of the Hungarian Union of Dance (*Táncoló Nép* – Dancing People) in 1950. The following details from his text testify to the limitless control of the totalitarian political power and resultant humiliation of the dance artists:

A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, miután belpolitikai harcait sikeresen megvívta, megerősödött tekintéllyel, új feladatot tűzött maga elé: a kultúra kérdéseinek megoldását. Ennek eredményeként elindult kultúrforradalom nagymértékben megváltoztatta látásomat és felhívta figyelmemet múltbeli működésim hiányaira. Nevezetesen arra, hogy a kultúra kérdéseit sem lehet politika nélkül megoldani. Ez döntő és alapvető hiba volt, mert kihagytam a legdöntőbb erőt, amely átalakíthat és megváltoztathat. A proletariátus erejét. A társadalom megváltoztatásának meg-

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2 Narodnikism (or peasantry, or populism) a political doctrine providing power to the peasantry at the expense of the others. Formalism is a school of literary theory concentrating on formal excellence of the literary text, ignoring the cultural, social, contextual features of the artistic piece.

oldását nem az osztályharc kiélesítésében láttam, így az osztályellentét döntő hatását a kultúrában nem ismertem föl. Ebből magától értetődően olyan alkotások születtek, amelyeket igen könnyen felhasználhattott az a réteg, amely ellen tulajdonképpen fegyvert akartam kovácsolni: a reakció. Múltbeli harcomat azért folytattam, hogy elismertessem az elnyomott parasztságot, amely alatt általában az elnyomott emberek tömegét értettem. Kultúrájuk terjesztésével öntudatukat akartam emelni, hogy harcolni tudjanak elnyomott helyzetük megszüntetéséért. Ám nem számoltam a politikai hatalommal, amely, ezt a fegyvert, a kultúrát kiragadta kezemből, azáltal, hogy míg felém politikamentességet hirdetett, addig saját érdekében felhasználta eredményeimet... (The Hungarian Working People's Party, having successfully fought its domestic struggles, gained strengthened authority and set a new task: to solve the issues of culture. As a result, the cultural revolution started to change my vision and drew my attention to the short comings of my past activities and ideas. Namely, that the issues of culture cannot be solved without politics. If I want to summarize my past deficiencies, I have to identify the key problem at this point: I saw the way of transforming life and changing society not in solving the political question, but through culture alone. This was a basic mistake, because I missed the most powerful force that can act to transform and change - the power of the proletariat. I did not see the solution to change society in the sharpening of the class struggle, so I did not recognize the decisive influence of class conflict in culture. Of course, there were works that could easily be used by the layer that I actually wanted to forge a weapon against: the reaction. I was pursuing a past fight to acknowledge the oppressed peasantry, where I usually understood the mass of oppressed people. Through the distribution of their culture I wished to raise their awareness and to empower them to fight for delimitating their oppressed situation. But I did not count on the political power that took this weapon and culture out of my hand by the fact that, while it offered me no politics, it used my results for my own sake...) [Molnár 1950:7].

### The closing part of the document:

Pártunk, a Magyar Dolgozók Pártja nem csak a magam munkáját irányította helyes útra, hanem állandóan irányítja és segíti az egész táncmozgalmat, hogy a szocializmusban a művészetek, köztük a táncmű-

vészet segíthesse a szocialista ember kialakulását. A Párt útmutatása nélkül a táncművészet sem végezhetne céltudatos építő munkát (Our Party, the Hungarian Working People's Party directed not only my work to the right way, but it is constantly directing and helping the whole dance movement, in order to make the socialist arts, among them dance, to be able to promote the development of the socialist citizen. Without the guidance of the Party we cannot make purposeful foundational work...) [Molnár 1950:8].

The necessity of imitation of the Soviet example (so called sovietization) was a permanent aspect of the party's declarations. It is possible to read the following statements, made by József Révai, in the documents of the 1951 congress, as confirmation of the words of the party leader Mátyás Rákosi:

Hadd mondjak itt köszönetet azoknak a szovjet művészeknek, Tyihonovnak és Novikovnak, Mojszejevnek és Obrazcovnak, Pudovkinnak és Zaharovnak, akik az új magyar kultúra kialakításának kezdetén ugyanolyan baráti segítséget nyújtottak nekünk, mint Bargyin a magyar kohászatnak és Bikov vagy Dubjaga a magyar sztahanovistáknak. [...] *A formájukban nemzeti és tartalmukban szocialista kultúrák* közt nincs és nem lehet harc, hanem csak közeledés, kölcsönhatás és összeforrás. Ez a titka a szovjet kultúra mély hatásának. És ez a titka annak is, hogy a szovjet kultúra befogadja és magáévá teszi a haladó magyar kultúra nagy alkotásait [Let me thank the Soviet artists Tikhonov and Novikov, Moiseyev and Obraztsov, Pudovkin and Zakharov, who at the beginning of the formation of the new Hungarian culture provided the same kind of friendly help as Bardin to Hungarian metallurgy and Bikov or Dubyaga to the Hungarian Stahnovists. (...) *Between cultures which are national in their form, and socialist in their content* there is no and cannot be a struggle, only approximation, interaction and unification. This is the secret of the deep influence of Soviet culture on the development of our socialist culture. And this is the secret that the Soviet culture also adopts and embraces the great works of progressive Hungarian culture) [Révai 1952:34].

I can illustrate the effects of the Soviet folk dance and folk music movement on Hungarian ensembles and groups through analysis of several texts and papers, but I present here a special case, an article about the relation between a Hungarian village group and the Moiseyev Ensemble. They met first in 1951 in Szeged and, three years later, when the Russian ensemble visited Hungary; the

village dancers sent an invitation to them via the local newspaper – *Délmagyarország*:

Kedves Elvtársak! Értésültünk arról, hogy a napokban újból hazánk földjére léptetek. Az öröm és boldogság, a szeretet és a soha el nem múló hála adta kezünkbe a tollat. Biztosan emlékeztek ránk három év távlatából (...) Három év nem homályosította el kedves emlékeket. Tőletek tanultuk, hogy az élet minden apró szépségét színpadra lehet vinni. A számunkra örökké emlékezetes „Buljba” egyszerű krumpliültetést ábrázolt. Tőletek kaptuk azt a gondolatot, hogy közösségünk sok évszázados hagyományait, ősrégi szokásait táncban, dalban őrizzük meg az utókor számára. Így születtek meg az azóta nagy sikert aratott „Sodró-fonó” és a „Gyékényes” népi játékok, amelyekben a tápéiak apáról-fiúra szálló mesterességét, a gyékényszövést művészi formában örökítették meg. (...) Mint barát a legjobb barátot, köszöntünk Benneteket és kérünk, jöjjetek el hozzánk, ismét hozzátok el művészeteteket. Forró szeretettel, Tápé és Szeged környéke dolgozó parasztságának legszebb táncaival, dalaival várunk benneteket. Tápéi Népi Együttes (Dear Comrades! We have been informed that these days you have come again to the land of our country. Joy and happiness, love and never-ending gratitude put the pen in our hand. You must have remembered us for three years (...) Three years did not blur your memories. We have learned from you that every tiny beauty of life can be staged. We shall never forget your “Bul’ba” portraying the simple sowing of the potato. We have gained the idea from you, that we should safeguard the centuries-old traditions and ancient customs in dance and song for future generations. This is the way, how our successful stage performances, “Sodró-fonó” (Twisting-spinning) and “Gyékényes” (Mat-work) came into being. These commemorate traditional local craft in Tápé in artistic form. (...) As a friend of the best friends, we greet you and ask you to come to us again to bring your artwork to our village. We are waiting for you with warm love and the most beautiful dances and songs of the working peasantry in Tápé and the villages around Szeged. Tápé Folk Ensemble [*Délmagyarország*, 2 March 1954:3].

I presume that the visits of the soviet folk music and dance ensembles (Moi-seyev, Alexandrov, “Ural” Folk Music and Folk Dance Ensemble and the like) contributed much to the recognition of the talented village dancers, singers and musicians by drawing attention to the artistic value of their activities. It created

a favourable atmosphere for the establishment of the “Master of Folk Art” Award in Hungary in 1953. One of the first persons awarded the Prize for his dancing, György Ács (1890–1967) came from Tápé, the above mentioned village [Felföldi and Gombos 2001].

The first period of the socialist era led to the termination of the former folk dance groups that were active in the 1930s and 1940s. Instead of them, decision makers established new, state- supported professional ensembles. Focusing on stage folk dance, they were: the Central Art Ensemble of the Hungarian People’s Army (1948), the State Folk Ensemble (1951), the Central Art Ensemble of the Trade Unions (1951) and the ensembles of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs (1952). The prosperity of the amateur folkdance groups may also be witnessed. Documents of the Second Congress of the Party in 1951 dealt with them in detail and appreciated their activity. Amateurism as a cultural mass movement also became a politically strongly supported artistic phenomenon. It was considered to be the representation of the active participation of the working class in the creation of the new Hungarian culture. (See the sentences in bold in the following quotation.)

...meg kell azonban említeni a tömegek művészeti öntevékenységének példátlan fellendülését, az üzemek és falvak tánc-, színjátszó- és kórusmozgalmát. A most folyó kultúrversenyen 3710 falusi csoport vett részt 53000 taggal, s 5874 városi-üzemi csoport 85000 taggal. **A mozgalom mutatja, hogy nemcsak új közönsége támad az új magyar kultúrának a dolgozó nép soraiból, hanem hogy a dolgozó nép a kultúra cselekvő résztvevőjévé akar válni és válik. Nem csak mint közönség, hanem mint alkotó is ki akarja venni részét az új magyar kultúra megteremtésében.** Ez a kulturális tömegmozgalom kimeríthetetlen tartaléka művészeti életünknek, itt jelentkeznek tömegesen új színész, táncos, énekes tehetségek. Sajnos nem eléggé figyelünk erre a mozgalomra, nem eléggé karoljuk fel a benne jelentkező tehetségeket, még mindig nagy a szakadék a tömegek kulturális mozgalmá és az úgynevezett hivatásos művészek között (...however, it is worth mentioning the unprecedented boom of the mass artistic activity, the dance-, drama- and choir movements of factories and villages. At the current cultural event, 3,710 village groups participated with 53,000 members and 5,874 urban group with 85,000 members. **The movement shows that not only a new audience came from the rank of the working class, but that the working people want to become and do become active participants in culture. They want to take part in the creation of a new Hungarian culture not only as**



Figure 1

*Performance of the village ensemble of Báta in their village, 1950*  
<http://www.sarkoz.extra.hu/elodeink.html> (Accessed 31 August 2018).

**audience, but also as creator.** This is an inexhaustible reserve of the *cultural mass movement* for our art life, here is a massive group of new actor-, dancer-, and singer- talent. Unfortunately, we do not pay much attention to this movement, we do not have enough talent to do so, there is still a big gap between the cultural movement of the masses and the so-called professional artists) [Révai 1952:27].

One of the most exciting events in connection with the theoretical and methodological question of the “folklore revival”<sup>3</sup> was the so called “jelleg-vita” (discussion on features), which took place in the journal *Táncművészet* (Dance Art) in 1952 with the participation of choreographers, cultural activists, dance theoreticians and journalists.<sup>4</sup> It was closely connected with debates happening in other fields of art and culture (literature, music, film, architecture, painting and so on) and it revolved around the same issues: narodnikism, formalism, schematism, naturalism, socialist realism, the leading role of the communist party and the dominance of Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist ideology. Discussion was rather unproductive from a professional point of view because the participants had such

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3 Revival as a part of the professional terminology became known in Hungary in the 1970s.

4 Selection from the participants’ writings: [Körtvélyes 1952; Molnár 1952; Pesovár 1952; Sebestyén 1952; Széll 1952].



Figure 2

*Miklós Rábai's choreography in the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble: Szüret (Vintage)*  
<http://vmek.niif.hu/02100/02185/html/560.html> (Accessed 31 October 2018).

different socio-cultural backgrounds and interests, as far as traditional dance was concerned. (Notwithstanding, several ideas surfaced which were the starting point for new productive debates in the following decades.) In this situation discussion was closed by such and similar political slogans as:

Egy dolgot pedig soha ne tévesszünk szem elől, sok ága, sokféle módja van táncaink új virágzásának, de útja csak egy van. És ezt az utat a marxi-lenini-sztálini elmélet kövezte ki, s a szocialista szovjet táncművészet fénye világítja be. Nagyon vigyáznunk kell, hogy le ne térrünk erről az útról (Do not ever miss one thing, there are many forms, and many ways to have a new flourishing of our dances, but there is only one way to go. And this path was paved by Marxian-Leninist-Stalinist theory, illuminated by the light of socialist Soviet dance culture. We have to be careful not to stray from this way) [László-Bencsik 1952:378].

In 1980 György Martin, the internationally influential dance folklorist (1932–1983) recalled the one-sided, distorted presentation of folklore on the stage in this period:

A folklór (az ötvenes évek elejétől)... szerves, tudatos részévé vált a kulturális politikának. (...) Ez a folklórnak jó volt, mert szinte állami rangra emelte a nép írástalan műveltségének értékeit. Az intézményes támogatás azonban túlságosan hivatalos keretet öltött, s ezzel éppen a további spontán folyamatokat gátolta. A hivatásos együttesek, az intézményes amatőr néptáncsoportok érthetően maradandó művészi értékeket akartak, vagy véltek létrehozni, s ezt mindig csak a színpadi kultúra, a színházi produkció, az individuális alkotások keretében képzelték el, más lehetőségen nem is gondolkodtak. Pedig a folklórban javarészt ettől eltérő tendenciák, vonások uralkodnak (From the beginning of the 1950s, folklore... became an organic and conscious part of the cultural policy. (...) This was good for folklore, because it elevated the values of the unlettered culture of the people to state level. Institutional support, however, was too formal and hindered further spontaneous processes. The professional ensembles, the institutional amateur folk dance groups, obviously, wanted or aimed to create lasting artistic values, which were always imagined only in the field of stage culture, theatrical production, individual works; they did not think about other possibilities, regardless of the fact that different tendencies and traits mostly dominate in folklore) [Martin 1980].

With respect to the overemphasis on folk dancing at the beginning of the 1950s, he says:

Ami a városi néptáncmozgalmat illeti, ott a hiba az volt, hogy erőszakosan szervezték, szorgalmazták a népi táncsoportokat, és a kötelező társadalmi munka kategóriájába került be a népi táncolás, sok más egyéb tevékenységgel. Szinte szemináriumi foglalkozásként illet a népi táncot is járni. Ez olyan telítettséget eredményezett, hogy később ellenkező hatást váltott ki. A néptánc iránti figyelmet azonban ez a korszak mégiscsak felkeltette (As far as the folk dance movement in the city is concerned, the mistake was that they organized it in an arbitrary fashion, and encouraged the establishment of folk dance groups; and folk dancing, with many other activities, was included in the category of compulsory social work. It was almost like a seminar ses-



*Figure 3*

*Romanian ensemble dancing at the World Festival of Youth and Students in 1951*  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:2nd\\_World\\_Festival\\_of\\_Youth\\_and\\_Students#/media/File:Bundesarchiv\\_Bild\\_183-R83618,\\_Budapest,\\_II.\\_Weltfestspiele,\\_Festumzug,\\_rumänische\\_Delegation.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:2nd_World_Festival_of_Youth_and_Students#/media/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_183-R83618,_Budapest,_II._Weltfestspiele,_Festumzug,_rumänische_Delegation.jpg) (Accessed 31 August 2018).

sion where people were also expected to dance folk dance. This resulted in a saturation that later triggered an opposite effect. However, at this period of time it raised the level of attention to folk dance) [Martin 1980].

The most frequent and characteristic manifestations of the folk dance revival inside Hungary were the local, regional or nationwide festivals, so called “kultúrversenyek” organised by the Institute of Folk Art<sup>5</sup>), the jubilees of the

5 Institute of Folk Art was the operative organ under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture established in 1950. It was reorganised several times during the last decades according to the political ideologies.

party leaders and performances at party events in Hungary at that time. Internationally, the most significant political event for performing folk dance and folk music was the World Festival of Youth and Students, arranged by the World Federation of Democratic Youth under soviet political control. It was first organized in Prague in 1947, then in Berlin in 1949 and in Budapest in 1951.<sup>6</sup> Hungary was represented by both professional and amateur ensembles at these events. This was an effective way of internationalizing cultural policy in the socialist camp. In 1951, the above mentioned village ensemble of Tápé (South-Eastern Hungary) had occasion to introduce their dances. It was a lifelong experience for the villagers.

## Cultural policy from the 1960s to the 1980s

After the suppression of the 1956 revolution<sup>7</sup> and the political retaliation made by the support of the Soviet army, the socialist era instituted a period of terror. Several experts on dance were imprisoned, others became unemployed or went abroad. Drastic changes happened in the amateur and professional folk dance and folk music movement. The majority of the ensembles ceased their activities and the mass-character of the movement changed considerably. Festivals were closed for years. Martin remembered these years thus:

Azt hiszem, hogy 1956 után sok minden olyat kiöntöttünk a fürdővízzel, amit meg kellett volna őrizni. A néptáncmozgalom túlhajtása miatti társadalmi visszahatást a hivatalos kulturális politika is megtette azzal, hogy akkor egyáltalán nem kell a néptánc. Fokozatosan csökkent a mozgalom hivatalos erkölcsi és anyagi támogatása: a társadalom nem igényli, tehát ne is csináljuk (I think, that after 1956 we threw out the baby with the bath water. We got rid of a lot of things, which should have been preserved. The almost limitless promotion of the amateur folk dance movement caused a negative social reaction, in addition they made a decision in the new official cultural policy – we do not need folk dance at all. The official intellectual and financial support gradually was decreasing: society does not need it, so we have to stop folk dancing) [Martin 1980].

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6 The Budapest Festival was held in 1951 between 14th and 27th of August with 22000 participants, from 82 countries.

7 The 1956's revolution in Hungary was a rebellion against the abuses and brutality of the communist party.

The party document, which determined the rigid, but slowly consolidating political atmosphere for the revival movement, was the directive of the cultural policy of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. First published in 1958, it was entitled *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt művelődési politikájának irányelvei* (Directives of the cultural policy of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party).

This and other documents of regulation<sup>8</sup> in the fields of science policy, art policy, youth policy and public education policy reflect well the new strategy of social alliance of the party and liberalisation of cultural policy. One of the most famous/infamous doctrines of this period was the “Három ‘T’ Elv” – Tilt, Tűr, Támogat<sup>9</sup> Party represented by György Aczél (1917–1991). This all-powerful cultural politician *prohibited* anti-socialist ideas; he selectively *permitted* some “bourgeois” (civil) initiations, which were considered not to be harmful to socialist cultural policy, and *promoted* all activities that were considered to be in harmony with the dominant socialist ideology.

A quotation from the speech of György Aczél, vice-president of the Council of Ministers, held at the meeting on the Central Committee of the communist party on 20 March 1974, talks about the problems of implementing a party decision, the situation at the time and the tasks of public education. In this expression, folklore and traditional culture have an important but diminishing role compared to the 1950s.<sup>10</sup>

...mindenkilátja-láthatja: hogyan óvja és kelti új életre a szocialista politika, a munkásosztály politikájánál minden értékét, kulturális kincseit, s benne a paraszti kultúra értékeit, köztük a népdalt, népzene-t. A szocializmus népünk eddigi fejlődésének szerves részeként, az egész nép megbecsült hagyományaként, az egyetemes kultúra, az ös-sznépi kultúra részeként őrizte és őrzi meg, emelte és emeli magasabb szintre a paraszti élet jó hagyományait, kulturális értékeit is. Kiemeli az elszigeteltségből azzal is, hogy egybeötvözi a munkáshagyományokkal. Arra törekedtünk és továbbra is arra törekszünk, hogy egységes, sokszínű, gazdag, népünk minden értékét megőrző s egyben internacionalista szocialista kultúra kibontakoztatásáért munkálkodjunk falun is. S ez sokkal nehezebb, fáradtságosabb, de igazabb, népünk értékeit hasonlíthatatlanul jobban szolgáló munka, mint a paraszti világ romantikájának elmúlásán kesergő fel-felbukkanó honfibu (... every-

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8 [Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt 1973, 1974, 1978, 1979]; [Herczeg and Villangó 1976].

9 3 T-s: *Tiltás*, *tolerálás* and *támogatás*. In English “the Three P-s” principle – Prohibit, Permit, Promote.

10 See the quotation from Révai above (socialist culture is national in form and socialist in content) [Révai 1952:34].

body can see how socialist politics – politics of the working class protects and revives all the values and cultural values of our people, their cultural treasure including the peasant’s culture values, together with folk songs and folk music. Socialism preserved and preserves, elevated and elevates the good traditions and cultural values of peasant life to a higher level, as an integral part of our society’s development so far, as a precious tradition of the whole people, as part of universal culture and as a whole culture. It is also removed from isolation by combining it with the workers’ traditions. We have been striving for and are endeavouring further to develop a unified, diverse and rich, also internationalist, socialist culture, which preserves all the values of our people in rural places as well. And this is a much harder, more laborious, and truer work, serving better the interest of our people’s values, than the melancholy discourse about the disappearance of the romance of the peasant world) [Herczeg and Villangó 1976:12].

Martin’s recollection about the consolidation in cultural life testifies to the appearance of new, fresh, civil initiatives and a different relation to traditional culture:

A Duna menti Folklórfesztivál és a Röpülj Páva következményeként nemcsak a falusi hagyományörzés éledt fel, hanem a városi fiatalok érdeklődése is megindult. A fiatal zenészek elkötelezett érdeklődése, és a népzene hiteles megismertetése, elsajátítására végzett kitartó munkája engem nagyon meghatott, mert ehhez hasonló őszinte, „öncélú” érdeklődéssel korábban alig találkoztam. Az „egy az egyben megtanulás” lehetőségében én magam sem hittem, de mindig sajnáltam, hogy a hiteles népzene megszólalásának hiánya miatt mi minden szépségtől kell örökre elbúcsúzni (As a consequence of the Danube Folklore Festival and the *Fly, Peacock*,<sup>11</sup> not only was the preservation of the village traditions prospering, but also the interest of young people in the city. The enthusiastic interest of the young musicians, and the persistent work of teaching and learning the folk music, has very much impressed me because I have hardly ever met such a sincere, “self-serving” interest. With respect to the possibility of “one-on-one learning”, I did not believe it myself, but I was always sorry that because of the

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11 Danube Folklore Festival is an international folklore event established 1967, broadcasted by the TV. *Fly, Peacock* is a TV series of folklore performances with the participation of the village ensembles and groups at the second half of the 1960s [Gila 2004; Felföldi 2018].

lack of acquiring authentic folk music, we should say good-bye to all the beauty for ever) [Martin 1980].

In the framework of the gradual liberalisation of cultural policy, this new fresh interest in folklore and traditional culture led to the appearance of civil initiatives and the creation of social organisations from below. Partly, it was due to the participation of folk dance ensembles in international folk festivals, first in the socialist countries and later in Western Europe. Naturally, the initiatives were controlled by the ruling power. One of the first social organisations in the field of the folk dance movement in Hungary was the Amatőr Néptáncosok Országos Tanácsa (National Council of the Amateur Folk Dancers) (ANOT) established in 1980 [Fuchs 1980; Maács 1980].<sup>12</sup> The organization rallied everyone (choreographers, teachers, dancers, researchers and the like) involved in the revival movement. Between 1980 and 1989, its president was the distinguished dance folklorist Ernő Pesovár. The vanguard of the Council was recruited from the most talented choreographers of the “semi-professional” amateur ensembles. They were based mostly in higher education courses offered by the Academy of Drama and Film in the 1950s, and had acquired dance knowledge in professional ensembles, or good, semi-professional, amateur ensembles. Their dedication to Béla Bartók’s and Zoltán Kodály’s artistic and educational concepts on music and their application in the field of dance made them able to create a special “genre” of stage dance – the so-called “stage folk dance”. The “project” was based on folk dance amalgamated with elements of modern and contemporary dance. Their best pieces gained fame internationally [Zórándi 2014].

Parallel with the artistic and ethnographic perfectibility of stage folk dance, members of the amateur folk dance movement and a great mass of young interested people developed a new scene of practicing folk dance for their own pleasure. It was a joint movement of the young revival musicians, which gained popularity first among university students and later in a wider range of urban and rural places as well. It was and is basically a cultural movement established and maintained from below, by young interested people with zero or minimal state support [Siklós 1977; Sándor 2006]. Participants maintained the value of concepts made popular in Hungary by Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály and their pupils, namely: the concepts of “clean source”, “music (dance) is for everybody” and “musical (dance) mother-tongue”. The dance house movement was greatly facilitated by the results of folklore research accumulated since the 1950s. It resulted in an

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12 It worked parallel with the State supported Union of Dance artists. In 1989 ANOT was reorganised in separate NGOs according to the different fields of its activities.



*Figure 4*

*Dance house of the Sebő ensemble, Kassák Club, 1970s, From the Dance house Archives of the Hungarian Heritage House, Budapest*

*<http://www.hagyományokhaza.hu/galeria/292/3454/> (Accessed 31 August 2018).*

intensive, direct connection between folk dance research and the revival movement. As Martin writes in 1980:

Az ötvenes évek végétől főként a hatvanas évek során felhalmozódott jelentős hangszeres tánczenei anyag 1970-re lényegében már minden fontos típus, stílus, dialektus anyagát tartalmazta, s így rendelkezésre állt mindazoknak, akik ezt valóban meg akarták ismerni. Ez már valami másfajta, intenzívebb érdeklődés volt, mint a korábbi. Nem azzal a céllal fordultak csupán a népművészet felé, hogy na, rögtön, azonnal, csináljunk valamit, hogy holnapután koreográfia, vagy zenekompozíció szülessék belőle, hanem a teljes megismerés igényét láttam benne, és ez mást is eredményezett, mint a korábbi érdeklődés (The great amount of instrumental dance music material accumulated since the end of the 1950s, through the 1960s, by the 1970s contained all the important types, styles and dialects, and it was available for all those who really wanted to know it. This was something of a different kind of interest, more intense than the previous one. They turned to folk art not with the aim of doing something at once, to make choreography or music composition immediately, a day after tomorrow. But I saw the

desire to acquire full mastery of the knowledge, and that was something different from the previous interest) [Martin 1980].

## Some legal documents after the socialist period

After 1989, the sharp political change brought about the fundamental reorganisation of cultural life in Hungary. It can be attributed to the comprehensive and intensive legal regulations that were made in order to legitimize the political changes. The most conceptual legal texts were issued soon after 2000, for instance: *Culture of Freedom. Hungarian Cultural Strategy 2006–2020*. András Bozóky, minister of culture and his collaborators, January 2006; *Directions of Cultural Modernisation*. Dr István Hiller, minister of culture and education, 12. December 2006; XXXVIII/2006 *Act on the ratification of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (UNESCO 2003, Paris), Budapest, February 2006.

In addition, attention should be drawn to the most influential international legal documents of these decades, as for instance: *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage for Humanity*, Paris, 2003; *Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, Faro, 27.X.2005. A detailed description and interpretation of these documents is not the aim of this paper (I have also postponed consideration of the introduction of legal documents between 1920 and 1948 to another paper).

## Conclusion

As a summary of the characteristic features of the cultural policy of the socialist era, I present here a schematic comparative table with the same seven criteria that I used towards the beginning of this paper. Features of the previous and the following historical periods, which are also arranged in the pigeonholes of the table, assist understanding of the trends and direction of the cultural changes. These features appear to be profitable tools for examination of the political texts and related documents presented above.

	<b>Between Two WWs (1920–1949)</b>	<b>Socialist period (1950–1989)</b>	<b>Post-communist Period (1990–)</b>
<b>Interpretation of tradition culture and folklore</b>	as national “mother-tongue”, foundation for national culture, “clean source”	as artistic expression, source of inspiration for ART (professional and amateur) internationally	as component of popular culture and cultural heritage, basis for sustainable cultural development
<b>Ideological background</b>	nationalism, chauvinism, clericalism homogenized one-culture	“internationalism” in national framework, anti-clericalism, Marxism-Leninism	trans-nationalism, multiculturalism, regionalism, localism, globalization cultural diversity
<b>Target beneficiaries</b>	middle class and peasantry	working class	local communities both in rural and urban areas, mainly middleclass
<b>Temporal aspect</b>	main focus on romanticised Past, respect to Future, negative feelings to Present	main focus on Future, negative feelings to Past, and idealised Present	focus on present, negligence of past, fear of unpredictable Future
<b>Objectives of preservation and contemporization</b>	purity, antiquity, manifestation of national character, stability	authentic revitalization, preservation of traditional artistic values mainly on stage, distinction between amateur and professional	living cultural heritage, local identity marker, creative use, ready to change, material for organic modernization
<b>Direction of initiation for cultural modernization</b>	from both above and below, co-operation with cultural industry and tourism	from above, controlled, significant state support	both institutional and spontaneous, minimal state support, decentralization, civil and local initiation, interest in cultural industry, tourism and market
<b>Ways of transmission of traditional knowledge</b>	traditional, face-to-face; festivalization, cinema	institutionalised, centralised, with the assistance of scientific research and education, electronic media	both traditional and institutionalised, decentralised with some central institutional guide

*Table 1  
Comparison of some characteristic features of cultural politics based on traditional culture during the twentieth century*

Some preliminary findings:

– The borders between the periods are not sharp and not always easily definable. Ideas may appear in a given moment of history, but become dominant in the following one. Additionally there is a kind of consistency and continuity in the process of socio-cultural policy throughout the periods. Initially, it began with the task of institutionalized preservation of the folk-national traditions, then development of the “proletarian ideology”, evolving the workers’ culture and art, and later the programme of stabilization and socialization of socialist culture, and finally the realization of a critical approach to cultural life [Gergey 1997:3].

– There are all embracing, bridging ideas and practices which may survive because of support or despite the political prohibition and may happen to be supported again and again by the society in a new era (e.g. nationalism, peasantism, romanticism).

– Features given in the table in order to characterize the cultural policy of a period are the result of a rough generalisation. It is valid mainly for the forty years of the socialist regime, the ideas of which appeared before 1949 and remained influential after 1989. Some of them were dominant in the first ten years, others in the period of consolidation (the next twenty years) and some remained valid in the last ten years, when most of the others lost their validity as, for instance, the dominance of stage folk dance, the relation of the professional, semi-professional and amateur ensembles and groups, different interpretations of authenticity and so on.

– The legal documents and accompanying writings presented in this paper do not refer to each of the notions listed in the table. Limited space precluded demonstration of each of them by one or more examples. Nonetheless, I hope that my goal to illustrate the “profitable” use of legal documents in cultural studies in the field of dance has been attained, and, furthermore, might contribute to results of international studies in this field [Slobin 1996].

– The legal documents and their interpretation in context might reveal power relations, the ways of decision making, the significance of individual “agents” in the “arena” and forms of resistance and revenge. I did not discover references in these documents to specific gender problems or questions about religion. These may be dealt with in a later phase of the research [Lewellen 2003].

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# The Power of Tradition(?): Folk Revival Groups as Bearers of Folk Culture

*Martina Pavlicová*

*Abstract:*

A growing interest in rural folk culture among the intelligentsia could be seen throughout Europe in the nineteenth century. This often had a symbolic aim of finding—or confirming—a national identity, which was in line with the philosophies of Pre-Romanticism and Romanticism prevalent at the time. A similar trend could be found in the Czech Lands in those days. The turn of the twentieth century saw the demise of many archaic manifestations of folk culture in the everyday life of the rural population; that, however, marked the beginning of their “second life”. This trend continued in the first half of the twentieth century. Some traditional manifestations of culture were still vivid in the memories of their bearers, while others were presented in new contexts. The other notable phenomenon was the manipulation of folk traditions in the name of social ideologies. This was particularly marked in Czech society during the Nazi occupation and in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when the Communist party took over. State-supported folklorism grew particularly strong after World War Two, when huge numbers of folk revival groups were established. Folk traditions were thus carried on not only by individuals living their everyday lives within their communities, but also by individuals taking part in the folk revival movement.<sup>1</sup>

*Keywords:*

Czech Lands, traditional folk culture, folklorism, folk revival movement, folk revival groups

Intellectuals across Europe took an increasing interest in folk culture during the nineteenth century. Researchers of that era stated that their efforts primarily aimed at finding a national identity, or confirming it. This resonated with the general philosophical direction of Pre-Romanticism and Romanticism. In the Czech Lands at that time, the situation was no different. Interest was further heightened by the transformation of archaic culture unfolding under the influence of modern society. Despite a number of external factors, no radical change actually took place in the lifestyle of the rural population. People’s everyday lives did not change, and festive occasions, framed by a mixture of folk and Christian traditions, continued to define the lifestyle in rural areas. The Moravian countryside—the region in which the research was conducted—was no exception until the mid-twentieth century.

Moravia, one of the former countries whose history goes to make up that of the contemporary Czech state, was not unified in terms of traditional folk cul-

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ture. Over the past 200 years, unique ethnographic regions formed in Moravia, some of whose history—e.g., the Haná region in Central Moravia—dates back to the seventeenth century. By contrast, other regions are somewhat young, such as Lašsko in Northern Moravia or the Luhačovice Zálesí in Southeastern Moravia, which originated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries respectively. Naturally, the development of individual ethnographic regions goes hand in hand with the development and specific characteristics of their folk culture. From the late nineteenth century, following the extinction of some elements formerly present in folk culture and the onset of mass culture, significant efforts were made by intellectuals to maintain the heritage of their ancestors. Collectors came not only to record any materials or spiritual phenomena that were on the decline—songs, verbal traditions, and dances—but also to revive them and present them to the public.

Czech society has developed an understanding of its cultural heritage—its legacy of folk culture—on several levels. At the most general level, it has always been strongly connected to who was in the position of representing the Czech nation and its government: the self-determination of the Czech nation within the countries and provinces ruled by the House of Habsburg in the late nineteenth century, or efforts for greater international visibility and prestige when the first Czechoslovak state came into being after World War One. In 1920, for instance, an *Exhibition of Czechoslovak Folk Culture* took place in Paris, opened by a lecture on its importance for the “intellectual development of the Czechoslovak nation” [Lenderová 2009:191]. An article published in the magazine *Illustration* in 1920 instructed readers to visit towns and villages in Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia, to be able to understand and to “linger awhile with people who have no teachers or formal schooling but are driven by their own internal, spontaneous inspiration, create this tender young art, which is passionate and graceful. This can help you understand their souls and the bravery that underlines their newly gained freedom” [Lenderová 2009:192; cited in Weiss 1920:276].

Milena Lenderová, the cultural historian, notes that the exhibition presented a

“somewhat distorted image of an industrial/agrarian country /... / it confirmed the vision of common, “salt of the Earth” people, who had only recently given up their picturesque costumes, people living in clay homes with painted arches above the entrance doors (“žudro”), singing melodic songs, dancing, cheerful, and pious” [Lenderová 2009:193].

It is no wonder that several years later, Vladimír Helfert (1886–1945), a musicologist, was among those who expressed their disagreement with the rural image thus created. His conflict was with the preparatory work being carried out for the 1928 *Exhibition of Contemporary Culture* in Brno: “Presentations like this one make foreign countries see us as nothing more than an exotic nation” [Pavlicová 2012:28–29].

In any case, it must be noted that at the time—during the onset of industrial revolution and mass culture—the maintenance of the traditional lifestyle and traditional manifestations of rural culture were closely connected to the farming population. Already at the time of the Romantic movement’s interest in folk culture, people had taken as their primary interest manifestations of this rural social strata and not, for example, the poor. Descriptions of Czech weddings, for instance, which always involved a highly syncretic conglomeration of manifestations of social and spiritual culture, were primarily based on the observations of farmers who owned their land.

The strong position held by the rural population, which included both farm owners and peasants, found recognition in a political movement.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, in the Moravian countryside, a peasant movement began to form in the 1860s [Malíř 2009:49]. By the 1890s, the movement had divided into two distinct streams: Liberals and Catholics. In 1904, the Agrarian Party for Moravia and Silesia was founded, which later, as an adherent of liberalism, fought against the stances taken by Catholic parties [Malíř 2009:52–60].

The political activities of both these streams in rural areas underpinned the foundation of various associations. Among the best known are Orel, Omladina, Sokol, and Agrarian Youth. They supported the social and cultural life in the countryside and continued to do so even after the formation of the independent Czechoslovak state. At the time, they also functioned as a strong support base that increased the chances of winning elections, and therefore of participating in political power.<sup>3</sup> As noted by historian Jiří Malíř, even before the establishment of the new state, Czech politicians had been much more closely tied to rural areas than to cities, with Catholicism, strongly present in Moravian rural areas, pro-

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2 'Peasantry' is generally used to describe people who made their living from agriculture; 'farmers' is used as a social category of these people, who enjoyed a higher status.

3 Orel originated in 1908 as a union of physical education groups established as part of Catholic education associations. It received strong support in the Catholic areas in Moravia. In addition to physical education, it focused on culture, including folk culture and the associated organization of events (the so-called ethnographic festivities frequently tied to a meeting of the entire Orel association) and mass exercises, the organization of Hody (the Feasts), Dožínky (harvest festivities), and the like. In 1937, there were 1278 local Czech Orel groups. In 1948, the association was prohibited [Večerková 1997a:225].

tecting their traditional values from the secularizing pressures of society [Malíř 2009:56, 64].

Moments of external support and admiration as a factor that stimulated the maintenance of folk culture were only one side of the coin. The second entailed the everyday world of rural people, which grew out of tradition and was based on the intergenerational transmission of social and cultural elements. Common law was the norm, and it continued to be an important “legal framework” within local communities. Although some researchers talk about the secularization of life in the nineteenth century, bringing significant changes to the social rhythm, the pace of change in the rural lifestyle remained much slower [Hlavačka 2009:108].

The church continued to hold an important position in the countryside, natural ties to the agricultural year remained robust, and so did the related cultural traditions. With the onset of modernization in society, many archaic manifestations of folk culture were no longer practised. This, however, brought greater opportunities for them to experience a “second life”.

Revival efforts were common in a number of locations in Moravia in the late nineteenth and early centuries. This is evidenced by findings from extensive field research projects in various locations. The cleavage between manifestations that fulfilled an indispensable role in the everyday lives of people versus those presented for the public at large was not distinct at that time. Some were still in the active memory of their bearers, and many were presented to fulfil a function other than their original purpose as well. A custom called the “Ride of the Kings” may serve as an example. In the first half of the twentieth century, it could be experienced as a Pentecostal custom whose function was purely ritualistic. At the same time, it was presented—by identical interpreters or bearers—as a show for foreign visitors. (For instance, in July 1930, in Vlčnov, the Ride of the Kings took place as a special performance for United States participants in an art course; in 1931, several hundred journalists who were attending a congress in nearby Luhačovice came to see this Pentecostal custom, and news of the occasion subsequently appeared in the national press) [Pavlicová 2013:551].

Information about the state of rural culture was obtained from micro-historical studies carried out at individual locations. Over the past two decades, this type of research has been the trend in Czech ethnography and history.<sup>4</sup> An ex-

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4 Monographs focused on history or ethnography were not unusual even in the early phases of existence of these fields of study. For ethnography, they were a seminal research method during the field's establishment among scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The increase in monographic research in the 1990s is tied to changes across society, the development of autonomy of specific locations and a reinforcement of identity. Many studies are therefore carried out as initiatives by local communities themselves interested in learning about their cultural history.

ample of such research would be a monograph on Ratíškovice in South Moravia. Looking at the presentation of folk culture in this village, it is apparent that a Ratíškovice folk revival group took part in the 1922 Orel Convention in Brno. Members of the local Omladina and Orel associations presented one of the wedding customs practised in the area. In 1927, a folk revival group from the village took part in the Slovácký Rok festivities in Kyjov and remained active even in subsequent years. As a result, a Slovácko Krúžek (an interest group focused on traditional songs and dances) was formed in 1946 and actively contributed to the postwar folk revival movement. In 1946, the group took part in the first festivities at Strážnice. (The event was later called the Strážnice International Folk Festival and today is one of the top folk festivals in the Czech Republic). The same year, the Slovácko Krúžek from Ratíškovice presented a Slovácko wedding in Prague, which was not merely a performance but indeed a real wedding, involving a Ratíškovice couple who were married in St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague. The wedding procession walked through Prague in traditional costumes, observed by Prague residents. The Ratíškovice company comprised 120 people [Pavlicová 2010:807]. The group gave another performance in Prague, this time in 1948 at the Agricultural Exhibition, and took part in the Sokol Convention [Pavlicová 2010:806–807].

In the aftermath of World War Two and against the new political background, the everyday life of Ratíškovice inhabitants gradually started to change.<sup>5</sup> The first changes occurred soon after 1945 when the Municipal Council was replaced by National Committees that provided equal representation for permitted political parties. In contemporary language, even in rural areas a “coalition with no opposition” was created [Dvořák 2010:390].

Then, the post-1948 period saw dramatic developments. In 1949, discussions began on peasants joining collective farming organizations: a critical intervention by the state in the financial circumstances of individual families. It resulted in the so-called socialization of the village, which practically entailed the elimination of farmers and private property, thereby weakening a potential “enemy” of the new Communist ideology [Dvořák 2010:410, 423].

The general details of this process are well known and the experience of Ratíškovice was no different than elsewhere. After unsuccessful invitations to join the collective which had been established, pressure was put on peasants and dramatic situations frequently occurred [Dvořák 2010:426–427].

The first Ratíškovice peasant joined the collective in 1953 [Dvořák 2010:427].

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5 Wars always upturned the lives of people and were in turn reflected in their lifestyle and culture.

In 1960, only four private farmers remained in the village to withstand the pressure [Dvořák 2010:433].

The village of Vlčnov noted above in connection with the Ride of the Kings may serve as another example of a village in the Slovácko rural area. Unlike Ratíškovice, Vlčnov was a purely agricultural village with none of the manual labour population that formed a socially disadvantaged group in Ratíškovice. In the late 1940s and 1950s, small businesses and artisans' workshops were nationalized, but the agricultural sphere resisted for quite some time [Dvořák 2013:356].

Pressure from the Czech government grew. Peasants' mandatory fees were raised, selected farms were liquidated and their owners unwillingly moved out and sent to work in the Ostrava coal mines [Dvořák 2013:363].

The Communist regime also tried to suppress any religious manifestations. For this reason, no Ride of the Kings took place in Vlčnov in 1951. Contemporary eyewitnesses say the authorities prohibited the King and the Riders from taking part in the mass at the local church. Families of the participants stood up against this prohibition and there was no Ride of the Kings that year [Dvořák 2013:376].

In 1953, the Ride of the Kings took place earlier: on Whit Sunday and not on Whit Monday, which had been removed from the list of state holidays under a 1951 act (this act came into effect in 1952) [Olšáková 2008]. However, the pressure from the Communist regime could work in the opposite direction, too. It could “contribute to integration and, in contrast, slow down some secularization” [Dvořák 2013:376].

In any event, even during the turbulent 1950s, everyday life in the area unfolded as a series of “ordinary days and feast days”. Folk culture traditions continued to play an important role, although frequently under new circumstances. The feast of Corpus Christi, during which people dressed in their traditional costumes and walked in a procession, was prohibited as it had been in other locations throughout the country [Dvořák 2013:377]. In contrast, local political authorities directly supported the establishment of a folk revival group in 1954 [Kondrová 2013:795–796].

Folk traditions in Vlčnov were increasingly maintained under the influence of a folk revival movement. Testimony to this comes from a list of folk revival groups in which both children and adults associated, as well as from the establishment of a dulcimer band. (Dulcimer bands originated side by side with brass bands, which represented a continuation of folk musicality in the Moravian countryside.) More evidence naturally comes from the support shown for the Ride of the Kings, a Whitsun custom, which—under the new social conditions—acquired new functions, while remaining the main symbol of identity for people

in Vlčnov. Folklorism supported by the state merged with local historical memory and reference to tradition. Tradition bearers were no longer individuals living their everyday lives within their communities, since their lives changed drastically as a result of collectivization. Rather, they were individuals taking part in the folk revival movement.

A similar situation was in evidence in Hluk, a village neighbouring Vlčnov. It, too, was known for its Ride of the Kings, a tradition which persisted even after the so-called socialization of rural areas. As is evident from the accounts of contemporary witnesses, although farmers lost their property, including the horses essential to the custom, many took part in its restoration and presentation in the late 1950s [Pavlicová 2007:117–119].

Naturally, there were disputes and quarrels, since the collectivization affected interpersonal relationships. But the life of people who were part of a single community had to go on. One of the respondents remembered his father—a Hluk farmer—who, although he had lost his property, took part in the Ride of the Kings at the Strážnice Folk Festival (riding on a borrowed horse.) He concluded his memory of the complex period of time and return to tradition by saying: “They probably had it in their blood... They didn’t get bitter” [Pavlicová 2007:119].

For the village of Hluk, there is also evidence that the city folk revival groups that came into being in the late 1940s and early 1950s reinforced the restoration of rural traditions. In this specific case, representatives of the Hradišťan folk revival group from nearby Uherské Hradiště played a significant part in the beginnings of the Hluk folk festival in 1959. They not only helped organize the event, they used their political contacts. At that time, the festival enjoyed no assistance from the local committee. However, an order was given from the superior regional leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia that the local committee must provide maximum support because the “folk tradition” was a party ideological priority.

It should be noted, however, that an ideological burden similar to that in the Czech context—where support for folk culture was particularly prioritized in the 1950s—may sometimes be found as well during the Nazi occupation, which repressed culture and prohibited Czech cultural activity in the Protectorate. The cultural dimension, and with it any interest in folk traditions, withdrew into the background. The only exceptions were activities allowed by the German authorities, which either constituted collaboration or approximated it. *Národopisná Morava* was an organization that played an infamous role in the area. The originally irredentist association striving for Moravia to be made part of Slovakia turned into an organization that no longer kept to its former strong stance, but instead fully cooperated with the Germans. Actions on the part of

the organization's individual members affected Hluk inhabitants, too [Pavlicová 2007:111–113].

Many of the organization's activities centred on folk culture had no ideological undertones, but those that did had them in abundance [Pavlicová 2007:112].

Let us not forget, for instance, the support for the occupation powers shown after the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, the Reich Protector, in 1942. Large demonstrations took place in cities as well as at the pilgrimage site of Blatnice in the Slovácko region: "... On 26 June, approximately 80,000 people gathered behind the Moravská Ostrava Municipal Theatre building. The Miners' Band was playing and honour guards stood by, dressed in traditional costume, holding miners' lamps. Like the day before, at the St. Antoníněk pilgrimage site, where the local demonstration was opened by Jan Úprka, the Chairman of Národopisná Morava, propagandists in Ostrava also made use of folk customs and symbols to make the demonstration attractive to the local crowd" [Šustrová 2012:55–56].

During the occupation, folk culture was abused in other ways, as well. For instance, Emanuel Moravec, the Minister of Education, promoted the notion that youth should be educated in the so-called curiae. Photographs of young men in Slovácko costumes showing the Nazi salute were an example of sophisticated Nazi propaganda.

Several years later, folk culture was abused yet again, this time in the name of socialism, which made it a tool used to reinforce totalitarianism, a strategy described by anthropological models from various other parts of the world. Folk culture was once again to become national culture. The aim was not to support the national identity like in the nineteenth century, but to purposefully change it. In 1945, the communist minister Zdeněk Nejedlý writes:

Isn't it wonderful what Soviet artists can directly use the folk art for!...  
And how high this art stands over so many praised and laboriously assembled works of so-called modern music! And this is also what we need, [Příbáň 2001:41–42; cited in Nejedlý 1945].

Over the course of history, folk culture traditions have played both positive and negative roles. But the impact relied not on the traditions themselves, but rather how they were manipulated. For this reason, it is important to distinguish the background of individual manifestations of folk culture, and the motivation and intentions of the actors involved.

In the second half of the twentieth century, two cultural streams may be clearly distinguished in the Moravian countryside. The first continued as a part of local people's everyday lives and was gradually modernized. It included both ordinary days and feast days. The second, by contrast, clung to the traditions of

the past—either owing to nostalgia or a desire not to lose the valuable cultural heritage—and increasingly was associated exclusively with festive occasions. And this is where folk revival groups and associations play their role. Collective historical memory includes both streams. Today, tradition bearers frequently no longer distinguish between them anymore, because they have overlapped to a great degree. Although it is clear that the driving forces behind tradition are not identical to those that drive folk culture, they nevertheless still possess the power to push the legacy of prior generations forward along the cultural axis of society.

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# Reviving Folklore, Moving Ideology: Social(istic) Dance in the German Democratic Republic<sup>1</sup>

Hanna Walsdorf

*Abstract:*

From the early 1950s, GDR politicians, commentators and even scholars took up the cause of laymen's "artistic work" in order to progress the socialist society concept. Being socialist was equated with being "democratic," and this, in turn, was connected to any social activity – such as folk (or social) dance. The boosting of folk art, folk music and folk dance by means of state-run institutions was aimed at bringing about a sense of social(ist) identity. Yet semantic absurdities within the respective discourse, e.g. "revolutionary tradition," were soon to illustrate the inherent problems of this undertaking. What started as a revivalist cultivation of German folk dance quickly turned into an ideologically loaded festival culture: folk dance became "lay stage dance" with "socialist" subject matters. Therefore, lay dance groups had to model themselves on the professional state ensembles; and by doing so, the GDR folk dance festivals were transformed into amateur dance group competitions.

*Keywords:*

competition, festival, folk dance, GDR, amateur stage dance, propaganda, socialism (socialist ideology)

When the Berlin Wall fell, I was only seven years old. I did not understand what was happening that night in November 1989, or why Berliners were shown crying live on television. Living in West Germany, the "other Germany" in the East was a foreign country to me that I did not discover until I became a PhD student in 2006. My thesis would focus on the political instrumentalisation of folk dance in the German dictatorships, i.e. the National Socialist regime (*Deutsches Reich*, 1933–1945) and the Socialist regime (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, 1949–1990). One of the first insights was that during these two historical periods, "folk" and "social" dance were notionally (almost) the same. This chapter traces the ways in which folk dance and its use in national festivals became social(istic) and, consequently, a political instrument of the GDR regime, evaluating contemporary print resources from the *Tanzarchiv Leipzig*.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter draws mainly on my PhD dissertation, published as *Bewegte Propaganda: Politische Instrumentalisierung von Volkstanz in den deutschen Diktaturen* [Walsdorf 2010], as well as on two articles that I have written on related topics: "Volk tanzt Folk," published 2012, and "Fluch der Akribik," submitted 2014, awaiting publication. These are referenced when referred to.

## Institutions, interests, ideologies

Using Soviet policy as a guide, the political and ideological regulation of “cultural mass work” and “demotic cultural work” had already begun on the eve of the formation of the German Democratic Republic in 1949. In the early days of the East German state, the *Free German Trade Union Federation* (German: *Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*/FDGB) set down the ground rules for the nationwide surveillance of any lay culture – and its slogans were to spread rapidly. In 1951 the Dramaturgical Department of the City Theatre of Chemnitz made the following appeal to the citizenry:

[...] We want to fight on together for the evolution of German folk dance. We want to approach this task with diligence, to preserve our national heritage, to maintain that which makes our dance unique, and to enrich it with new dances and cultures. The lay dance groups are to bring our labourers joy. Here joie de vivre, which is further enhanced by the colour and form of dance, must find expression. The joy of dance must be real, and, because we love the truth, we must use all means at our disposal to combat those corrosive elements that are the enemy of the people.

What is at stake is our culture, and the preservation of our nation. Folk dance serves to express a portion of our cultural life – no matter whether it is a children’s dance, handworker’s dance, a May Day dance or a wedding dance. Each of these speaks a living language, each reflects everyday life and special occasions. And even if, just months ago, many of our groups still offered unauthentic portrayals, with girls dancing in pants to take the place of boys, while others denied our German folk dance and sought to imitate Russian folk dances, today we can say that all of these groups have since learned and now do their best to authentically portray old folk dances, and even to develop new ones. They use their machines to depict our times, where man is no longer a slave to the machine, but is at the centre of everything, and sings his song as he works, to the rhythm of the machine. Our role model, the great Soviet Union, has shown us new avenues with its dance and song ensembles. It is now up to us to rediscover our culture, to lift it up from the ashes, and to prepare for the peaceful competition that will take place at the Olympic games of the lay groups in Leipzig in 1952. We already have large choirs, and large orchestras in the collectives – but when it comes to dance groups, there is still a major gap [Dramaturgische Abteilung der Städtischen Theater Chemnitz 1951:2–3].

From that time on, “Olympics” and festivals were to take place on a regular basis, the goal being to foster the rediscovery and advancement of German folk dance. In 1952, the *Zentralhaus für Laienkunst* – later *Zentralhaus für Volkskunst*, finally *Zentralhaus für Kulturarbeit* – was founded, a centralist authority that presided over an extensive subsidiary structure nationwide. Its purpose was to control and to coordinate lay culture activities. From the early 1950s, GDR politicians, commentators and even scholars took up the cause of laymen’s “artistic work” in order to move the socialist society concept forward. Being socialist was equated with being “democratic,” and this, in turn, was connected to any social activity – such as folk (or social) dance.

## Definitional problems

According to the definitions prevalent at the time, the boundaries between social dance and folk dance were already blurred when officials began to organize the cultural life of the young GDR. In March 1951, the SED central committee (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) discussed the “right” cultural heritage and how it should be adopted. The talks resulted in a decision that would affect dance practice for decades: Modern dance was declared to be inapprehensible, mystical, and therefore ‘formalistic’ (just what ‘formalism’ meant, however, was never clearly defined). The resultant development was fateful, as, on 23 and 24 March 1953, the State Commission for Artistic Affairs’ ‘Theoretical Conference on Dancing’ in Berlin explored in depth the question of how cultural-political necessities could be fulfilled in dance. As such, it focused on the technical, aesthetic and ideological significance of folk dance and classical ballet in comparison to *Ausdruckstanz*, as well as the question of “how the lack of realistic libretti could be remedied” [Krause 1996:1-3]. Accordingly, one of the conference’s seventeen theses, formulated in advance, was that “dance in the German Democratic Republic [...] lagged far behind the artistic aspirations of the people,” and that this was due to the “not yet overcome dominance of formalism in dance.” Further, it was argued that “classical ballet and German folk dance” had to form the “fundamentals of degree programmes” in artistic dance, and that “academic research into the progressive periods of classical German dance and of German folk dance alike” represented “a pressing necessity” [Staatliche Kommission für Kunstangelegenheiten, Hauptabteilung künstlerischer Nachwuchs und Lehranstalten 1953:75].

The Theoretical Conference on Dancing ultimately decided that modern dance (or free dance) should be banned and that classical dance (ballet), national dance and folk dance should be the only accredited genres. The difference between na-

tional dance and folk dance remained unclear, but this was not the only problem. As Ralf Stabel has shown, the SED drew on a Soviet guideline in which “modern dance” referred to American ballroom (or jazz) dances. But the GDR official who translated the Russian text read the term as signifying “Ausdruckstanz” – and thus, caused by a simple translation error, the German tradition of Ausdruckstanz was suppressed in and banned from the GDR.<sup>2</sup> As the “decree of the Theoretical Conference on Dancing,” [Ibid.:77–78] the following was recorded:

The participants of the first conference on artistic dance in the German Democratic Republic welcome the State Commission for Artistic Affairs’ initiative, and will work tirelessly with the government, state institutions, and folk dance groups to improve their performance for the benefit of our people, and to forward the artistic-realistic principles laid out by socialism [Ibid.:78].

Just what these lofty goals meant in real-world practice was the subject of lively debates in the years that followed. Did they mean that German folk dance was to be revived and practiced in its traditional form, which would also mean that no changes to the repertoire were allowed? Or wouldn’t it be wiser to tout it as “the fierce content of folk culture labours”<sup>3</sup> and, as such, to open the door for change? As Igor Moiseyev informed those involved in the creation of dance at the National Folk Arts Ensemble of the GDR (German: *Staatliches Volkstanzensemble der DDR*) in a 1954 statement ‘On German folk dance and its artistic evolution’: “I’m not in favour of saying that certain folk dances can no longer be changed. After all, it [...] is the calling of choreographers to develop all of the motifs supplied us by the people in such manner that new, corresponding forms arise.” This evolution would constantly oscillate – with alternating proportions – between loyalty to the party line and appreciation for folk traditions.

Further, the call for an academic analysis and critical assimilation of the folk dance heritage, expressed at the Theoretical Conference in 1953, was soon translated into concrete measures: The available “cultural heritage” was painstakingly researched, dissected, recorded in the form of individual steps and elements of motion and, in keeping with the cultural-political practices of the day, subjected to a systematic reorientation.

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2 See [Stabel 2008:36–37]. Before, during or after World War II, most representatives of German Ausdruckstanz moved to West Germany or other Western countries. Gret Palucca (1902–1993), a student of Mary Wigman, would not let go of Ausdruckstanz and taught it, relabelled as “Neuer Künstlerischer Tanz” (NKT), at her dance school in Dresden.

3 Cf. “‘Es gilt, die guten Erfahrungen in allen Gruppen anzuwenden!’ Für eine sozialistische Programmgestaltung (I).” [*der tanz* 1 (1958):1–2].

The promotion of folk art, folk music and folk dance by means of the state-run institutions was aimed at bringing about a sense of social(ist) identity. Based on the principle of ‘socialist realism’ and on an affirmed social cohesion, the GDR folk/social dance policy was based on the pattern of Soviet conduct. “Proximity to life” and socialist issues were to lend distinction to the lay groups’ dances and choreographies, be it in a convivial context, for the stage, or in preserving the traditional folk dance repertoire. Dance researchers gave special attention to the ‘folkloristic heritage’ and foraged for ‘national characteristics’ in history and lore, so as to provide for the systematic advancement of folk/social dance as ‘dance of the working class.’ (Corresponding task schedules were consistently rephrased and revised until the end of the GDR in 1989/90.)

In 1957, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany held a Cultural Conference on the Progress of Socialist Culture (German: *Kulturkonferenz der SED zur Entwicklung der sozialistischen Kultur*) to define what should constitute “socialist programming.” As a result, two directives were issued:

1. Reflection of the heroic, sacrificial struggle of the working class and of their allies in past and present times” as well as “social liberation for the cause of the people, reflecting our new socialist life in all its forms and variety
2. A fierce party statement for the victory of the working class in the socialist formation of the German Democratic Republic” as well as the “resolution of those matters vital to the German people.”<sup>4</sup>

From 1957 onwards, the Central Working Group Dance (German: *Zentrale Arbeitsgemeinschaft Tanz*) supported the interests of lay dancers within the proclaimed “demotic cultural work,” and national ensembles were brought into being in order to function as role models for lay dance groups: their choreographies tended to actuate Marxist-Leninist ideologems and socialist issues (c.f. “Bitterfelder Weg” 1959–1965). Yet semantic absurdities within the respective discourses, e.g. “progressive revolutionary tradition,” were soon to reveal the inherent problems of this undertaking. What started as a revivalist cultivation of German folk dance quickly turned into an ideologically loaded festival culture when folk dance became “lay stage dance” with “socialist” subject matters. Lay dance groups had to model themselves on the professional state ensembles; and

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4 See [*der tanz* 1 (1958):1–2]. See also Methodischer Instruktionsbrief der Abteilung Tanz des Zentralhauses für Volkskunst, No. 11: Sozialistische Thematik im Tanz. Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Leipzig, Akte Bezirkshaus für Volkskunst Leipzig, No. 32; cited in Klotzsche/Römer: *Tanz in Sachsen*:79–80.

by doing so, the GDR folk dance festivals were transformed into amateur dance group competitions.

## Folk dance festivals and competitions

In an effort to promote lay dance, it was decided that, from then on, the dance groups should contend against one another in the form of competitions and public performances. But they needed suitable platforms for this purpose, and in 1952, through a collaboration with the unions and the FDJ, the first German Festivals of Folk Art were organized. In 1953 they were followed by a Festival of Song and Dance, in the course of which a ‘republic-wide referendum’ was used to select the best lay groups and soloists, who would represent the GDR at the 4th World Festival of Youth and Students in Bucharest. Apparently the SED functionaries were so taken with the idea of a competition that regional and republic-wide referenda soon became commonplace for the lay dance groups. After all, the groups were tasked with “enriching the lives of our labourers” and



Figure 1

*Club house “Völkerfreundschaft” (“Friendship among the peoples”) of the coal mine in Profen, Saxony-Anhalt: The dance group of the culture group in rehearsal, 8 June 1959.*

*BArch, Image 183-64831-0004 / Schmidt.*

turning lay dance “into an effective weapon in our patriotic struggle,” as Erich Janietz declared in 1954 [Janietz 1954:6–7].

In June 1955, the first Festival of German Folk Dance took place in the small Thuringian town of Rudolstadt. Until the Wall came down in November 1989, there would be a further 23 installments – with frequent name changes, and a corresponding resetting of the festival number. The first festival in Rudolstadt alone attracted 3,000 active folk dancers, who gathered for collective dances and thematic discussions. At the sports stadium, nearly 1,200 folk dancers from all regions of Germany performed “in unison, and with no advance preparation” a collection of old German folk dances, which was celebrated as the “pan-German pinnacle” [Hartung 1955:4]. At the Heidecksburg, as part of a festival event – and allegedly before 20,000 spectators – the National Folk Arts Ensemble of the GDR and the Song and Dance Ensemble of the Free German Trade Union Federation (FDGB) took the stage: professional, state-run ensembles, which were meant to serve as role models and benchmarks for the lay groups.



*Figure 2*

*Dance group of the village kindergarten Mestlin, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 27 June 1954.  
BArch, image 183-26594-0009 / Weiss.*

So as to avoid the stage programme becoming overly dominant, it was decided to create street dances and mass dances, which were open for everyone, for future festivals. Merely reviving old German folk dances and dancing the dream of a reunified Germany was no longer enough. By 1957 at the latest, demands for treating socialist themes in dance also reached the lay dance festivals. In a programmatic statement, the Central Working Group for Folk and Lay Dance, formed for precisely this purpose, defined which aspects all those involved in dance in the GDR were to observe. There was talk of “true democratic and revolutionary traditions in the folk dance heritage,” and of “consistently implementing the principle of working groups” [Cf. Fritsch and Janietz 1958].<sup>5</sup>

### Claiming authenticity: Socialistic realism in dance

Traditional (folk) dances had already disappeared from everyday life by the end of the nineteenth century, and so the song and dance collections of twentieth-century researchers were often the only source for reconstruction. In a century of competing political ideologies, the notated German folk dances were instrumentalized by Nazis and Socialists alike. To the Nazis, an ‘authentic’ dance was an ‘originally German’ dance without any (or little) foreign influences. For the GDR socialists, ‘authentic’ dance meant literally ‘social’ dance. In the socialist workers’ and peasants’ state, the use of traditional peasant and craftsmen’s dances was self-evident. A dancing people was the ideal of all dance work in the GDR – to the detriment of the popular (American) couples’ dances, which were often denounced as ‘unsocial’ or even forbidden because of their ‘capitalist’ provenience. Therefore, reconstructions of German folk dances were combined with imported dances of the so-called socialist brother states. Dance ensembles from these countries were often invited to East Germany and were praised as role models.

Right from the start, dance group leaders were advised to include the principles of Marxist-Leninist thinking in their training of ‘working laymen’ (and laywomen), children and adolescents. Therefore, the application of socialist issues to dance was the group leaders’ responsibility. Folk/social dance training started in kindergarten, while schoolchildren’s and youth dance groups were mostly part of the GDR mass organizations – like the Ernst Thälmann Pioneer Organization for children aged 6 to 14 – and thus even recreational dancing was permeated by propaganda. Members of the adult working class were to implement the ideological agenda in the form of state-mandated lay stage dance. Most of

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<sup>5</sup> See also [Entwurf zum Arbeitsprogramm der Zentralen Arbeitsgemeinschaft Tanz].

the nationally owned enterprises of the GDR had their own ‘voluntary’ dance groups.

Given the fact that tradition, as mentioned above, was now meant to be ‘progressive’ and ‘revolutionary,’ the mere reconstruction or restaging of German folk/social dances did not satisfy the cultural functionaries. Instead, they pushed for the use of traditional dances in dance plays with socialist subject matter and assessed the resulting performances “more for the author’s devotion to the political doctrine than the aesthetic quality of the work” [Stamp Miller 2004] – as the following two examples serve to illustrate.

## Examples

### *The Single Cow (Die Einzelkuh, 1958)*

In 1958, the National Village Ensemble of the GDR (German: *Staatliches Dorfensemble der DDR*) created a dance play entitled *The Single Cow*, which was meant to be performed at peasant events to promote the build-up of socialism in the country [F.R. 1958]:

Members of an Agricultural Production Community [German: *Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft/LPG*] meet with their brigadier to allocate their work units. Happy about the profits of their shared labour, they start to dance with joy. Against this life-affirming, colorful background, a peasant couple is struggling with their ‘single cow’ from sunrise until sunset through the grey daily routine. / The ‘single cow’ gets more and more stubborn towards its masters (the peasant couple) from day to day. Why? It has realized the need and the advantages of collective work in the country, [as is depicted by its] standing with two feet in the LPG. When the cow finally jumps over [the fence], the peasant couple can no longer resist and follow the cow, to be warmly welcomed by the members of the community [Ibid.].

Designed as a didactic play for the peasant population, *The Single Cow* was widely performed and critically acclaimed as a “convincing manifestation of a party socialist lay dance work.” According to the newspaper *Spandauer Volksblatt*, the piece propagated “the corporate federation of the peasants.”<sup>6</sup> Another newspaper article praised the ensemble for their efforts to “increase and strengthen socialist awareness in our villages with their art.” The dance produc-

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6 See [Der parteiliche Laintanz. ‘Die Einzelkuh’ und ‘Arbeitsbummelanten].

tions would show “the experiences of the working people in the country ‘then and now,’ expressed as a dance” – the *Single Cow* was highlighted as a “satirical piece.”<sup>7</sup>

The “humoristic scene of the single peasant’s cow” was soon to lose its topicality: In 1960, *The Single Cow* was considered to have been “overtaken by reality,” even though the piece was still appreciated for its drollness [Merz 1960]. The aforesaid reality was the Forced Collective Farming that the so-called ‘Socialist Spring’ of 1960 had brought with it – five years earlier than originally planned [Gruhle 2001:4].

### ***Brigitte und das Schweineglück (Bridget and the Pig Luck, 1961)***

In 1961, Rosemarie Ehm-Schulz choreographed *Bridget and the Pig Luck* (libretto: Elisabeth Elten, music: Eberhardt Schmidt), a piece that was classified as one of the “most important dance creations that have been developed in preparation for the fifteenth anniversary of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany.” The “cheerful ensemble play” consisted of songs, dances and choir pieces that were intended to convey “a joyous, optimistic image of the new socialist life in the country.” The main character was a young girl named Bridget who had studied Agriculture with a focus on pig breeding, as the scenario tells us. She knows and masters many things, but her unconventional application of knowledge tends to cause conflicts. Resolving these means personal growth for everyone involved [H.T. 1961:9].

The choreographic implementation of the storyline contained “a number of new joyous dances,” e.g. the “dance of the milkers and tractor drivers” [H.T. 1961:9]. By this means, the ‘voluntary’ collectivisation of the peasants in Agricultural Production Communities was accentuated anew [Heising, Römer and Klotzschke 1994]. In fact, real members and leaders of an LPG in Western Pomerania had helped to shape the ensemble play. Even the “mayoress of Neuen-dorf A, the old teacher of Neetzow, and the cattle breeder Dmilov” had advised the dance ensemble on the right movements and stage props for the milkers [H.T. 1961:9]. At the 3. *Arbeiterfestspiele* in Magdeburg (10–18 June 1961), *Bridget and the Pig Luck* even won the Fritz Reuter Award, i.e. an award for literature (!) named in honour of the novelist Fritz Reuter (1810–1874).

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7 Cf. [Sie brachten uns viel Freude.’ Fünf Jahre Staatliches Dorfensemble].



Figure 4

Magdeburg, 3. Arbeiterfestspiele, Staatliches Dorfensemble der DDR: "Brigitte und das Schweineglück," here: "Dream of the 'Schweine-Otto,'" performance on 13 June 1961. BArch, image 183-83789-0044 / Irene Eckleben.

## Further developments in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s

Those elements most essential to folk dance, namely sociability and a love of home, were increasingly lost in the new, ideologically motivated performances, for which folk dance was nothing more than a nominal point of departure. The promise of freedom inherent to folk dances passed down from generation to generation was broken, at the latest when their movements were transformed into a specially designed training programme: the Folk Dance Exercise (*Volkstanzexercise*), first published by Rosemarie Ehm-Schulz in 1960 [Walsdorf 2019].

With the aid of her exercises, Ehm-Schulz, who led the National Village Ensemble of the GDR, sought to teach "difficult movements" – those used by professional and lay dancers alike. The goal was for "all movements and positions" in the exercises to be "easy for a normal, healthy body," so that "becoming acquainted with the material would not be hard" for virtually anyone [Ehm-Schulz

1960:17–19]. The need for a new training programme had by then become painfully apparent, as those involved in creating dance increasingly had to admit that, in many regards, the implementation of the maxims proclaimed in the early 1950s was not proceeding as planned. The cultural-political authorities were not remotely satisfied with the performance of the dance group leaders – which initially resulted in the introduction of a “management development plan” [Janietz 1960:9–16] to “improve the quality of dance creation” [Thomas 1960:9]. According to the plan, those involved in creating dance were now to be carefully selected and trained at schools for the folk arts. This included “physical and movement training,” “folk dance exercises and folk dance steps,” rhythm lessons, “large group etudes” and, last but not least, studying and perfecting the folk dances themselves [Küster 1960:18–19].

Though a first response upon hearing the phrase “folk dance exercises” might be to consider it a contradiction in terms, or to view it as an utter failure to grasp the nature of folk dance and how it is learned, at the same time it raises a number of multilayered questions: How were the folk dance exercises – compared to, say, ballet exercises – conceived, what were the underlying choreographic and political motives, what did those in power hope to achieve by introducing these exercises – and did those hopes come to fruition, especially with regard to lay dance practice? Another aspect that remains unclear is whether Ehm-Schulz was familiar with essential Soviet training programmes like *The Work of the Lay Dance Collective* (*Rabota tanceval'nogo kollektiva chudožestvennoj samodejatel'nosti*, Moscow 1956) by M.D. Janickaja and A.A. Žukov [1956] and used it as a template for her own work; in any case she would have had access to it, as there was a copy at the Dance Archive of the GDR at the time. The brief guide (in German and glued into the first pages of the book) to the 84-page booklet, which unfortunately contains no illustrations, cites content including a “List of exercises for the non-professional leader to use with the members of the group – [...] exercises with physical supports (distribution of the movements) – and the same exercises, but in the middle of the hall” [Ibid.].

The release of the folk dance exercises could not have come at a better time. With the building of the Wall in August 1961, the conditions for dance festivals in the GDR were fundamentally changed. Pan-Germanic folk dance events like the one in Rudolstadt were no longer possible. And from then on, the GDR lay dance groups’ “friendship meets” no longer involved West German groups, but groups from ‘fellow socialist countries.’ As a result, the Festival of German Folk Dance in Rudolstadt (not to mention countless other events) increasingly became a competitive exhibition. Mass dances, allegedly intended to promote a sense of community, were in fact nothing more than choreographed propaganda, and had precious little to do with preserving cultural heritage. The focus was on ‘forming



Figure 4  
 Illustrations from the *Volkstanzexercice* by Rosemarie Ehm-Schulz (1960).

the socialist view of human nature’ and on the ‘struggle against the imperialist war,’ on demonstrative gestures of solidarity with the Soviet Union. Yet, as Jürgen Morgenstern claimed in 1970, merely preserving the traditional folk culture could no longer be considered suitable for the 1970s: “With regard to our stance on cultural heritage, our socialist-humanist alternative serves as a counterweight to the cultural destruction of West German Imperialism.”<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly, starting in 1974 “central performance comparisons” were posted for the Festivals of German Folk Dance in Rudolstadt, shifting their focus once and for all from celebration to competition [Lotz 1974:4–5], even if the press coverage of festivals throughout the 1970s consistently underscored the congenial nature of the meets with ensembles from fellow socialist countries.<sup>9</sup> Well into the 1980s, participants could win diplomas for the new, ideologically compliant dance creations performed at these events. Nonetheless, the organizers and professional socialists were never completely satisfied with what they saw on stage. To top it all, by introducing an “avenue of guilds” and a “marketplace for dance, music and song,” the event in Rudolstadt would regain its folk festival character in the mid-1980s.

## Conclusion

With the aid of intensive research, the GDR initially sought to comprehensively document its ‘folkloristic heritage,’ with two goals in mind: on the one hand,

8 See [Die weitere Entwicklung des Laienbühnentanzes in der DDR und seine Hauptaufgabe – die Gestaltung des sozialistischen Menschenbildes 1970:3–8].

9 Cf. [10. Tanzfest der DDR 1975 in Rudolstadt – Stätte der Begegnung von Freunden. 1975:15–17], [Konegen 1975:6–8; Guth 1977, 1977a and Gommlich 1977:7–9].



Figure 5

*Berliners dance on top of the Berlin Wall, November 10, 1989.*

Source: <http://www.dw.com/de/der-fall-der-berliner-mauer-9-november-1989/a-3990679>.

to preserve it; and on the other, to adapt it to reflect the realities of the ‘new era.’ New dance creations were expected to convey socialist content, and to employ traditional movements and forms so as to hold a broad appeal for lay dancers. Yet it is hard to imagine that dance plays presented at competitions and festivals (such as *Die Einzelkuh* or *Brigitte und das Schweineglück*) were taken seriously. Lay dance in the GDR, whether performed on stage or in more sociable contexts, was ultimately trapped in a restrictive corset of ideologically dictated aesthetics, and the ‘lay dancers’ received highly specific physical training in the form of programmes like the ‘folk dance exercises.’ In the long term, ‘socialist’ stage dance was not successful – neither the performances of the state ensembles nor the lay dance productions. The obstinacy of the people was the main stumbling block to all politically regulated ‘social’ culture. From the late 1970s on, they preferred to participate in free folk/social dance events that the government had to tolerate for better or worse. When the Berlin Wall fell, Berliners held hands and danced right on top of it.

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# The Estonian Folklore Revival Movement and its Politically Correct Format in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century

*Iivi Zájedová*

## *Abstract:*

The customary cultural festivals of the Estonian people constitute a unique way of maintaining and advancing traditions of national heritage through a variety of activities. They offer a profoundly distinctive and rich topic for analysis. Estonian national folk songs, folkdance, and festivals, together with growing appreciation and revival of handcrafted folk costumes, grew in significance and political importance during the national awakening movement (1850-1918). Throughout Soviet occupation of the homeland (1945-1991), Estonian festivals not only kept alive the traditions, but were also used effectively as a political weapon. During the same time period, Estonian compatriots abroad also maintained their traditions, often using them for identity building, and as informative gatherings for the younger generation, as well as introducing Estonia to local people.

After World War Two, a forced separation took place in Estonian national culture and hundreds of thousands of citizens from the Republic of Estonia escaped from Soviet occupation to the Free World. This split the Estonian people geographically into two groups: homeland Estonians and Estonians abroad. At the end of the 1940s, viable Estonian exile communities consisting of World War Two refugees were formed in Sweden, the USA, Canada, Germany, Great Britain and Australia. And so, the traditions of cultural festivals continued on both sides of the Iron Curtain in an effort to maintain traditions under different circumstances.

## *Keywords:*

Estonian national culture, folklore, revival, identity, festivals.

## Sources of data and research object

This article introduces various periods, situations and political pressures through which, during the second half of the twentieth century, the Estonian people sought to preserve and revive their national folk culture. Special attention is paid here to folk dance (traditional folk dance) in Estonia and abroad in Estonian communities. Relevant data was derived mainly from archive materials, literature, interviews and personal experiences. Between 2008 and 2015, additional data was collected during fieldwork among different folk dance groups and events in Estonia and in Estonian communities abroad.

To follow the development and revival of Estonian folk dance traditions, I have divided the development of folk dance into several periods: beginnings (the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries); folk dance in the period of Independence (1918-1940), folk dance during the occupation of the Soviet Union (1944-1991), the period of the Song Revolution (1987-1991) and Re-independence (20 August 1991).

In order to understand the movement of Estonian folklore and folk dance, a brief introduction to the literature on Estonian folklore follows.

## The beginnings

Over the centuries, Estonia has been a region of different foreign nations. Estonian peasants were regarded and maintained as a lower rank in the population, and thus for a long time they utilized their own deep-rooted forms and manners of cultural traditions as means of socialization.<sup>1</sup>

These were not, however, unaffected by modern cultural phenomena. Already in the eighteenth century, the Herrnhut model awakening movement (a Moravian religious movement) had disseminated orchestral music and communal singing, which deepened feelings of communion and exposed European musical traditions to Estonians. During the first part of the nineteenth century, the network of peasant schools increased, together with organized social life using school property for gatherings, which resulted in the establishment of choirs.<sup>2</sup> Choral singing was an important factor in uniting Estonians. The first National Song Festival of 1869, held in Tartu, was also the first manifestation of the choral tradition.<sup>3</sup> The first descriptions of folk dance date back to the end of the nineteenth century. Interest in the collection of folk dances and performing them on stage started around the second decade of the twentieth century. At that time, interest in dance traditions took hold among Estonians. Anna Raudkats, who was the first to receive training in folk dance traditions while studying at the University of Helsinki, made her first field visit to collect folk dances in 1913 together with other students such as Armas Otto Väisänen, who later became a folklorist and music researcher.<sup>4</sup>

After graduation in 1915, Anna Raudkats began to spread folk dancing through gymnastic classes in schools, sports and women's societies. Under her direction, folk dances were performed at the Vanemuine Theatre in Tartu, an event now regarded as the very first stage performance of folk dance.

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1 Historical data are found, for example, in chronicles and travel documents of the twelfth-seventeenth centuries: Saxo Grammaticus „*Gesta Danorum*“ (1170); Balthasar Russow „*The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*“ (1578) where he describes the folk festival at the Brigitta Convent; Dionysius Fabricius „*Liivimaa asukate tavad, usund ja eluviis*“ [The inhabitants of Livonia, religion and way of life] (1610) *pulmaliste ringmängudest ja tantsudest* [*Eesti entsüklopeedia* 2002:414, 766]. See also [Zajedová 2017].

2 <<http://www.kirjandusarhiiv.net/?p=347>> (2017 December 28)

3 The tradition of song festivals has lasted from 1869 to the present day and has been included in 2003 the World Heritage List.

4 For instance: 15 dances from Kolga beach, 11 dances from Setomaa, some of which appeared in printed form jointly with Raudkats's own creations [Raudkats 1926].

On the other hand, Estonian folk dances such as Tuljak, Kaerajaan and Labajalg had already been performed at the “Estonia” society concert in 1904 to collect funds for the construction of the theatre. Under the direction of Raudkats, folk dances were performed as evenings of dance at different seminars of gymnastic teachers and the like. Through her activities, the folk dances collected and documented in 1913 found their way back to the people.

From then on, we can speak of Estonian folkloric dancing being learned on a new level, from educators and leaders of folk dance groups whose knowledge came from seminars, gymnastic classes in schools, printed materials, and also, occasionally from actual traditional dance. The traditional ongoing dissemination of folk dance through local folk dance customs is no longer the principal mechanism and context. Now it is a cultural endeavour to transmit the inheritance from the past mostly through events where the element of entertainment is key.

## Folk dance during the first independence period

The founding of the Republic of Estonia in 1918 introduced a time of new opportunities for Estonians. It was the period when, finally, land reforms freed peasants to buy and own land. Estonia, as had happened elsewhere in Europe, became a nationalistic country. Since the concept of Estonian nationalism was conservative and retrospective, nationalistic cultural activities met with a great response. Activities focused on ethnic culture in villages and cultural programmes of social clubs were understood as work for the betterment of nationhood. Folklore was interpreted as a recollection of ancient idyllic memory that bound the whole population into an entirety. Active dissemination of folklore and folk dance took place everywhere. At the same time, a foundation of interest in authentic folk dances, and inventiveness of new movements and originality within the genre were established. The popularity of folk dance and folk costumes became a central theme among the younger generation in the middle of the nineteenth century, when the International Estonian Youth Community (ÜENÜ) was established and where gymnastic teachers in schools and folk dance leaders Ullo Toomi and Ernst Idla were active. Due to enthusiasm for folk culture in Europe, it was decided to establish a folk dance and folk customs subdivision at the International Estonian Youth Community organization (ÜENÜ). Significant momentum also came from the enthusiasm of gymnastic endeavours under the instruction of Ernst Idla, who had received his education in the University of Berlin [*Eesti entsüklopeedia* 2002:414].

Another field collection of original folk dances started in the 1930s, led by the Estonian folklorists H. Tampere, R. Põldmäe, U. Toomi, R. Viidalep and participating correspondents such as M. Mäesalu and T. Saar. Volumes of dance descriptions, methods and photographs rapidly increased and in 1938 a book was published providing a systemic introduction [Põldmäe and Tampere 1938]. The vision of the charismatic gym teacher Ernst Idla, - i.e. to continue presenting folk dance in its original format - was embraced whole-heartedly. As a consequence, processed and composed folk dances fell out of favour during the 1930s.

A great impetus for the folk dance movement came in the summer of 1934 when during the First Estonian Games, a huge gymnastic and sports festival in Tallinn, 250 pairs of folk dancers performed under the leadership of Üllo Toomi (called the father of Estonian folk dance). Nowadays, folk dance performances go hand-in-hand with the Song Festivals. It can be said that before the Second World War, as folk dance performances moved towards a format nearer to that in which they were originally collected, the compositionally rearranged presentation style of Anna Raudkats, who had directed the development of folk dance in the beginning of the twentieth century, declined.

## The USSR occupation period in Estonia 1944-1991

The occupation of the Soviet Union in 1944 destroyed the world as known up until then in Estonia and for Estonians. During the war and the years afterwards, Estonia lost almost one fifth of its population.<sup>5</sup> The mass flight to the West during the Second World War and just before and after the end of the War, together with the repression and formation of the new Soviet power structures, caused great and sudden changes in social community and national structures. Likewise, traditional national culture fell under Soviet oppression.

The Soviet concept of culture only partly cared about old traditions. New Soviet culture was formed on the basis of the old but too much adhesion to old ways was condemned. Soviet culture had to be “socialist in content and national in form” [Zajedova 2017].

The new regime actually advocated and imposed pro-Soviet Slavonic culture, but also gave the union republics that had been forcibly joined with the Soviet Union a possibility to develop local ethnic culture within certain limits. Only

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5 The number of Estonians has fallen (for example in the year 1934 were 88,1 % and in 1989 only 61,5% Estonians) and as the Latvian nation has not reached today its original number. See also [Zajedova 2006].

two kinds of dance, for example, were approved and permitted, namely classical ballet and folk dance. Conditions for the latter were favorable. The state supported folklore activities financially, keeping the people involved but under control while guiding them ideologically. The USSR State Song and Dance Ensemble in Moscow (led by Igor Moiseyev), for example, which performed an artistic, acrobatic dance style that was far removed from that of ethnographic folk dance, was given as an example of the correct trend to be followed.

Initially, Moscow's repression of folkloric activities was not particularly identifiable, yet coercive directives to Sovietize were consistently demanded. People were able to return to folkloric innovations of the past during the first years of Soviet rule in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (ENSV). The XII Song Festival of 1947 was an attempt to leave the impression that it was a bigger and better display of Estonian culture blooming "under new germinal conditions of socialism". At the same time, a certain new emphasis was gradually and subtly extended. In 1950, the next changes to new choreographies in folk dance style took place. The Soviet power insisted that the newly created dances should be programmatic and focus on reflecting socialist labour activities (Kolkhoze dance ("Kolhoositants") or Foreman's polka ("Brigadiri polka")). It was accepted that folk dance in its original form had lost its purpose and as such would not suit the views and taste of contemporary people.

In this fresh political situation, folk dance presentations were assessed by new standards –i.e. a massive number of participants. Soon a new repressive directive demanded of the Estonian folk dance leaders that the Estonian folk dance evolution had to follow in the steps of the Soviet Union's prevalent teaching styles of Igor Moiseyev. Statewide song- and folk dance ensembles needed to diverge from ethnographic folk dance towards an artistic and acrobatic trajectory.

If, during the beginning years of occupation, Estonian folk dance standards had been deemed praiseworthy, then now Estonian folk dance was receiving criticism for its conservative attachment to ethnographic impressions. Ethnographic Estonian folk dance was forced to change into artistic and lively public dancing. The main focus shifted from traditional cultural aspects to modern interpretations of a dance. The dances changed into technically complicated compositions, affecting even the position of dancers' free hands; men had to place them on their hip and women to hold onto the skirt.<sup>6</sup> One part of the training changed to classical ballet, plus exercises for flexibility and the like. Only higher category dance groups could conceive of taking part in the dancing. Contemporary progress in presenting dancing arrangements was rapid and new basic steps were used which had not existed in the traditional folk dances.

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6 Estonian folk dancers a never put their hand on the skirt [Torop 1990].

Nor can one cannot overlook the mandatory friendship of nationalities (Soviet peoples' friendship) in the Soviet Union, i.e. enjoyment of cultural dances of other ethnic groups in the Soviet Union. It became mandatory to perform this repertoire during dance festivals. Estonian ensembles at the festivals mostly danced some Slavic dances of Russian, Ukraine or Byelorussian origins.

A shift also occurred in the folk costumes. When, during the Republic of Estonia the folk dance groups wore costumes of the county they came from, during the occupation it became habitual to choose unvaried costumes regardless of the dancers' original county. The Song Festival committee chose the folk costumes for a group as their uniform, relying more on the appeal of the costume than the group's original county. This brought on fashion trends. Between 1960 and 1980, for example, the pleated skirts of Mustjala, Muhu and Saaremaa were in vogue. The women's folk costumes also lost the distinction of status between maids and women. Even older women wore maiden flower crowns and the maidens donned the married woman's costumes. Changes also took place in the men's costumes. Instead of the traditional breeches, they now wore long pants, and a skullcap or beanie became part of every costume. Unification occurred in the dance presentations and also in the manufacture of the folk costume sets.

Beginning in 1975, the song and dance festivals took place in the capital as a united event. The national dance festival is a complete performance with a specific topic where thousands of dancers perform on the grass. The renaming of the I and II Estonian Games (in 1934 and 1939) during the pre-war Republic of Estonia was validated and concerns of folk art during the Soviet times were later re-named as Dance Festivals, although all followed and developed the principles started in 1934. Nevertheless, this period is characterized by a negative attitude towards authentic folk dance. In the 1960s, the folklore movement gradually started to develop an oppositional stance to that of the official trend.

The arrangements of folk dance performances at the time were viable and fruitful: new basic steps and patterns were created, and in a similar way the themes began to embrace more of a national style (not following that of Igor Moiseyev). Attention was paid by leaders of dance groups such as Ilma Adamson, Mait Agu, and Maie Orav, to poetic feelings of home and homeland and to the idea of the Estonian primeval spirit. The themes of home, for instance, were used: the sower, home district, three square tales, ox-dance.

In 1970 a new national consolidation took place in Estonia in reaction to the doctrine of the occupying authorities that sought to melt all people living in the USSR into one Russian speaking population. Now, Estonians immersed themselves, in particular, into their own history and traditional culture. This cultivation of traditional culture acquired a fresh social dimension. New folklore groups evolved and returned to archaic and genuine folk dance. Kristjan Torop's ensem-

ble, for example, “Leigarid” took up this trend. An ethnographic emphasis also began to emerge in performance arrangements. In summary, it can be said that the Estonians used the façade of communistic ideology regarding the free evolution of all ethnic people in the Soviet Union to assure survival and the future progress of its own ethnic culture.

The popular movement during 1987–1991 was a prologue to Estonia regaining its independence. This process is known as “the Singing Revolution”. In this period, folklore and especially the song festivals movement became an important complement to the cultural leisure activities of Estonians. This could have been an expression of Estonians aspiring to go “back- to - the - roots”. The singing revolution is unique in its nonviolent action: a tradition of national festivals developed during the nineteenth century and established powerful identities and traditions of political and cultural activism in Estonia that were nonviolent in their very foundations.

## The folklore movement in Estonian communities outside Estonia.

While the great political pressure from Moscow on the ESSR folkloric movement was intended to change everyone into a mass population of the Soviet Union, Estonian refugees in democratic states were able to continue freely with their folkloric traditions. Estonians, who had been able to escape from the Soviet regime, felt an obligation to keep their identity and folklore alive.<sup>7</sup> Expatriates knew that the Estonians under Soviet occupation could not maintain their traditional folklore. Therefore Estonian communities in exile established associations, schools and clubs, which have been continuously active from the initial years of their establishment to the present day. Several cultural events (e.g. West Coast Estonian Days since 1953, ESTO since 1972 and other cultural festivals, as well as annual scouts’ camps taking place in various parts of the world) provide evidence of active cooperation between the associations [Zajedova 2016]. This was undoubtedly related to a drive towards consolidation and expression of Estonian traditional culture and identity [Zajedova and Rüütel 2014:57–76].

Estonian communities around the world may differ greatly from each other. The common denominator, however, since the first days of the independent state (1918) has been active participation in social life, activities and hobbies. Parallels should be drawn with the time when the national state of Estonia was first established [Zajedova 2016a]. Estonian folk dance, as well as folk song, folk poetry, and national costume has always been a part of Estonian national folk cul-

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7 Estonia was occupied three times in 1940–1944.

ture, which has helped to maintain Estonian ethnicity and act as a basis for identity formation.

In much of the literature describing expatriate Estonians, folk dancing has been mentioned as one of the cultural activities in which people engaged besides their everyday obligations. Folk songs and dance had an important role in summer camps organized by Estonians in exile and later also at the Worldwide Estonian Days – ESTO's. Thus many publications that appeared abroad listed folk dance groups of Estonians in exile and their activities in different countries [MÖ- *Metsaülikool* 1967–82:214–218; Kangro 1976:171–179]. A well-known folk dance leader from Canada, Mr. Toomas Metsala stated in an international seminar at Tallinn University in 2008, that several folk dance groups were already active in German Displaced Persons' camps [Kool 1999].

## Period of regaining independence

After regaining independence on 20 August 1991, Estonians hurried to discover the world and were not always able to decide whether to act as global citizens or Estonians. The new circumstances seemed to change the activities of national folk culture. The fast integration of economic structures brought along poverty and insecurity of employment and social trends. The first governments did not understand that people were unable to finance their interests. Yet the Estonians' great need of cultural activities and participation in these activities remained high. During the first year of the re-established Republic of Estonia, folk culture remained unsupported. The State supported professional cultural activities but not folk traditions and the government did not foresee that regular citizens could not finance their free time activities on their own. At the same time, Estonians maintained their high dependence on culture and perceived need for participation in it. However, the Estonian National Culture Foundation, founded in 1991, and the Cultural Endowment of Estonia, which was restored in 1994, supported the leisure activities of Estonian citizens. As of 2005 the cultural quest seems to have been completed and the situation has stabilized. Both branches, professional and folk culture, have developed their own networks which provide activities and training for participants, also retaining a high level of artistry and enabling international socializing.

The authentic orientation of reconstruction is supported by CIOFF (International Council of Folk Festivals and Folk Arts) as the International Folklore Festival „Baltica“. The Viljandi heritage music trend based on the world music movement, the movements of dance clubs that value regional and local culture, and Folklore Song and Dance festivals continue to have a very important place

in society. Furthermore, today the organizers of the heritage of song and dance festivals are free to decide what to compose or what to choose from the basic national folklore.

## Conclusion

For many decades, the complex of folk costumes, folk songs, folk dances and festivals that evoke a nationally romantic spirit, originating from the period of awakening, has helped Estonians to maintain a sense of identity. The Estonian folklore revival movement construes the politically correct format in the second half of the twentieth century to be self-expression. This took over from the role of specific self-definition and self-empowerment during several politically critical periods.

Folklore could be observed in Estonia during the Soviet occupation (1944–1991) in the homeland and was used by compatriots abroad in association with identity building and as a phenomenal weapon: in addition, singing and also folk dance were used to introduce Estonia to local people.

The tradition of cultural festivals continued in Estonia and also outside of Estonia. My research results (2007–2014) show that cultural pursuits formed a positive link between the past and present, taking on a balancing role in the tragic understanding that seeking temporary asylum had become a constant state in exile; it helped to prevent people from being trapped in the disconsolate condition of a refugee. Folk festivals helped people to stick together in difficult times, to define themselves and to introduce Estonia in foreign countries by means of song, dance and folk costumes. Folklore was their weapon.

In conclusion, during all periods from 1918 to 1991, the folklore revival movement has been variable but nevertheless a strong force. The revival movement in Estonia and in Estonian communities abroad was particularly evident from the 1970s when Moscow increased pressure. In response, Estonians started to immerse themselves, in particular, in their own history and traditional culture, with the result that new folklore groups evolved, based on archaic and genuine folk dance.

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# The Norwegian Folk Dance Movement in Political Perspective<sup>1</sup>

*Egil Bakka*

*Abstract:*

The Norwegian folk dance revival can be seen as two continuous parallel threads that, without absolute breaks, began around 1900 and continue to the present day. Many discourses in the histories of various movements have argued the neutrality of folk dance. People of all political, religious and professional backgrounds were welcomed. Organisational practices, as the present author has experienced them from the last part of the twentieth century, also aspired to this ideal of neutrality and openness. Still, the overall impression is that at least one of the threads reveals clear stances on a number of political issues.

This chapter looks at how these movements and their leaders situated themselves both in terms of political adherence their relationship to central issues such as rural versus urban, religion and different shades of nationalism. I will focus on certain critical points in twentieth century Norwegian history, such as the growth of the Labour movement in the 1920s, World War Two and the struggle over membership of the European Union in the 1970s and 1990s.

*Keywords:*

folk dance, revival, cultural politics, nationalism, labour movement, European Union, World War Two, neo-nazism

The Norwegian folk dance revival can be seen as two continuous parallel threads with no absolute breaks, which began around 1900 and continue to the present day. Internal discourses from within the threads have argued for neutrality towards political parties, although revivalist members belonged to most of them [Ranheim 1998:127; Klippenberg 1995:65; Hodne 1995:126].<sup>2</sup> People of all political, religious and professional backgrounds were in principle welcomed. Organisational practices as the author has experienced them from the last part of the twentieth century also aimed fulfil this idea of neutrality and openness.

This chapter considers how these movements and their leaders situated themselves both in terms of political adherence and their relationship to central issues

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- 1 The author was an active member of Noregs Ungdomslag from 1958 and joined also Landslaget for Spelemenn somewhat later. He remained an active member in the organisations until the second decade of the twenty first century, so much of this article is based on personal experience. There is rich and high-quality material written for and by people internal to the organisations, so this is more of a summary. The article needs to be read with this in mind.
  - 2 In the period leading up to the independence in 1905, Noregs Ungdomslag had an agenda very close to that of the party Left, and most leading members probably belonged there (Grøvik 1970: 14). Ingar Ranheim mentions a similar situation for Landslaget for Spelemenn [Ranheim 1998: 127].

such as rural-urban, religion and the different shades of nationalism. I will focus on certain critical points in twentieth century Norwegian history such as the struggle for independence towards 1905, the growth of the Labour Movement in the 1920s, World War Two, the struggle over membership of the European Union in the 1970s and 1990s, the ministries' reports on cultural politics and professionalism from the 1960s and the polemics about refugees threatening Norwegian culture over the last few years.

The term "political" is broad and complex, and I will use an explanation by the political scientist Michael Curtis as a point of departure: "Politics is organised dispute about power and its use, involving choice among competing values, ideas, persons, interests and demands" [cited in Sharma and Sharma 2000:4].

As noted above, the term "political" will refer to central issues in the development and rule of Norway, where politicians promoted opinions and formulated aims, particularly through their parties. For the purpose of this article I restrict consideration to the national level. My question is therefore: how did the political climate influence the work with folk dance during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? Were the organisations and movement that promoted folk dance as part of their agenda attracted to specific groups that fought for political power on a general level, and did they express their adherence to and support for political groups openly? A parallel question is whether political groups included work for folk dance in their agendas.

## National romanticism

Folk culture was an inherent part of the national romanticism of the mid-nineteenth century. Herder's idea of shared culture as an ideal for nationhood was politically potent, and inspired the idea that small, culturally distinct "nations" should be independent. Norway was under the rule of Denmark between 1380-1814. Then, at the end of the Napoleonic wars, the idea of Norway as an independent nation arose, because Norway, as a region of Denmark, was to be given to Sweden as war compensation. Norwegians resisted this, and preparations were made to establish independence with a separate Norwegian constitution. This proposal for independence was not accepted by Sweden, but the idea had been established: Norway kept its Constitution and became a nation in union with Sweden. As a result, ideas about Norway as a nation had emerged that might harmonize with those of national romanticism, even if the political dimension was not dominant at that time.

Traditional dance, however, was focused in an unusual way in 1850, when the violinist Ole Bull, who had toured the world, set up a National Theatre in Ber-

gen. There he brought in young peasants<sup>3</sup> from the countryside around Bergen for a “peasant ballet”. Without any training, they were to dance their traditional dances in a play he staged at his new theatre. One of the actresses from the educated class of the city described the event in detail, showing that even members of the educated classes had some idea of the traditional dances. She described the event as more of a scandal than a success, since the rural youth did not know how to behave as expected on the stage. Still we can see that the actress showed an understanding and respect for the traditional dance, in accordance with the new attitudes brought about by national romanticism [Bull 1905]. The Norwegian art historian Magne Malmanger refers to these attitudes in an article about the painter Adolph Tidemand (1814-1876), a central exponent of the trend. Tidemand was retrospectively criticised for painting only “the peasants on Sunday”, that is idealised figures. Malmanger defends him, saying, “If one wished to put the idea to people that peasants were perhaps something more and different from working animals, then Sunday was no bad point of departure” [Malmanger 2003:17].

These are strategies that reoccurred in the attempts of the national romantics to demonstrate values present in the culture of peasants. By idealising some groups of the lower classes, they helped to reduce the divisions between classes and show peasants as human beings. It became an important stepping stone for the emancipation of rural culture that followed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. National romanticism belonged to the educated classes, which meant the bourgeoisie, since an aristocracy did not exist in Norway.

## The movement for Norwegianness

The emancipation that followed was to a large extent in the hands of the sons and daughters of peasants, many of whom managed to obtain an education and make careers and who used their positions to promote their rural culture as a basis for the new Norway [Bakka 2014:129–158]. Some peasants had already been part of the reunion that wrote the Constitution, and later formed a strong fraction in the Parliament. The last part of the nineteenth century saw a strong wave of enlightenment in the countryside that inspired political engagement in general.

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3 The Norwegian term used in this context is “bonde”, which was used to refer to a man who cultivated a moderate piece of land he owned or rented. There were also crofters (husmenn), who rented a house without enough land to live on but there were no serfs. Many crofters in the west and north lived from fishing or crafts, and peasants did not have very large farms, which made communities egalitarian, without strong class divisions. Crofters in the richest farmlands, particularly in eastern Norway, had work duty on the big farms, which could be small estates. Here there was a clear and often bitter class division.

The emancipation marked a strong point of departure in the work of a peasant's son, the linguist and author Ivar Aasen (1813-1896). He saw a need for an official written Norwegian language to replace Danish, emphasising that there were social as well as national reasons why an independent nation needed to have a written language based on the dialects spoken all over the country. As early as 1836, Aasen wrote: "It has always hurt me bitterly hearing the language of common people despised and laughed at, be it from dressed-up<sup>4</sup> ignorance or from an admittedly benevolent zeal for purification"<sup>5</sup> [Aasen 1909]. Aasen published the first results of his work in 1853, and after long processes the Norwegian Parliament recognised his "New Norwegian" as an official language, alongside the slightly modified Danish in 1885. This was core to the movement for Norwegianness<sup>6</sup> that gained more impetus and importance during the last decades of the century, reaching its peak when Norway gained independence in 1905. Young people of rural background started competing for influence in culture and politics with the youth from the relatively thin "educated circles" and the city population. The culture they wanted to build the new country upon was the Norwegian culture that had been maintained in the countryside in contrast to the imported Danish and European culture adopted by city people and educated circles. In the parts of the country with small estates and class divisions, the movement of Norwegianness appealed neither to the big farmers who subscribed to European culture nor to the crofters who associated themselves with the budding labour movement. Norwegianness had its strongest support in egalitarian communities.

## The folk dance and folk music movements – the two threads

There was not much focus on folk music or folk dance after the movement of national romanticism, which faded out within a few decades towards the turn of the new century. When focus returned, people from rural backgrounds had mostly taken over. They promoted it as their own culture, to be cultivated and continued, and the proponents were part of, or at least sympathised with, the movement for Norwegianness.

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4 Referring to the middle class wearing the fashion of the day, rather than traditional clothes of the lower classes.

5 Educated people correcting common people who speak their Norwegian dialect, to make them speak proper Danish.

6 The term *Norskdø* (Norwegianness) was used more than terms stemming from the word national; for instance, there is the expression *Norskdømsrørsle* (the movement for Norwegianness).

## The heirs

There were two points of departure that created two threads which ran through the twentieth century and still continue. The first one was started by and for the renowned fiddle players and their admirers, who were mostly found in egalitarian communities. I have characterised them as the heirs of the music and dance heritage:

People who assume the heir attitude are mainly those from societies where dance and costume have always had and still have a strong presence. [...] The heirs consider themselves as having inherited their dances [...] directly from their family and close neighbors. They will usually judge that there has not been any important break in continuity, despite the many changes in function, use and even form. They have a strongly emotional attitude to their inheritance and feel proud to be its heirs even if they do not use this term to describe it. They feel entitled to some sort of moral authority over tradition [Bakka 1994:117].

Competitions in folk music, mainly fiddle playing, marked the beginning of the heirs' thread, with the competitions also to some degree including the dances belonging to this musical heritage. The number of competitions as well as that of the competitors were modest during the first half of the twentieth century but grew significantly from the 1960s. At present there are some twenty competitions a year. The first competitions were held in the countryside and continued as individual events until 1923. Then, an organisation for folk musicians was founded, but did not grow strong and influential until after World War Two. The competitions and the heirs cultivated the best musicians and dancers, emphasising the continuity and faithfulness to the past, in addition to exhibiting attitudes of exclusiveness and individuality. The competitions were between solo musicians and between dance couples that performed one at a time.

## The users

The second thread in the revival had its point of departure in the liberal youth movement that was part of the movement for Norwegianness. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, young people in the countryside started clubs for enlightenment, discussions and cultural activities. In 1896, the representatives of such clubs met and founded the organisation Noregs Ungdomslag. The organisation grew rapidly, establishing some 950 clubs with some 50 thousand members and 330 clubs with their own community houses, and 200 more clubs

that had raised money for their establishment by 1920 [Moren and Os 1921:382–383]. Many parts of Norway had a relatively egalitarian population where talented young people started liberal youth clubs to work for popular enlightenment, to claim rights for rural culture and for the New Norwegian language. The ideals were equality, inclusiveness, enlightenment and personal growth. Folk music and folk dance were not a point of departure here; rather, they were seen only as one of several means to promote the cause of Norwegianness. This environment fostered what I have called the user attitude:

The users are people who feel that they are not in a position to consider themselves as heirs in any direct manner, and who are not so emotionally involved with traditions from their native community. They have been fascinated by folk dance or folk costume as general resources and are engaged in working for their revival. They will, however, usually define their work as being motivated by wider aims than merely the revival of dance or costume - pointing to specific external ends of many different kinds. They have a pragmatic, practical approach to the use of traditions and feel they should first and foremost be cultivated to serve wider, more important and general aims, like being symbols of local or national identity, methods for recruitment to popular enlightenment, temperance etc. [Bakka 1994:118].

Before 1902, the clubs of Noregs Ungdomslag used simple games and dances as entertainment after the more serious enlightening programme at their meetings, and they were not looked upon as a real part of the club's agenda. In 1902, the author Hulda Garborg had the idea to adapt the Faroes chain dance to Norwegian ballads. These ballads were considered a link between the Norse language and the dialects, and therefore constituted support for the New Norwegian language. They had literary qualities, and Hulda Garborg's innovation was eagerly embraced by the organization, as an ideal form of dancing for the movement of Norwegianness. Ever new ballads and songs were adapted for dance, and the song dance became a core of the folk dancing in Noregs Ungdomslag, supplemented with sequence and figure dances collected from the countryside. Klara Semb, the main force behind the work in Noregs Ungdomslag, established a national repertoire out of these dances and published a manual with descriptions for the folk dance instructors that the organization educated (Semb 1922). The older, more traditional and representative music and its dances, the regional couple dances, were valued, but were mostly out of reach for the young instructors, and too complex to be used in clubs whose members did not already know them. In this way, folk dancing was adapted to the practical work in the clubs and to the

political aims of Norwegianness where modernization and progress were leading aims. The most traditional music and dance heritage could not compete, remaining on the outskirts of the work in the second thread.

## The labour movement and a communist folk dance intermezzo

Starting in the early twentieth century, big building projects of roads, railways and factories created a working class that came to many places in egalitarian rural Norway and represented lifestyles and political views that collided with those of the local peasants. They built their own community houses, the People's houses (Folkets hus), of which there were some 500 at the peak towards the middle of the century and which were built in competition with the Youth houses (Ungdomshus) of Noregs Ungdomslag, of which there were already 330 by 1920 [Moren and Os 1921:382–383]. The People's houses, which were also central for dancing, did not use folk dance but the ordinary popular dance of the day [Bakka 1978:170].

At the time, when labourers built houses at construction sites throughout the country, an independent organization, “Den norske folkeviseringen” (The Norwegian ballad circle), dedicated solely to folk dance and folk music, was established in Oslo [Øygard and Austbø 1923]. It was founded by a person who was central to the activities of Noregs Ungdomslag and belonged to the communist movement. There seems to have been competition about whether folk dance should belong within the subgroups of Noregs Ungdomslag or become an independent organisation with looser ties to the Norwegianness movement, and particularly to the New Norwegian language, which were mostly resisted by labour movement circles. People in the new organisation also started communist children's folk dance groups in the capital and nearby areas. This grew to considerable proportions, with 7,286 members in 136 clubs reported in 1923, including children and grown-ups. I have found no sources that were sceptical about the strong communist commitment of the new organisation, but there was clearly a large gap politically between most leaders of Noregs Ungdomslag and the communist movement. The whole project suddenly disappeared, and there are hardly traces of it after 1923. It was at that time that the communists formed their own party and split from the movement that became the Labour party [Bakka 2007:518]. It is interesting to note that the Labour party later never took up Norwegian folk dancing, and when the Labour Party published a book related to dancing, it contained singing games that the Swedish Labour party used [Rimestad 1957; Bakka 2007:518].

## World War Two: patriotism – nationalism

In 1933, the minister of the Farmers' Party, Vidkun Quisling, left and founded the fascist party *Nasjonal Samling* (NS - National Union). It did not obtain enough votes to have a representative in Parliament, but when Norway was occupied by the Germans in 1940, the party became their collaborators when the Government fled to London and the Parliament was dissolved. The party remained a strong influence on Norwegian society throughout the war, helping the German occupiers fight against domestic resistance.

Bjørnar Blaavarp demonstrates in his master's thesis how the discourses of *Nasjonal Samling* were quite similar to those found in both threads of the Norwegian folk dance movement, in terms of describing the values of this heritage, although the party showed little interest in this field before the war. During the war, however, many attempts were made to recruit folk musicians and folk dancers to the party through discourses and arrangements that were familiar to the field, but with little success. The leaders and the membership dissolved the organisations and their activities when the NS took over, and most members from both threads refused to cooperate [Blaavarp 2012:71]. The clear stance of both movements was strongly on the resistance side, which protected folk dance from harm and from a dubious reputation after the war. The movements could celebrate their patriotism and experienced a boom in popularity in the first years after the war, but received little attention from the political parties: patriotism was shared by all, and folk dance had not played any stronger role in resistance than everybody else [Lauvrud 1995:189–230].

## Neo-traditionalism

The 1960s and 1970s saw student folk dancers who brought in knowledge from relevant academic disciplines to scrutinise and criticise the actual work and basis for the Nordic folk dance movements. Influenced by trends such as British folk song clubs, the student revolts and German 'folklorismus' debates, they wanted to turn back to the roots of the tradition. The folk dance revival of the Nordic countries had changed folk culture into canons and methods during the first decades of the twentieth century. The "back to the roots" impetus resulted in new field work and collection of dance forms that the earlier movement had, for various reasons, not documented. A new orientation resulted, where new material was added to the repertoires, and where new methods brought about new trends in presentation and pedagogy [Okstad 2007:561–570]. In this period, archives for traditional dance with dedicated staff were established (Sweden 1965,

Norway 1973, Denmark 1981), and folklore archives that already had such material also intensified their work in the field, as for instance in Finland.

These developments, starting in Norway in the 1970s, were based on political good will in Parliament towards culture, and a highly profiled folk musician and folk dancer became a member of Parliament trying to promote his field. However, his right-wing party affiliation did not please all members of the organisations, many of whom belonged more to the Left [Ranheim 1998:26]. There were also sympathisers with folk dance in other parties, so the decades up to the turn of the century saw a substantial increase in funding for folk music and folk dance. Institutions were developed for education, documentation and archiving, and festivals were established specialising in the field and having reasonable state subsidies. There were other political issues and questions that seem to have contributed to the positive attitude towards national and local identities and to the renewed and developing revival movements, influenced and strengthened by the neo-traditionalist enthusiasm and improved competence.

## Referendums on the European Union in 1972 and 1994, Olympic Games in 1994

In the early 1970s, Norway experienced heated debates about whether the country should join the European Community, a question that split many political parties. Noregs Ungdomslag joined the “No” side, with a clear majority vote of the general assembly [Kløvstad 1995:264]. In the following referendum in 1972, the “No” side won with 53.5 per cent of the vote. The question was raised again in the early 1990s, but in the 1994 referendum the „No“ side won again with 52.2 per cent of the vote. Earlier the same year, the Olympic winter games were held at Lillehammer; Norway and traditional culture with folk dance, folk music and folk costumes were strongly represented in the opening and closing ceremonies. All these three events seem to have boosted support for neo-traditional work for folk culture. National and local identities were valid slogans used in the struggles over EU membership and reasons given for why the country should not risk losing sovereignty.

## Reports to the Parliament on cultural politics

In 1973-74, the Ministry of Culture started to write reports to the Parliament on cultural politics. To date (2018) seven have been written. Most of them mention folk music and folk dance, which in the 1991-92 report are mentioned in

positive (if rather general) terms. In 2002-2003 the Ministry pointed to responsibility for transmission and stressed the importance of professionalization.

The ministry will strengthen our national music heritage through supporting various kinds of music expressions and transmission on a traditional basis as well as extensive work with documentation and research that is done in the field of folk music and folk dance [Kulturdepartementet 1991-1992:188].

Norway only can protect, manage and transmit Norwegian folk music and folk dance. It is an important task to see to it that such a cultural resource can compete in a modern, professional cultural life. Folk music has, over the last few decades, increased its number of performers on high levels, has got more arenas and larger audiences... The interest in and recruiting to folk dance, on the other hand, has decreased, confronting the folk dance movement with particular challenges [Kulturdepartementet 2002-2003:130].

The 2002-2003 report points to some of the ideas in UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which was adopted in 2003 and ratified by Norway in 2006. There were big hopes associated with this convention within the field of folk culture, but it has attracted little attention from politicians.

## The demand for professional artistic quality

Norwegian cultural politics was formalised and concentrated in 1965 when the Arts Council Norway, a state institution, was established to fund projects of arts and culture. This institution has worked on the principle of distinguishing between professional arts and amateur activity. Folk dance and folk music could, for a long period up to the end of the twentieth century, find goodwill and support for a field that, for the most part, remained on the amateur side but, towards the end of the period, folk music also entered the scene of professional art. Folk dance, with its strong intention of being social dance, resisted professionalization for fear of losing the social aspect. At a time when folk dance had professional research activity and university education, there were, however, calls for more money to support folk dancing that was in decline. There were unmistakable signs from the circles of cultural politics that higher subsidies would only be given to projects involving art on a professional level. This triggered a new development: in 2001 the Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance

commenced a project entitled *Bygda dansar* (Countryside dances) which combines safeguarding of one county's dances as social dances with stage productions under professional guidance based on elements and technique from the social dances. The project visits county after county, working three years in each of them. In this way, the internal wish for maintaining folk dance as social dance, the requirement for professional artistic aims from the authorities and the new aspect of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage could be combined. The latter requires that the heritage be continued in its community of origin; therefore, the project teaches the dances in their home counties rather than working with a national repertoire. During the first decades of the twenty-first century, several professional dance ensembles have been established, basing their performances on elements from folk dance and folk music and they compete very well on the contemporary dance scene.

## Norwegian values and culture of the present

Since 2013, Norway has had a right-wing government, and strong polemics have circulated in the media about what was in 2016 called the refugee crisis. One contention from the right and ultra-right has been that Norwegian values and Norwegian culture are threatened by the acceptance of huge numbers of refugees, and that Norway is heading for multiculturalism. The Norwegian minister of culture wrote on her Facebook page: "Be proud of what is Norwegian! Kvikklunns<sup>7</sup> brown cheese<sup>8</sup> Marit Bjørgen og Ole Einar Bjørndalen<sup>9</sup> dugnad<sup>10</sup> and porridge. Generations have created what is typically Norwegian, words, attitudes and values. If we read Ibsen<sup>11</sup> and other classics we will recognise this" [Helleland 2016:1]. The liberal and left-wing politicians have heavily criticised this discourse, but it is interesting to note that neither side mentions folk music and folk dance as typical Norwegian culture, or that these might be threatened.

## Summary

The political climate and mainstream political ideas are decisive for what kind of elements and ideas of culture can be successfully promoted. The national romanticism of the educated circles opened the field of folk culture as acceptable

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7 Chocolate produced in Norway.

8 A kind of "cheese" made in a way claimed to be invented in Norway.

9 Two famous Norwegian ski athletes.

10 A system for exchanging work with neighbours on a voluntary basis, widespread in Norway.

11 The author Henrik Ibsen.

for the nation building movement of the early twentieth century and provided ample space for promoting folk dance. Two threads in the revival were established and remained relatively separate with distinct methods and intentions up to the present day.

The newly established communist party tried to put folk dance and folk music on its agenda in the 1920s, but they were firmly established with the movement for Norwegianness, which had a very different discourse and agenda. This is probably why the communists failed on this point (while they succeeded in Eastern and Central Europe much later in the communist era) and also why the Labour party never adopted folk dance.

In the Second World War, Norwegian folk dancing was not harmed; quite the contrary, it grew stronger, since it was seen to remain on the side of resistance. The struggles over membership in the EU also strengthened folk dancing, which was on the NO side, and coincided with the neo-traditionalist reorientation that brought folk music and folk dance into academia, to festivals and to the arts, contributing to more state support. The strong intention of keeping folk dance as primarily social dance had to be modified around 2000 to access the funding that Norwegian cultural politics reserved for the arts. Neither side in the polemics about immigration posing a threat to Norwegian culture (that arose particularly in 2016) has taken up folk dance as a value to safeguard, and it seems to have remained neutral territory. While there were attempts to bring folk dancing onto party agendas from the communists in the 1920s and from the National Socialists during World War Two, the results remained insignificant. Even if folk dancing has stayed close to the line of Norwegianness, the line has been developing and modernised, and has remained at a distance from neo-nazism.

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# Part 2 **Czech Histories**



# Folklore in the Era of Socialism: Display Window of Official Culture or Little Island of Freedom? Folklore movement in Contemporary Historical Research and Oral Historical Studies

*Miroslav Vaněk*

*Abstract:*

The folk “movement” has often been referred to as an official part of the “culture of socialism”, alongside other sources of official culture, and as possibly an export item of Communist Czechoslovakia. On the other hand, the perspective of the actors has been neglected. The folklore “movement” in the context of the study of contemporary history and oral-historical studies is gradually looking for pioneers in oral history to investigate this phenomenon. Recently, projects and studies have emerged that turn to the actors themselves. Their views are beginning to disrupt the predominant view of folklore as monolithic organized folk entertainment. On the contrary, for some actors, active participation in the folk ensemble could represent an imaginary little island of freedom. The role of oral history is, in this respect, irreplaceable. Research needs to be undertaken by knowledgeable and ethical professionals. Particular consideration should be given to analyzing the position of insiders conducting research.<sup>1</sup>

*Keywords:*

folklore, official culture, inner emigration, oral history, insiderism.

The history of the second half of the twentieth century was turbulent. It is not surprising that its interpretation changed after 1989; however, it has further changed in recent years. There is now a tendency to abandon a black-and-white attitude, dichotomies having become an obstruction in interpreting the past. Just as the view of history in all its diversity but also detail is constantly expanding, so is our understanding of various social groups, associations, organizations and individuals, both before 1989 and after; it is also becoming more precise.

During forty years of communist rule, Czech historiography found itself in a situation similar to that of the Czech people. It could not develop freely and was isolated from modern world trends and developments for many years. This was also the case with oral history. Before 1989, oral history was totally unknown in Czechoslovakia as well as in other countries of the so-called Communist bloc. Isolated attempts at inviting contemporary witnesses to take part in research projects yielded poor results (with possible reasons including ideological limitations, ignorance of the methodology, poor technology and so on.).

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It seems then that after years of struggle Czech oral history can finally be developed, without constant criticism, without interference and fully focused on its goals – namely, to deal with so many important topics that have so far been unexplored. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, we can even speak about a boom in oral history. Nonetheless, it has not yet become a mainstream method or discipline as noted by Sean Field [2009] when writing about South America or South Africa.

An increased interest in oral history surely brings satisfaction to those who have been actively disseminating and using it for years. This trend, however, also brings some problems which are mostly to do with the concept of oral history and with the researcher's identification with its principles. These principles, in my view, are essentially ethical and methodological ones: mastering the method and having a good knowledge of the historical context are, in my opinion, essential requirements for a valid historical interpretation. Similarly to Sean Field, I wonder whether this recent trend (the oral history boom), which can also be observed in the Czech Republic, can only be positive. What has caused this turnaround and what are the dangers and pitfalls of this recent development? Contemporary history is an imaginary space where scholarly research meets the personal experiences of the actors who carry their own memories and recollections of the past or who narrate their own life stories and opinions about recent history.

Therefore, contemporary history – as a historical era – does not belong to professional historians alone. Its image is co-created by “non-professionals” because they also remember. In this sense we can definitely speak about the democratization of history. Such democratization, however, can also lead to the “secularization” and simplification of history because each memory is a part of a specific perspective of the past.

Not only historians have a right to memory and its explanation. It seems that this apparent monopoly of historians was disposed of because of rapid social and also scientific development in recent years, as well as the democratization of society. This does not mean, however, that historians (and oral historians) would not be needed. Yet their role is changing – they are not “judges” of history; they are not the only ones who can explain history. Today they are (or should be) professional scientists who bring and offer multiple perspectives on how to perceive history; and they always do it in a historical context, using all relevant resources and historiographical methods. And, most importantly, they always guarantee that historiographical work and projects are done with respect to ethical aspects of the matter – simply said, they always guarantee the quality of historical work.

What does the concept of quality mean when we say “good project” and “good use of method”? What do we, professional oral historians, perceive as “good oral

history”? Might a negative definition help here – how not to proceed with oral history? What, according to our standards, is not oral history? We do not use interviews with narrators as a “decoration”; we do not build our theses on parts of narratives artificially cut out or edited in order to support foregone conclusions. We perceive a published interview only as a small segment of the narrator’s life story. We definitely do not present this given segment as a historical fact. We do not demonize individuals, and we do not offer simplified or harsh judgments which sometimes verge on the fairytale realms of Good and Evil. The issue then is to find a desired point of intersection between the above-mentioned two worlds, which are so different from one another – journalism longing for emotions versus science carefully avoiding emotions and trying not to cause any embarrassment or indignation. Oral historians conducting biographical interviews are often reserved and moderate; they respect taboos or the narrator’s unwillingness to talk about certain events, i.e. they behave very carefully and with empathy. As Alistair Thomson has said:

The oral historian is not a chaser of human souls; he/she is not an exploiter of narrators who victoriously leaves after having finished the interview. These victories, if they could be called victories at all, are shortsighted and temporary [Vaněk 2013:152].

One of the problems of Czech contemporary history is its focus mainly on victors and “visible” groups. But we have to study everything in historical context and we cannot forget other groups in the Czech population. We still know too little about the Czechoslovak “silent” majority before 1989. What do we know about the everyday life of ordinary people? There are still repeated clichés from the beginning of the 1990s, constantly stressed by the media, that the majority of citizens should be considered as weak and of little historical value when compared with the courage demonstrated by the victims of communist oppression. Using such an approach, we cannot add much to our knowledge of the past. I am sure that the way adopted by, *inter alia*, the Oral History Centre, Institute of Contemporary History – namely focusing on different groups in the Czech population – is the best way to gain an understanding of our past and to bring about results using scientific methods.

With respect to– questions of folklore, or rather the folklore movement – it has to be said that one of the most widely held opinions is the following: Folklore (the folklore movement) was “supported” by the state. It has even been referred to as the display window of socialism, the most distinctive feature of national culture and national character. What seems to follow is that many members of folklore associations and the folklore movement in general were supporters

of the “socialist cause”. Through their activities, they intended to gather “political points” for building their future careers. It is probably not surprising that this view of the world of folklore fails to capture reality in all its diversity and complexity (a comparison can be drawn, for instance, with the environmental movement before 1989, e.g. the Brontosaurus movement).<sup>2</sup> In order to come closer to reality, we have to understand, given the period context, what the state wanted, what it told its citizens, what members of various organizations were thinking [Vaněk and Mücke 2016:145-168]. Did they think they were providing a substitute for popular culture? Here we can come up with a host of novel research questions: the relationship of the members of various groups to the official rhetoric surrounding folklore; what was the attitude of the members’ classmates during their teenage years when they announced they were going to dance to traditional brass music while their peers were smuggling Rolling Stones records? What was their attitude towards taking part in certain official events and the like? We may or may not also find differences between ordinary members and representatives and functionaries, people within the cultural administration, choir-masters, stage managers, choreographers, event organizers, and so on. As an article by Martina Pavlicová and Lucie Uhlíková tells us,

After 1968, the official line on cultural politics and the folklore movement arrived at a paradox: a number of personalities “hid” under the cover of so-called “positive cultural politics”, even though in terms of their post-1968 political attitudes, they rather crossed over to negative politics [Pavlicová and Uhlíková 2008:193].

Ivo Stolařík, an editor at the Czechoslovak Radio in Ostrava, wrote in 2003: the Brontosaurus movement

Later, the party line could be felt more and more and politics started to creep into broadcasting... Those who didn’t like it hid under the cov-

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2 Hnutí Brontosaurus (*The Brontosaurus Movement*) is a large nature conservation group in the Czech Republic concentrated on young people. Brontosaurus was founded in 1974, being the first such organization in Czechoslovakia. The founders were several young enthusiasts from the Institute of Landscape Ecology of Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. In January 1974 “Akce Brontosaurus” (Action Brontosaurus) started as a set of ten tasks concentrated on environmental education and to be finished within one year. Unexpected success led to an indefinite extension of the programme and the appearance of regional branches. In 1978 Brontosaurus had to become a collective member of the Socialist Union of Youth, a pro-regime political organization aiming to completely cater for young people. Brontosaurus has organized numerous festivals, propagation tours and competitions and has managed to increase awareness about numerous ecological problems.

er of ensemble activities and folk songs. Thus they could demonstrate relevant activities and on top of that receive support, if their activities could also be considered youth activities. Thus, these ensembles survived this whole strange era and I think that the area of folklore and music did quite well [Pavlicová and Uhlíková 2008:193].

The author of another article in the *Journal of Ethnology* from 2008, Klára Davidová, studied the ensemble Chorea Bohemica and likens membership in the ensemble to inner emigration [Davidová 2008:198]. She cites the description made by the ethnochoreographer, former member and, at one point, also director of the Chorea Bohemica ensemble, Daniela Stavělová, who evaluated the role of folklore during normalization as follows:

During the period of political normalization and lack of freedom, the folklore milieu provided the possibility of true self-fulfilment, which many people did not find in their regular professions...the activities of these ensembles were often an escape from an oppressive reality, they provided opportunities for free self-expression, travel abroad and meeting likeminded people without a political subtext...people were capable of highly professional dedication in these ensembles, which often meant that they produced artistic performances of professional quality, though conducted in amateur conditions [Davidová 2008:198].

The question is whether this reflection does not go to the other extreme, showing folklore not as controlled by the state and officially supported, but as constituting a kind of *inner emigration* (IE refers to a way of dealing with life conditions, which an individual has not chosen and does not agree with, but which they cannot change. The term is used to refer to activities outside of the public sphere, with which those engaging in them can fully identify, and which contribute to their sense of purpose and satisfaction, something they lack in everyday reality). I am here reminded of a parallel with our earlier project and publication *Little Islands of Freedom /Ostrůvky svobody* [Vaněk et al. 2002] (ecological and peace initiatives, scouting and tramping, the punk subculture, religious youth activities), in which we tried to map how the hobbies of the young generation in the 1980s gradually became a platform for developing the values and principles of civil society, and which gave rise to contradictions and confrontations with the ruling power. These attitudes and leisure activities of young people were automatically considered potentially dangerous for the smooth running of the system by the authorities. “An island – yes, so that there would be somewhere to return

to, but not a ghetto or glasshouse. For me, an island was a place where I could be myself, share a particular philosophy and not be afraid to voice my opinion” [Vaněk et al. 2002:7–10].

When conducting research, it is helpful to consider the motivations for entering into folkloristic associations and groups. We have some partial personal testimonies at hand, but unfortunately, from an oral history point of view, we do not have information on how exactly the individual authors proceeded. For this reason, current research is so important – more on that below. From the available sources and interviews it appears that under the previous regime, ensembles functioned as a meaningful platform for spending leisure time, as they enabled self-realization and a distinctive lifestyle. What is, however, surprising, though only for the uninitiated, is that we can see the same in the case of summer cottages, and indeed, similar motivations are present even in the current regime. Even today, such ensembles become something of a “second family” – often it was or still is the case that members of ensembles meet their partners there. The Institute of Ethnology in Brno published a study in 2005, in which it used interviews with Brno’s folklore ensembles to investigate the motivations for interest in such activities over the past decades. One of the findings was the fact that current members see a fulfilment of their cultural needs and a meaningful use of their free time in their activities [Toncrová 2006:56]. They are members of ensembles primarily because of the enjoyment they feel from singing and dancing, a good collective, improving their physical condition, a positive mood, and mention that folklore often constitutes a “life necessity” for them. Younger members emphasized that they value the opportunity to show their talents at performances and enjoy meeting new people when on tour with the ensemble.

I like the character of the dance, how it looks, how it looks in the end in combination with our costumes, I enjoy performing... I like the dance itself and it fulfils me. It charges me with energy so that even if I’m sad about something, I know that I will dance and I’ll be fine. (Petra P., 20 years old, dancer) [Poppová 2016:51].

Because I’ve been there since childhood means that I’m close to folklore. I don’t do folklore just because it’s Rosénka [name of ensemble], and I think that if Rosénka suddenly started to do hip hop, I’m not sure I’d stay, I’d definitely stay in contact with those people but maybe I wouldn’t do hip hop. I would stay in the Rosénka group of people. And if I were to leave Rosénka, I would look for folklore somewhere else (Petr D., 31 years old, dancer) [Poppová 2016:46].

At first sight it must seem to outsider that it's just alcohol and girls and... I mean, that is part of folklore, but I think that hand in hand with that comes a love for singing, those melodies, that's for the musicians, and songs and dance for those who like to move (Lenka H., 25 years old, dancer) [Poppová 2016: 47].

In evaluating folklore (just like in other – though not all – areas), we do not have to choose what it should represent for us; both attitudes can coexist: the display windows of socialism and, simultaneously, islands of freedom. The question that remains unanswered is whether the actors at the time were aware of either the “display window” or “islands of freedom” function of folklore, or whether this is a retrospective interpretation. It is quite possible that they simply did not admit to the display window function, they simply did not think about it, as they had been involved in folklore activities since childhood, and if they continued into adulthood, they were not able to access a different perspective. It could also have been a peculiar mixture of experience, such as “under the guise of official activities we simply do what we want – even though we sometimes have to “pay” for it by having to fool around at some potentates’ event”.

A project founded primarily on the Oral History method can answer at least some of the questions about the ambivalent relationship of the folklore movement, political power, and the actors themselves. Aside from analysing written sources, which help to map the movement's chronology, regional focus, and functioning, oral history can bring precisely the missing actors' perspective.

Based on our previous experience, what do we know already, even before starting the research? How shall we conduct the interviews and what should we be aware of?

Generally speaking, Oral History works mainly with a form of life stories, which are an unstructured method, as in the case of qualitative research. Structured life stories prevent understanding the whole story and its classification into particular structures of the human lifecycle [Vaněk and Mücke 2015].

*The problem of the researcher's position*, also known as the problem of subjectivity, his/her level of participation or distance, interventions, status asymmetries, insiderism, should be reflected in all research projects, but especially in those which are close and personal for researchers.

Therefore, we should be able to keep in mind the problematics of insiderism – we do not live in a vacuum. A question which we have to keep on discussing is to what extent we can be impartial, what influences us. Without insider access, certain topics could never be researched. An insider can be an advantage in many projects, as long as we are aware of our own insiderism at all points of the research and accept this position.

It becomes more complicated if we are ourselves actors. There are too few projects to draw any wider conclusions on this topic. Nevertheless, the position of actor already makes the position of interviewer and researcher very complicated when conducting the project. What can at first appear as an advantage can be scientifically dangerous, as conclusions are drawn from a special pre-understanding of the topic. We want to study something we already “know”. We have to think through how difficult it is to record interviews with friends and acquaintances and ask ourselves if we can truly “freely” interpret the research results regardless of our personal relationships. Without answering these questions, the research does not have much sense and will only serve to validate or negate the aforementioned without bringing any new questions and their possible solutions.

## Conclusion

Despite all potential research problems that I have just mentioned, I believe that oral historians should concentrate on professionalism and ideological impartiality, even if it is sometimes quite difficult. Yet it could be an aim for everybody. Paths leading to knowledge about our past are framed with substantial questions that cannot be avoided – questions of history and ethics. It is in this context that I see a difficult task for Czech oral history – to avoid the ideological perspective as well as any attempts to interpret the past in a way that could be far from reality. And it is not just about oral history. If, on the one hand, I do reject any political activism in scientific research, I am in favour of a certain intellectual activism and active approach in finding new topics and I believe that such activism can ultimately be very useful. What I mean here is that we should try to move our attention to groups which, to this day, have been ignored or disregarded by our historians – “ordinary people”. Unless these groups form part of our historical record, our interpretation of the past will be incomplete, black-and-white and, in fact, very inaccurate. Potential non-conformist views opposing the current neo-liberal trend should not discourage us from such research. Open discussion, free of prejudice, about our recent past, which does not end in 1989, is needed, and not only in terms of social science.

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# The Folklore Revival Movement in Former Czechoslovakia: Dichotomy of the Term

Daniela Stavělová

*Abstract:*

In the Czech Lands, the *folklore movement* is used to refer to the existence of folklore ensembles and their stage production. Recently, however, the term has gained negative connotations as it is associated with the era of Communism, especially the ideological pressures of the 1950s. The reason for these negative associations is that folklore was performed as politically harmless entertainment preferred by the ideology of the day; thus, the folklore movement became representative of values associated with the ideology. The paradoxical, and less known, fact is that members of folklore ensembles often used this environment as a refuge that they could escape to from the grim reality of the political system and a meaningful way of realizing their alternative ideas that they were unable to realize in their professional life. This “weightlessness”, although only lasting for short periods, allowed people to survive the depressing atmosphere around them in “inner emigration”. However, this implicit meaning of the folklore movement in the Czech context remains little-known and under-researched by historiography. Therefore, the current grant<sup>1</sup> project explores this ambivalence, which can be identified in the folklore movement in the latter half of the twentieth century in particular. The implicit meaning of the activity can best be explored through the memories of surviving actors of the folklore movement; therefore, the principal method used here is oral history, with the main focus on an individual human story – a little history in the context of big history.

*Keywords:*

folklore revival movement, folklorism, folk ensembles, oral history, narratives, Czech Republic

Inseparably from folklorism<sup>2</sup>, the term *folklore movement* can be used to refer to the existence of folklore ensembles, festivals and other activities related to folklore in the Czech Lands and former Czechoslovakia. It dates back to the 1950s, a period that saw the boom in folklore ensembles or, as they were known back then, ensembles of folk songs and dances, which were established especially in towns.<sup>3</sup> Their purpose was to provide this type of leisure activity but also to

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  - 2 The term is used in the sense proposed by Hermann Bausinger [1970] as “second-hand folklore”, denoting visual as well as music and dance manifestations taken out of their original context and presented in a new context. See also [Sirovátka 1977; 1989], [Holý and Sirovátka 1985], [Leščák 2007], [Pavlicová and Uhlíková 1997].
  - 3 Following the coup d'état of 25 February 1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia began the era of socialism. The single-party government also launched a transition from democra-

realize explicitly the ideas of the cultural policy of the day resting on a strong socialist ideology, with culture being folk and serving ordinary people while at the same time being accessible to masses and politically committed individuals. The aim was not to foster folk songs and dances in order to preserve traditions, as was the case especially in the late nineteenth century and, to some extent, throughout the twentieth century; rather, the rationale was to use this type of artistic activity to substitute modern-day culture, considered by the Communist leaders to be politically unacceptable. The advantage that folklore had in those days was that it was created by people and owned by everybody, thus fulfilling the idea of Socialist Realism culture. Indeed, anyone could become a creator by joining this free-time artistic activity. The boom in this movement inevitably led, in the late 1950s, to proclamations about the “weight” (or “burden”) of folklore, resulting in a substantial reduction of such activities.<sup>4</sup>

Subsequently, the folklore movement went through a number of developmental stages; it took a different shape in former Czechoslovakia in the 1960s, undergoing a substantial transformation in the 1970s and 1980s, and later still, with the transition to democracy in the 1990s, gaining a specific form which it has retained until the present day. Despite this leisure time activity being embedded in today’s society, the activity is often seen by people as a relic of the totalitarian regime. The reason for these negative associations is that folklore was performed as politically harmless entertainment preferred by the ideology of the day; thus, the folklore movement became representative of values associated with the ideology. The paradoxical, and less known, fact is that especially in the normalization era following the 1968 Soviet occupation, members of folklore ensembles often used this environment as a refuge that they could escape to from the oppressive reality of the political system. This community offered them relationships resting on different principles to the official sphere and a meaningful way of realizing their alternative ideas that they were unable to realize in their professional life. This “weightlessness”, although only lasting for short periods, allowed people to survive the depressing atmosphere around them by “inner emigration”.<sup>5</sup> However, this implicit meaning of the folklore

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cy to totalitarian regime and integration into the Soviet bloc. What followed was a time of political oppression and lack of freedom of expression and the press. Traditional folk music and dance culture thus became almost the only creative expression, which proclaimed itself as being folk and therefore fulfilled the idea of socialist culture.

4 The author who used this expression in connection with folklore, and later went on to say “let us do away with folklore” was Vladimír Mináč [1958], who published a critical article under the same name in the magazine *Literární noviny*, pointing out the overabundance of folklore production and the excessive media coverage of folklore.

5 The term *inner emigration* was first used by Neil H. Donahue and Doris Kirchner [2003] in their literary study on German literature of the 1930s and 1940s.

movement in the Czech context remains little-known and under-researched by historiography.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the present study, conducted as a grant project, explores this ambivalence, which can be identified in the folklore movement throughout its existence, particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century. The implicit meaning of the activity can best be explored through the memory of the surviving actors of the folklore movement – former and current members (and non-members) of folklore ensembles; therefore, the principal method used here is oral history, with the main focus on an individual human story – a little history in the context of big history.<sup>7</sup> The study seeks to exclude generalization and ahistoricity; instead, its intended purpose is to understand individuals’ motivations and attitudes, to capture individual experience and explain these hidden processes, which can be confronted with the explicit level and expectations of the political leadership. My question is to what extent the folklore movement was a tool of political power and to what extent it substituted for other free time activities, being a space for “inner exile” and individuals’ alternative ideas and strategies. This particular study will focus on the processes of representation and stereotyping, the primary tools for manipulating traditional folk culture.

## Representation

My understanding of the folklore movement is that of a cultural and social expression which draws upon musical and dance manifestations of traditional folk culture presented as staged performances. This understanding of the process is similar to, among other authors, the American ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino [2008] who, using the term “folklorization”, talks about the relocation of native customs from their original environment to new urban contexts, with regular support from the state. Traditional folk culture adapted for the stage has been defined by the Australian choreologist Diane Carole Roy [2014:iv] as a kind of folklorism characterizing a folklore performance or, in other words, a convert-

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6 I make this assumption drawing on my many years of experience as an insider in the folklore movement; having seen these attitudes many times, I was inspired to conduct the present study.

7 Support for researching this topic can be mainly gained from contemporary history and oral history which provide adequate terminology relating to some of the phenomena of the latter half of the twentieth century. Relevant works include, in particular, those by Miroslav Vaněk and his team [2007; 2009], including his characterization of ordinary people; furthermore, Martin Franc and Jiří Knapík [2013], who researched the structure of cultural facilities which managed people’s leisure time and ensured that it was spent in a reasonable way, contributed to the definition of the topic.

ed cultural performance. Roy suggests that this was especially typical of folklore ensembles in countries of the former Communist bloc, opening the topic of the representation of cultural symbols. The means of this “concertization” or stage adaptation tend to differ from country to country, depending on the intentions: who selects and manipulates these means and for what purpose.<sup>8</sup> In any case, these are stage productions of folklore that will inevitably be viewed as social constructs, rooted in social relationships and produced as part of social life [Baumann 1996:xiii]. Therefore, folklore performances can be considered part of social practices or as bearers of “ideas” in the sense of cultural performance as communication.

The representation of folklore productions is explored in detail by Diane Carole Roy [2014] in her study on the importance of a performance by the Slovak State Ensemble *Lúčnica* held for Slovak minorities in Melbourne, Australia. Her investigation rests on Goffman’s [1961; 1963] framework analysis and his public space theory, where those who give are, at the same time, receivers, including the researcher as a participating observer; communication exists on the basis of an exchange system, with continual evaluation of who said what to whom, where and when.<sup>9</sup> Understanding this language is, first and foremost, understanding actions in the given context [Goffman 1963:15–16]. These situations as well as data from ethnographic interviews are then used by Roy to generate findings for a number of questions related to the terms *participatory* and *presentational* [Turino 2008, Nahachewsky 2001]. By distinguishing between these two basic positions or identities, it is possible to categorize and distinguish between two primary motivations for participating in folkloric performances. On the one hand, the role that the folklore ensemble *Lúčnica* performed in the place which is home to marginalized Slovak minorities was, without a shadow of doubt, understood by the audience as performing the Slovak national identity, underlined by elements of the Herderian tradition and an aesthetically polished production fea-

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8 The means of stage adaptation of folklore have been explored by a number of Czech and Slovak researchers and methodologists, e.g. [Laudová 1966; 1988; 1989], [Pavliščík 1966], [Sirovátko 1977; 1989], [Holý and Sirovátko 1985], [Rejšková 1977], [Krekovičová 1992], [Leščák 2007], [Ambrózová 2014]) starting in the mid-1960s, these issues were addressed mainly in connection to the growth of institutionalized folklore activities presented at national contests of stage performances, under the auspices of the Central House of People’s Art Creativity (ÚDLUT) and its successors, the Institute for Cultural Educational Activities (ÚKVČ) and, currently, the National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture (NIPOS-ARTAMA), in addition to culture centres and clubs organized by the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (ROH). The above studies and articles contributed to the general discourse of the day about what was expected from staged folk culture in the given period and what role society expected it to perform. Cf. also [Stavělová 2015b].

9 For more on Goffman’s theoretical approach cf. also [Giddens 1988].

turing talented and good looking young performers; at the same time, the actors themselves – members of the ensemble, dancers and musicians – were reported to feel their own ability to use their skills to make a good impression on the audience and be rewarded adequately [Roy 2014:225].<sup>10</sup>

This polarity can be seen in other stages of the multi-layered investigation into manifestations of folklorization or the folklore movement – including the stage productions – although it cannot be approached in a simple way. Andriy Nahachewsky [2001:1] points to the fact that both conceptual categories, participatory and presentational, are not easy to separate from each other and should not be seen as a dichotomy, nor as an unambiguous discerning principle. Rather, the two categories are to be understood as ideal opposites which act as a counterbalance to the theoretical continuum.

The symbolic representation [Hall 1997] of folklore in state-controlled and state-sponsored stage productions was explored in much detail by the choreologist Anthony Shay [2002] in his monograph on state folklore ensembles in a number of different countries within a diversity of cultural and political contexts. Shay understands state-sponsored productions by folklore ensembles as a representation of political power, especially in newly established nation states or as part of countries' ideological transformations. Representation is highlighted as an instrument of power that can refer to others using non-verbal means, e.g. choreographic representational strategies that are part of the national discourse on the nation's own image [Shay 2002:225]. Representation is selective by nature and, therefore, a substantial part of the discourse revolves around the following questions: who is (or is not) to represent the nation-state in order to fulfil the government's intention (farmer, manual worker and the like), and in what manner (vigorously, courageously, generously, by using force, by employing masses of people, collectives or unity, to mention but some of the means). These means, alongside the Herderian idea of unspoilt rural life embedded in the ethos of authentic expression issuing from the nation's soul, are one of the most frequently used principles of primordial representation connected to folklore production in many countries in and outside Europe in the latter half of the twentieth century [Bithell and Hill 2014]. Traditional folk culture offers a wide range of means of creating (with adequate choreographic strategies) representations of ethnicity, gender, religion, social classes and so on.<sup>11</sup> These strategies call for conscious decision-making on how to represent and lead to the creation of national, regional and other stereotypes.

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<sup>10</sup> For more on performance identity cf. also [Olson 2004].

<sup>11</sup> This means was used as early as the late eighteenth century in theatre productions of operas and ballets, with dances used to characterize characters of different ethnicities (the Spaniard, the Moor) or social classes (the townsman, the farmer).

## Stereotypification

One example of such stereotypification was the production by the Soviet state music and dance ensemble led by the choreographer Igor Moiseyev, which became a role model for most folklore ensembles established in countries of the Soviet bloc after the Second World War.<sup>12</sup> In former Czechoslovakia, the example was followed by dozens of folk song and dance ensembles. These were urban formations set up mainly by the Communist youth, their intention being to foster socialist culture which conformed to the idea of collectivism, internationalism and ideology-based and controlled leisure-time pursuits [Franc and Knapík 2013]. Being part of the government strategy, i.e. developing leisure-time folk art skills, such initiatives received state support, becoming a significant component of political campaigning. Moiseyev's ensemble and his approach to stage production thus served as a role model for stage performances whose strategies of creative work were fully in line with these trends. According to Anthony Shay [2002:22], the primary focus was on optimistic and cheerful topics, most frequently the lively village dance events, with women and men dancing together like innocent children, looking rather asexual. The motif of playful argument or teasing was a substitute for real emotions, being the only source of emotions and giving all dancers a uniform look of happy dolls with no natural bodily functions [Ibid.].

A further significant means of representation was the presentation of national culture and its key features (carefully selected and predetermined) outside the country or for tourists coming to Czechoslovakia [Kirchenblatt-Gimblett 1998, Shay 2002:29–32]. Huge festival stages allowed for mass stage productions expressing unity and collectivism, with an emphasis on lively and colourful costumes and energetic young dancers. Individuality was consciously suppressed – this would apply to choreographers and musicians as well, whose names were rarely advertised in order to create the impression that the pieces were danced by real people tied to their traditional environment. Typified characters of happy village people – the genuine soul of the nation – were used to represent *all* the people of the country. This romanticizing idea of authenticity could be found in almost all folklore stage productions in the latter half of the twentieth century, making the movement into a specific genre. These strategies gave folk dance

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12 Established in 1937, the ensemble soon drew the attention of pre-war Czechoslovakia. The critics of the day appreciated its artistic mastery, but what especially drew much positive response was the use of folk culture elements, whose patriotic message resonated strongly with the Czech general public at a time shortly before the outbreak of World War Two, alongside the Folk Suites by the director and composer E. F. Burian. Igor Moiseyev [1973] later went on to explain his work in some of Czechoslovakia's periodicals.

its apolitical look, turning it into the most innocent instrument of political power. Folklore ensembles were a profitable export commodity which represented the country's ideology abroad using a message understandable in any linguistic context such as: 'we are charming, innocent and happy people, and our country is a beautiful place to visit' [Shay 2002:32].

The obvious and crucial question is to what extent such manipulation of symbols and their representation was noticed by ordinary members of the ensembles. People would join these leisure-time artistic formations at different times and with different expectations. In the Czechoslovakia of the second half of the twentieth century several stages can be distinguished [Stavělová 1995; 2001; 2017]. The years immediately following the Second World War were the most important period. The post-war euphoria and biased ideologization of political and cultural affairs gave the beginnings of the folklore movement in the 1950s their specific socialist-realism thrust. The late 1950s and early 1960s saw, however, a change of political climate heralding a period of intellectual revival. What this meant for the folklore movement was a reduction of these bodies, as they turned out not to be able to substitute the broad range of cultural production, followed by a redefinition of their responsibilities. The production of folklore ensembles began to be stimulated by stage dance contests, which provoked them to search for new topics and performance formats to better suit their preference for smaller stages. In the late 1960s, these tendencies resulted in innovative stage forms, indirectly following upon Emil František Burian's folk suites from between the two world wars.<sup>13</sup> Later, the oppressive normalization period of the 1970s and 1980s gave folklore ensembles yet another meaning. While communist propaganda remained the official *raison d'être*, I believe that folklore ensembles also provided ample opportunity for politically independent and innocent entertainment. There was a wide choice of activities – apart from displays and contests, ensembles were able to participate in numerous folklore festivals in and outside Czechoslovakia, a welcome (and often the only) possibility of travelling to countries outside the Soviet bloc. A decline in popularity followed in the early 1990s, when the social and political changes brought with them new opportuni-

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13 The turning point in the history of the folklore movement in the then Czechoslovakia was the establishment in 1968 of the Chorea Bohemica ensemble, whose approach to the stage adaptation of folklore infused this sector of culture with fresh blood, meeting with admiration as well as fierce criticism. Working in tandem, the composer Jaroslav Krček and the choreographer Alena Skálová shifted the stage use of folk culture in the direction of dance theatre, relying on stimulating and innovative topics of folk culture with an emphasis on their emotional veracity. In doing so, they opposed the existing model of staging folk culture, becoming a frequent target of criticism by authorities associated with the folklore movement. For more on the subject, see [Bezdiček 2006; Davidová 2007; and Stavělová 2012].

ties in culture and creative work. It might seem that was the end of the folklore movement; being considered a product of a certain ideological context, it had fulfilled its historic role and was no longer needed. Surprisingly, this was not the case, and starting in the mid-1990s, these activities began to grow in popularity. It is, therefore, essential for research to focus on the motivations that shaped the movement during the individual stages of its development and, at the same time, consider the issue from an opposite perspective – i.e. exploring the actors themselves not just the mainstream aspect.<sup>14</sup>

## The inner exile

It follows from the above that the best way to understand the hidden perception of the folklore movement by its direct participants is to study the motivations of an ensemble's individual members at different periods of time. Apparently, a major role in this movement throughout the various stages of its social development was played by the “charismatic leader”, who can give it a missionary and visionary nature [Hill and Bithell 2014:10]. The role of the personality and other factors that make people decide the way they do and choose the environment that they want to share with others are, undoubtedly, good indicators of how people think about things and how things are viewed in a given context. It makes sense that research should rely most on the method of oral history which, along with other procedures of the ethnographic interview, enables the researcher to better understand a given period through the memories of its actors [Vaněk, Mücke, Pelikánová 2007].<sup>15</sup> Most importantly, research should focus on how membership in an ensemble was viewed by those who applied to join it voluntarily, to what extent they identified with mainstream expectations and to what degree they found the right opportunity to develop their own strategies. Existing and ongoing research seems to suggest that it was during the political normalization in the then Czechoslovakia that people who had lost their professional and

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14 The current three-year research project involving a team of ten revolves around narratives obtained through interviews with three generations of long-time members of Czech folklore ensembles. In what is now the Czech Republic, about twenty-five ensembles were identified which have been active for over three decades. The research draws on 300 interviews, half of which have been held so far (2018).

15 Apart from interviews, there are other important sources of information that allow to explore, among other things, the creation of specific musical styles and choreographic strategies involved in this stage genre. One of the essential methods is the content analysis of audio-visual sources or the media in those days in order to track the reflection and expectations of society and the authorities of the folklore movement.

social status during the purges of the late 1960s very often found new opportunities for self-realization in folklore ensembles. And it was these very people who, as existing interviews suggest, became the charismatic leaders, in positions as directors, executive managers, composers or choreographers. While their work would have been under scrutiny and political screening in institutional settings, their activities for folklore ensembles were much less monitored. They were relatively free to do things that they would have been prohibited from doing if they had held official posts in state institutions. After all, folk dance and song ensembles were about innocent popular culture, and there was nothing wrong with it in principle. That was, however, a principle following from a deep-rooted belief that folk art is nothing more than harmless and cheerful entertainment.

Another concept, mentioned above, is inner emigration [Donahue and Kirchner 2003], a way of avoiding direct participation in governance and escaping from the official oppression to the very inside of the regime. Referring to the idea of a safe haven in an uncertain world, the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman [2001] explains people's need to withdraw from social pressure. Moreover, tradition in the form of cultural manifestations represents a kind of cultural capital, guaranteeing that these things are constant and indisputable. Folklore ensembles thus had the potential to become precisely the place where people found their personal identity and inner freedom; the interviews held so far suggest that this was indeed the case. The freedom could come from the fact that there was a fixed framework of a clearly hierarchized community which did not ask where people came from but how profitable their activity could be to the community. Clearly defined roles, e.g. dancer, musician, singer, choreographer, costume designer and others, gave this social framework visible contours and its actors a sense of social belonging. Unlike the other domains of public life, their identification with the given environment could also bring satisfaction not only from a voluntary choice but also from the sense of togetherness, underlined by dance practices that call for solidarity and equal conditions.

Nevertheless, these facts cannot be generalized; rather, each of the testimonies should be considered as unique. And when taken together, they will contribute to the definition of this social environment. Its image is built from narratives, including all the potential risks associated with their interpretation, as the research relies on human memory and its limitations, which need to be borne in mind at all times. The primary obstacle is memory's selective nature; furthermore, when narrating, people not only talk about their memories, but they can also make representations of past events. In any case, what happens here is the reconstruction, interpretation and evaluation of the past, sometimes including the need to transform, complete or improve things. Another potential factor is the sense of shame and the related need to obscure reality. This may come from the belief that

participation in folklore activities was a kind of collaboration with the regime, which may be criticised in retrospect. However, existing research does not seem to confirm that. Yet, the absence of shame can point to the fact that this activity was considered apolitical by its participants and that, moreover, the folklore environment was an anti-structure that provided a temporary alternative to the social structure of the day.<sup>16</sup>

## Who is the narrator?

The obvious question is: who are the people, narrators, but also members of folklore ensembles, who come and go, spending a shorter or longer portion of their working lives there? In the context of the latter half of the twentieth century, how can they be characterised as members of society? Were they the silent majority, identity seekers, seekers of social status and influence, escapists from the grim reality, or seekers of an alternative to ordinary life? A similarly important question is what their political attitudes were, whether they were dissidents or politically committed individuals or just ordinary people [Vaněk 2009]. And what about their professions – were they artists, intellectuals, manual workers? It is equally important to explore their civic attitudes: did they use their actions to express passive resistance to the regime, or did they express their disapproval indirectly by inactivity in the sense that being unable to do anything against the regime means one should not do anything in support of it. Did they have a completely passive attitude, taking their existence as living against the backdrop of propaganda, which no one believed anyway, thereby participating in rendering the regime empty, as suggested by the historian Miroslav Vaněk [2009:13]?

The narratives, memories and interviews reveal a number of motivations why the folklore ensembles continued to gain new members throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, with their expectations varying widely. Some expectations predominate and, taken as a whole, they can be divided into several thematic areas. In a nutshell, they can be labelled as “I just wanted to sing and dance”, “I wanted to make an impression on girls”, “it was fun”, “I enjoyed learning something new”, “we travelled to Western Europe”, “I found a bunch of nice people there”, and “that thing is my whole life”.

The many interviews suggest that people’s personal lives were tied to the ensembles to a large extent. Ensemble members would hold birthday, wedding and newborn baby parties, and would make collective trips to the mountains, to do paddling and other adventures; moreover, they would help one another when

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16 Cf. also [Stavělová 2015a].

moving house or on other occasions. These ties have been maintained by most members even after they have left the ensemble; new types of activities are invented as an opportunity to meet old friends; alternatively, “old stars” initiatives, involving retired people, are not infrequent, representing what could be called a “second wave of ensemble activity”.

By asking these questions, I hope to find the difference between the interpretation of the movement in its day and the individual experience with the activities, between the official opinion at that time and members’ own interpretations. Connections are explored among the topics of the interviews to find the interrelations between people’s existence in an ensemble, their family and profession, and to investigate the role of relationships inside the ensemble and how they extended to members’ everyday lives, as well as the position of ensembles in relation to other leisure time activities. A specific set of questions is also designed to explore how the creation of an ensemble’s repertory was perceived and what role was played by creative personalities. Of equal importance are narratives on the perception of collective performances at public events, festivals, contests and on other occasions. Moreover, such questions are expected to help shed more light on how members perceived their own identity and their sense of freedom inside the ensemble [Stavělová 2015a].

## Conclusion

Findings to date suggest that the folklore movement is an ambivalent phenomenon: on the one hand, it represented the ideology of the day and its notion of Socialist Realism; on the other hand, it provided space for alternative activities and an opportunity for a legitimised withdrawal from social and political reality. However, one would have been impossible without the other; therefore, this social space was shaped by both these factors to an equal measure, without them acting in mutual opposition. Viewed as folk and innocent entertainment, traditional culture had an ability to provide shelter to entities incompatible with the official ideology if dressed in colourful folk costumes. This was a dichotomy that was characteristic of the folklore movement from its very beginning, with a permanent clash between ordinary members’ individual motivations and the establishment’s expectations. Both lines coexisted with an innocence of a laughing child who has no idea what meanings its smile can have. This obvious dichotomy of the folklore movement helps uncover other layers of the thinking associated with that period in history, ones that are implicit and remain under-researched. Surprisingly, however, this dual view of the same reality is far from natural and there has been very little critical distance in the perception of the folklore move-

ment in most countries of the former Eastern bloc. Elements of traditional folk culture have helped to create numerous national symbols which remain largely intact in many of these cultures. And this does not have to apply to symbols as such but also to the personalities who are associated with their creation and were thus granted the status of national heroes. This process of “mythologization” has an essential role to play in every nation and is often associated with state-forming processes and nationalism. Yet the rigidity of some emblematic signs has potential to long outlive their creators, becoming a symbol of a specific identity. It is only the analysis of people’s choreographic strategies and behaviour accompanying their pursuit of these intentions that helps slowly uncover the essence of symbols. The folklore movement thus becomes a text whose content can only be understood by adopting the dichotomy discussed above. This is an opportunity for anthropological research that explores the folklore movement as a social and cultural phenomenon from the perspective of the individual and his or her lived experience. Drawing upon the theoretical background of revivalism, this is also a process of historicization, i.e. the present use of elements of the past, including their selection, manipulation and transformation to meet the needs of contemporary communication.

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# Literature on the Folklore Revival Movement in the Czech Journal *Taneční listy* 1963: a Critical Analysis

Dorota Gremlicová

## Abstract:

This study critically examines texts published in the Czech journal *Taneční listy* (Dance Journal, 1947–1950, 1963–1996, 1998–2003) which deal with the folklore dance and song revival movement after 1945. A detailed analysis is conducted of various texts from the 1963 volume, paying special attention to the dominant themes and topics and typical opinions and patterns of thinking. Through the analysis, shifts in the evaluation and conceptualization of the folk movement in Czechoslovakia in the early 1960s are addressed in connection with changes in the social, political and cultural contexts. In the selected volume of *Taneční listy*, František Pokorný played a significant role as a person involved both in the “official” literary reflection of the changing attitude to the folklore revival movement in Czech society and in the active replacement of it by a new stream based mainly on jazz dance inspirations.<sup>1</sup>

## Keywords:

folk dance, *Taneční listy*, choreography, Czechoslovakia.

## Taneční listy

In the second half of the twentieth century, the journal *Taneční listy* (Dance Journal) was the main platform for written reflections on dance in Czechoslovakia. Its genesis was long and connected especially with the personality of the dance reviewer, aesthetician and theoretician Jan Reimoser.<sup>2</sup> To begin with, he published two separate sheets named *Taneční listy* (1934 and 1937), including texts, partly historical, partly contemporary, by various authors. Closer to the shape of a dance journal reacting to actual dance life were three sheets of *Živý tanec* (Living Dance, 1937 and 1939). After the war, Reimoser finally established a genuine journal, *Taneční listy*, printed in six volumes per year (sometimes as a double issue) from 1947 to 1950 (with only one double issue 1–2). Initially, the journal was printed in the publishing house Athos, founded by František Her-

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  - 2 Jan Reimoser (1904 Slezská Ostrava – 1979 Praha), dance aesthetician, theoretician and reviewer, founder of the dance department of the Prague Conservatory and the dance department of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. Online: <[http://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com\\_mdictionary&task=record.record\\_detail&id=4612](http://www.ceskyhudebnislovník.cz/slovník/index.php?option=com_mdictionary&task=record.record_detail&id=4612)> (accessed 13 July 2018).

mann jr.<sup>3</sup>, with Reimoser as editor-in-chief. After the change of regime in February 1948 and the beginning of the government of the Communist Party, Hermann was arrested, and a so-called state/national administrator was appointed to the publishing house until it was closed down in March 1949. The last volume of Reimoser's *Taneční listy* in 1950 was printed, according to its imprint, by Společnost přátel tance (the Society of Dance Friends), established by Reimoser under the cooperative Umění lidu (People's Art).<sup>4</sup> This last volume featured the announcement of the dissolution of *Taneční listy* together with other theatrical journals<sup>5</sup> and their replacement by the newly reorganized journal *Divadlo* (Theater). This latter was under the control of new central ideological organizations and the personal influence of Miroslav Kouřil, a stage designer who, following the Second World War, was an influential ideologist of socialistic theatre [Just 2010]. From that moment on, theatrical dance/ballet was incorporated into the journal *Divadlo* (with Reimoser as an author of the articles), with issues related to the folklore revival movement being addressed by the new journal *Lidová tvořivost* (People's creativity, published 1950–1962), which was strongly connected with the ideology of the day, supporting the artistic creativeness of “working masses”.

A dance journal returning to the name *Taneční listy* was not established until 1963, during the new social and political atmosphere of the 1960s.<sup>6</sup> Jan Reimoser was only a member of its editorial board and an occasional author. Its first editor-in-chief, the musicologist Milan Kuna<sup>7</sup>, came from the same position in *Lidová tvořivost* and is believed to have been one of the initiators of replacing this journal with two new ones, *Taneční listy* and *Melodie* [Poledňák 2015]. In his editorial in the first number, Kuna formulated the orientation of *Taneční listy* as a journal dedicated to all sorts of dance (“from twist to the Leningrad Symphony”), professional and amateur. Amateur dance creativity is specially

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3 František Hermann jr. (1921 Slaný – 1977 Santa Catarina, Brasilia), a book printer and publisher, who was married for a short time to the soprano Ema Koliandrová. In 1948, he was imprisoned after being turned in for possessing weapons and printing anti-establishment leaflets. After his release from prison (possibly involving bribery?), he escaped to Munich and later to Brasilia. The publishing house Athos existed until March 1949 and was dedicated to theatrical and dance prints. Reimoser was also responsible for a series of dance books printed there. The editor of theatrical literature was Jaroslav Procházka, later active in Umění lidu. Online: <<http://www.slovník-nakladatelstvi.cz/nakladatelstvi/athos.html>> (accessed 14 October 2017).

4 Online: <<http://www.slovníkceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=1842>> (accessed 14 October 2017).

5 *Divadlo* [Theatre], *České lidové divadlo* [Czech folk theatre], *Otázky divadla* [Questions of Theatre], *Čs. dramaturgie* [Czechoslovak dramaturgy], *Loutková scéna* [Puppet scene].

6 The journal *Divadlo* was published until 1970.

7 Milan Kuna was replaced in this position by Miroslav Langášek from the fourth issue of the volume.

mentioned as one of the main topics for the new journal [Kuna 1963]. This policy was in fact retained until 1989 but, in particular periods, the proportion of attention paid to different fields of dance shifted, according to the changing ideological and social situation and also according to the preferences and interests of editors-in-chief. The most visible impact was the reduction of space devoted to social dancing and the continual growth of the importance of ballet and other stage dance reflections towards the end of the era. The folklore revival movement was always among the topics addressed by the journal, but to different degrees in different times. In 1963, the editorial board included several representatives of this movement such as Hana Laudová, Štefan Nosál, partly also Eva Kröschlová, Jana Hošková and František Pokorný. The editor-in-chief, Milan Kuna, was also personally involved in contemporary discussion about this field.

## The folklore revival movement in *Taneční listy*

In Reimoser's *Taneční listy* (1947–1950), the topic of the folklore dance revival movement was predominantly represented by articles about foreign (folk) dance cultures (French, Japanese, Polish or Soviet), by authors both Czech (Jožka Šaršeová, Libuše Hynková, Jan Reimoser) and foreign (Igor Moiseyev), and by historical and informative contributions, sometimes with exact depictions of certain dances which also included music scores. Similarly, there appeared articles by Czech and Slovak authors about “our” dances from specific regions, sometimes based on “field research” and usually with music and dance descriptions. These texts were written by “authorities”, such as the ethnographer and film director Karel Plicka, or by people deeply engaged in the revival movement such as Zora Šemberová, Jiřina Kovaříková (Mlíkovská) and Cyril Zálešák. Such texts did not appear in the later volumes.

Another field which was present during the whole existence of the journal constituted articles dedicated to the Strážnice folklore festival, competitions and similar events, dealing with critical reflection and discussion of their conception. In one of his articles, Cyril Zálešák addressed issues related to work in folk song and dance ensembles [Zálešák 1949]. A special topic was touched upon in the contribution entitled *Několik poznámek k problému přenesení lidového tance na jeviště* (A few notes on the transfer of folk dance onto the stage) written by Šárka Smetanová, at that point a student of choreography at the dance department of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. In her terminology, she discusses two different ways of handling folk dance on stage: stylization, and reassessment as the more creative process [Smetanová 1949:6].

In its revived form after 1963, *Taneční listy* featured a new frequent type of text: portraits of certain ensembles, normally on the occasion of their anniversary. The greatest attention was probably given to the Slovak ensemble Lúčnica and, from among the Czech ones, to the Josef Vycpálek Ensemble. The articles also sometimes took the form of an interview. Of exceptional value is the text *Co je Chorea Bohemica?* (What is Chorea Bohemica?) by Alena Skálová, in which the founder of the new ensemble and its choreographer explained the ensemble's orientation and topics [Skálová 1971]. The 1970s and 1980s saw the domination of reports about ensembles' foreign tours and participation in festivals abroad. Reports on performances by foreign folk dance groups in Czechoslovakia were also sometimes included.

Another type of text was formed by portraits/profiles/obituaries of leading personalities and interviews with them. A privileged position seems to have been that of Igor Moiseyev, whose several writings were published in the magazine, together with an interview with him, made by Jiří Blažek [Blažek 1975].

What was relatively rare were more detailed critical reviews of particular programmes and choreographies; however, evaluative reflections on the artistic/choreographic qualities of stage creations appeared in texts dealing with festivals, competitions and ensemble portraits.

Growing attention was paid to festivals (Strážnice, Poprad), competitions, and also related "scientific" events (symposia, seminars). These texts were a platform for discussing concepts, aims, the function and other aspects of the folklore revival (and especially folk song and dance ensembles), its position within the framework of so-called people's artistic creativity, socialist culture, society and arts. It was primarily in the 1960s that this debate was an important part of the content of the whole journal as one component of a broader debate.

The direction which was launched by Šárka Smetanová [Smetanová 1949] was developed through contributions dealing with questions of staging folk dances and "authenticity", for instance by Petr Novák, Zdena Jelínková and Hannah Laudová [Jelínková 1975]. Another topic addressed at a theoretical level was "folk dance and children".

The spectrum of authors was broad. The most active ones were people belonging to the revival movement (organizers and leaders of ensembles). Another large group consisted of people active as researchers, ethnographers, folklorists, sometimes musicologists, and aestheticians. Informative and "ideological" articles were normally written by people belonging to the editor's office. Among the few foreign authors, the most authoritative personalities were Igor Moiseyev and Ernő Pesóvar.

## Taneční listy – the volume of 1963 as case study

The journal *Taneční listy* was newly established in the specific cultural atmosphere of the 1960s, characterized in Czechoslovakia by the discussion of many fundamental principles of socialist ideology in areas such as politics, social life, culture and arts. This process – sometimes euphemistically labelled as “thaw” – also influenced the world of the folklore revival movement and its position and evaluation in the society of the time [Just 2010]. One of the most relevant questions connected with the domain of arts and so-called “people’s artistic creativity” was topicality and the ability to “speak to contemporary people”. This seems of special importance in folk art and the folklore revival movement: is it really possible to speak about the changing world, changing life conditions and changing experience of people through traditional culture? This fundamental question was touched upon many times in the course of the whole volume, from different positions and with different solutions.

The first volume of *Taneční listy* in 1963 reflected the intention to make it intellectually ambitious while addressing the most pressing issues of the time. As already noted, the main idea was to cover “all sorts of dance”. The folklore revival movement was incorporated to a large extent. Milan Kuna, the editor-in-chief, was also concerned with the topic; he published, for instance, his influential critical observations on the conception and content of the Strážnice folk festival in that year in the central political newspaper *Rudé právo*.<sup>8</sup> This article was reflected upon by some other authors in *Taneční listy* in 1963 and was understood as one of the important voices in the whole debate of the folklore revival movement of that time [Holý 1964].

Issues related to the folklore revival movement were included in some more general texts and put into a wider perspective. The first page contained an editorial by Milan Kuna and an essay by the aesthetician Antonín Sychra entitled *Několik postřehů o estetice tance* (Several observations on the aesthetics of dance) [Sychra 1963] which also included some thoughts on the folklore revival movement. He summarized the development of the so-called peoples’ creativity movement in the dance field, dividing it into three stages: 1948–1953 was a stage of the mass regeneration of folklore and the establishment of folk song and dance ensembles; 1953–1959 was a time of unrestrained, spontaneous en-

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8 Using the title *Soumrak nad Strážnicí* [The Dusk above Strážnice], Kuna critically evaluated the conservative and conventional dramaturgical conception of the programme as a whole and the traditionalistic performances (with little creativity) of renowned ensembles like Hradišťan or the Kapitán Jaroš Ensemble. Kuna, Milan. 1963. “Soumrak nad Strážnicí” [The Dusk above Strážnice]. *Rudé právo* 43(188, 10 July 1963): 3. Praha: ÚV KSČ. Online: <<http://archiv.ucl.cas.cz/index.php?path=RudePravo/1963/7/10/3.png>> (accessed 20 July 2018).

thusiasm for modern social dances, especially connected with jazz music, previously denounced from ideological points of view, happening outside the official control by the state institution responsible for coordinating and controlling people's leisure activities; and finally, the early 1960s in which the central activity of "small" theatres had developed, led by young artists under the influence of the idea of synthetic theatre.<sup>9</sup> The folklore revival movement, dominant in the first stage, had now become, due to dogmatism, a symbol of the hypocritical, inflated ideology and a target for satirical reflections. Sychra tried to harmonize the critical voices and future perspectives of the folklore revival by highlighting the positive ways in which the revival had contributed to dance: an expanded dance vocabulary, a wider circle of its amateur participants, the audiences' deepened understanding of dance, better awareness of the social function of dance in everyday life, the establishment of monumental folk feasts like the Strážnice festival, the establishment of what is understood as "national character" in Czech dance, attention to the diversity of traditions among different nations, and, in particular, new relationships among young people. He used typical argumentation and concepts in his proposals for solutions to the "problem" of folk song and dance ensembles and their performative, "artistic" activities. He maintained that traditional folk dance is inseparably bound to its authentic (historical) environment, ceremonies, life reality, making it impossible for it to be replanted easily into the modern big city with developed technology – its life requires a new mode of expression corresponding to the changed social needs. He also argued that tradition is not to be cast off because of this, but can serve as a source of invention for the new creativity. Giving a successful example of such a creative feat, he nevertheless named some choreographies of the professional army ensemble AUS VN that are based on folk dances (Dance of partisans), and not those by amateur folk song and dance ensembles.

The volume contains the whole representative scale of specialized texts dedicated to ensembles, personalities, festivals, foreign guests and the like. As a connecting link among them, reactions can be identified that belong to the debate

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9 The concept of synthetic theatre is related to the Wagnerian idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In the frame of the modernistic theatre it was used, for instance, by the Italian Futurists, namely in the *Manifesto of the Synthetic Futurist Theatre* of 1915, and by the Russian avant-garde theatre directors as Alexander Tairov. In his understanding the synthetic theatre is an organic connection of all kinds of stage arts (word, singing, pantomime, dance and circus), a harmonic permeation of them creating a monolithic artwork (*The notes of a director*, 1921) [Tairov 2005:19] In the context of the Czech avant-garde theatre it was developed both under the influence of Tairov's thinking (the Czech translation of his book was published in 1927 as *Odpoutané divadlo*) and the domestic aesthetic tradition (Otakar Hostinský, Jan Mukařovský and Prague Linguistic Circle). The theatrical work of the director Emil František Burian was understood as an example. The movement of the 1960s followed this line.

about the state of the revival movement provoked by the thoughts labelled as the “burden of folklore” which were formulated by Vladimír Mináč in his famous article [Mináč 1958]. The volume was mainly focused on the situation in Slovak folklore revival, but it found its response in the whole cultural domain of Czechoslovakia and formulated the basic ideas and opinions expressing common feelings associated with the mass and ideological handling of folklore and folk dance and music. One of the most problematic statements seemed to be the proclaimed absolute progressiveness of folk art, always and everywhere, in all its shapes and expressions, regardless of time and space, forever. This ideological idealization led to deformations and ignorance of the features deemed to be unsuitable “politically”: not only were defiance, sensibility, and simplicity considered to be desirable qualities that should be part of folk art, but some of its expressions were also judged as submissive, dependent on higher culture, primitive, banal and sentimental. The dogmatic view of folk art was considered the reason why some creations of folk ensembles were labelled as “operetta kitsch”. Consequently, the traditional art and folklore revival movement appeared to be fossilized and epigonic to many contemporary people. Mináč expressed his sceptical opinion that it is impossible to resurrect folk art through folk ensembles and competitions, that it had to disappear from real life and could only be maintained as exhibits in museums. With these statements Mináč touched a delicate point with many consequences in culture, politics, society and the arts. The following debate dealt with many matters fundamental to the ideological formation of the specificity of socialist culture, in which folk art played a central role, as it had been developed during the years after the communist takeover in February 1948. In the domain of dance, the main rival of the folk dance revival movement was modern social dance (twist and similar dances) and theatrical jazz dance, and partly (politically) rehabilitated modern dance (*Ausdruckstanz*).

In the pages of *Taneční listy*, this debate had many forms and included various attitudes, mirroring the confusing range of approaches and opinions. Of greatest importance were the informative text *Amatéri a tanec* (Amateurs and Dance) conveying the official, authoritative point of view of the Central Advisory Board for Dance as a body of state support and control; the interview *Co s folklórem?* (What to do with folklore?) featuring the choreographers Jiří Blažek (National Theatre Prague), Libuše Hynková (Czechoslovak State Ensemble of Songs and Dances) and Frank Townen (revue and show dance); the critical review *Příklad stále živý* (A Still Living Example) about the new staging of E. F. Burian’s pre-war piece *Vojna* (War) by the professional Czechoslovak State Ensemble of Songs and Dances (ČSSPT); Dušan Holý’s essay entitled *Životnost folklóru* (Viability of folklore); an unsigned portrait of the choreographer Alena Skálová; and finally Vladislav Stanovský’s essay *Strážnické varování* (Strážnice

Warning). The section dedicated to contributions from readers contained two texts dealing with the situation of folk dance ensembles.

It seems that it was František Pokorný who acted as the leading person, and the one who had initiated attention to questions concerning the further existence and development of folklore ensembles and the conception of their artistic creativity in this volume of *Taneční listy*.<sup>10</sup> He was personally involved in the situation as the founder of the Modern Dance Group belonging to the ensemble VUS (University Artistic Ensemble under Charles University in Prague) which had been transformed from a former group performing folk songs and dances. In 1962, he completed his study of the theory of dance at the dance department of AMU and, in the years that followed, he was intensively active as a reviewer. In the 1963 volume, he published the interview ‘What to do with folklore?’, in addition to his critical reviews of the staging of Burian’s *Vojna* and of the new programme of the Slovak ensemble *Lúčnica*, and an essay on competition in the artistic creativity of children and young people.

## New choreographic creativity based on folk dance

In the 1950s, the main aim of the newly established ensembles of folk songs and dances was proclaimed to be the collection of “authentic” folk songs and dances and, subsequently, their artistic appreciation and transformation into stage performances. Folk songs and dances were seen as products of the creative activity of the folk, meaning also (ordinary) working people, forming the ideological foundation of the new socialist society. It was proclaimed that folk creative activity will and must be revived to mirror the “progressive” changes in society. This was supposed to happen, in particular, through the so-called “new creativity” of the ensembles, based on traditional principles but with new, contemporary themes and a new socialist ethos.

Soon it was clear that this could not be accomplished by straightforward updating, by simply introducing motives of agricultural technology (such as a tractor) and new working relations in villages and factories, nor by trying to base their choreographic expression on the traditional dance material. Nevertheless, the “incantation” of the necessity of “new creativity” was repeated again and again, continuing into the next decade.

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10 František Pokorný (b. 1933), a dance theorist and reviewer, dancer and choreographer. He was a dancer in the folk ensemble of VUS, leader and choreographer of the modern dance group of VUS (1961-1969), ballet master and choreographer of the ballet group in the theatre in Liberec (1971-1993) [Holeňová 2001:259–260].

The debate in the 1963 volume of *Taneční listy* mirrors this through a whole range of texts and their authors. It was generally accepted that if the creativity of folk ensembles was to have any sense, it had to be strongly connected with contemporary life and the needs of contemporary people. This is formulated in several general texts. Vladislav Stanovský published, under the title *Strážnické varování* (Strážnice Warning) [Stanovský 1963], his critical and controversial reflection on the events of the 1963 Strážnice Festival, focusing on issues related to new creativity. He was sceptical as regards the possibility of expressing matters of the contemporary world through folk art. He wrote explicitly that the attempts to do this, performed at Strážnice, provided a warning against overestimating the potential of folklore and amateur folk ensembles in the context of contemporary arts. The idea of developing folklore into some sort of new socialist art was dismissed by Stanovský as politically glossy dreaming without any theoretical justification. He questioned the sense of developing and remaking folklore, as well as the effort to “arbitrarily pour new content into the folklore form”.<sup>11</sup>

The authors of the critical reviews based their evaluation on whether and to what extent the choreographers were able to find a creative solution to the issue. There were repeated dissatisfied commentaries on some of these attempts, pointing out that the solutions seemed to be too formal, with little organic connection between traditional material and new themes and dance means, with kitsch-like aesthetics and so on. On the other hand, examples of contemporary “good practice” were harder to find: these included some of the new choreographies of the Slovak ensemble *Lúčnica*, the *Hlubina* ensemble from Ostrava and mainly new choreographies by Alena Skálová for the *Josef Vycpálek Ensemble* (*Selský tanec, Husarský, Hory a lidé*). It was, nevertheless, not easy to formulate why these creations were valuable. Possible reasons included the ability of the creator to respect theatrical rules and principles, to create new movements in harmony with folk dance material, to find a stylistic unity between the traditional and the new, not to force folk dance to express thoughts outside its borders, and to respect and appropriately use the ethos of folk dance. A year later, Josef Jančář, writing in another journal, summarized three essential conditions for successfully “contemporizing” folk dance and music in the framework of artistic creativity. In his view, the elements to be staged were the following: knowledge of the folk legacy, knowledge of the development of contemporary arts, and artistic talent [Jančář 1964].

Leaders of ensembles, especially the small ones or those based in villages, asked for more exact explanation, on how they were expected to work and to

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11 „Ukázalo se, že do folklórní formy nelze libovolně nalévat nový obsah“ [Stanovský 1963:97–98].

meet these demands in their current work conditions, without the help of any professional (paid) choreographer, existing only thanks to the enthusiasm of local people mostly of the older generation that had grown up in the optimistic stage of the folklore revival movement in the 1950s [Koželuha 1963]. One attempt to solve this contradiction was made through the material from the meeting of the Central Advisory Board for Dance [-pný 1963]. According to these documents, it was necessary to divide the so-called people's dance creativity into three levels: dance as social entertainment; dance circles deeply rooted in the local society, retaining their importance as places of meeting with other people, but also with some performance activities on the local scene; and dance ensembles as the most developed form of people's dance creativity, with the focus on artistic aims. It was the responsibility of each collective body to make the decision as to on which level they wished to participate.

Probably the clearest explanation of his position in the debate was provided by František Pokorný in his review of *Vojna* (War), staged by the Czechoslovak State Ensemble of Folk Songs and Dances (ČSSPT) [Pokorný 1963a]. The original version of this theatrical piece with songs and dances by the composer and theatre director Emil František Burian was first staged by Burian in his theatre D 35 in 1935. He used folk texts from the collection of Karel Jaromír Erben, added his own musical score, with the choreography of numerous dances incorporated integrally into the whole piece by Saša Machov. The work was influenced by the ideas of the members of the structuralism-oriented Prague Linguistic Circle, especially by the thoughts of Piotr Bogatyriew about folk theatre. It was highly esteemed by audiences, theoreticians, and artists and was restaged several times after the war, also by Burian himself. The 1963 staging and choreography for the ČSSPT was by Nina Jirsíková, who had been involved as a dancer in the Burian/Machov version, and it was done very faithfully to their conception [Klívarová 2003]. In his review, Pokorný tried to identify the reasons why this "old" creation gave the impression of being much more recent than many contemporary pieces. He believed that the so-called renaissance of folklore after World War Two drew inspiration from the national movement of the nineteenth century with its romantic features, and also identified a link with the "scientific" attitude. The artistic productions of this period remained in the framework of the idealization of folk arts, in showing nice forms, and Czech national elements. Burian, by contrast, worked with the truthfulness, mettle and vitality of folk arts, using them as a poetic means, as expressive material for his creative ideas, deriving vital contrasts and contradictions from them all.

In a similar way, Pokorný continued in his critical reflection of the new programme of the Lúčnica ensemble, identifying, as the highest qualities, "de-romantization", the connecting of their dance – both in thoughts and dance shapes

– with the present times, relinquishing spectacular effects, and the non-pathetic simplicity of their performances [Pokorný 1963].

His opinions may serve as an example of the point of view based on a mixture of several factors: preference for folk dance, involvement in introducing new, modern dance styles (in his case jazz dance in particular) and emphasizing highly creative principles in choreography. This approach of his was shared, on the one hand, by the choreographer Alena Skálová, who was – in the late 1960s – the founder of a new type of folk dance ensemble (Chorea Bohemica) and a new choreographic style, and, on the other hand, by Pavel Šmok, a leading reformer of ballet choreography at that time and founder of Balet Praha, an “independent” (i.e. not belonging directly to any theatre) dance company.

## Conclusion

The volume of *Taneční listy* from 1963 is both typical and untypical. A detailed analysis of the texts raises a wide range of questions, some specific, some more general and shared by all volumes. Its specificity lies in the fact that it was the first volume of the newly revived journal, whose creators wanted to show its potential and concerns. The intensive attention to the folklore revival movement came out of the current situation. This debate continued on its pages during the 1960s and it was an integral part of the wider literary discourse on this field. This is evidenced, for example, by the study, noted above, by Dušan Holý, published in *Národopisné aktuality* in 1964 [Holý 1964], in which he reviewed the writings that had contributed to discussion over the previous five years, also quoting texts from the 1963 issue of *Taneční listy*.

Several questions arising from this discussion in general and the texts of *Taneční listy* from 1963 in particular seem to be of more general importance: 1) the role of the individuals, their personal skills, opinions, moral, social and political positions, underlined in Czech conditions by the fact that a relatively small number of people were engaged in literary reflection on dance – all of them were usually active in more than one field, serving as inter-mediators among them; such was the case of František Pokorný; 2) connections between the journal, its content and the political and social situation and the place of the journal in the discourse on the folklore revival movement. The first insight into the link between the opinions expressed in the articles and the ruling ideological tendencies indicates the existence of complicated relations as well as successions of actions and reactions, and which point the way towards stimulating further study.

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# Radio Broadcasting as Role Model, Authority and Norm in Czech Musical Folklorism in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century

*Zdeněk Vejvoda*

*Abstract:*

The presentation of Czech folk music in concerts and on stage from the 1950s to the 1990s is characterized by unprecedented dynamics, especially marked in the changing style of interpretation, which is now very different from the technologically imperfect recordings of Czech folk music made in authentic settings in the early twentieth century. Much was done to the arrangement of folk songs and instrumental melodies, by amateurs as well as musicians with a professional training, who, it is important to note, maintained contact with the folklore movement in general, unlike in pre-World War Two times. Of crucial importance has been radio broadcasting and the works of leading composers affiliated with professional radio orchestras. In Bohemia, these personalities included Zdeněk Bláha, Zdeněk Lukáš, Jan Málek, Vladimír Baier, Jaroslav Krček and Josef Krček, to name but a few. In 1953, the regional studio of the Czechoslovak Radio saw the establishment of the Plzeň Folk Ensemble which recruited players from the radio symphonic orchestra. The style of play of its prominent instrumentalists and the style of singing of a number of its solo members has, up to the present day, been considered a role model for the interpretation of regional folklore.<sup>1</sup>

*Keywords:*

folklorism, folklore movement, radio broadcasting, Plzeň, Plzeň Folk Ensemble

Anyone listening to and analysing authentic historical recordings of Czech folk music, mostly made in the short period of the first third of the twentieth century, will inevitably feel the need to explore the development of the musical style of ensembles and bands in the context of what is known as the folklore movement, which came to prominence after World War Two. It is important to emphasise that in Bohemia – unlike Moravia – there was, with very few exceptions, a lack of continuity. Members of newly established folk music groups had no direct experience with authentic bands active in the region that performed songs and music in traditional contexts, since they had by then become historical. Therefore, the newly established bands were forced to rely primarily on written records of folk songs and dance melodies from the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries and only very occasionally did they carry out their own organized research by interviewing contemporary witnesses from rural areas. Fur-

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thermore, rare historical sound recordings remained inaccessible to the general public for a long time, due to technical reasons. It was not until much later that some of them were released in a series of gramophone anthologies [Bláha and Markl 1963; Bláha 1972; Soukup 1976] and not until recently that a complete annotated edition came out in digital format [cf. Tyllner 2001; Kratochvíl 2009]. It is, therefore, symptomatic that those urban folklore ensembles established following World War Two claimed, on the one hand, that the most important criterion was authenticity and the need to preserve manifestations of folk culture, while at the same time they systematically created a completely new style of interpretation. Importantly, they continued in the traditions of authorial stylizations in theatre, dance and music created in the period between the two world wars. Naturally, they also responded to scientific findings as well as the cultural, social and political context of the day, which – this being the 1950s – meant enormous Soviet influence. Therefore, the *Škoda Plzeň Folk Ensemble*, simulating the Prague-based *Josef Vycpálek Ensemble*, had a huge orchestra, a choir, solo singers, and a group of dancers who, drawing inspiration from the Russian choreographer Igor Moiseyev, used motifs from various Czech and Moravian regions as well as from other parts of Europe, including Russian dances. The Soviet influence, however, did not become a permanent feature of Czech amateur folklorism, having waned by the 1960s.

An absolutely crucial role, however, in the formation of folklore ensembles and bands was played by radio broadcasting and the composers active in professional radio orchestras and bands. Moravia and Silesia had their own regional radios in Brno and Ostrava respectively, which were served by the bands *BROLN* (*Brno Radio Orchestra of Folk Instruments*, founded in 1952) and *Technik* (founded in 1958). As for Bohemia, the only regional studio with its own band was that of the Plzeň Czechoslovak Radio and its *Plzeň Folk Ensemble* (founded in 1953).

The Czechoslovak Radio in Plzeň started to broadcast just a few hours after the town was liberated by the United States Army in May 1945. Over time, it became a truly unique regional radio station thanks to, among other things, the presentation of musical folklore. The beginning of broadcasting in Plzeň was made possible by leading personalities associated with music culture and ethnography in the West Bohemian Region. The musicologist Antonín Špelda (1904–1989) who organized and popularized music events in the town, was appointed first music editor. Several others joined the team in 1945, including Oldřich Blecha (1892–1951), a composer and collector of folk songs remembered for creating the first signature tune of the station, using motifs from the popular folk song *Chytila má milá sýkorku* [My beloved girl has caught a titmouse]. Other eminent ethnographers and historians associated with the dawn of radio broadcasting in Plzeň include Karel Rodina (1884–1969), Marie Ulčová (1925–1998), František Svato-

pluk Homolka (1890–1972), Ladislav Lábek (1882–1970), Fridolín Macháček (1884–1954), Alexandr Berndorf (1889–1969), Jiří Kajer (1904–1969), Rudolf Svačina (1900–1997) and numerous others.

Among the specific programmes broadcast by the Plzeň Radio in the first year of its existence was a successful series called “*radio practice of folk dances from the Chodsko region under the tutorship of Milada Pučeliková and with a bagpipe accompaniment by Stanislav Svačina*” [Klausnerová 2005:20]. The Radio also broadcast dozens of “ethnographic programmes” featuring music and folk stories and live performances by folk singers and small groups. Just a few of these programmes from the mid-1940s to the late 1980s can be found in the Plzeň Radio’s archives of music documentary programmes.

It is equally interesting, at this point, to consider the role played by regional studios – and tolerated by the central management of the Czechoslovak Radio – in serving as documentation centres for folk music; this was especially important in the first few decades after World War Two, when state-of-the-art recording technology was by no means accessible, even to specialist scientific institutions. The broad spectrum of the team’s activities is evident from the profile of the newly established department, written at the time of its establishment. An independent folklore department of the Plzeň Radio was founded in 1954 in order to “survey musical folklore in the regions of West Bohemia and South Bohemia, make field recordings of authentic carriers of musical folklore and subsequently broadcast them” [Klausnerová 2005:24; Vondráčková 2002:41].

The Plzeň Radio archives still hold – despite several waves of destruction caused by repeated use of magnetic carriers that were hard to come by – 22 hours of top-quality recordings of authentic forms of folk music and singing made between the late 1940s and the 1980s [cf. Vejvoda 2013; 2015]. Especially valuable is the collection featuring singers and players from the Chodsko region near the town of Domažlice in the Bavarian-Bohemian borderlands. Recordings were also made, however, by the technical staff of the Plzeň Radio in the foothills of the Šumava mountains, in the environs of Plzeň as well as during the first several years of the major folklore festivals in West and South Bohemia (The Chodsko Festivities held in Domažlice since 1955; the International Bagpipe Festival held in Strakonice since 1967).

Let us now turn to the versatile personality of Zdeněk Bláha (born 1929), who served as music editor of the Plzeň Radio for four decades. He has also left his mark as a composer, collector of folk songs and dances, founder of several distinguished groups and bands (*Úsměv/The Smile* from Horní Bříza, *Konrádyho dudácká muzika/Konrády’s Bagpipe Band*), and is generally remembered as a vital personality in musical folklorism in West Bohemia. He is the author of numerous music publications and memoirs, but was equally successful as a TV script-

writer and festival dramaturg. The results of his documentation and collection activities being used by the recording company Supraphon to design and implement a project of gramophone anthologies of folk music from Bohemia and the Chodsko region. Most of his activities, however, were associated with the Plzeň Radio, for which he prepared several series of folk music programmes; the best-known of them all was called *Hrají a zpívají Plzeňáci* (Music and songs performed by Plzeň folk musicians), which was broadcast nationally once a week for an impressive 40 years from 1958 to 1998 [Vejvoda 2011:154–157].

The success of these programmes meant that top-quality recordings of folk songs were desperately needed. Therefore, as early as 1953, members of the radio symphonic orchestra, i.e. solely professional musicians, came together to form a chamber studio group called *Plzeňský lidový soubor* (*The Plzeň Folk Ensemble*) (1953–1996). Its regular collaborators included the mixed choir *Česká píseň* (*The Czech Song*) (1954–1990) and, more importantly, several solo singers, most of whom came from the newly-established folklore ensembles: Václav Švík, Věra Rozsypalová, Zora Soukupová, Jiří Pospíšil, Eva Pecková, Jiří Bárta, Václav Dolejš, Jana Kopřivová, Michal Polcar and others. Occasional guest appearances were also made by singers with professional vocal training affiliated with the Plzeň theatre and other music-oriented institutions: Jaromír Horák, Jiří Miegel and Věra Příkazská.

Over the years, the Plzeň Radio orchestras and bands were led by some excellent creative artists, such as the composers and conductors Zdeněk Lukáš, Jaroslav Krčec, Jan Málek (born 1938) and Zdeněk Bláha [cf. Vejvoda 2015:140–143].

The person most associated with the early days of folklore at the Plzeň Radio was Zdeněk Lukáš (1928–2007), a versatile music personality with a flair for arranging Czech musical folklore and the person who found and mentored Zdeněk Bláha. A graduate of teacher training in Prague, Lukáš took private lessons in composition from Jaroslav Řídký and Miloslav Kabeláč. He left behind a huge oeuvre including over 350 compositions and numerous arrangements of folk songs and dances. His unparalleled gift for working with sung text was put to excellent use in his choral pieces, cantatas and song cycles. His instrumental compositions are rich in fresh melodies and imaginative instrumentation (concertos, orchestral works, and chamber music), while his symphonic works comprise over twenty pieces, seven of which are symphonies. His most acclaimed stage works are operas *Falkenštejn* and the musical comedy *Věta za větu* (Measure for Measure). Despite an undeniable measure of originality, Lukáš's entire oeuvre reflects his very deep understanding of, and familiarity with, Czech folk culture. His method of composition reflects his inborn musicality and infatuation with Czech folklore. Lukáš served in multiple positions at the Plzeň Radio, includ-

ing music editor (1953–1964), conductor of the *Plzeň Folk Ensemble*, founder (in 1954) and leader for eighteen years of the mixed choir *Česká píseň*. His compositions and folk song arrangements remain to be valued for their originality of stylization and innovation, especially in form, harmony and instrumentation. Impeccable rendition and perfect musical as well as technical performance were inseparable parts of the recordings that he produced. In 1964–1975 Lukáš was choirmaster and leader of the female singing group of the Prague-based *Czechoslovak State Ensemble of Songs and Dances*, composing for, among others, the Prague-based *Josef Vycpálek Ensemble*, *State Ensemble of Songs and Dances*, and *BROLN* [Vejvoda 2007; Vondrušková 2000:28].

Another prolific and multifarious composer is Jaroslav Krček (born 1939). A graduate from a teacher training preparatory school in České Budějovice and from the State Conservatory in Prague (conducting and composition), Krček is a versatile musician, singer and producer of musical instruments. His arrangements of folk music carry distinction and a substantial amount of stylization without losing vivacity and spontaneity. Krček's ensembles have been noted for their performance excellence. This is especially true of *Chorea Bohemica* (1967–1987) and *Musica Bohemica* (since 1975), the latter being the only contemporary Czech professional body to specialize in folk music. While still in his native town of České Budějovice, Krček joined the band of the ensemble *Úsvit* (*The Dawn*), whose solo singers he continued to cooperate with in later years when working for the radio. While studying in Prague, he established a small band within the *Josef Vycpálek Ensemble*. He joined the Plzeň Radio in 1961, serving as music director and, simultaneously, conductor of the *Plzeň Folk Ensemble*. In 1967 he switched to the Prague-based state music publisher Supraphon, working as a director. Since the mid-1970s, he has been active as a performer and composer. His oeuvre comprises folklore arrangements as well as symphonic, chamber and vocal compositions, including nine symphonies, numerous concertos, operas and oratorios [Krček 2011; Vondrušková 2000:23–24].

Another innovative musical personality remembered as a long-time radio director, successful composer and arranger of folk songs is Jan Málek (born 1938). A graduate of the Prague State Conservatory, he replaced his former classmate Jaroslav Krček as a music director of the Czechoslovak Radio in Plzeň for a short period in 1963, later switching to music dramaturg and supervisor of the newly established electroacoustic laboratory. In 1965, Málek replaced Zdeněk Lukáš as dramaturg of the Plzeň Radio Orchestra. His oeuvre comprises a range of orchestral, chamber, vocal and vocal-instrumental works. Their melodies were inspired by early music and folk music as well as the establishment of the electroacoustic laboratory in Plzeň. Responding to the radio contest Prix De Musique Folklorique De Radio Bratislava, Málek wrote - in 1974 - *Invention No. 3 for the Bag-*

*pipe*, an electronic piece using the motifs of a West Bohemian folk song, featuring Zdeněk Bláha as the sole performer. The other piece that Málek wrote for Bláha was the *Concerto for Bagpipe, Strings, Timpani and Percussion*. Málek continued to write for the *Plzeň Folk Ensemble* after moving to Prague, where he served as music director in 1976–2017 [Martínková 2014:55–82].

In the four decades, the above-mentioned personalities affiliated with the Plzeň Radio produced 2,000 recordings on tapes, a total of approximately 100 hours of authorarrangements of folk songs and instrumental dance melodies. The sound of most of these recordings, i.e. the arrangements, instrumentation, the singers' and instrumentalists' style of interpretation, was – and in musical folklorism still is, to a large extent – considered to be a role model.

Although *the Plzeň Folk Ensemble* relied on a diversity of authors – besides those just mentioned, it is only fair to name the composers Jan Slimáček (born 1939), Jiří Teml (born 1935), Josef Krček (born 1946) and the ethnographer and bandmaster Vladimír Baier (1932–2010) – the ensemble has had, since at least the second decade of its existence, its own distinctive style of interpretation. The “Plzeň” style lies mainly in the dramaturgy of the recordings, which has always been in the hands of Zdeněk Bláha, who drew from collections of folk songs and dances from the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries (Karel Jaromír Erben, Josef Vycpálek, Čeněk Holas, Karel Weis, Jindřich Jindřich) in addition to his own collections that he made in the Plzeň region from the 1950s to the 1970s. The authors adopted a similar approach when doing music arrangements, influenced, undoubtedly, by the views of their teacher of composition at the Prague conservatory, the composer Miloslav Kabeláč (1908–1979), an esteemed personality in Czech music circles. Kabeláč and his pupils used harmonies sparingly, which was compensated by a natural abundance of rhythms and melodies, respecting the basic dance types and historical layers of Czech musical folklore. There was occasional innovation – if less usable by amateur folklore performers – in instrumentation which went beyond the traditional Czech instrumental set-up of bagpipe and string bands that relied on woodwind instruments. The original compositions also sometimes featured brass, harp, harpsichord, percussion and other instruments. On the other hand, compositions based on folk motifs, especially their transparent musical form, and sometimes masterful instrumental and vocal interpretation of the radio recordings, are considered to be role models, both by performers and authors affiliated with non-professional folklore ensembles.

It is also worth pointing out that typically for Plzeň and the entire region, the personalities involved in the Radio orchestra were also active in amateur ensembles: for example, Zdeněk Bláha has been leader of the ensemble *Úsměv* from Horní Bříza since as early as 1958; moreover, he was one of the found-

ers of *Konrády's Bagpipe Band* from Domažlice in 1955 and has cooperated as an author with the ensemble *Škoda* based in Plzeň (known today as *Mladina*), *Šumava* from Klatovy, *Rokytky* from Rokycany and other folklore groups. He has also left his mark on the interpretation style of the ensemble *Jiskra* from Plzeň. Jaroslav Krček and Josef Krček are authors of most of the repertoire of *Škoda (Mladina)* and have influenced many others beyond the Plzeň region. And Vladimír Baier, the sole composer of *Konrády's Bagpipe Band*, cooperated with all the bands in the Chodsko region, helping shape the way bagpipe music is presented in the whole region of West and South Bohemia and in Prague.

Interviews with those involved in the Czech folklore movement in the second half of the twentieth century point to the profound influence exerted by important personalities, outstanding in their multiple roles as organizers and artists, and to the irreplaceable authority held by certain institutions, including counseling and training centres at all levels which initiated and organized educational workshops and contests. When analysing various sources and the interviews to explore the ways in which Czech folk music was presented by folklore ensembles, we come across, again and again, is the appearance of natural authorities, primarily composers, singers and instrumentalists, whose participation in the ensembles was indeed made possible by cooperation with cultural and social institutions.

Finally, when considering what institutions had the biggest influence on the arrangement and interpretation of Czech musical folklore, the inevitable conclusion is that, apart from the state-run music publishers Supraphon and Panton or the Czechoslovak Television whose interest in folk music was somewhat marginal, the most influential institution over the last half-century was undoubtedly the Czechoslovak Radio and some of its regional studios.

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# Politically Committed Songs: A Distinctive Product of the Czech Folk Revival Movement of the 1950s

*Lucie Uhlíková*

*Abstract:*

The beginning of the Communist totalitarian era in then Czechoslovakia brought with it political declarations of a new historical epoch and a new worldview, one whose rise was to be facilitated, among other ways, by a retooling of culture. The ideologists of the period saw folk culture as an ideal platform: as the artistic expression of the ‘suppressed’, stripped of any exclusivity or individualism – ‘art created by people for people’. Folklore was misused more than other areas because the folk revival movement was transformed into a strong propaganda tool. ‘New folk art’ in the spirit of socialist realism demanded new songs that would reline traditional forms with contemporary content, oftentimes with political or propaganda undertones. Songs of love and the joys of working in collective fields, of the wonders of the tractor and the harvester, may seem comical today, but they are a sad memento of the time. As contemporary folklore research indicates, these propaganda ‘folksongs’ were composed primarily by members of politically active folk ensembles. Despite this, these were creative individuals closely tied to the live tradition, and their composition took place within that framework.<sup>1</sup>

*Keywords:*

folklore revival movement in the Czech Lands, totalitarianism, propaganda folk songs, political song, communist ideology

The creation of the Communist totalitarian system in Czechoslovakia is linked with proclamations about a new historical epoch, that of the government by the people. The political doctrine declared the building of a new, righteous order, which required a new man and new mentality, which in turn required a new culture. It is a generally known fact that it was folk culture that became, in the eyes of ideologists, an ideal platform for the creation of a new culture; it was presented as an artistic manifestation of the people in the sense of the socially oppressed working class, which was exploited first under feudalism and then under capitalism. Following the Soviet model, folklore was presented as a specimen cultural model, “the art created by the people for the people” [Machov 1948:122], the most distinct manifestation of national culture, the art accessible to everyone, a counterpart to capitalist culture which was “with no ideas”, “nation-void”

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and “cosmopolitan” [Havlíček 1951:5], and intended for the privileged classes (that is, bourgeois classes in the communist discourse). Consequently, the folklore movement became a powerful weapon of political propaganda. The folklore movement in the Czech context was comprised of associations and groups which originated in and after the late nineteenth century, which aimed at maintaining and presenting folk traditions (such as folk songs, dances, costumes and various festivities connected to the folk church and agricultural year) as leisure time activities. Institutions were established for methodological guidance of the folklore movement and for the supervision of individual subjects. Ideological frames were applied to help approach traditional folk culture, with special concern to distinguish progressive and principled traditions from reactionary traditions. All things that reflected any aspects of religion were completely taboo [cf. Pavlicová and Uhlíková 2013:32, 37–38].

What are the new life conditions in which our [folklore] ensembles grow? Before we answer this, let's remind ourselves of what was the foundation like from which the old ethnographic circles, groups and folkloristic clubs grew. The key ideas for associations of this type were maintaining and preserving 'ethnographic and original' peculiarities. This was a basic misunderstanding of folk art and artistic creativity in general. [...] Folk art represents an uninterrupted creative process, reflecting and picturing people's lives, their struggle for a better life, and so it directly embodies the class struggle. [...] The Church and the whole capitalist system were satisfied when people remained at the same level of development, when people lived the old way in their original culture, because they could be better manipulated and exploited. Nevertheless, our people's democratic state, which has embarked on its path to socialism, creates completely different conditions of life. [...] Our people's democratic regime, following the Stalinist national politics, directly requires us to study, learn, and develop the folk culture of individual areas and adapt it into the new social and economic conditions [Bonuš 1951:12–13].

The “new art by the people” under socialist realism also required a new song formation; it made use of **traditional forms**, but added **updated content**, often politically flavoured and propagandist. The propagandist texts of the period characterize the new folk song as a song which had grown from what was called progressive folk traditions, from the “optimistic” culture of the people, which nevertheless did not avoid the “fighting spirit” and “revolutionary content” [Havlíček 1951:5]. To fulfil this mission, songs were used from the times

when labour was compulsory, and outlaw songs were presented as a reflection of the class struggle under feudalism. However, that part of folk traditions was not enough: life under the new conditions required, according to totalitarian ideologists, new songs which would reflect up-to-date development. Therefore, folklore ensembles were supposed to present 'the new face of the creativity of our people', depicting the transformation of the 'backward' rural areas into 'progressive' cooperative settlements; the repertoire also included topics which reflected the work of workers in factories or the exemplary military service of soldiers in the Czechoslovak People's Army in defending peace. The nation still had vivid memories of the tragic World War Two experience, and people therefore sang and danced under slogans about life in peace, a joyous future, and common work which would rid individuals of their heavy life's fate, and about the building of a righteous society without any oppression.

It is necessary to stress at this point that the formation of new songs in the spirit of folk tradition was nothing new, especially in some Moravian regions. Despite the fast destruction of traditional singing occasions, the customary practice of song creation had never ceased there; nevertheless, in the period between the two world wars the practice accepted, under the influence of the folklore movement, certain new elements, gradually transforming itself into a specific and intentional composition activity, which had nothing to do with the traditional variation process.<sup>2</sup> The authors of these songs were considered anonymous, or more precisely, they were known to a very limited group of people; they composed their songs intentionally within the collectively shared tune and lyrics normativity and typification [Tyllner 2007:485]. Hence their songs were created and accepted as 'folklore' songs; while passing from person to person, the lyrics and tunes would be transformed (gaining the form which best suited the taste of their bearers), and many of them became popular. The politically committed song formation of the 1950s represented an entirely new type of folklore composition: on

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2 Folklore creativity is above all connected with a combination of details given by the tradition, with a new whole originating from their new arrangement. The creation of new song variants involved, in particular, rearranging of stanzas, linking different song lyrics (i.e. song contamination), completing new lines or whole stanzas to the already known songs, or composing new tunes to the already known lyrics. At the far end of the scale of possibilities, there is the origin of completely new songs, which is the top form of variability [Gelnar and Sirovátka 1967:188]. Nevertheless, an author does not strive to compose an original piece: he composes within the limits of tradition. This comprises of a complex of norms introduced and established over the last several hundred years, which determines the style and content unity of folklore manifestations. Besides folklore creativity, the list can also include unintentional or 'false' song variations which are connected predominantly with the singers' bad memory, as well as unwitting and accidental deviation of the text or tune, which reflects fluctuation typical of any collective singing act from everyday culture.

the one hand, it continued to use especially the above mentioned normativity and typification of tunes (the melodies copied folk tradition distinctly, and sometimes the melodies were directly taken from older folk songs), and song lyrics worked with the basic morphological and semantic features (motifs, idioms, dialects); on the other hand, the songs assumed an entirely new ideological flavour and a direct and open propaganda function. It is this function that was the main reason behind the short life of the songs. There is nothing as ephemeral as (politically) committed culture.

The core themes of the new songs included economic progress which was linked to the establishment of cooperative farms in the countryside; less frequent themes worked with the motif of peace (symbolized by the image of a dove) (see Appendix for the songs “The White Dove” and “The Little Dove”); there were also songs which celebrated the new regime and its representatives (see Appendix for the song “Oh, the Little Red Star”), and songs about work in factories, mines and in the army. The analysis of song lyrics makes it possible to identify prevailing motifs almost instantly. Gradually, the motifs developed into clichés. The core clichéd themes included the following:

General prosperity (everybody is well off, everybody is equally rich)

Freedom (social equality, nobody gives orders to anybody)

Desire for peace

Rejection of the past (the old ways of management)

The joy of collective work

Socialist work competition

The appeal for joining a cooperative farm or working group

The revelation of those who have refused to participate in collective work

The use of new agricultural machinery

The ploughing up of ridges.

The individual motifs have shown convincingly that the new folk songs were primarily an ideological weapon aimed at the rural population. Farmers were in a different position than (factory) workers. The collectivization of the countryside meant that they lost all their possessions (land, farming animals, and agricultural machines). This is also why frequent performances were targeted at rural audiences and were done by folklore ensembles or smaller groups called agit-prop cultural brigades or *agitky*.<sup>3</sup> *Agitky* were formed either inside folklore en-

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3 The term *agitka* (pl. *agitky*) is a non-standard Czech term, a shortened form of the expression for cultural agitation. As one of the important protagonists of the 1950s folklore movement recalls, the “*agitky* were moveable, technically undemanding and politically versatile acts com-

sembles, or independently. Not surprisingly, many independent *agitky* gradually turned into an ensemble.

We were told by the party members that as an ensemble we should do this and that. Seeing that things go wrong in a certain community, we should entertain or amuse them, so they would be more receptive. In a way it was something like an agitation. I was a young girl then and I saw it like that. Well, and the gathering which followed in the village always surpassed our expectations, it always went more smoothly [...], we were received well everywhere, without any swearing at us. [...] So, this travelling from village to village was called culture *agitky*.

Interview with a woman (born 1937),  
a former member of the Jasénka folk ensemble

When considering the surviving sources and folkloristic research from the 1950s<sup>4</sup>, it is obvious that the authors of the tendentious 'folk' songs were mostly members of the foremost politically active folklore ensembles, i.e. ensembles which rigorously went down the path of following the cultural politics of the period. Ensembles united under the *ZUČ*<sup>5</sup> were required to fulfil three basic tasks:

1. Each ensemble was required to come with firm and clear cultural and political lines, which should "enable them to fulfil all tasks they are facing in the building of socialism". Only artistic forms were recommended which would express such a premiere task "fully and clearly". The ensembles were required to learn the method of socialist realism, and adopt it into their own activities;

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prising several singers, an MC, and a guitar player or accordion player – the line-up was unlimited in its make-up; they accompanied political agitators travelling to villages, performed at meetings on the occasion of the establishment of new *JZD* farms (United Farmers' Cooperatives), and also offered short culture sketches: short campaign performances, which were to highlight and make important the meeting of trade union members, Youth union members, and various gatherings, as well as to enrich the programme of workers during their factory leave" [Pavlišťík in Pavlicová and Uhlíková 2008:190].

- 4 There were printed song books of the new folk songs, magazines and newspapers, and works in folklore focused directly on the authors of the new people's songs (such as [Havlíček 1952; Kadlčíková 1953; Hrabalová 1954; Stiborová 1959; 1960; Thořová-Stiborová 1968; and Thořová 1971]).
- 5 Apart from the folklore ensembles, the term *ZUČ* (zájmová umělecká činnost, the Czech for artistic special interest activities) applied generally to all non-professional dance, music, and theatre groups, and song choirs.

2. The ensembles were expected to initiate a revival of popular creativity in the broadest possible layers of society, to develop new forms of popular entertainment, and to be responsible for transferring experience to less developed ensembles;
3. The ensembles were expected to process their experience (to conduct a critical assessment of their work), and folklore ensembles in particular were expected to process folklore material [Bonuš 1951:3].

The ensembles were required to compose new songs which would fit the second objective above, i.e. to develop new forms of popular entertainment (implying entertainment for the working masses). Some of the authors of new songs came from an environment with surviving residues of folk traditions, and, working within the folk tradition, they composed politically committed songs as well as purely apolitical songs [cf. Havlíček 1952; Hrabalová 1954; Stiborová 1959; Thořová 1971]. Their songs reveal a tight link to the tradition: despite the authors' credits, the songs reveal folk motivation and idioms. However, they also used forced arrangements of folk song lyrics, typical of the period.

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| <p>1. Ej, žito, žito,<br/>zlatóčký žito,<br/>pod'me, má milá,<br/>sežneme my ho.</p>   | <p>1. Oh, the rye, the rye<br/>The golden rye<br/>Let's go, my sweetheart<br/>And cut it down.</p>      |
| <p>2. Co bych chodila<br/>a se trápila,<br/>kombajner přijel,<br/>hlópá bych byla.</p> | <p>2. Why should I go<br/>Why worry myself<br/>A combine operator has arrived<br/>I would be a fool</p> |
| <p>3. Žitko nám sežne,<br/>ba i vymlátí,<br/>naše JZD<br/>bude bohatý.</p>             | <p>3. He will cut down our rye<br/>He will trash it too<br/>Our cooperative,<br/>Will become rich.</p>  |

(Anonymous new song)

1. Vyletěl ptáček přes to polečko družstevní,  
doněš on do dědiny pěkné pozdravení.
2. Počujte, lidé, co ptáček zpívá pod oknem,  
že už brázdy rozorali, ej, chlapci traktorem.
3. Nech rozorali, šak teho bylo potřeba,  
aby měli šeci lidé věcí krajíc chleba.

1. A little bird flew out across the cooperative field  
Bringing fine greetings to our village.
2. Oh, folks, listen to the little bird, it is singing below a window  
That the boys have ploughed furrows with tractors.
3. Let them plough, it was necessary  
In order to provide everybody with a bigger slice of bread.

(By Fanoš Mikulecký)

In general, the new campaigning songs were not always anonymous; credits are frequently given, and very often there were two people involved in creating a song: one writing the lyrics and the other composing the melody [Pecháček 2010:108]. The two aspects are the most distinct feature of the new folk song formation, compared to that of the folk tradition. Obviously, there were two possible ways of composing new songs. On the one hand, there were gifted individuals coming from the traditional background who composed songs spontaneously, with no cooperation with anybody else; on the other hand, there were formally trained individuals coming from the field of literature or music: for instance, Harry Macourek<sup>6</sup>, representing the Czechoslovak State Ensemble of Songs and Dances, was a professionally educated composer and his motivation was completely different from that of a village musician. The politically committed folk songs as such represent a group comprising both plain emulations/updates of folk songs, and songs which reflect other genres: the *chastushka*<sup>7</sup> and the mass song<sup>8</sup>.

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6 Harry Macourek, born Karel Macourek (1923–1992), a Czech music composer, conductor, music editor, and choir master of Slovak origin. During his lifetime he was active in various genres and styles of music, ranging from popular music and jazz to stage music and classical music. In the early 1950s, he was conductor of the Czechoslovak State Ensemble of Songs and Dances, serving at the same time, from 1950, as conductor and artistic leader of The Julius Fučík Ensemble. He is the author of many songs with politically committed topics. Macourek represented the generation of the post-1948 February “youth” musicians and civil servants, who followed the ideology of the period and related ideas concerning the form of popular music (inspired by folklore, the Soviet variety show, accessibility, and politically committed art, and more) [Poledňák 2003].

7 The term *chastushka* entered the Czech language with the coming of the Soviet Army at the end of War World II. It was introduced in 1889 by Russian writer Gleb Uspensky as the denotation of a specific poetic form of Russian folklore. It is a 4-line ditty, which works as a coherent whole ending with a punchline [Vrabcová 1954:6–7]. Originally, the *chastushka* used to be about love, later the content was humorous and satirical, becoming predominantly propagandist in the Soviet era.

8 The mass song: a form of collective singing typical of the proletarian movement, and a type of song genre promoted later by the totalitarian regimes of communist countries. Typically, it is

Perhaps the best known author of politically committed folk songs was Anežka Gorlová (1910-1993). A native of Boršice in the Slovácko region, Gorlová was a versatile personality (a storyteller, writer, embroiderer, painter of toys and decorations, among many other activities), composing over 70 song lyrics mostly on topical social and political themes, many of which were published<sup>9</sup>. Gorlová composed her songs or lyrics using folk tunes or her own melodies, although the credits to most of the melodies contain names of other people. The author revealed her motivation in her personal account [cf. Gorlová 1953; 1955], confessing that her work grew out of her inner need to come to terms with the social situation in the village in her day: “[With my songs], I would reflect the passage of time and the problems it brought, which I wanted to solve, and manage the situation with my songs. I would notice everything that was part of human life: the changing family relations, the backward superstitiousness, slanderous talks; I commented on the necessity to do the harvest properly, to maintain agricultural machines properly, and to increase work effort; I did highlight the love for work to the hearts of people, as well as the power and strength of the people in the struggle against the initiators of a new war, and our civic duties towards the state” [Gorlová 1955:8]. Gorlová’s reflections make it obvious that she also pondered about the historical development of the folk song; she understood the folk song to be a value which had to be protected and maintained; at the same time, she saw it as an anachronism in a way, which did not respond to the current needs of the society and life. That is why she decided to develop the cultural heritage of ancestors: “Why should it not be possible to compose and sing the new – and at the same time also our – folk songs? Since time immemorial, our people have composed songs and sung about all their joys and sorrows. [...] Why shouldn’t we compose new folk songs with the same mission? There are so many things around us which please or disturb us anyway” [Gorlová in Havlíček 1951:9].

The personal accounts provided by Gorlová and the confessions given by many others who followed her or responded to the calls of cultural institutions give rise to the inevitable question of how to understand their content or to what

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a song in the form of a march with an austere, declamatory melody performed by singing choirs. Gradually, the mass song developed into many different forms associated with many specific and thematic areas [Kotek and Fukač 1997].

- 9 The songs by Gorlová were published, among other publications, in these Czech songbooks: *Dobré je* [Everything is fine] (Prague 1954), *Veselo muziko, ešče lepši bude* [Be merry, music, there will be better times] (Prague 1954), and in songbooks dedicated to Gorlová only, such as *Nech sa dobre darí* [Let everything go well] (Prague 1951), *Písně Anežky Gorlové* [The songs of Anežka Gorlová] (Prague 1955), *Dožínky* [Harvest] (Beroun 1976), *Písně a říkanky naší vesnice* [The songs and rhymes of our village] (Prague 1979).

extent the songs represented the real individual accounts. Did the songs correspond to the real attitudes and opinions of the authors, or did they just mirror the official cultural doctrine full of phrases about ways to produce a better, happier society in which everybody would be equal? The emergence of the politically committed song was driven by an external impulse, and it can certainly be claimed that, with some exceptions, there was no spontaneous folk creativity in the beginning. The new songs were promoted heavily, with their formation required by cultural institutions which directed the whole folklore movement methodically. Contests were set up to compete for the best new song, with successful authors and their songs praised publicly and in the media. The songs were staged, broadcast, and published in print. From today's point of view, it is difficult to say which and how many of the authors really expressed their own feelings and which of them were less sincere, aiming at benefits and praises only. It is very likely that many of the authors just accommodated the numerous demands for folklore ensemble activity: apart from rehearsing and practising songs and dances, they were required to give evidence of their exemplary approach to work, the number of hours spent doing voluntary work, the completion of crash courses in culture and politics, the administration of a chronicle of their ensemble, and many more.

The analysis of the new songs published in the period songbooks brings interesting findings. Apart from songs with an up-to-date campaigning content, there are many songs plainly composed in the vein of folk tradition. At first sight, they fulfil the totalitarian political doctrine: they celebrate outlaws as people's heroes, depict a happy free life, and even include some love lyric poetry. It is evident that not everybody felt the necessity to enrich their songs with a new-time, politically flavoured and campaigning content. They responded to the requirements without feeling that they were being pushed beyond their limits. It is evident from the sources that these were not mere exceptions. Some authors did manage to use the totalitarian overestimation of folklore within the formation of the new socialistic art and did hide their own real motivation: the pursuance of their personal interests aimed at fostering folk traditions within the framework of the folklore movement. In the 1950s, the political commitment of the folklore movement enabled them to hide behind the label 'folklore ensemble' and continue the activities which they started before the rise of communism. The sources suggest that some ideologists were aware of this. They called it "escaping into folklore" or "disguising conservatism at a higher level" [Pokora 1962:2]. Nevertheless, it is evident from their criticism that the folklore movement was not united even in the periods of its biggest political commitment and mass involvement; throughout the totalitarian period, the folklore movement operated with various functions and various motivations.

There is no doubt that the response of the young members of folklore ensembles to the call for composing new folk songs was positive. This is evident both from their accounts and their songs. It is obvious that the communist regime brought a substantial transformation of social conditions for a considerable part of the country's population, and not everybody perceived this negatively. Research on the transformation of the countryside, after the establishment of agricultural cooperatives (the collectivization of villages) shows that the issue cannot be approached as a black-and-white matter. On the one hand, there were forced confiscations of possessions and hundreds of thwarted lives; on the other hand, the harsh work conditions of farmers were improved, especially in less fertile regions. Communal managements were not always negative: they brought a higher quality of life in areas such as education, health service, sport, and culture. These aspects should be considered while judging the politically committed songs, even if people tend to laugh when listening to the naive content of the song lyrics today. Despite their optimistic content, the songs are a very sad example of ideological manipulation and mistreatment of cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to say that many of the authors of politically committed songs were creative artists who also composed songs within the folk tradition, with no politically committed content, and who continued to write songs later, when in the late 1950s there was little demand for the new songs due to the easing of political pressure. Their songs became part of the repertoire of folklore ensembles, with some of them becoming popular and entering the folk tradition. We can still ask to what extent the cultural politics of the 1950s influenced the future development of the folklore movement/folklorism, because folklorism is an original genre which works creatively with music and dance folklore (ranging from the reconstruction of authentic folklore to various degrees of stylization to simple inspirations by folklore elements).

Was it not just the influence of the period that brought a substantial change in paradigm, when a connection was required between archaic folk songs and brand-new motifs reflecting the lifestyle under transformation? Even though in the mid-1960s these songs were subject to criticism and disappeared from the social repertoire, there have been creative activities in the same vein (if without ideological tendencies), which can be observed till the present day [cf. Uhlíková 2017]. As may be easily demonstrated in the repertoire of individual folklore ensembles, folk songs were no taboo for these collectives: if the occasion requires it, a new stanza is written, or a fresh new song is composed. As the links to authentic folklore tradition<sup>10</sup> have become looser, there has been an increasing ef-

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10 From the point of view of Czech ethnology, the authentic folklore tradition is linked with the original function and the original bearers, members of the traditional rural countryside culture.

fort to create in the spirit of folklore. Folk songs and dances are not an endless source of inspiration, and many folklore ensembles suffer from a lack of material for expanding their repertoire. That is why they turn to a method which has been reliable since the 1950s.<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

From today's point of view, the origin of politically committed songs within the Czech folklore movement is a mere episode. Nevertheless, it is one of the aspects which have contributed to the negative image of the folklore movement in the eyes of part of the Czech public: the folklore movement is seen as the "shop window" of the totalitarian regime, as a betraying platform which served the political regime blindly. Here we can ask to what extent the folklore movement differed from other areas of culture in totalitarian Czechoslovakia, whether it was more politically committed and more favoured than other areas of non-professional culture (such as theatre groups, choirs, and various music and dance groups) and high culture, or whether it was just the most visible one. Sources and accounts given by survivors indicate that folklore ensembles were no exception. They provided a place of self-fulfilment for hundreds of individuals who were drawn by a considerable romantic interest in folk culture and folklore in particular. For many members of folklore ensembles, their involvement was also a spiritual refuge of sorts, an escape from the omnipresent political pressure to a romanticized world of folk culture and its ethos. Although this extra-curricular activity had been related to a certain politisation in the Czech context since its beginnings [cf. Pavlicová and Uhlíková 2013], it became the focus of interest of the ideologists of the regime without its own effort. Following the Soviet model, folk traditions became one of the pillars of the creation of the new socialist culture. Consequently, they were misused, with censorship and deformation affecting mainly their spiritual side connected to Christianity. Although we know today that the motivation for the work of most of the members of the folklore movement in 1948-1989 was mostly apolitical, there is no other way than to per-

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While claiming this, we are fully aware that the phenomenon of folk culture in the Czech context is a construct of the 19<sup>th</sup> century national movement. During its formation, the search for differences shared by cultures of various ethnic groups was stressed while many of the other manifestations of culture were fully ignored.

- 11 Similar creative activities are visible predominantly in children's folklore ensembles, which, on the one hand, are motivated by the lack of material from the location of their activity and, on the other, by the necessity to offer a repertoire attractive enough and relevant to the age of the children.

ceive the 1950s mass establishment of folklore ensembles and the content of their activities as the social commitment and manifestation of loyalty of its members towards the ruling cultural politics. This has been evident from the new folk songs, a symptomatic memento of the period.

## Appendix:



Figure 1  
*Folk ensemble Jasénka from Vsetín. Archive of the ensemble.*

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# Formal or Informal?

## Folk Music, Folklore Revival and Music Education

*Matěj Kratochvíl*

*Abstract:*

Traditional folk music in the Czech Republic was usually connected with an informal way of knowledge transfer from generation to generation. Personal contacts with experienced musicians played an important role in transmission of repertoire, style, and skills to younger ones. During the twentieth century and especially in its second half, with the development of the revival movement, this system changed. While some of its aspects have remained, the transmission process was strongly influenced by a formalized and institutionalized system of public music education. Music education both in grammar schools and in the network of so called “Basic schools of arts” (Základní umělecké školy), where children learn music as a hobby, has had an impact on the way traditional music is taught today. These changes include the emphasis on different aspects of musicianship, drawing inspiration from other genres of music, and a different way of organizing ensembles including a higher representation of girls in them. In this chapter, I present findings from my own experience as well as from interviews with musicians from several generations. I aim to demonstrate how their particular experience with learning and teaching traditional folk music has informed their approach to the way they perform, listen to and think about music.<sup>1</sup>

*Keywords:*

traditional music, music education, Czech Republic, improvisation, folk song collections

Any attempts to explore music education (or education in any area, for that matter) come up against the boundaries between institutionalized education and its various informal forms. The European musical culture of the early twenty-first century is characterized by a variety of sophisticated systems of teaching musical skills; at the same time, many musical genres have retained their own procedures, ones that are much less researched. Importantly, an individual can be involved in several systems simultaneously. The present article explains some of the aspects of music education within the folklore revival movement, pointing out the differences that come out of comparisons with how folk music was performed originally.

The learning process – in the broadest sense, that is any form of information transmission and acquisition of knowledge and abilities – is a combination of two aspects. On the one hand, this is how an individual obtains a new identity; on the other, this process enables tradition as a set of expertise and values to

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be preserved and – at the same time – transformed. In folk music, an individual acquires a specific musical identity by becoming a member of a group of people who control a set of instruments for musical expression. Simultaneously, the specific tradition moves forward as its components are – to varying degrees – either preserved or transformed.

When defining folk song, the way it is handed down from generation to generation is often mentioned as one of the key aspects and, at the same time, as a source of the authenticity of folk song. Vladimír Úlehla, a natural scientist and ethnographer, explains this process in his book, *Živá píseň* [The Living Song]:

... there are still people who sing a song in the same manner as it was sung by their mothers who used to sing it as it had been sung by their grandfathers, and so on further back down the line, maintaining an uninterrupted song tradition as alive as you who are reading my words [Úlehla 1949:11].

In his book, Úlehla offers a view of folk music in South Moravia in the first decades of the twentieth century, at a time when the first attempts were made to revive folk music systematically by those who feared it might not survive the changing world. In these attempts, the transmission described in the previous quotation as an idealized uninterrupted flow comes into conflict with the need for a different way of learning. This is how Úlehla explains the difficulties:

Learning to do musical accompaniment, and its subtle nuances, for singing as well as dancing (...) – and when the singer stops, the musicians, looking as if they are happy to be able to perform on their own, start off producing a full range of melodic feathers with harmonic colourful stains on them – learning all that and communicating it in a language which cannot rely on ordinary knowledge of notation and harmonics, now that must be difficult and peculiar! [Úlehla 1949:185].

Every musical tradition places emphasis on different elements and it is their presence and quality of performance that help evaluate whether the material has been acquired correctly by a pupil. Philip Bohlman has introduced the concept of markers, or clues, which help performers and audiences alike to determine the identity of the musical performance. Although the following quotation refers to markers in the context of oral tradition, the findings that have so far come from research into the folklore movement show that the process is similar in contexts where an oral tradition meets a tradition conveyed through written sources or audio recordings. And it is the correct transmission of these markers that is the aim of education in the given tradition:

The oral transmission of folk music depends on memory and the mnemonic devices that facilitate it. A singer learns a song by recognizing markers that he or she has used previously. Audiences also expect to encounter markers they have experienced in other songs. These markers may be small, coupling a word with a motif of a few notes, or as extensive as an entire piece. The density of these markers may be so great that accurate performance results in exact repetition of a song as the singer first experienced it; their musical function may be such that they encourage new phrase combinations or improvisation. Each repertory and each genre may have some mnemonic devices unique to it and others almost universal in distribution. Some mnemonic aids require rather sophisticated specialization, whereas others need no more than naive repetition. Taken as a whole, these memory markers become the units of transmission that make oral tradition possible [Bohlmann 1988:15].

The process inextricably linked to the development of the folklore revival movement is codification and conservation of folk music and dance. The emphasis on regional specificities leads to an increased focus on details and the evaluation of whether they are correct and adequate. It is at concerts and festivals that these elements are evaluated, with performers assessed positively if expectations are fulfilled, or negatively if their performance is considered inadequate. Thus the folklore movement has set the rules, which musical education is to help observe. The goal, therefore, is to acquire a certain code, as Tamara E. Livingston explains:

The ideology of authenticity, which combines historical research with reactionary ideas against the cultural mainstream, must be carefully constructed and maintained; this often gives rise to the prominent educational component of many revivals. Knowledge and practice of this code has the added benefit of creating a strong feeling of cohesion among revivalists who become cultural insiders to the revived practice [Livingston 1999:74].

The principal question addressed by the present study is how institutionalization of folk music in the folklore revival movement has shaped the process of education and transmission of musical expertise; how important were other institutionalized forms of music education, what role was played by sound-recording technologies, and what has remained from the mechanisms used in the past. The present study draws on the author's personal experience with the folklore movement as well as on research involving other members of the movement, us-

ing oral-history methods, i.e. interviews. Rather than providing definitive answers, the study aims at formulating questions which need to be addressed when dealing with specific cases. The first part of the article explores how the folklore movement has changed the demands placed on performers in comparison with the original existence of folk music, in other words, what musicians need to be taught. In later sections, the focus will be on ways in which this knowledge can be attained, particularly who, and using what methods, is to guide the process of instruction. The final sections will use the specific example of a Czech folklore ensemble to explain how the different elements and methods of teaching can be combined.

## On stage and beyond

The process of reviving and rediscovering is a crucial component in a number of domains of today's culture. It combines an interest in specific historical facts with efforts towards communicating these facts to the contemporary world. The inevitable part of revival is the belief that communication between the past and the present is possible and that the object of revival has some meaning for the present, be it its aesthetic qualities or information value. The process also involves making a decision about what, and in what manner, is to be revived. In recent years, musicological and musical-anthropological reflections on this topic have featured prominently the idea that the revival of musical forms, be it folk music or Baroque compositions, goes beyond the neutral, objective transfer of an element from the past to the present, and inevitably involves filtering and transformation of specific material. Writing in the introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*, Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill say the following:

A music revival comprises an effort to perform and promote music that is valued as old or historical and is usually perceived to be threatened or moribund. Generally speaking, revival efforts engage a number of intertwined processes and issues. First, revivals are almost always motivated by dissatisfaction with some aspect of the present and a desire to effect some sort of cultural change. Revival agents usually have agendas specific to their socio-cultural or political contexts and in this sense may also be regarded as activists. Second, identifying musical elements and practices as old, historical, or traditional, and determining their value, often involves selecting from or reinterpreting history and establishing new or revised historical narratives (...). Third, transferring musical elements from the past to the

present (or from one cultural group perceived as preserving lifeways that are in direct continuity with the past to a cultural group that perceives itself as being more modern) entails a decontextualization and a recontextualization [Bithell and Hill 2014:3–4].

The relationship between folklorism, or more precisely the folklore revival movement, and traditional folk music has been subject to theoretical debate for many years. Of great importance was the theory of the first and the second existence of folklore, the contribution by Walter Wiora [1959], which was further developed (focusing on dance folklore) by Felix Hoerburger [1968] and Andriy Nahachewsky [2001]. The latter showed that the process of change, extinction and revival of traditional forms can occur at several parallel or intersecting lines. The concept was also taken up by Lubomír Tyllner in *Tradiční hudba. Hledání kořenů* [2010] [Traditional Music. Searching for the Roots]:

With the demise of the traditional song, a process of revival began, if at a different level and under different circumstances. A similar thing occurred, according to Walter Wiora, in the Renaissance and, most importantly, in the nineteenth century, when the works of ancient art began to be moved to archives, museums as well as schools, theatres and concert halls. This art then becomes the focus of various movements aiming to achieve a renewed tradition. Songs as performed by song clubs, folklore ensembles, at school, on the radio or television are no longer original traditional songs. This is because songs, folk music and dance adapt to new conditions, fulfilling new functions and responding to new stimuli [Tyllner 2010:85].

Tyllner seems to suggest that, as he understands it, the relationship between traditional folk music and folklorism goes beyond merely a new performance; Tyllner says, *inter alia*, that “the life of traditional music in a new environment and new conditions has often led to new forms of education being created” [Tyllner 2010:87].

The stage known as second existence of folk music is inextricably linked to the transferral of music and dance to stage presentation, with a more distinct boundary between audiences and musicians and with a higher degree of stylization. Music is presented to an audience, which has necessitated new requirements as regards its form. In order to make the performance attractive for a passive audience, considerable attention needs to be paid to the dramaturgical structure and diversity as well as the musicians’ virtuosity. Instead of a spontaneous stream of songs that can be heard at informal musical events, stage presentations are

normally well-prepared, forming a coherent whole. There is more emphasis on modulations to different keys and changes of instrumentation, with some sections played by only some of the musicians, again in contrast to informal events, where most of those present play all the time. All these changes, which are used to make music more appealing to the audience, approximate folk music to European classical music with its emphasis on through-composed structure. This also means new demands on musicians and their education. While the original context of folk music placed most emphasis on the ability to respond rapidly to a situation, on the needs of dancers and singers as well as the ideas of fellow musicians, these aspects are made somewhat less important in stage presentations, with the emphasis shifting to good coordination, excellent intonation and, generally, self-discipline and the ability to suppress one's own creativity to serve the whole. At the same time, this type of presentation calls for authenticity in that the regional and local origin of songs is respected, as is the correct style of performance, which can include harmonization and other details. In other words, what is required is both the "correctness" and "attractiveness" of the performance.

In this respect, the folklore movement of the latter half of the twentieth century involved a pressure for the "westernization" and "artificialization" [cf., *inter alia*, Hill 2009; Keegan-Phipps 2007; Nettl 1985] of folk music and, consequently, the education of young musicians. The formalization and shift from participatory forms to presentational ones [see Turino 2008] did not, however, mean a definitive predominance of the latter over the former. On the contrary, the institutionalization and formalization of folk music led to the creation of new opportunities for informal, participatory music making and, consequently, new informal ways of learning.

The institutionalized folklore movement resulted in a large international network enabling meetings of musicians from various regions and countries. These contacts began to bring new inspiration and members of ensembles have been able to learn about music which was, to a greater or lesser degree, different in style. Given that these meetings are not limited to official events but also include informal entertainment, which involves spontaneous music making, the mutual inspiration can be intense. Folklore festivals thus include official stage performances as well as the musicians' entertainment activities at various locations of the festival venues, in pubs and the open air. Festivals, therefore, enable musicians doing a stage performance of, for instance, music from one of the regions of South Moravia to meet musicians from Slovakia or Hungary, areas which, as regards music, are very similar to Moravia in some respects, while they are different in others. It is from these people that they learn new styles and new repertoires.

Consequently, the folklore movement codifies and sets down the rules while it creates inspiration for them to be broken. Musicians are able to learn different things in music and are, at the same time, taught against incorporating them into their own musical language. Musicians affiliated with ensembles thus receive a music education in two partially intertwined ways, applying the knowledge and skills thus acquired in a way that depends on the situation – either they are asked to do an arranged performance, or they are involved in a less formal musical event.

## New forms of education

Folk music has its own mechanisms of learning and conveying of its individual components – repertory, style, manners of communication between musicians and audiences as well as communication among musicians. The folklore revival movement – especially in the latter half of the twentieth century – represents a new form of existence of folk music. This existence retained some of the earlier elements while it abandoned others. Of great importance was the institutionalization of the folklore movement. Following the Second World War, the movement enjoyed massive state support, with ensembles and festivals being established. Rather than being part of local entertainment events and other occasions associated with community life, folk music and dance came to life on stage. This change brought along a new way of transmitting knowledge, a new system of education. Education shifted from learning by simulation to more formalized instruction. The newly established ensembles began to practice training in a way that enabled even new musicians to acquire the fundamentals rapidly and become fully effective members of the collective.

Following the Second World War, more or less all the components of musical culture started to change, including music education. Many countries in Europe, be it those in the “socialist bloc” or those on the other side of the Iron Curtain, saw varying forms of systematic institutionalization of music education – primarily in classical music, but also jazz and pop music as well as folk music. The mode and speed of the change differed from country to country. In some, the process mainly affected higher education. This was the case of the Sibelius Academy in Finland, where a department of folk music was opened in 1983 [Hill 2009]. Alternatively, a completely new organization is created and devoted to music education, such as Folkworks, an agency from North England which was established in 1987 [Keegan-Phipps 2007]. In the Czech Republic, institutionalization of this kind was absent until 1998, when schools of folklore traditions were launched under the National Institute of Folk Culture in Strážnice and

the National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture. This, however, is a series of weekend courses rather than systematic education. The cimbalom (dulcimer), the instrument most typically associated with Moravian folk music, is taught at the Faculty of Music of the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno as well as conservatories in Brno, Ostrava and Kroměříž. All these institutions, however, place emphasis on the use of the cimbalom as a classical music instrument. Nevertheless, the absence of folk music in secondary and tertiary education does not mean that institutionalization is entirely absent from folk music in the Czech Republic. Rather, it has occurred at lower levels of education and taken different forms.

The then Czechoslovakia had a network of music schools, unified in the 1960s into a system of “folk art schools”. The primary goal of these institutions, attended by children in the afternoons, was to provide an education in the canon of European classical music. Gradually, some schools – at least in some regions – started to offer training in folk music as well. For instance, some schools in Southern and Western Bohemia started to teach the bagpipe, the folk music instrument typical of these regions. Folk songs are used by these schools as the simplest introduction to singing but folk music is sometimes also practiced in specialized ensembles organized at each school.

The growth of this type of music education has had several consequences. First, a knowledge of notation and the basics of music theory developed among generations who participated in the system. These young musicians thus had better prospects of learning folk songs from sheet music rather than by listening and simulating. The other consequence of the reformed education was a better gender balance in folk music ensembles. Traditionally, folk music instruments in Bohemia and Moravia had been played by men. Women had been predominant in singing, but had rarely been invited to join musicians’ collectives. As music education developed, this started to change and by the late twentieth century the participation of women had grown considerably, solely female ensembles now being far from rare.

## Authorities and sources

The crucial thing in the education process is the concept of authority, i.e. the figure who says what is correct and important, what elements and in what order and context the pupils or students need to learn, evaluating the degree of progress made. The authority also identifies sources of information about music. In the traditional context of folk music, the role of authority was invariably assumed by experienced individuals from among the music community. In the modern, insti-

tutionalized context, the authority is the music teacher or the person put in charge of leading the music ensemble by the institution. In the folklore movement, the primary way of learning a new repertory by the young generation of musicians is not by listening but by targeted training. This gives a prominent role to printed collections of folk songs. These are a sum of knowledge drawn upon during instruction, but apart from music itself, they also inform about things like the regional provenience of each song. Although Vladimír Úlehla, quoted in the introduction to the present paper, says that the nuances of style of Moravian folk music cannot be captured by the system of classical notation and harmonics, many of the musicians involved in the folklore movement hardly thought this was a problem and learned from sheet music nevertheless. Oral tradition, which was the traditional way of conveying information, has not lost its role entirely; rather, it is complemented and influenced by the existence of notation. Although this is not, strictly speaking, oral tradition, it is possible to use the term “secondary oral tradition”, defined by Walter J. Ong [Ong 2012]. At the same time, it has to be remembered that even in the past, oral tradition was not necessarily fully dependent on a diversity of memory media, which is reflected by the existence of various private songbooks and similar texts. As Henry Glassie puts it:

With repetition the goal, people create and adopt aids to memory. Performers write texts down for preservation. In Appalachia and in Ireland, I met singers who kept and traded manuscript “ballats”. People refresh their memories from books and recordings until the songs learned from their parents become textually identical with those on paper or wax [Glassie 1995:406].

And it was wax, the sound recording mechanism mentioned by Glassie, that was another important technology with a profound effect on folk music education in the latter half of the twentieth century. The growth of the recording industry made recordings of folk music an important source of learning of repertory as well as style. Some recordings may gain a canonical status, being understood as referential samples of the style or form of the particular song and being learned by musicians, literally note after note. As the recording technology developed – especially cassette recorders with in-built microphones in the 1990s – recordings started to influence music education in the folklore movement in yet another way, providing a certain kind of feedback. Musicians record themselves during rehearsals, evaluating one another’s performance and discussing the details of their playing.

## The personal journal as a source of data

As is evident from above, each particular case of music education in the folklore movement is subject to the interplay of a number of factors. What follows is a discussion of one particular case. One of the respondents during my research (2017) among members of the folklore movement was Dan Kroutil, a double-bass player and leader of the band in which I spent my childhood. The ensemble *Rosénka*, which the band was part of, was established in the early 1980s and although based in Prague, its main orientation was folklore from the region of Uherské Hradiště. Its leaders as well as regular dancers and musicians were people who moved to Prague from Moravia in addition to those who were born in Prague and who saw Moravian folklore as simply one of the many types of music. Learning folk music was similar to them as learning classical music, and the process was not that of following up on a tradition that would be close to them through family heritage and the environment in which they grew up. Apart from the interview, Dan Kroutil offered his own journal as a source of research data. He wrote it as the band leader in 1989–1993 and its pages contain practical organizational points relating to the management of a children’s music collective (telephone numbers and dates of events), but also commentaries that – in combination with the interview – provide an insight into the training of musicians. For his part, Dan Kroutil was one of those who moved to the Moravian folklore region from “outside”. A native of Prague, he engaged primarily in traditional jazz before joining the ensemble. This means that he had to learn some of the things together with the children of whom he was in charge. The details gained from the interview and the journal show the extent to which a children’s band used teaching methods common in classical music and the way these methods were combined with those inherent to Moravian folklore in its traditional form.

One of the recurring topics is the sources used when teaching young musicians. While the primary source in folk music is older musicians who pass on their experience to the young ones, modern music pedagogy relies on sheet music in particular. And it was a combination of these two approaches that characterized education in *Rosénka*. Commenting on this, Dan Kroutil says:

I would collect all sorts of songbooks. There was nothing in shops under commies. You could sometimes get Sušil<sup>2</sup> or Úlehla in second-hand book shops. I somehow got hold of Janáček<sup>3</sup>. *Harmonie* by Janáček is what I got hold of. His collections of romantic songs. Some folklore ensembles also brought out their songbooks. We produced

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2 [Sušil 1859].

3 Leoš Janáček (1854–1928), the composer and musical folklorist.

one, too. I had two books of interesting stuff from the Slovaks and some other stuff from Moravia.

Kroutil's journal contains names of collections that in the late 1980s were the primary source of Moravian repertory for Prague-based musicians. These include items such as Vladimír Úlehla's *Živá píseň* mentioned in the introduction, Ludvík Kuba's *Cesty za Slovanskou písni* [In Search of Slavic Songs] and others. Of great importance were arrangements written down by Vladimír Klusák Jr. (1916–1991), of which Kroutil said: "Klusák was the only folklorist who understood that the best start for bands is to get the thing ready written down. This is where I learned how to write contras."<sup>4</sup>

Several pages of the bandmaster's journal contain points relating to individual musicians and their tasks.

- 1) Use the flutes as an independent accompanying body, i.e. as a modification in some verses, especially dance ones.
- 2) Use the flutes in solo, instrumental pieces. Write it down!
- 3) Identify "first-category" violinists who can play all the time (to accompany dance *and* singing).
- 4) Motivate other violinists with the prospect of being promoted to the "first category".
- 5) Make sure every tone is pure.
- 6) Make sure the songs have a singing quality and are played softly, but always keep the rhythm right.
- 7) Simplify the parts for "second-category" violinists as much as possible, basically making them into rhythmic accompaniment.
- 8) Increase demands on "first-category" violinists; make them produce pure and accurate tones.
- 9) Teach children natural, playful improvisation.
- 10) Include improvisation in written stuff, too.
- 11) Vojta<sup>5</sup> needs to be more playful with the songs, carefully flesh them out, add embellishments, and be more courageous.
- 12) The singing is only accompanied by part of the band (the first category, perhaps) without Vojta. Vojta and his *cifra*<sup>6</sup> only join in for the dance.

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4 "Contras" (for the Czech *kontry*): a way of playing the rhythmic-harmonic accompaniment on the violin or the viola in the folk music of Moravia, Slovakia and Hungary. It is done by playing dyads (two-note chords) and producing rhythmic variations.

5 One of the violinists, who went on to become *primáš*, the first violinist who assumes the role of a conductor in a folk ensemble.

6 "Cifra": a way of embellishing the melody.

These twelve brief points provide ample information on how the instruction was managed. Apart from being members of the folklore ensemble, most of the children attended a folk art school, where they learned about classical European music. These schools placed emphasis on playing off sheet music, using classical technique; however, they mostly ignored the teaching of improvisation, interaction with singers and dancers, and the blending of instrumental play with singing. The children, therefore, needed to be taught these skills. It is evident that there was a hierarchy among the musicians based on their abilities and roles in the ensemble. There were simultaneous demands for “natural” and “playful” playing as well as efforts towards technique development. The fipple flute was a popular instrument among the youngest children in folk art schools; therefore, children’s folk bands often had several young players using an instrument that had been relatively rare in traditional folk music bands (typically, a folk music band from Southern Moravia would contain the violin, the viola, the double-bass, the dulcimer, and – of woodwind instruments – the clarinet). The band leaders thus needed to look for ways to make the flute sound become an organic part of the whole.

Another section of the journal contains the detailed description of a rhythm to be played by *contras* (i.e. the violin or viola playing the rhythmic-harmonic accompaniment). The subtle nuances of these rhythms are used to teach how to distinguish among the different types of Moravian folk dances and identify their regional provenience. Local musicians always learned new types by listening to and simulating their senior peers without having to use sheet music. Kroutil’s notes contain, for instance, lists that group songs into series united by a certain type of dance or provenience, i.e. features which have traditionally not been fixed but, rather, fixated in musicians’ memory through personal experience. Ensembles which lacked this type of experience had to receive the expertise in a formalized manner. Other important features include the harmony of the songs, alternation between fast and slow verses, transformations based on whether music is played to sing or to dance.

Talking in the interview, Dan Kroutil also mentioned the role of recordings in learning:

I listened to records and I actually lived with the records. I loved Slovaks, I loved Staněk, Dudík, BROLN,<sup>7</sup> although we did have our doubts about them doing folklore; rather, they were professionals,

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7 Jaroslav Staněk (1922–1978), the leader (*primáš*) of the ensemble *Hradištan*; Samko Dudík (1880–1967), *primáš* from the Slovak town of Myjava; BROLN – the Brno Radio Orchestra of Folk Instruments, established in 1952.

marbles players.<sup>8</sup> There were series that we were asked to play and, naturally, the man who played them best was Staněk. So I listened to what went on there. Actually, what you do is you learn to work with sound. Fortunately, I was trained to do exactly that in my jazz days. You know, no one ever tells you anything in jazz. So I listened to it and went like: “Hmm, this is how we’re supposed to play it.” And then I found that no matter how we played it, we were too slow.

## Conclusion

The case study discussing the music band of the ensemble *Rosénka* has shown that pedagogical approaches and techniques associated with classical music, including sound recording, helped musicians with no background in the original context of folk music to acquire the relevant styles of performance as well as the repertory. The mix of formal and informal teaching methods would be different in an ensemble based in Moravia or even more different in an expatriate organization in the United States. Applying Philip Bohlman’s concept of markers, introduced earlier in the present paper, to Moravian folk music, they include particular songs, instruments used, style of performance as well as details of communication between musicians, dancers and audiences. In the original context of folk music, the young generation of musicians learns these markers through continual contact with their senior and more experienced peers. By contrast, in the folklore movement, with a diversity of approaches to music, these ways of knowledge transmission clash with pedagogical methods taken from classical music. In summary, the objective is to achieve a similar effect; the ways to do that, however, need to respect the different backgrounds and life experience of those involved.

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8 In Czech *kuličkáři*: a slightly dismissive term denoting musicians playing off sheet music (with notes on the sheet metaphorically called marbles, in Czech *kuličky*).

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## **Part 3** Folklore as Performance



# Folklore, stage and politics in the Croatian context

*Tvrtko Zebec*

*Abstract:*

In the Croatian context, a political perspective focused on local, regional or ethnic identity in dance expression was always important, especially when social and ideological circumstances changed. Folk dance production on stage has never been considered as the *revival movement* because this tradition never disappeared, thanks to the early existing festivals of peasant culture where the bearers themselves performed their own living traditions on stage. After the Second World War, the socialist regime suppressed any national, cultural or other ideological perspective inside the South Slavic, “Yugoslavian collective”. Dance was an essential element in the project of creating a new citizen and a new, united, unified socialist and Yugoslavian culture. The building of a national culture, which operated as the dominant social framework in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, shifted to a socialist concept of unified, non-national or supranational ideology in the second part of the twentieth century. The aesthetics have shifted according to social and political changes, but also as a result of expert influences that have directly affected cultural politics.

*Keywords:*

folklore, stage, politics, aesthetics, Croatia

The tradition of folklore festivals in Croatia has roots in celebrations of peasant culture from the late 1920s and the latter half of the 1930s. At that time, the cultural, educational and charitable association *Seljačka sloga* (Peasant Harmony) – with its populist ideology and ideas of the brothers Stjepan and Antun Radić, and other leaders of the Croatian Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka*) – attempted to inspire self-confidence in peasants, enlighten them, and introduce them to national political life. Back then, expert juries at peasant culture festivals already consisted of intellectuals – ethnographers, folklorists, musicologists and musicians. Providing advice and recommendations, they created a cultural policy, trying to shape national identity by promoting old and domestic culture from what was naturally their urban point of view [Zebec 2007]. In addition, participating in the preparation of festivals has always meant having an influence on the new life of tradition, whether the experts prompted performers to offer a particular repertoire (usually the earliest one) or injected new life into the content selected for the festival. Moreover, this was repeated in other performances by the same performers, while being given the status of certified value in the local community [Vitez 2000:42].

Dance revival case studies have already been discussed within the circle of the Study Group on Ethnochoreology of the International Council for Traditional Music during the Symposium in Cluj (2006), at the panel *From Field to Text*

coordinated by Andriy Nahachewsky and Stephanie Smith, published in the proceedings in 2012. Back then, I had already concluded that from our perspective folk dance production on stage in Croatia has never been considered as the *revival movement*. This is because this tradition has never disappeared, thanks to the early festivals of peasant culture where the bearers themselves performed their own living traditions on stage. A political perspective focused on local, regional, and ethnic/national identity in dance expression was always important, especially when social and ideological circumstances changed.

## Historical background

At the end of the nineteenth century, the *Salonsko* and the *Dvoransko kolo* became popular among aristocrats in towns at social events at which they expressed their national consciousness and pride [Ruyter 1984; Dunin 1988]. Those dances were artistic, urban choreographies composed of figures inspired by rural dances [Niemčić 2005:77], similar to the *Česká beseda* in Bohemia-Czech Republic or the *Kör*, in Hungary at that time.

In this era, for the very first time, Croatian peasant choirs were organized, in the same way as bourgeois choirs. The *Seljačka sloga* association taught the peasants – who made up more than 70 percent of Croatia’s population [Puljiz 2006:8] – how to make music in a way that was declared as their own. Scholarly analysis has found three basic models that were developed over the last ninety years of folk music public practice. The first one is the modernistic model that lasted until the 1930s; secondly, the traditionalistic model; and thirdly, the socialist realism model during the 1950s [Ceribašić 2003:406]. In the first one, folk song in artistic form was encouraged, featuring a conductor and the choir singing authored compositions created on the basis of folk songs (from the most desirable simple harmonisation to more complex arrangements). Thus, peasants from different parts of Croatia had literally to perform the same music, in the same manner, in choral harmony, as there was a limited number of compositions and authors available. The main idea was to make music that would be national, uniting the peasantry and urban people: thus, the principal intention was the creation of a national, Croatian culture.

In small towns especially, in parallel with the tradition presented by *Seljačka sloga*, there were firemen brass bands, tambura, and jazz orchestras, as well as dance masters and their schools. They played music and danced all the European modern dances during dance evenings, events and weddings, only for fun during social gatherings, but not on stage [Bratanić 1941:13–14]. Even up until the 1980s, several dances – the *polka*, *valcer*, *mazurka*, *čardaš*, *šotiš*, *tango*,

*fokstrot* and the like – were not readily accepted by professionals because they showed the influence of urban and non-Croatian centres, and if they were performed at festivals as an exception to the rule, they were not evaluated favourably [Sremac 1978].

In the second model of folk music public practice, the idea of modernization through the format of national compositions and conductors in front of the choirs was rejected. Primeval peasant art became seen as an eternal source of Croatian cultural individuality [Ceribašić 2003:406]. Festivals of Croatian peasant culture, strongly influenced by folklore experts Milovan Gavazzi, Vinko Žganec, Zvonimir Ljevaković and Branimir Bratanić and the inherited philosophy of *Seljačka sloga* [Vitez 2016:19], focused performances on depicting older local and domestic peasant culture that was considered national.

Again, at the same time, there was another, parallel – but not so dominant – urban idea of stylised dances: “If every year we introduce only two folk dances, arrange the music and choreography, we could have even elite social events with only folk dances, very soon!” [Skld 1935:1]. It is known that from the early 1930s, Igor Moiseyev, a Ukrainian based in Moscow and already an acknowledged ballet master at the Bolshoi Theatre, also researched folk dances and expounded the idea of creating a folklore art theatre, which he succeeded in doing in 1936 by establishing his own ballet company.<sup>1</sup>

In 1936, the amateur group of students and people from the theatre and ballet circle in Zagreb, *Matica hrvatskih kazališnih dobrovoljaca* (MHKD), the Union of Croatian Theatre Volunteers, went to the international dance competition during the 11<sup>th</sup> Olympic Games in Berlin with choreographies of folk dances prepared especially for that occasion. According to newspaper reviews, German audiences accepted them and gave them standing ovations. As far as is known, that was the first performance of stylised Croatian folk dance choreographies at a festival somewhere abroad [Zebec 2017:81–82]. Geno Senečić wrote in the 1970s:

even though folk dances, their meaning and success are regularly suppressed these days [in the socialist Yugoslavia], they are, nevertheless, after the medal and the first place won by MHKD at the XI. Olympics in Berlin in 1936, the basis of the fruits we pick today... truly a remarkable global success story [Senečić 1972].

Following Senečić’s idea, I can say that, after the Second World War, the socialist regime suppressed any national, cultural or other ideological perspective

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1 See <<http://www.moiseyev.ru/bio.html>> (2018 March 18.)

inside the South Slavic, “Yugoslavian collective”. It was an essential element in the project of creating a new citizen and a new, united, unified socialist and Yugoslavian culture. The Croatian peasantry lost its position as the legitimate bearer of the distinct folk and national culture, and *Seljačka sloga* lost its position as the legitimate creator of a discourse on folk culture. From 1948 onwards, it was the time for urban folk dance ensembles to blossom, and for socialist realism to be a new, third model for public practice of folk music in industrial centres [Ceribašić 2003:407].

Anna Ilieva [2001:125] identified a similar phenomenon of the „amateur art activities“ in Bulgaria as „the huge octopus whose tentacles gripped the entire country“. During socialism, it should have been a-national, or in Yugoslavia – supranational. The leaders believed that dance could be something more than *original* folklore. It could be stylised, raised to a higher artistic level. As opposed to that, *original* folklore could not be anything more than a dance and associated music. It reached the very bottom of the scale as regards official socialist and public value. At the same time, among nationally-oriented and conscious people, it acquired a very important symbolic meaning of resistance against the socialist regime. Moreover, it can be argued that underground resistance existed in some parts of the International Folklore Festival in Zagreb. After the opening ceremony of the festival, for example, audiences would follow certain groups to St. Marko’s church, singing *Zdravo Djevo, kraljice Hrvata* (Hail Lady, Queen of Croats), a song with a strong patriotic meaning.

An entirely new theatrical vision emerged after the Second World War. Thanks to Zvonimir Ljevaković, the *Folklore Ensemble Joža Vlahović* was established. It was very quickly followed by a professional body, the *State Folk Dance Ensemble*, later renamed *Lado*. Ljevaković revisited the MHKD concept of ballet dancers adapting traditional models for stage performances. But Ljevaković made it closer to the rural, „older“ traditional Croatian standards. After he established *Lado*, he briefly collaborated with contemporary dancer Ana Maletić. She created the famous choreography *Shqiptar Suite* for this company, but soon had to leave, because *Lado* embraced the “Zagreb folklore school” which pursued an approach with less stylisation, championed by Zvonimir Ljevaković and his successor, Ivan Ivančan [Đurinović 2008:55–75].

Although the idea of making folk dance choreography in urban settings had been in existence for a long time, the context was different in this period. The national idea as the framework in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shifted to a socialist concept of unified, non-national, or supranational ideology in the second part of the twentieth century.

After the Second World War, for different ideological reasons, stage presentation of folk music, and particularly dance, developed throughout the world. It was

recognised as one of the ways to promote national culture at festivals in the international context. The festivals often had a competitive nature, but understanding could also be promoted between peoples and cultures [Buckland 2002:71].



*Figure 1*  
*Josip Broz Tito and Vladimir Bakarić (a President of the Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Croatia within SFRY), with the participants of the Folklore Festival in Zagreb, 1947 [IFF Zagreb, with a permission].*

Yugoslavia with Josip Broz Tito as president was one of the leaders of the Third World countries. It was part of the Non-Aligned Movement that was established on Tito's initiative in Belgrade in 1961. That was one of the reasons why it was easier to start and develop the International Folklore Festival in Zagreb. The idea of showing cultural diversity and internationalization was a way to make the Festival happen under the socialist regime. Therefore, developing countries and cultures of the Third World, together with nations and national/ethnic minorities within Yugoslav republics, were well represented at the Festival.

### **Personal experience of a dancer and leader in urban ensembles**

I grew up in the new settlement of Trnsko in Zagreb that began to be built in 1960, two years before I was born. It is a neighbourhood filled with sizeable five-storey buildings which contain no elevators, a few staircases and three small

two-bedroom apartments on each floor. There are several twelve to sixteen-floor skyscrapers around. There is a kindergarten, an elementary school, a medical centre, and a supermarket – the basic infrastructure that one needs in a settlement like this. The streets were named after military divisions, and the school after Krešo Rakić, a Second World War hero.

The demographic picture was very diverse since the people who moved there were from all over Croatia and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Many of the apartments were given to current or former officers of the Yugoslavian Army, and some of their wives were teachers at the elementary school. The neighbourhood was young and so was its population – most couples had two children. Back then, the residents did not publicly declare which to which religion they belonged. The small number of those who did, however, were Roman Catholics. They used to go to the parishes in the older neighbourhoods because there was no church in Trnsko. The parish was initially formed in a wooden hut in 1971. It was not until 1983 that a big church was built in the neighbouring quarter of Siget.

When I was in Year 8, our teacher encouraged some of us to go to our school's folklore rehearsals, with a final performance scheduled for the end of the school year. The artistic leader was a ballet dancer who ended up as a professional dancer in *Lado* upon the invitation of Zvonimir Ljevaković. She lived right around the corner from the school that her children went to and was invited to lead the school group. That school group has grown into the Omladinsko-kulturno umjetničko društvo "Krešo Rakić" (the Krešo Rakić Youth Cultural Arts Association) just like some others in the city. A year later she created an hour and a half set that included songs and dances from Yugoslavia, influenced by *Lado*. Besides regular holiday performances in Trnsko, and other New Zagreb settlements, we used to perform with the Yugoslav Army division of Lučko at the huge stadium political events called *Sletovi*. The biggest annual one was Tito's birthday (25 May), later renamed Youth Day. We performed all kinds of dances and songs from various Croatian regions including *Slavonia*, *Prigorje*, *Međimurje*, *Posavina* and *Baranja*, but also from the regions of *Šumadija* in Serbia, *Štajerska* in Slovenia, *Banat* in Vojvodina (Republic of Serbia) and *Osogovo* in Macedonia. Because of the collaboration with the Army, the leader was asked to create a choreography for the *Brankovo Kolo* which then symbolized brotherhood and the unity of the peoples of Yugoslavia. Thus, to symbolise diversity, couples wore costumes associated with different nations and ethnics.<sup>2</sup>

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2 Soon after his death, Branko Radičević (1824-1853) was pronounced the greatest poet of Serbia, and Jovan Paču, a composer from Vojvodina, set to music the *kolo* circle dance from his poem *Đački rastanak: Kolo, kolo, naokolo*, and harmonised it for a choir and an orchestra in 1883. After the Second World War, *Brankovo kolo* became obligatory reading at Croatian el-

In 1979, in my senior year in secondary school – having gained some experience in a small singing and dancing ensemble in New Zagreb – I transferred to the Ivan Goran Kovačić Academic Folk Dance Ensemble. Founded in 1948 by students from all over Slavonia who had come to study in Zagreb, it grew into one of the most reputable urban ensembles. Being part of that group, I learned many more Croatian choreographies based on regional division. I also learned dances from all over Yugoslavia: *Skopska Crna Gora* from Macedonia that was brought to our Ensemble by Lazar Lazarevski, *Vlaške igre* from eastern Serbia choreographed by Desa Đorđević or dances from Banat choreographed by Vera Ristić from Belgrade, *Resian dances* by Slovenians in the Italian valley of Resia (Friuli) choreographed by Mirko Ramovš from Ljubljana, Albanian dances from Kosovo and many others. Moving to a more respected ensemble meant more performances, three rehearsals a week, a great company, national and international tours. The most exciting ones were those in western Europe because one could not often travel there in those days.

I decided to study ethnology because I loved folklore, costumes, and everything that I had learned about representing it on the stage. During and after my studies, many questions were raised by my one-sided experience with stage performances. Ethnographic fieldwork taught me the important difference between this experience and what tradition really means. Therefore, there is a huge difference in the meaning and symbolism of some cultural elements for the bearers of the tradition on the one hand and, on the other hand, for the performers, student amateur dancers and singers on the stage in the city ensembles presenting it to general audiences.

Being an ethnologist also made me the leader of the Ivan Goran Kovačić Ensemble, where I used to be a dancer. During and after the Homeland War for independence, I was responsible for designing the national folklore programme. This meant that I could experiment as a director. I had to create a diverse set including rich traditions of smaller cultural communities that were not “exploited” or discovered during the time of Yugoslavia. Instead of choreographies from different regions of the former federation (after they gained independence), we started to focus more on the local cultures in Croatia as a more enriching set. On the other hand, the urban way of making stage performances and choreographies is still authorial and stylised and, therefore, different from the village-based performing groups, which present their own, old and domestic, local traditions.

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elementary schools, with the clear intention of the authorities of the time to use it as a symbol of brotherhood and unity among the nations and ethnic groups of Yugoslavia. In the second half of the 1960s, choreographers from Novi Sad and Belgrade composed choreographies for *Brankovo kolo* [Sremac 2002:158]. Sremac also wrote more about the historical and political background of the *kolo* as the symbol of unity in Croatia since the early nineteenth century.



*Figure 2*

*Student Folk Dance Ensemble Ivan Goran Kovačić, Zagreb, in traditional costumes from different republics of the SFRY (Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia) and the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, 1980 at the International Folk Festival, Leiden, The Netherlands, Photo: T. Zebec*

The research activity at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research then quickly expanded with the applied work by observing performances at local and regional festivals, together with my colleagues from the community of ethnomusicologists. Having gained experience in ethnographic fieldwork, we would encourage choreographers to constantly explore the traditions shown in their choreographies. Over time, a significant enrichment of the repertoire has been achieved on the Croatian folklore scene, although the stylistic approach has not changed drastically. For most choreographers, their authorship and stage canons with numerous geometric movements are still more important than the aesthetics which they can learn from the bearers of local traditions.

Understanding the diverse aesthetic principles depending on the difference in context and participants is more important than analysing the content and structure of the performance. If one wants to understand the aesthetics and value of a community's cultural forms, it is necessary to understand the principles under-

lying such aesthetics, and to understand them in the way that they are accepted by that particular community, as well as understanding what their perceptions are [Kaepler 2003:154].<sup>3</sup> In accordance with performance anthropology, each performance is a new experience from the ethnochoreological viewpoint and also a possible subject for new field research, therefore making it important to position the aesthetic principles according to the context and performers of an event. Just as each performance differs according to the invested force and momentary mood of the performers, according to which its meaning can be changed, so depending on the differences in context, participants and aesthetics, the meaning of each performance can be interpreted differently. And that is subject to debate, becoming the critical point of our discussions. It sounds paradoxical that sometimes the traditional dimension is what is crucial to our evaluations, while at other times it can be the artistic, adapted, stylised, and authorial aspect. Many people link aesthetics exclusively with high art and Modernism, not thinking that it should be viewed as part of feelings and sensitivity, which relate to all cultural systems, diverse conceptualisations of the world and what gives it meaning. It was in that sense that Andrée Grau [2003:173] spoke of *ethno-aesthetics*.<sup>4</sup> The fact is that, similarly to the bearers themselves, the way scholars look at the traditional dances choreographed and performed by the professional Ensemble *Lado* and the amateur urban folk dance ensembles is different to the way they look at the dances danced in squares, outside churches after Sunday holly masses, or those performed by village groups. Nor can we, as scholars, in keeping with the ninety-years tradition of folklore stage presentation in Croatia, monitor the performances of diverse performers according to the same aesthetic criteria.<sup>5</sup>

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- 3 Adrienne Kaepler [2003:153] claims that relatively few anthropologists, ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists have to date dealt with aesthetics. She writes that in European languages since the nineteenth century the concept has related to the notion and philosophy of beauty and good taste, and that, similarly to all philosophical systems, thought is based on particular principles, in this case, on aesthetic principles. Whether something is beautiful or not is a matter of evaluation, and that mental construct is part of the system of thought.
  - 4 In his research and published collections, Ivan Ivančan dealt systematically, to a large extent, with the question of aesthetics among the bearers of dance tradition themselves, most frequently examining what is beautiful and what is ugly in dance according to their view.
  - 5 Modes of stage presentation have travelled a developing path since the performances of village folklore groups (Vrličko kolo, Vrlika, Jadran film 1948 <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p\\_uAm9dKWtU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_uAm9dKWtU)>), urban folk dance ensembles (founded after the Second World War: FA "I. G. Kovačić" *Vrličko kolo*, choreography Zvonimir Ljevaković <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s\\_o\\_oSiCxRs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_o_oSiCxRs)>), ballet pieces inspired by tradition (e.g. the *Završno kolo*, opera *Ero s onoga svijeta* by Jakov Gotovac, choreography by Zvonimir Reljić <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogev5E40eqM>>), through to what have to date been rare, but completely contemporary, free dance performances with folklore motifs (e.g. Rajko Pavlič's

Due to the Croatian tradition in the stage presentation of folklore in which the conceptions of folk dances were charged from the beginning with powerful national forces focusing on early and local tradition, there have not been any avant-garde shifts to date in regards to choreography, even for the urban ensembles. Today, too, efforts are being made to reach back to the early and the local and to show collective, folk creativity. Although stylisations have been much more moderate than those in the Eastern European tradition, particularly those of the *Beryozka* Dance Company and the Moiseyev Ensemble, stylised interpretation does exist. Depending on the author, choreographies are more or less stylised, something that the choreographers themselves often do not want to admit. They regularly refer to “original” material from the field, while they justify the authorial interventions by the laws of the theatre, the stage, and artistic freedom and conceptions. Therefore, at the critical point of assessment of individual choreographies, their views differ from those of critics, usually ethnologists, ethnochoreologists and ethnomusicologists. During discussions after performances at festivals, for example, one also finds village groups whose members still practice their dance tradition in their everyday lives (although this is more frequently becoming the exception), and the exchange of views can become very lively.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1990s the concept of revival acquired other connotations in the social and political context after the last Croatian War of Independence. A stronger return to a concept promoted by the *Seljačka sloga* in the 1930s is evident – that of presenting *old*, *local* and *national* culture among the village performing groups. Revival, with the meaning of renewal, reconstruction and revitalisation, especially for those parts of the country which had been destroyed or ransacked, started quickly after the defensive war. Urban folk dance ensembles still hold on to their stylised presentations – because they cannot be done differently. The members of these ensembles are students and town youth – the idea of local and old does not mean much for them, and the aesthetics are different in their relationship with the audience. They can only feel pride for their nation when it makes them different in front of others at the festivals abroad. Recreation is the most important aspect for them – travelling, having fun and being in good company where they can sing and dance [Ćaleta and Zebec 2017:144].

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choreography to the music of *Jedna pura, dva pandura*, Lado Electro <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edKQpnMhRAM>>).

6 Consequently, festivals have become distinctive and are categorised according to their participants and according to whether they present so-called *choreographed* folklore or *original* folklore. In that process, there are a growing number of groups who also present choreographed, authorial folklore along with their native-place folklore, which makes the assessments and discussions even more multi-layered.

Although no competitive character festivals are held in Croatia, the very idea of public performance at reviews is, in essence, competitive. Even when the members of the professional juries are against the idea of proclaiming the best, particularly using the principle of the first, second or third places, participants themselves expect and demand public comments and evaluations of their performances. The “best” folk groups are selected at small local or regional reviews and they represent their district or region at large, countrywide festivals. The groups that are to perform at the largest regional and state festivals are selected at these local reviews. A performance at the *International Folklore Festival* held in Zagreb is regarded as proof that a particular group has met the most important quality criteria. Since 1966, the *International Folklore Festival* in Zagreb has been considered to be Croatia’s most respected festival within the circle of people engaged in this form of creativity. Nowadays, it has become part of the global movement led by UNESCO that aims to safeguard and promote intangible cultural heritage. In 2014, the Croatian Ministry of Culture and the City of Zagreb pronounced it as a festival of national significance.

## Conclusion

Even with the ten more years of experience that I have gained since the symposium in Cluj, noted above, I still prefer to talk about different aesthetics and ways of presenting folklore on the stage rather than about the *revival movement*. The Croatian experience shows that there have always been two performance streams and realities. There is the rural one, which was inherited by the *Seljačka sloga* movement from the 1920s and 1930s and was achieved by the traditional performing groups that have always, until the present day, shown their own living tradition. That reality is followed by most folklore festivals in Croatia, with the *International Folklore Festival* on top. The other reality has been developed by the urban elite, with a patriotic idea of creating a national culture and adding an artistic touch to all the materials from the field. In that urban perspective, the most important aspect is the immediate performer-audience relationship and, hence, stage aesthetics. This perspective does not need verification from the field, where the social rules are different from those in the urban context, from choreographers’ and student performers’ point of view. Of course, like everything else, aesthetics has shifted through history according to social and political changes, but also expert influences that have directly affected cultural politics.

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# At the “Crossroads”: The Transformation of Dance Folklore into a Professional Stage Art in Bulgaria in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century

*Gergana Panova-Tekath*

*Abstract:*

This chapter examines the professional stage art of “Bulgarian Folk Dances” which, even in the context of Eastern Bloc folk ensembles, is notable on account of its unusual scale and contribution in the construction of national identity. I focus on the creation of the State ensemble, followed by 19 regional professional ensembles and 15000 amateur groups, together with reference to educational institutions, key choreographers and theoretical understanding of the new genre. Why and how did the “folk dance” matter so much and why and how it still matters in Bulgaria, are my main questions. Through application of the *Semantic Star*, a strategy designed to facilitate reflection on past experience, the phenomenon is analyzed as a form of culture in historical time, geopolitical space and social life. Bulgarian specifics such as the mythology of folklore and the roots of Russophilism are discussed. In conclusion, I emphasize the power of inspiration that evokes authenticity as an expression of national identity.

*Keywords:*

Bulgarian folk choreography, professionalization, Russophilism, semantic star, identity

Bulgaria is most often depicted as a geographical, cultural, political, economic, and religious crossroads. This well-established image has often been evoked by western Europeans to represent the Balkans as transitional, in every regard, between the civilized West and the exotic East.<sup>1</sup> I argue, on the other hand, that this image of Bulgaria as a crossroads may suggest knowledge and competence for the reconciliation of contradictory ideas and thus, in contrast, offers an image capable of enhancing Bulgarian self-esteem. I will employ this symbol of the “crossroads” in interpreting the following brief overview of traditional dancing in the towns and cities of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria (1945-1989).

## I. The phenomenon and its win-win-situation

Folklore in Bulgaria is famous for its extraordinary variety of unique rhythms, melodies, movements, figures and rituals, which represent five ethnographic regions with an ancient history. The folklore revival movement of the second half

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1 For further detail see Todorova [1997].

of the twentieth century was not only an attempt to preserve this wealth, in the process of ongoing urbanization and industrialization of the country, but also was a central unificatory factor in the construction of a national Bulgarian musical and dance identity. It is logical that a communist government, which proclaimed itself as the ruler of the united villagers and proletariat, would gladly support and manipulate the “correct evaluation of the importance of dance folklore as an educational factor and a healthy popular diversion... in the urban environment” [Kacarova 1955:4].

Following the Soviet example, but supplemented with much originality and verve, Bulgarian state cultural policy developed a new genre of the performing stage arts - “Bulgarian folk dances”. Even within the framework of the Eastern Bloc, the transformation of dance folklore into a stage art in Bulgaria achieved a notable level of excellence and scale.

A question I wish to raise is why some researchers have considered what transpired to be a betrayal of folklore and a form of „brainwashing“ [Ilieva 1994:38]. In my experience, all protagonists of the genre continue to practice it both in the Democratic Bulgaria and abroad to the present day. Almost thirty years after the “perestroika”, participants in the movement and their students view the times before 1989 as the “golden years” and continue to dance the “classical” Bulgarian folk choreographies.

Similar to Communist parties in other Soviet Bloc countries, the Bulgarian Communist Party recognized in the creation of the genre an opportunity for:

1. the establishment and strengthening of the union between villagers and the proletariat;
2. the integration of the younger generation and the imposition and control of a certain type of moral code amongst them, and
3. the construction of a very attractive “business card” worthy to be presented to the world at large.

For the choreographers and dancers, this was an excellent opportunity:

1. to socialize within a collective, - transfigured into a family within a political oasis;
2. for creativity and physical exercise unrestrained by financial limitations, and;
3. for recognition at home and abroad, which considerably heightened their personal and national self-esteem.

The following reflections are based on my personal experience, on multiple interviews in Bulgaria and abroad starting in 1993 to date, and theoretical work in various fields of the human sciences. I call my method “reflexive participation”.

## II. The professionalization of Bulgarian folk dances as a genre

I have analyzed elsewhere the establishment of the genre as a “Soviet model of dancing the Bulgarian way.”<sup>2</sup> Here I will focus once again solely on the professionalization of “Bulgarian folk dances” which is a distinguishing mark of the Bulgarian folklore revival in the second half of the twentieth century.

In 1942, the Sofia Opera presented the first Bulgarian ballet based on folklore motives “Nestinarika” - choreographed by Maria Dimova. It demonstrated the emergence of ambition to create a **national stage choreography**. The successful performances of the Igor Moiseyev dance troupe in 1946 motivated the idea for organizing a representative professional folk dance company in Bulgaria. First, a specialized group for the performance of folk dances was constituted in addition to the ballet cast at the Sofia Opera. After the visit of the “Pyatnitski” choir in 1949, the decision was made for a state ensemble, which would include not only a dance troupe, but a choir and an orchestra of traditional musical instruments. Its creation and management were entrusted in the hands of the composer Philip Koutev, whose name the National Ensemble bears today. Margarita Dikova, who had lifelong experience in urban folklore dancing and worked in the Sofia opera with Dimova, was appointed chief choreographer at the beginning of February, 1951 and the first auditions for performers were held at the end of the month. The “**State Ensemble for Folk Songs and Dances**” was constituted on 1<sup>st</sup> May by decree of the Council of Ministers at the Committee for Arts and Culture of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria.

The executive team of the Ensemble was remarkably large and intent on multi-competence. Its female quota was striking.<sup>3</sup>

The discovery of talent amongst the living bearers of folklore in Bulgaria was a key factor. The archives reveal that more than 5000 singers, several hundred instrumentalists and about 2000 dancers from villages all over Bulgaria were auditioned for places in the three casts of the ensemble. Alongside the creative challenges, Koutev and Dikova were also supposed to transform performers’ lives. One of the favourite anecdotes related to those times, was that the selected ensemble singers asked: “Fine, we will come to sing in Sofia, but what work will we do there?” [Kouteva 1989].

The central task was announced in one of the early advertising brochures of the Ensemble as

the search for, the development and staging of the finest and most typical folk songs, dances and instrumental melodies from all over the country. It is an art-

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2 See, for example [Panova-Tekath 2010; 2014 and 2015].

3 Six female and three male members.

istic group for the preservation and development of Bulgarian song and dance folklore, which should ring out with all its initial freshness, with its intact style, and at the same time to correspond to the requirements of the stage vocal, instrumental and dance art.<sup>4</sup>

As distinguished musicologist Todor Todorov reminisced: “An ensemble of the folklore kind! There was no previous experience in Bulgaria... They paved the way“ [Todorov 1993].

The first experimental stage performance took place on 1 March 1952 in Buhovo before an audience of workers, miners and members of the then Co-operative farm (peasants) and the official premiere in the “Bulgaria” Hall in Sofia was later in June that year. The first trip abroad was organized for the participation of the Ensemble in the Prague Spring Music Festival in 1953. The first major tour in Western Europe (France, England, Holland, Belgium) was from March to May 1955 and in North America (USA, Canada) from September to November 1963.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of highly positive responses<sup>6</sup>, the performers gained in confidence and national self-esteem, while embracing their collective music and dance identity. The Ensemble’s success led to the genre’s expansion at various levels.

Maria Kouteva, who has collected the ensemble’s memoirs, recalled that “very quickly we became an inspiration and had to bear responsibility for it” [Kouteva 1989]. Typical of a flourishing new art form in a socialist country, all was very well organized, structured, focused on the masses and with an eye to the future. 15000 new **urban dance groups** were assigned to industrial trade union organizations and coordinated by the then Centre for Artistic Activity. In 1958, Dikova co-authored a brochure “Amateur dance activity” in which guidelines were presented for setting up and developing dance groups.<sup>7</sup> On the initiative of Philip Koutev, the first **large folklore fair** took place in 1960 in the village of Gramatikovo.

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4 I own the oldest advertising brochures, many of which do not have a publication date, courtesy of the daughter of Philip Koutev and the current director of the Ensemble, Elena Kouteva.

5 The first concerts in the Balkans were in July-August 1953 (Rumania), the first performances in the UdSSR – in October 1956. The Ensemble travelled first to the Middle East in September-October 1955 (Syria, Lebanon), then it toured October-November 1960 in Mongolia, China, Korea, Vietnam, in December 1961 - January 1962 in Israel, and represented Bulgaria at the EXPO 1970 in Japan.

6 An extensive collection of publications is kept in the archives of the National Folklore Ensemble “Philip Koutev”.

7 Many years later, she shared with me, that even though the text “had to sound in tune with the times”, she had tried to say things “universally important” to her colleagues [Dikova 1991].

The network of **twenty professional ensembles for folk songs and dances** formed in the comparatively small country of Bulgaria was unrivalled in the Eastern Bloc. Funded by the party's regional or municipal committees, their structure was like that of the first ensemble. Each engaged approximately 100 participants, of which the dancers were usually 20 women and 20 men. The initial argument for their creation was that every folk music-dance region was to have its own stage representation at a prominent level.<sup>8</sup>

Koutev's ensemble survived under the wing of the Ministry of Culture and was referred to as the "State Ensemble". It enacted two very important functions internationally and nationally: 1. to be the main ambassador of the national culture, which is why it continued to recreate Bulgarian folklore on stage in its entirety; 2. to serve as a measure of the highest quality and a guide for the genre. The fact that it was stationed in the capital, enhanced its status as an elite formation.

Bulgaria was also distinguished by its **educational institutions**, which supported the genre in the second half of the twentieth century.

Five years later, the State Ballet School, instituted in February 1951, was renamed the *State Choreographic School*. It was judged necessary to adopt a special professional education programme in the field of "Bulgarian folk dance". Every year 300-400 children of 12 years of age from all over the country applied for enrolment. In addition to the regular high school curriculum, the girls studied the traditional style and practiced "Bulgarian folk dance" over five years under the guidance of a female teacher, while the boys had a male instructor. The curriculum was supplemented with music lessons (accordion or piano), theory of Bulgarian dance, transcription, rhythmic, ethnography, performing in ensemble, ballet, international folk dances, and acting skills.

There were subsequent degrees of education for choreographers and directors. In 1969 in Plovdiv, a specialized School for Leaders of Dance Groups was instituted which offers a seven-month course of training in the field of staging dances as of "Bulgarian folk dances", teaching methodology, and so on. In Sofia, from 1972 until 1986 there existed a College offering a two-year course for musical and choreographic cohorts.

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8 Their shortest names and years of creation: "Pirin" – Blagoevgrad (1954), "Dobrudzha" – Tolbukhin (1954), "Tundzha" – Yambol (1954), "Zagore" – Stara Zagora (1955), Sliven (1959), "Severnoyashki Ensemble" – Pleven (1959), „Rodopa" – Smolyan (1960), Pazardzhik (1962), Gabrovo, Kyustendil (1964), "Kapanski" – Razgrad (1966), "Trakiya" – Plovdiv (1974), Varna (1976). The ensembles "Iskra" – Veliko Turnovo (1960), "Miziya" – Turgovishte (1961), "Strandzha" – Burgas (1965) and "Dunav" – Vidin (1971) were originally amateur and later were accorded professional status. In Sofia there were also two professional ensembles, part of the People's Army and the Administration of the Labour Forces, which principally performed "Bulgarian folk dance".

The most significant extension of the qualifications, however, was offered by the *Higher Musical-Pedagogical Institute*<sup>9</sup> in Plovdiv. There, in 1974 a special department was established, which continues to offer a bachelor's degree in "Bulgarian folk choreography" and a master's degree in "Directing". The practical exercises included specialized folklore field work, motion analysis, creating choreography on a set task, and stage works. The palette of specialized theoretical courses was supplemented by interdisciplinary courses in pedagogy, psychology, philosophy, ethnography, ethnomusicology, human anatomy and physiology.

Judging by the quantity of institutions, it would seem that the **choreographers**, to whom we owe the evolution of this genre, were numerous.<sup>10</sup>

From this point, I will devote attention to the phenomenon as a whole, emphasizing the names of Margarita Dikova (1916-1996) and Kiril Djenev (1922-2006). Dikova is recognized as the "Mother" of the genre. She has maintained her position in the State ensemble for twenty years, and is responsible for creating the classic examples of "Bulgarian folk choreography" and developing the "Bulgarian exercise", used as warm-up by all dance groups to the present.<sup>11</sup> Djenev was first her assistant and later founded the ensemble "Thrakia" and the curriculum in higher education. In collaboration with Kiril Haralampiev, he invented the Bulgarian Kinetography and is the author of several textbooks. He has been admired as a "*Horeo*-Master" and "defined the development of our stage dances" [Parlamov 1996:127].<sup>12</sup>

### III. The semantic star

For years I have tried to include the "Soviet model of dancing the Bulgarian way" in the international comparison of the politics of cultural performance in order to fathom the specifics of the professionalized folklore revival movement in Bulgaria. I propose replacing the emblematic metaphor of Bulgaria as a crossroads with that of the Semantic Star,<sup>13</sup> a form of graphic organizer to facilitate understanding and reflection on past experiences. In Figure 1, I expand the

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9 Since 1995 "Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts".

10 See the published collection [Petrov 2012].

11 As a performer and assistant choreographer in the State ensemble, I knew Dikova very closely post 1988 and conducted retrospective conversations and interviews with her.

12 I knew Djenev as my professor in Plovdiv and from the meetings of professional ensembles. Those were the venues for informal conversations with choreographers and dancers and "setting one's watch right".

13 I did introduce it formally in my dissertation in 2004. One of its applications in the process of Bulgarian professional folk choreography research can be seen in Panova-Tekath [2015].

matrix of the Semantic Star to investigate why and how “Bulgarian folk dance” mattered so much and continues to do so in Bulgaria. I believe that

music and dance are fulcrums of identity, allowing people to intimately feel themselves part of the community through the realization of shared cultural knowledge and style and through the very act of participating together in performance [Turino 2008:2].

The three axes of the Star will help comprehension of “Bulgarian folk choreography” as a contemporary key to identity formation.

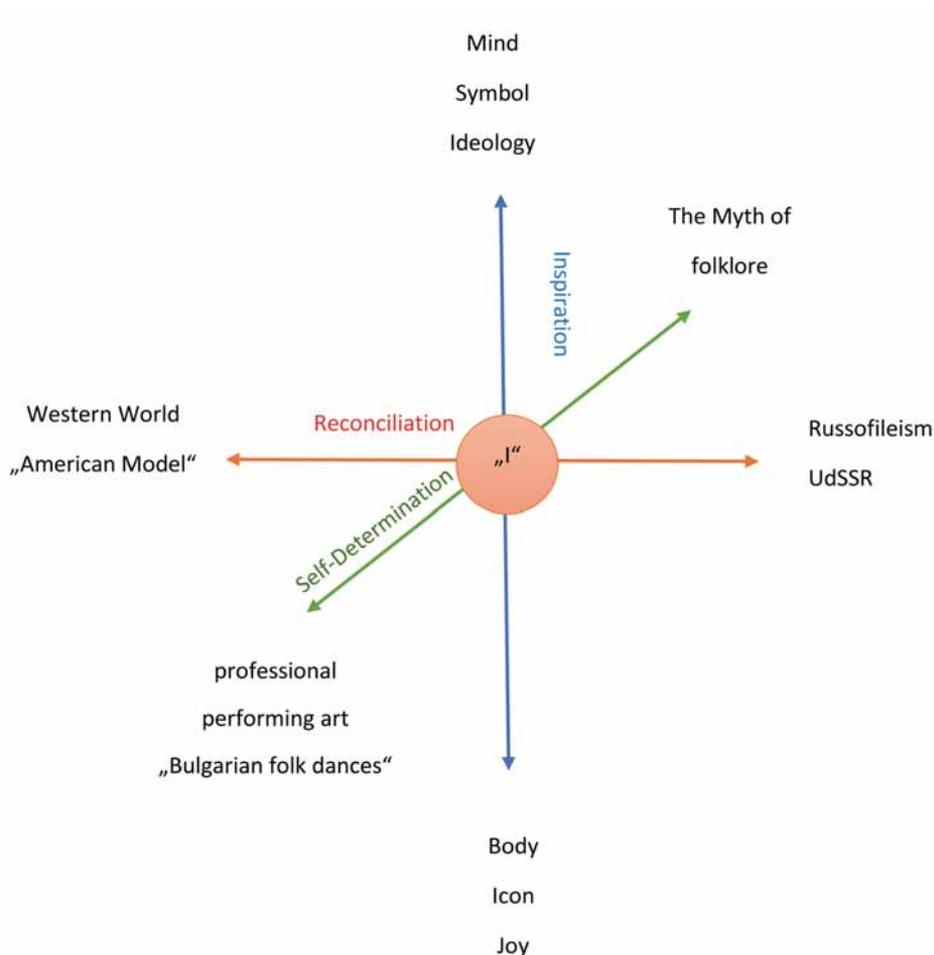


Figure 1  
The Semantic Star – a new interpretation.

## A. The historic time axis: *the road*.

### The myth of dance folklore in Bulgaria and its contemporary development

The historical past and tradition play a very important role in consolidating a positive attitude among Bulgarians towards the theatrical genre of “Bulgarian folk dances”. Folklore enabled maintenance of national cultural identity during the five centuries-long Ottoman occupation (1396-1878). This belief is so persistent in the cultural memory that it easily overrides any tendency to identify Bulgarian folk dances with any kind of newer political ideologies. Over the centuries, people in every Bulgarian village would gather to dance *horos*, communal circle dances, holding on to their hands, shoulders and belts. There used to be a well-defined place for the women and the men, the old people and the children in its circle or line. There was time for performative dancing and the demonstration of special techniques, as well as natural opportunities for the evolution and creation of new dance figures. I believe, according to this cultural memory, that every individual felt included and sheltered within the community, justly valued, properly identified and materially provided for. The *horos* manifested itself as a metaphor both of a particular society and the circle of life in its universal meaning. Undoubtedly, traditional dancing played an important role in the establishment of a societal moral code and the determination of the social hierarchy, as well as a means of providing information, education, communication and integration. In addition, during times of hardship it was probably one of the very few means for the enrichment of culture. Perhaps for this very reason, during the time when the Bulgarian State had disappeared from the political map of Europe for five centuries, thousands of *horos* were created on its lands. When the arts and sciences were flourishing in Central and Western Europe, traditional music and dance were for ethnic Bulgarians the only means for cultural expression, the central art form.

The call of the monk Paisii of Hilendar (1722–1773), a key figure of the eighteenth-century Bulgarian National Revival movement, for Bulgarians not to be ashamed of their name, but rather remember that they too had famed kings and history, their own alphabet and schools, marked the beginning of the Bulgarian enlightenment. Unfortunately, the years between the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878 until the end of the Second World War in 1945 were also stained by extremely harsh times and again in the archives and museums are pictures of colossal *horos*. This is the context for most of the answers I received from many Bulgarians when confronted with the question: “What does, according to you, the Bulgarian folk dance stand for?” and the answer is: “What for!?! Everything!”, “What would we be without it!?! Nothing!” Thus “dancing the Bulgarian way” in towns

and cities repose on the historical merits of the *horo* and inherits its two central images – a means of survival and cultural enhancement. These are regarded as universal and timeless meanings which Bulgarians preserve as myths in their persistent cultural memory,<sup>14</sup> placing them above and beyond political regimes.

Professional ensembles were accepted as their supreme stage manifestation. Only ethnomusicologists were concerned with differentiating between “spring folklore” (or “authentic folklore”) from adapted folklore. But even one of the most terminologically precise Bulgarian ethnomusicologists, Lyuben Botusharov, admits that the unique mystery of Bulgarian musical folklore has manifested itself precisely in the execution of the authors’ productions in professional ensembles, because in the case of choral performances, folk singers have added to the timbre and manner of presentation, “not only an aesthetic taste, but folklore authenticity” [Botusharov 1996:82]. All the researchers and choreographers in Bulgaria accept that the great virtue of Philip Koutev’s and Margarita Dikova’s creativity is their loyalty to the prime source of the imagery, the subordination of the composition to its characteristics, and its optimal preservation. In this respect, Lyuben Botusharov pays tribute to the

profound penetration into the spirit of the folk art, so as not to be able to discern, ... which are the steps of the original folk “horo” and where begin the combinations of the choreographer [Botusharov 1996:80].

Djenev continued the line of Dikova with his efforts to maintain syncretism between music, dance, text, decoration, personalities, and spirit in order to organize a successful dance theatre.

Based on my discussions with Dikova, Djenev, other choreographers and the oldest dancers, I have identified four sources and methods from which were derived the so-called “classical examples” of the genre:

1. **Folklore brought by the (first) dancers** employed in the ensemble. It was not limited to steps and style but included inspiration from images and chance events. Thus “*Ludi-Mladi*” was created, based on observation of two loving couples on the staff. The idea for “*Zaeshkata*” emerged from the behaviour of two candidates in the course of their entrance examination. Djenev also visualized one of his characters in “*Shinitci*” using the same approach. Even when the link with the original folklore was lost and everyone connected with the ensemble were “city siblings”, graduates of the State Choreographic School, this approach was zealously cherished. The heir of Dikova and Djenev in the State Ensemble, Jordan Yanakiev, for example, used to invite exciting dancers from the villages so that we could “see them and copy their style”.

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14 I use “memory” terms in the way of Jan and Aleida Assmann [Assmann 1991].

2. **Reminiscences and explorations of the choreographer.** One of the most exciting examples, in my opinion, is “*Kukli*” in which Dikova anthropomorphizes the puppets that once hung on the *gadulka*<sup>15</sup> bow of a wandering narrator of stories and legends. The dance theatre piece “*Horo in Sofia*” is also a picture seen and experienced while standing in a village square.

3. **Additional information from other experts, museum and institutional archives.** Permanent guests and advisers to the ensemble were researchers from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences: (Raina Kacarova - ethnochoreologist, Elena Stoin – ethnomusicologist, Maria Veleva - traditional costumes), famous painters (Iliya Beshkov, Dechko Uzunov), poets (Lamar), writers (Konstantin Petkanov) and composers (Petko Staynov, and the like) who had an affinity for folk art. It is notable how these experts managed to skirt Communist epistles when offering their advice.

4. **Collective opinion and creativity of the members.** Djenev used to sound out opinion from the collective and numerous discussions ensued which raised dancers’ self-esteem and sense of belonging.

Of course, the professional Bulgarian folk dances have not been defined as monuments of culture, but rather are treated as processual. There was also criticism of individualism:

Regrettably nowadays we have abandoned the self-imposed limitations peculiar to the founding fathers and strive to enforce more or less our own peculiar style, to promote our own handwriting as authors. In this way the settings .... become more and more an expression of personal creativity [Botusharov 1996:80].

But innovation as a criterion of art has been rightly connected with folklore, signalling a sign of creative genius and a way to develop culture. Dancers, choreographers and directors were concerned to merge tradition and innovation into one, and as understanding grew, they developed theory textbooks devoted to the genre.<sup>16</sup> Bulgarian professional choreography began to be articulated and classified into the following four categories: 1. **Divertissement dance**, which was the simplest of all and became more complex through the: 2. **Suite form**, this most often dealt with the specifics of an entire ethnographic region; 3. **Thematic dance**, which interpreted folklore as a type of culture, being highly respected and central for Bulgarian folk dance as an art form; and 4. **Storyline dance**, which required a line of logic, conflicting situations, and so on.

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15 A traditional viola da gamba.

16 See the publications of Djenev, Haralampiev, Abrashev and so on.

It is interesting to see to what extent the genre has linked its contemporary social role with the official policy of its sponsors. It is noteworthy that even the thematic and subject based Bulgarian folk choreographies did not serve the new Socialist reality. Their choreographers instead were searching for links to Orpheus and the ancient ethnos. In the course of the twentieth century, the genre staged more and more national and historical legends alongside depictions of folklore as a vibrant world. Special attention was given to the style of the different regions, leadership strategies, gender demeanour and age groups. In Dikova's and Djenev's art works, there is a sense of Iliya Beshkov's brush, who has said that "Even if you see the *"shop"*<sup>17</sup> naked in the bath, you should be able recognize him as such" [Parlamov 1992:35].

Of special value, to my mind, are two findings with respect to subtle messages in the choreographies of the genre from the second half of the twentieth century, which run counter to the prevalent atheism and political conformity:

1. As if in the spirit of historic materialism, there are traces of the religious calendar in the folklore visualizations. This started with Dikova's interpretations of the female initiation ritual on St. Lazar's day.
2. A real rarity was the interest in the guerilla antifascist movement. In contrast, there were many choreographies devoted to the *haiduti* (local armed resistance to Ottoman rule). Without resorting to overly numerous participation (instead he used a small chamber cast) Djenev underlined the patriotism of the freedom fighters "Aramii". The choice of Dikova in 1956 to recreate the traditional all male ritual "Rusalii" from the Pirin Macedonian region was very shrewd. Even the costumes of the men in the Rodopa Ensemble are indicative of the readiness to fight. In 1976, Dikova and Koutev celebrated The Day of Liberation from Ottoman rule (March 3) with a new, specially dedicated production. It seems likely that it was not by chance that the title was: "Bulgarians, Their Heads Aloft" („*Bulgari glava vdignali*").

Bulgarian professional choreographers almost always managed to camouflage even their most advanced freedom loving ideas associated with the themes and plots of their artistic creations in rural or old/ancient historic "packaging." No one remembers a case when a dance, part of an ensemble's repertoire was taken off the stage, or a choreographer fired for ideological reasons. The situation was very different during the incipient period immediately after conversion to democracy. This period was notable for increasing poverty which threatened almost every ensemble with bankruptcy. In 1991, on a local municipal level, the ensemble "Varna" was disbanded, based on allegations of links with communist

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17 A person from the ethnographic region around Sofia.

propaganda. The Labour Corps, part of the Bulgarian army whose conscripts were mostly representatives of the Roma minority and which existed even before the advent of the totalitarian regime (as institutionalized in 1920), clashed conceptually with the philosophy of the EU (European Union) and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). It was disbanded in 2002 and consequently the professional dance ensemble which was attached to their headquarters (HOLC) ceased to exist.

As far as Bulgarian folk music is concerned, there exist numerous very valuable generalizations detailing the transition from folklore to a modern professional stage art within the Socialist political context. Many of those conclusions<sup>18</sup> have a direct bearing on the field of dance. It is essential to engage with scientific perspectives from abroad, especially if researchers have been part of the Recreational Dance Movement in the United States.<sup>19</sup>

My own perspective aims to incorporate the theme of “Bulgarian folk dances” into a critical analysis of the immediate past, applying an interdisciplinary approach and international comparison.<sup>20</sup> The cultural architecture though is very intricately interwoven with the process of the maturation of the dancing individual, which I will only hint at here in the third axis of the Star. It is a matter of fact, that both the generation which took part in establishing the genre, as well as the dancing individuals post-1989 find it difficult to accept claims that communist ideology was present in the phenomenon. Most of the professional dancers and choreographers I have interviewed believed that they had lived in a cultural oasis beyond politics and that their choreographies did not have ideological overtones. The well-provided-for “**golden years**” of the genre have made it possible for them to “connect with their roots” and to “develop their creative potential”. They view the phenomenon of folk dance choreography as a manifestation of the “model of the resurrecting structures, which stabilize history, make history possible and on the whole make it comprehensible” [Koselleck 2003:28].

Bulgarian folk dances updated their meaning to become not just an old symbol but an index<sup>21</sup> and a key to identity formation. One of the first advertising brochures of the State ensemble reported:

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18 Put forward by Timothy Rice, Donna Buchanan, Klaus Roth and my colleagues from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, amongst whom is Lozanka Pejcheva.

19 Anthony Shay did not include the Bulgarian example in his *Choreographic Politics* [2002], his comparative analysis of State Folk Dance Companies are of value to Bulgarian ethnochoreologists.

20 Serious social research and scientific rethinking of the Communist era in Bulgaria is underway today. See Znepolski a.o. [2018].

21 Here I use the theory of signs known as *Semiotics* elaborated by Charles Sanders Peirce [Peirce 1931-1935] and I agree with the understanding of the musical signs by Thomas Turino [Turino 2008:5–16].

The concerts of the Folk Song and Dance Company have done a great deal to increase interest in local folklore. Thousands of amateur groups all over the country now sing, dance and play their local folk songs and dances in the manner of our folk singers and players, which has become so familiar to them. [ANFEPK 1960:4].

Professionalization strengthened the link between continuity and innovation, past and present. After all, “the finest and most typical” folklore dances “without losing their original *cachet*” have managed to “acquire the qualities necessary for the purpose” of stage performance and have become “**the national style**”. It is important to note that the new and “free” urban art has involved “based on statistic data, almost a half a million Bulgarians” [Zhivkov 1981:292]. This was about 1/16 of the total population!

Similarly to the “*horo*” in folklore, Bulgarian folk dances have formed and structured a following of their own, which includes social circles and entire families. Today, this social entity not only has not disappeared, but rather has expanded thanks to the new models of “dancing the Bulgarian way”, which I term “Democratic” and “Emigrants”. It still has representational pretensions vis-à-vis national culture. In all the models, the professionals, having come into contact with the above-mentioned institutions, continue to maintain a prominent position.

Since 1993 “Gala days of professional folk art” have been conducted in Pazardzhik. Such a competitive forum for professional state ensembles (*Nadigravane*), apart from joint concerts, did not exist in the Socialist past. All professional dancers and choreographers came to know each other and formed an insiders’ friendly circle.

By contrast, today the most well-known private folklore ensembles tend to perform on their own and are in bitter competition with one another. Looking from the sidelines, it appears strange that the ethnocentrism of the professional performances of the genre is more pronounced than it was before 1989. Fortunately, I consider that ethnocentrism in Bulgaria has always been predominantly existential and not pathological.

## **B. The axis of the geo-political space: *balancing*.**

### **Russophilia in Bulgaria**

Bulgaria differed from most other Eastern Bloc countries on account of its Russophilia,<sup>22</sup> which is deeply rooted in its history and related myths. Operation

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22 Love for Russia.

of the latter is very pronounced in Bulgarian folklore. The collective mythological images of “Russia the liberator” and of “Dyado Ivan” (Grandfather Ivan) were part of the all-encompassing consciousness of the Bulgarian people in their aspiration for national liberation from the five centuries of Ottoman rule. Such beliefs did not emerge post-1945, nor were they the result of suggestive policies of the Communist Party. After the Russo-Turkish wars and the liberation of the original Bulgarian lands in 1878, the whole country was dotted with monuments of gratitude. On the square in front of the Parliament building in Sofia, stands to this day, the monument of the Russian “King Liberator”, and behind the Parliament building stands St. Alexander Nevski Cathedral. It was not difficult to place alongside these commemorative buildings, new monuments to the “Brothers Liberators” from Fascism and Capitalism. This was especially so given that the times prior to 1944 were marked by the disasters of the Balkan wars and the alliance with Germany in the course of the two World Wars. In Socialist Bulgaria there was never the need for the presence of the Soviet army. The fraternity with the Russian people was recognized as such in the course of the Bulgarian National Revival and was based on the fact that both peoples were East Orthodox Slavs. It was within this closed family that “the younger brother” (Bulgaria) found his identity, but his pride as well.

Approximately 180 Russophile organizations continue to be part of the Bulgarian cultural environment.<sup>23</sup> Naturally, Russophilia has its critics in Democratic times, but even at the highest levels of the political system expressions such as “to be a Russophile equates to being a Bulgarophile“ can still be heard<sup>24</sup> A question to be asked is how such favourable relations with the USSR exercised impact on the genre of Bulgarian folk dance.

Contrary to the directors of ensembles in the former Yugoslavia, Bulgarian counterparts had complete access to the knowledge and experience of Soviet professional artistry. The introduction of the genre was supported by Soviet ballet-masters: Nikolai Holfin and Nina Anisimova directed two Bulgarian ballets, based on folklore motifs<sup>25</sup>; and Vladimir Belii trained and assisted Atanas Petrov in the setting up of the State Ballet School. Before assuming her position in the State Ensemble, Dikova completed a two- year Russian ballet choreography training course in Sofia and choreographed the dances of Lyubomir Pipkov’s opera *Momchil*. The expertise acquired from the Russian ballet school has contributed greatly to her establishment of a specialized Bulgarian dance exercise, which was initially called “*trainage*” (from training). Despite the initial mistrust

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23 The oldest one was constituted in 1899, whereas the most pro-active was established in 2003.

24 A statement made by the presidential candidate Ivailo Kalfin at a meeting of the “Russophiles” National Association on October 10, 2016. [www.bg.rbth.com/news/2016](http://www.bg.rbth.com/news/2016)

25 „Haiduti’s Song“ and „Legend of the Lake“, music – Alexander Raichev.

and protestations of the dancers, who had been brought to Sofia from the villages, against the “*trainage*” approach, Dikova succeeded with its help in synchronizing her talented “patchwork family”. Audiences the world over noticed “the precision of the steps which can only be the result of the feeling of community and strict discipline”.<sup>26</sup>

In 1950 Djenev, accompanied by five of his colleagues,<sup>27</sup> was sent for the first time to Moscow for a specialization course. Speaking of Igor Moiseyev he admitted:<sup>28</sup>

He opened for us still another window towards the world at large and the dance art”; ... “without my association with him, I would have definitely been a poorer person as far as dancing goes”; ... and he left me with the “thought, that we should approach our work most profoundly and seriously, with lots of knowledge and understanding.

One of the main services which Moiseyev has delivered for the development of Bulgarian theatrical folk art was his directive given to his Bulgarian guests not to lose the so called “periodic synchrony” between the musical and dance phrases. The “world renowned expert” had underlined, that this was not a sign of inferior culture, but a richness of Bulgarian folklore and that the new Bulgarian choreographies “should not be schematized”.

Thus, this magnanimous recommendation, which is felt to this day within the genre, focused on uniqueness and emancipation from the USSR. Consciously or not, Moiseyev gave a green light to Bulgarian art by saying that “at any cost the specificity of the Bulgarian dance should be preserved”. His notion for folklore has acted as a guiding star and act of liberation:

He pointed out to us that folklore should not be regarded as something definite, complete, but as a living thing, a movable phenomenon, which as he used to say “is in depth reflection of life itself”.

In later years, I only recognize Georgi Abrashev as an emissary of Russian scientific achievements in the field of stage dance. He graduated from the Moscow Theatrical Institute, taught in Bulgaria and in 1989 produced a collection of his works, entitled *Questions of choreographic theory*.

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26 *De Staandaard*. Brussels, May 15, 1955.

27 Toshko Kichunov, Peter Zahariev and Haralampiev, with whom he has been working on the book „Terminology of the Bulgarian dances” [1965], as well Lyuben Zarkov and Hristo Cocev.

28 All the following quotes from the Djenev’s memories of Moiseyev come from [Parlamov 1992:44-45].

## Relationships with the Western World

In the earlier twentieth century there were clear relations with the Western world: Bulgaria had a monarch of German ancestry, and more directly with respect to Bulgarian folk dance, the innovator Maria Dimova who died in Vienna in 1944 was a graduate of the German school for contemporary dance. After the so-called socialist revolution, Bulgaria had minimal contacts with Germany, whereas the Western world as a whole was gradually turning into a distant and inaccessible dream for many Bulgarians.

After the great successes of the ensemble of Koutev and Dikova in Western Europe in 1955, the government realized that their ensembles for folk songs and dances could operate as a business cards for the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Performers received many privileges, among which were their first elegant costumes and diplomatic passports. It was not a connection to folklore, but a longing to travel to the capitalist world and the high praise received there that imperceptibly became the reason for the increase in scale of the genre. This was one of the central motives for the thousands of young people who danced in folklore groups in the country, for the thousands of candidates for jobs in professional ensembles, for the hundreds of girls and boys who competed every year for the twenty openings in the State Choreographic School and for the hundreds of prospective university level students in the field of choreography, directing and pedagogy. The travel notes of author Liliana Stefanova *One Autumn in America* are noteworthy. It was hardly a coincidence that the writer was allowed to accompany the State ensemble on its first tour of North America in 1963. On reading her book, I was overcome by a stream of memories and admiration for the first performers, who, as Maria Kouteva said, had laid out the path for thousands of Bulgarians to follow in their footsteps. Stefanova expressed her surprise as to how former villagers in their new role of cultural ambassadors of their homeland had, as if by magic, changed their customary behaviour: "I just couldn't believe it. Even the language they were using was quite unrecognizable, flexible and literary" [Stefanova 1989:84].

The success of the State ensemble was huge and the performances were the first real communication with the capitalist world during the Cold War. Undoubtedly, the spectacular stagings of national identity had carried ideological messages and the first of these was "Life in a Socialist State is wonderful, the Bulgarian culture – rich and the people – normal, cheerful and talented!" Bulgarian performers rarely consciously associated with the East-West race as they competed at festivals with amateur groups from wealthy capitalist states and celebrated on winning prizes. Almost everyone in the West, however, who had witnessed the performances of the first Bulgarian ensembles and whom

I interviewed,<sup>29</sup> told me that the concerts have made them suspicious of the anticommunist propaganda and the need for a “Red Scare“.

Dikova used to tell me that it was “late in time” when she had grasped in detail her role as a political missionary, but meeting with other peoples and the “challenge to show them what you are capable of”, as well as the opportunity for cultural exchange “on an equal footing” had always excited her. “The responsibility for painting a beautiful picture of Bulgaria was a priority” [Dikova 1990].

Thus, the tours generated many friends and fans of Bulgaria. Some of them, such as Yves Moreau, Martin Koenig, Timothy Rice and Marc Levy received personal support from the Bulgarian government to visit Bulgaria in order to study, explore and disseminate Bulgarian national culture around the world. The American dance ethnologist Anthony Shay also shared with me how fascinated he was by the State ensemble tour in 1963 and by his meetings with Philip Koutev in Sofia in 1968. Concurrently, the School for leaders of dance groups in Plovdiv opened its doors for foreign students. Most of them continue to this day as teachers and managers of the so-called “American model of dancing the Bulgarian way”. As a result of the first tour of the State Ensemble, Bulgarian stage choreographies were introduced into the repertoire of some of the most famous American ensembles. Alongside Anthony Shay (the AMAN Folk Ensemble in Los Angeles), special credit for this development went to the dancer of the State ensemble of Bulgaria Iliya Rizov. Before his early demise, he befriended many in the Bulgarian diaspora, a relationship which played a significant role in the “Tamburitians” ensemble in Pittsburgh. Otherwise, it was only towards the end of the 1970s that the Socialist government allowed more professional Bulgarian choreographers and pedagogues to travel to the West in order to teach within the framework of this model. In line with the exchange programmes between sports universities, Stefan Vuglarov was the first to travel to Germany.

In regard to the role of the ensembles abroad, we must not deceive ourselves that a State-funded art can be disassociated from politics. It would be wrong to argue that there did not exist an element of control over the genre by the Party. For the Party, the consensus and homogeneity within the dance groups was of considerable significance and correspondingly – the strength of their impact at home and abroad. That is why when professional ensembles travelled abroad, they were accompanied by a representative of the political establishment. It is claimed that very few problems ever occurred. One of the dancers of Dikova remembers the very first tour of the ensemble in England when a colleague of his defected while in London, and made an anti-communist statement on one of the local radio

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29 In Central and Western Europe, I conducted 300 interviews among people dancing “the Bulgarian way” in 1994-2004, in North America almost 150 in 2012-2018.

stations. The young man ultimately rejoined the ensemble and returned to Bulgaria where he was discharged on disciplinary charges. However, the privileges and the benefits, which the professionals of the genre enjoyed in Socialist Bulgaria were so many that those who fled to the West were an exception.

Bulgarian emigrants were another audience before which the State ensemble staged samples of a “happy and beautiful image of the motherland”. Bulgarian folk choreography made the agrarian folklore past more beautiful than it was in reality. Consciously or not, it also adorned a recent past that was painful for the emigrants. Colleagues-dancers remember how in Paris in 1954 they tried to boo the emissaries of the communist homeland. In North America in 1963, however, before and after the performances, there were many personal encounters and tears of nostalgia. Professional folk art, presented there, had perplexed even some of the more well-to-do emigrants:

We despised this Bulgaria of simpleminded and ignorant people, of workers and peasants, of brutes and paupers. We felt sorry for her. More so – we hated it. We looked down on it with all the haughtiness of intelligent graduates of renowned academies and colleges in rich countries... I have always concealed when abroad my Bulgarian lineage! Today, for the first time in my life, I am proud to be a Bulgarian! [Stefanova 1989:85].

## C. The axis of self-expression: *stabilization of the significance*

### **The power of inspiration**

At the point when Bulgarians were experiencing weak national self-esteem, a totalitarian regime descended on top which also did not have its own image with which to boast abroad, nor a means for the unification and control of the masses in times of peace. I argue that to the rescue came a new national stage art to construct a Bulgarian national music and dance identity which was powered by individual inspiration.

It is easy to imagine this for the dancing performer since joy and self-esteem increase when people dance in a group,<sup>30</sup> fostering a natural sense of belonging. The satisfaction is immense, and devotion - complete, not only because the movement is associated with aesthetics and with a sense of skill and high quality, but also with meaning. And this is transferred to the audience through so-called mirror neurons. In that natural way, without the need for ideological persuasion,

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30 The term “muscular bonding” arose for the anthropological explanation of this momentum [Turino 2008:3].

but only with brilliant personal examples the folk dancing of the state sponsored ensembles became „infective“ in Bulgaria.

Indeed, the professionalization of the genre has helped to engage almost seven percent of the total population of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria in “folk dances.” The genre linked with the idea of continuity and designs a contemporary national musical and dance identity. As illustrated in the second Axis, the new professional stage art showcased its identity abroad and assured the Bulgarians international respect. Thus, the “people’s choreography” inspired and united the population, beautified and anesthetized everyday life and stabilized society. Even in Western Europe, the following compliments were bestowed on the State ensemble after its first concert tour in 1955:

the creation of such a company is a revolution in the development of the art of theatre... This visit will give an impetus to the movement for a revival of folk songs and dances in England<sup>31</sup> [ANFEPK 1960:8].

After the first-generation of professional dancers of the State ensemble, almost all performers of Bulgarian folk dances that I interviewed claimed that they did not have any contact with village folklore, and that they would hardly have expressed an interest in it if they had not come into contact with the genre. In the buses of the touring Ensembles, as well as at other gatherings, many folk songs were sung and at professional folk dancers’ weddings spontaneous folk dancing took place. Shifting to the level of symbols and their interpretation (*Thirdness* as defined by Peirce) ), it is noteworthy that the enthusiasm, which gripped tens and even hundreds of young people on numerous occasions after a successful performance of a “Bulgarian folk dance” led them to start singing the national anthem of their own accord.

The Bulgarian state sponsored ensembles enjoyed spectacular success, and – as Stefanova narrates – the performances had a stronger impact on the audiences than the speeches of the politicians whom they were accompanying [Stefanova 1989:28]. So, the role of Bulgarian professional folk dance as a metaphor of power in the twentieth century is highly significant.

As an action the dance functions here and now, the artistic experiences transcending one’s normal self. The actor is fully in the present and his/her dance convinces and engages on the level of the *Secondness*, following Peirce’s terminology. But precisely at this level of authenticity, dance is capable of manipulating and, at the same time, of being an object of manipulation. It is threatened by the degeneration of *Thirdness*, that is, in its interpretation. None of the professional dancers whom I interviewed were able to comprehend the accusation that

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31 Ewan MacColl, communist party member, playwright and folk singer, London, 1955.

Bulgarian stage art was employed as a political instrument. But read only the end of the sentence of the then Head of State, Todor Zhivkov in 1976 addressed to the Koutev Ensemble:

Your high artistic achievements have won recognition and glory for our country far beyond its boundaries... You, in the most convincing way, show to what heights this creativity can ascend in a socialist environment [Rabotnicesko Delo 1976].



Figure 2

*The State Ensemble for Folk Songs and Dances "Philip Koutev", Sofia. Photo: A. Porto, 1991.*

#### IV. Towards a conclusion

Bulgarian folklore performances have succeeded in making an impact on thousands or maybe millions of people, including sophisticated viewers abroad. Today, when the curiosity of audiences in the West has decreased, the Iron Curtain no longer exists and the world is moving towards digitalization, these performances continue, in my opinion, to excite and inspire almost all Bulgarian society. The reasons for this different attitude in comparison with other state sponsored



*Figure 3*  
*Folklore Ensemble «Thrakia», Plovdiv. Photo: B. Kalcheva, 2000.*

ensembles<sup>32</sup> are cultural-historical and I have noted them in connection with the first Axis. On the other hand, the success of the genre of Bulgarian folk dances is due to a form of authenticity, which dancers have come to recognize post 1951 under the expert guidance of their choreographers and pedagogues. I do not have in mind here authenticity as determined by criteria for the old steps, but authenticity as a unique expression of the dancing “I-here-now”.

This does not mean, however, that the genre has ever been or can become apolitical. The structures of “folk dances” and of a specific collective, ethnic or national cultural identity do not allow this.

Communication with the outside world is a driving factor in the construction of identity and this dynamic acquired a political dimension on the stage where the Bulgarian “people’s choreography” was performed. In the three Axes, I have identified three major political missions, relevant to the professional forms of the “Soviet model of dancing the Bulgarian way” during the second half of the

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32 View [Shay 2002: 230].



Figure 4  
*The State Ensemble "Philip Koutev" in Sofia. Photo: DAFK, 1992*

twentieth century. They can be considered as common for the professional presentation of any traditional dances on stage: *1. Self-determination, 2. Reconciliation and 3. Inspiration.*

In the case of Bulgarian stage folk dance, the dancing individual is always a part of a team, the moment of action carries consciousness of the past and tradition, whereas the location of performance is extended into the political space. For the Bulgarians, the "people's choreography" has become the centre point of their most cherished images and a catalyst for their national culture: the genre was, I believe, a key means to construct a new identity. Discovering and developing uniqueness and searching for balance in the modern world, the formation of "Bulgarian folk dances" led to the creation of community. This community was different from the one that practiced folklore in older rural communities, because it came into being for the sake of performing at home and abroad.

"Bulgarian folk dance" as a stage art cannot be regarded as folklore as a type of culture. Participants in the genre recognize no ambition to be perceived as performers of ancient rural folklore, but only present a multitude of modern and unique references to it. These references are both testimony to cultural memory, as well as to the folklore action itself, and to the style of those who are tradition

bearers. When “folk dances” depict on stage the vibrant world of rural folklore, they are enacted with the mechanisms of communicative memory. My use of the Semantic Star has indicated that Bulgarian stage choreography is a dynamic culture which is capable of creating new forms. Even the concept of Bulgarian nationality can be extended and changed by it.

The phenomenon over the course of thirty-eight years, as surveyed here, has connected the triad of Individual- Bulgarian-Socialism with Joy-Pride-Peace and has left the power of inspiration beyond the time. Based on my own extensive experience and research, I conclude that Bulgarian choreographers uplifted the quality of the genre of Bulgarian folk dance to a level which allowed it to transcend the totalitarian regime.

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# Institutional Developments of Sorbian Folk Dance post 1945

*Theresa Jacobs*

*Abstract:*

Throughout history, the folk dance culture of the Sorbian minority has presented itself in very different forms. One of the most important processes of the last century was the institutionalization of folk dances. A special situation for Sorbian culture emerged after the Second World War. The new status of the Sorbs as an officially accepted national minority in East Germany began to express itself as part of the GDR's cultural policy oriented towards the neighbouring Slavic countries and their experience. This framework enabled the foundation of the first professional Sorbian National Ensemble in 1952. Its main aim was to perpetuate, cultivate and develop Sorbian dance and music as a stage art. Beside the existing dance practices of the Sorbs in everyday life and on festive days, the ensemble presented a successful minority cultural policy outwards. By using the institutionalization theory of Richard Scott (1995), this article offers a differentiated view on this topic by considering, together, general political frameworks, and collective arrangements of norms and space for individual creative interpretations. The aforementioned elements determine each other. This approach reveals the manifold aspects and interactive dynamics of the relationship between external minority cultural policy and internal cultural practices.

*Keywords:*

Sorbs, folk dance, GDR, institutionalization, Sorbian National Ensemble

“We are proud of the richness of our folk culture. We do not want to get tired of using all our forces for the preservation of peace, for only in peace will our socialist Sorbian culture live and thrive.” (Director of the State ensemble of Sorbian folk culture, May 1960)<sup>1</sup>

## The beginnings of institutionalization

In 1841, in the two-volume collection of Upper and Lower Sorbian folk songs, the student Jan Arnošt Smoler described for the first time the dance *Serbska reja* (= Sorbian dance), calling it the only Sorbian “national dance”<sup>2</sup>. [Haupt, Smoler 1996: 218] A short description is followed in the original by a detailed account of the actual dance structure, which does not, however, provide any details of the individual step elements of the dance. Since the middle of the nineteenth centu-

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1 [Kube 1960: 5]. All German and Sorbian text passages have been translated by the author.

2 The Sorbs live as one of four recognised ethnic minorities in the eastern part of Germany. [Cf. Die Sorben 2014].

ry, the collection and documentation of folk culture, which followed the work of Johann Gottfried Herder, also became the expression of a movement called “national rebirth” among the Sorbs. At that time, the Sorbs naturally did not know just the *Serbska reja* as a “characteristic” folk dance. Many other dances were widespread, but no comparable importance was attributed to them for nation building. They therefore received less attention and were identified neither by the collectors nor by the dancers themselves as specific and characteristic Sorbian “national” dances. The *Serbska reja* was no longer described as just one Sorbian folk dance among many others, but specifically as the only Sorbian folk dance. Smoler termed this dance a national dance, thus elevating it to a new level of meaning. Up until the World Wars, there were a number of initiatives to search systematically for folk dances of the Sorbs to protect them from oblivion. But Smoler’s formalised definition and the assignment of a new meaning to the *Serbska reja* can be seen as the beginning of an ongoing process of institutionalization.

In the everyday world of the Sorbs, however, there was at no time an equivalent to the homogeneous idea of a unique and genuine national folk dance. Where at first, numerous facets and forms of folk dances could be observed among the Sorbs, an independent institution of a Sorbian folk dance developed in the course of time through a national paradigmatic discourse. In the words of Emile Durkheim, the *Serbska reja* emerged as a “social fact”. Since then, it has carried with it a self-image based on negotiation processes between the framework conditions surrounding it and the discursive interpretations of the individual carriers. In contrast to the multitude of folk dances danced by the Sorbs in the everyday world, “Sorbian” folk dance grew beyond its actual substance. Under changing political conditions and accompanied by social development processes of modernisation, Sorbian folk dance was increasingly embedded in institutional structures and finally professionalised into stage dance folklore after the end of the Second World War. Thus, since the second half of the twentieth century in particular, Smoler’s description was repeatedly used for the arrangement of dance choreographies within the developed stage dance folklore. As a result, the National Dance *Serbska reja* is still considered the embodiment of Sorbian folk dance and as such it is also reflected in current folklore debates on tradition and modernity.<sup>3</sup> How the processes of differentiation and institutionalization took place, increasingly after 1945, in the newly founded German Democratic Republic is traced in this article. As a theoretical framework to illustrate the complex and multilayered nature of this development, W. Richard Scott’s sociological theory of institutionalization is used, which is briefly presented below.

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3 [Cf. Jacobs 2014a and b].

## The pillars of institutionalization

Over and over again, to the present day, discussions take place about whether folk dance is specifically Sorbian, authentic and traditional. Images, more or less clearly developed, and claims emerged about what to understand as a Sorbian folk dance in general, what to accept as such, and what to expect from it. Thereby, different interpretations clashed again and again. Divergent “expectations about the observance of certain rules, which claim obliging validity” [Esser 2000:2] led to debates about the authenticity of its substance between traditional approaches focussing on protection and conservation and modern approaches going along with its professional presentation as stage art. This permanent discourse on the significance of Sorbian folk dance can be regarded as an important impetus of the process of institutionalization. Scott explains this phenomenon as a need for a certain canon of control. This canon seems meaningful and adequate in a specific time-span for the majority of the bearers of culture. In addition, this canon of control exists as a social construct where social facts also develop a life of their own and emerge according to general frameworks. But by and by, this canon responds, in its contemporary ways, to the future actions of single bearers of culture. According to Scott’s theory of institutionalization,<sup>4</sup> a general framework is not the only factor that has influence on the establishment of, for example, folk art ensembles. Ensembles’ guidelines of action are directed to single actors or groups and can only be effective if they are created and supported by the actors themselves. Phenomena like that of the *Serbska Reja* and its historical social construction are seldom consciously reflected. Hence, it is difficult to fathom its complexity. Since such phenomena are often perceived as relatively stable dimensions, they are always challenged by perpetual adaptations and processes of negotiation. To capture these different and changing dimensions, Scott identifies three pillars of a process of institutionalization: the regulative, the normative and the cognitive one.<sup>5</sup> All three pillars are closely connected and influence each other. Nevertheless, they can be coined with varying strength.

The regulative pillar encloses temporarily prevailing general frameworks that act as political or economic factors influencing social facts from the outside. Thus, these frameworks provide the general scope of action for social development. Written regulations and laws, which go along with mechanisms of control and sanctions, are located in the very centre. The cognitive pillar encompasses the individual, subjective experience and creative knowledge of single bearers of culture and actors. Guidelines of behaviour and values, which can be identi-

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4 [Cf. Scott 1995].

5 [Scott 1995:33].

fied within the normative pillar, emerge out of the permanent negotiations among these single actors within the general framework. Compared with the regulative pillar, with its impact “from outside”, these internal processes of negotiation are likewise action-oriented in dealing with the social fact; nevertheless, they do not imply legal possibilities of sanction from the outside, but rather internal social control. With the establishment of new organisations, new orders with universal validity may be created. Scott summarizes the process in the following way: “In this conceptualisation, institutions are multifaced systems incorporating symbolic systems – cognitive constructions and normative rules – and regulative processes carried out through and shaping social behavior.” [Scott 1995:33]

In contrast to the primarily orally imparted knowledge about many different folk dances in the premodern age, the process of institutionalization in the twentieth century resulted in a consolidation of written regulatives and fixed norms accompanied by a homogenising trend towards a so-called “national dance”. In contrast, the “non-national” folk dances of the Sorbian people are marked by the changeability and heterogeneity of everyday life and festive days. The establishment of Sorbian folk dance as a social fact from other Sorbian folk dances often led to diametrically opposed interpretations. However, they were all created and negotiated at the discursive level. The three pillars of institutionalization help to exemplify different levels and meanings of the Sorbian folk dance in professional, semi-professional and amateur Sorbian dance groups and ensembles, as well as social dancing in everyday life and on festive days.

The differentiation in the area of Sorbian folk dances is not to be understood as a process of replacement. Rather, new functionalities in the dance practice have been added to the already existing ones. New solidified standards and structures, further developed knowledge of practitioners and new events interact closely here. The following section of this chapter will discuss how the institutionalization process of Sorbian folk dance after the Second World War led to the establishment of professional stage dance folklore.

## Orientation models and general conditions for the establishment of Sorbian stage folklore

Dance fulfilled an important function in the GDR, which was to be controlled by the development of guidelines. The Theoretical Dance Conference, which took place in East Berlin in March 1953, called for a shift towards “socialist realism” in the art of dance.<sup>6</sup> Thus, folk dance in general played a central role in

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6 [Staatliche Kommission 1953].

the context of “artistic folklore” and mass mobilisation. The fact that folk dance was of particular interest can also be seen in the foundation of state folklore ensembles, the establishment and promotion of regional folk dance groups and the mass culture related to it.<sup>7</sup> The preservation of German folk dance, which became part of the political programme in the early 1950s, therefore concentrated on stage presentations that corresponded to a concrete educational mission on behalf of the socialist state. This was accompanied by processes of professionalization and institutionalization of folk dance practices. The state ensembles served as role models for the ideological orientation of folk dance, which, since the Berlin conference, had been considered a national heritage. These included the State Folk Art Ensemble of the GDR (founded in 1951), the State Village Ensemble (founded in 1954), the Dance Ensemble of the Free German Trade Union Federation and the Erich Weinert Ensemble of the National People’s Army. As the first professional ensemble of the Sorbs, the State Sorbian Folk Ensemble for Music and Dance was founded in Bautzen in 1952 under the same conditions that applied to German folk dance. The body’s mission was to build a professional Sorbian folk culture and to become a symbol of the GDR’s successful national minority policy. However, further paragon and contentual orientations became effective to accomplish these tasks which were related to the specifically Sorbian situation after 1945.

The reconstruction of Sorbian cultural life after 1945 was marked by the foundation of many dancing groups. These groups were part of regional chapters of the Domowina – the umbrella organisation of Sorbian associations. Their primary intention was the preservation and care of the Sorbian folk culture. To do this, they used collections of Sorbian folk dances. For the practical negotiation and implementation of norms and values that led to increased anchoring and professionalization of the Sorbian folk dance in the post-war period, three aspects were of particular importance:

- (1) the theses of Igor Moiseyev, head of the State Folk Dance Ensemble of the USSR,
- (2) the number of invented dance festivals as new opportunities to perform dance, and
- (3) the capture of the stage as a new place to present dance.

The search for the “national character” and the “feeling of the people” were, according to Moiseyev, the given paradigms also for Sorbians engaged in the

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7 Cf. [Primavesi, Raschel, Jacobs, Wehren 2015]; pursuing [Walsdorf 2010].

cultural sector.<sup>8</sup> It shows the relatively rigid and nationalistic understanding of folk-art-production at that time. The artistic work within such organisations consisted of fixed aims and detailed tasks, which oriented themselves on the one hand decisively to frame existing paradigms, but on the other hand, to specific subjective images of single actors. Every actor plays specific roles according to their social position or personal background which are then reflected in their norms and values, as well as in their individual knowledge and action. With the establishment of the first post-war dancing groups, trends of professionalization can be observed. But also new places, events and functions of folk dance came increasingly to the fore.

The Federal Secretariat of the Domowina initiated a conference under the direction of the folklorist Paul Nedo as early as March 1950. Among other things happening during the event, further work in the field of folk dances was discussed.<sup>9</sup> Jurij Winar, Laureate of the 1951 GDR National Prize, took the first initiative. Ever since he gained recognition as a choirmaster, conductor and composer as early as 1945, he had been campaigning for the foundation of a Sorbian folk art ensemble whose members would be amateurs who would later be trained to become professional artists. Consultants and models were searched for primarily in the neighbouring Slavic countries that had already established professional ensemble structures. In January 1952, the central cultural committee of the Domowina was consulted regarding the cultural tasks of the forty cultural groups under its umbrella. In 1951, dance groups and representatives of the Domowina joined the Third World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin where they came in contact with Moiseyev's theses. The new ideas were published by the teacher Pětr Malink<sup>10</sup> in the daily newspaper *Nowa doba*<sup>11</sup> and were adopted by the "Circle of Friends of the Sorbian folk dances", founded on 14 February 1952.<sup>12</sup> They were placed at the centre of the new social orientation to create new Sorbian self-confidence:

1. Finding all literature about Sorbian dances
2. Studying all living sources
3. Writing down and systematizing Sorbian dance elements such as steps, motifs and musical dance elements
4. Designing choreographies of dances created after 1945

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8 Cf. [Moiseyev 1951:5]. The German edition was published as a contribution to the World Youth and Student Festival in Berlin.

9 [Nowa doba 1950a:2].

10 Malink later becomes the leader of the dance group of the First Sorbian Cultural Brigade.

11 [Malink 1952:3].

12 [Šořta 1952:3].

5. Describing steps and choreographies in detail and conveying them to groups for practical application.

Another important factor that promoted the institutionalization of Sorbian folk dance in the second half of the twentieth century was the newly established festival culture which presented a major opportunity for the performance of Sorbian stage folklore. These festivals include, for example, the “World Festival of Youth and Students” and many other mainly regional festivals initiated by the Domowina. Between 1966 and 1989 seven “Festivals of Sorbian Culture” took place in Lusatia.<sup>13</sup> These were the highlights of artistic creativity for all Sorbian folk dance groups and were always concluded by the national folk-dance ensemble as the main act. But until the twentieth century, documents with concrete descriptions of dances for practical folklore work on stage did not exist. Starting with the collecting activities that have taken place since the nineteenth century, materials were now published for the dancing groups that took part in these festival events. The House for Sorbian Folk Art in Bautzen, for example, was in charge of such a project (launched in 1956) and, in collaboration with choreographers, published the series “Wjesele do rejki” with twenty-two dance instruction booklets coming out between 1956 and 1974. At the same time, the Institute for Sorbian Folk Research, a constituent part of the Academy of Sciences of the GDR in Bautzen, and the Institute for Sorabistics at the University of Leipzig were funded to provide the necessary basic research. Both institutes were supposed to guarantee a detailed understanding of the national culture including Sorbian folk dance. The folklorist Hannelore Fascyna, who first worked for the House of Sorbian Folk Art (1959-1964) and later for the Institute for Sorbian Folk Research (1965-1982), became an important expert in Sorbian folk dance and an important player in education in the field of Sorbian folk dance.

## The First Sorbian Cultural Brigade

The framework conditions described above facilitated the development of a broad cultural initiative. Beginning in January 1949, the First Sorbian Cultural Brigade<sup>14</sup> was founded under the direction of Handrij Ziesch. It originated from the cultural group of the Sorbian High-School in Bautzen and the Domowina Cultural Group. Sonja Šajbic, secretary of the Sorbian Sokół gymnastics

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13 [Bresan 2014].

14 The term “brigade” probably goes back to the Yugoslavian model. The young people organised in brigades took part in post-war reconstruction work. Cf. [Bresan 2014:59f].

movement,<sup>15</sup> took over direction of the dance group. In the same year, the Brigade took part in the Second Festival of the World Youth and Students in Budapest with four dancing couples. In November 1950, the Brigade received its first award for its cultural work on the occasion of the five-year anniversary of the GDR welfare association People's Solidarity. The music teacher Jurij Winar summed up the Brigade's work in the Sorbian cultural magazine *Rozhlad*:

Our old national dances, which in their old form could no longer testify to our will to live and the vigour of today's Sorbian youth, were revived by the Brigade and inspire us all [...]. The main triumphs in all performances of the Brigade are their cheerful dances! Only our First Sorbian Cultural Brigade dances so skilfully today! [...] The First Sorbian Cultural Brigade is on the right path, it is in the middle of life and is already an important factor in our cultural life today. [Winar 1950:12f]

Other dancing groups followed. They were often connected to schools and – needless to point out – to the Domowina. In 1950 more than 500 singers and 400 dancing couples in Sorbian national costumes from almost 100 villages under the direction of Šajbic took part in the First Central Sorbian National Meeting in Bautzen. Additionally, 2,000 pioneers from 62 schools presented three Sorbian folk dances. Also, the First Sorbian National Meeting held in Upper Lusatia in 1951 provided an impetus for a new cultural consciousness and the creation of so-called “national art”. Finally, in 1951, Sorbian cultural groups took part in the Third World Festival of the Youth and Students in Berlin as part of the “National Programme of the GDR”. Beside the official shows, Sorbian groups also appeared as an independent Sorbian folk-art ensemble. For such performances, folk dances had to be reworked for the stage:

In the field of folk dance, new creations opened the way, which differed from the old Sorbian peasant dances through the imprint and expression of a free cultural and national development. The First Sorbian Cultural Brigade brought all that was new to the people, where it soon established itself and raised the cultural level of the Sorbian people. [*Nowa doba* 1950b:2]

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15 Serbski Sokol (= Sorbian Falcon) was founded in 1920 and is the umbrella organisation of the Sorbian sports clubs, which feel connected with the aims of the Slavic Sokol movement. The focus is on promoting popular sport. Cf. [Wićaz 1990].

Among them were so-called mass scenes in which Sorbian folk dances in traditional costumes were presented and in which the Brigade participated.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the Brigade's work was referring to socialist realism. The Brigade's participation in events increased enormously. More than 100 performances are said to have taken place since December 1950,<sup>17</sup> often accompanied by folk art competitions.

In 1951 Sorbian dancers and singers joined the Third World Youth and Student Festival in Berlin. Twelve couples danced as a "Sorbian dance group" in the national programme of the GDR.<sup>18</sup> The journal *Rozhlad* emphasised that this was the only amateur dance group to perform together with professional artists.<sup>19</sup> In addition to the official performances, Sorbian dancers also performed as "Serbski ludowy ansambl" - Sorbian Folk Ensemble.<sup>20</sup> In the evaluation of the festival by the Central Cultural Commission of the Domowina in September 1951, however, the Sorbian writer and painter Měrćin Nowak-Njechorński critically stated that the revival of Sorbian folk dances "must be built more conscientiously on the basis of old folk dance", and that in the development of new dances, "cheap external effects must be renounced". He also refers to Nedo, who opposed the artificial separation of amateur and professional art.<sup>21</sup> A year later, Nedo lamented in *Rozhlad* that Sorbian cultural groups were not yet participating satisfactorily in competitions and festivals. He describes the groups lagging behind others and an enormous lack of skilled workers in the Sorbian lay art movement.<sup>22</sup> At the festival in Berlin, folk dances performed by the First Sorbian Cultural Brigade were criticised by the evaluation commission – of which Nedo was chairman. Nedo himself found fault with insufficient accuracy of the dancers and the dances themselves. In the dances there would be nothing but a "construction of forms" behind which there is no content.<sup>23</sup> He therefore called upon the Institute for Sorbian Folk Research in Bautzen, in particular, to carry out precise studies in the field of folk dances and to create new choreographic works.<sup>24</sup>

The desire for professionalization in the field of Sorbian folk dance became louder. Finally, Winar, in particular, supported the founding of a full-time Sorbian folk art ensemble, whose members were to be found in lay work and subse-

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16 Pursuing [Jacobs 2017].

17 [Nowa doba 1950b:2].

18 [Rozhlad 1951:179]; [Jenka 1972:40].

19 [*Rozhlad* 1951:180].

20 [Nowa doba 1951:1]; [Serbski ludowy ansambl 2005:14].

21 [Nowa doba 1951b:3].

22 [Nedo 1952:88].

23 Right there 89.

24 Right there 90.

quently trained to become professional artists and specialists in their field. One of the three sections – beside the choir and the orchestra – was to be dedicated to folk dance.

## The foundation of the Sorbian National Ensemble

The new protective framework and the success of the first choreographic works had a positive effect on further institutionalization of Sorbian folk dance. A new orientation with a specific legal and organisational framework for the development and presentation of Sorbian artistic work had to be formed. The Polish “State Dance and Singing Ensemble Mazowsze” became the model for this.<sup>25</sup>

Today’s Sorbian National Ensemble (SNE) was founded in Bautzen on 1 January 1952 as the “National Sorbian Folk Ensemble for Music and Dance”. Following the recommendation of the Domowina, it was officially founded by the State of Saxony and in 1953 assigned to the Ministry of Culture of the GDR.<sup>26</sup> Already in April 1952, the first singers and dancers took up their activities under the direction of Jurij Winar, who led the ensemble until 1960.<sup>27</sup> Dancers were recruited for the new ensemble from amateur dance groups.<sup>28</sup> In January 1952, job advertisements appeared in the newspaper *Nowa doba*, amongst others, with 20 dancers (10 female and 10 male) wanted for immediate employment. It was advertised with a free artistic education.<sup>29</sup> The primarily rural population could not understand how artists with a professional education could earn money with folklore.<sup>30</sup> The official rehearsals of the folk-dance section began with eight dance couples.<sup>31</sup>

A specialist in the field of music or dance was needed to fill the position of the head of the dance section of the SNE, as well as the head of the “Folk Dance” department who was responsible for the “political and technical management of Sorbian cultural groups”. [Jenka 1971: 64]. The director of the institution should also be an expert in the field of music or folk dance.<sup>32</sup> Nedo referred here to Prof. Dr. Bernhard Wosien as an experienced expert in the field of folk dances.<sup>33</sup> Wos-

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25 [Serbski ludowy ansambl 2005:15]; [Nedo 1953:3].

26 [Scholze 2014:384].

27 Subsequently, Ziesch took over the directorship until 1990; Ziesch had previously founded and headed the First Sorbian Cultural Brigade. Cf. [Scholze 2014:387].

28 [Nedo 1953:5].

29 [Nowa doba 1952:2].

30 [Nedo 1953:4f.]; [Nowa doba, Předženak 1977:10]; [Šoĺćina, Winarjec 1977:11]; [Serbski ludowy ansambl 2005:16].

31 [Serbski ludowy ansambl 2005:47].

32 [Jenka 1971:64].

33 [Nedo 1953:4]; [Serbski ludowy ansambl 2005:16].



*Figure 1*

*Prof. Bernhard Wosien rehearsing at the Sorbian National Ensemble ~1953; photographer: Kurt Heine; source: Sorbian Cultural Archive at the Sorbian Institute, Bautzen*

ien became the first ballet master and choreographer in the SNE in 1952/53. Despite the necessary recruitment of German-speaking Lusatians as actors, the initial scepticism about the so-called Sorbian character of the ensemble increased.<sup>34</sup> In October 1956, after four years of existence, a local conference on the activities of the SNE was convened by the Ministry of Culture and its Sorbian Depart-

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34 [Nedo 1953:4f.]; [Kola 1992:56]; [Serbski ludowy ansambl 2005:16f].

ment. As a result, it was noted that the ensemble should continue its activities with the following focus:

All attendees agreed that the main task of the ensemble is not to present Sorbian culture to the German and other public, but rather to work above all with the Sorbs, so that the national consciousness of the Sorbian people is strengthened and is ready for the tasks facing it today. [*Rozhlad* 1956: 379]

Nevertheless, with the newly established National Ensemble, for the first time in Sorbian history, folk dance culture reached a very professional institutionalized level of stage folklore. What this also meant for practical work in the field of dance was the exploration of folk dance and the development of new choreographies based on this folklore. As early as 1953, the folklorist Albrecht Langa, one of the first dancers of the ensemble, wrote down, by hand, the first choreographies with accompanying descriptions. However, many sketches are without descriptions and have never been completed.<sup>35</sup> The SNE participated in all important festivals, including the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> World Youth and Student Festivals in Warsaw in 1955 and in Moscow in 1957, where they appeared in the German National or Gala Programme. The ensemble also took part in the Sorbian People's Meeting in 1956. The actors were encouraged:

not only to pay attention to artistic perfection and versatility, but also to the ensemble's original and fundamental task of cultivating Sorbian folk culture. For this, it is also necessary that especially with the dances and dance scenes, nothing should be spoiled and the original root and the popular character should not be botched. [Nowak-Njehornski 1956: 253]

Parallel to the SNE, the desired mass cultural work developed. At the Second Sorbian Folk Meeting in Bautzen in 1956, another 600 couples danced Sorbian folk dances in a mass scene in the stadium Müllerwiese.<sup>36</sup> This mass scene was repeated on other occasions. Further training for dance group leaders took place for such events. In January 1956, for example, eighty people completed a three-week course held in the village of Milkel under the direction of Jan Hrjehor, a former dancer of the First Sorbian Cultural Brigade. [Jenka 1972: 68] For the lay groups, as well as for the SNE, the development of a representative stage dance folklore was the focus in the post-war years. Over the course of time, how-

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35 [Langa 1953].

36 [Nowa doba 1956:2]; [Jenka 1972:72].

ever, tasks, goals and working methods were modified to respond to changed general conditions. In lay work, the main focus was on mass culture with the involvement of the working population. Here, the ensemble initially focused on “the cultivation and development of traditional Sorbian folk art, as it lives in Sorbian songs, Sorbian costumes, customs and folk dances”<sup>37</sup> and on further development of this material as representative stage art with a role model function. Dances were sought above all in Sorbian customs and traditions and participants were demanded to leave the “path of the Unsorbic” and to beware of “balletisation”.<sup>38</sup> The initial aims of folk art practice in the post-war period were not to revive folklore or even to preserve traditional forms and contents. Rather, the aim was for an artistic appropriation of folkloristic traditions and the creation of new forms of dance in the socialist sense.

Standards were always adapted to the changed framework conditions of the regulatory component of insitutionalizacion and repeatedly provoked disputes. Already with the first objectives of the ensemble, it was formulated that the ensemble also be regarded as a training centre for future folk dancers from the amateur sector. Consequently, dancers were admitted to the SNE only after passing a test of their dancing skills.<sup>39</sup> Since the 1950s, regular further training courses for dancers, choreographers and educators have taken place in order to pass on the specifics of Sorbian folk dance and to make them available for work with lay groups.<sup>40</sup> It was Wosien who gave his first lecture entitled “Sorbian Folk Dances” at the Sorbian Folk Art Course in Bautzen in July 1953.<sup>41</sup> Writing in *Rozhlad*, Jan Měškank, a member of the Institute for Sorbian Folk Research, regrets that only ten participants had applied for this course. Wosien reported many interesting things about folk dances in general, but hardly anything about Sorbian dances. Instead, the presentation of some Sorbian folk dances of the dance group as a practical part of the event was praised.<sup>42</sup> After Handrij Ziesch took over the directorship of the SNE in 1960, every artist was obliged to strive for or catch up on a university degree. The same applied to the dancers. They gained a recognized degree from the State Ballet School in Berlin or by taking an external examination for professional dancers.<sup>43</sup> The establishment of a branch of the Palucca Schule Dresden at the SNE was negotiated in 1965: “This branch was

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37 [Wićaz 1959:336].

38 [Njekela 1956:3].

39 [Serbski ludowy ansambl 2005:47].

40 [Jenka 1972]; [*Rozhlad* 1974:36].

41 [Serbski ludowy ansambl 2005:48].

42 [Měškank 1953:189].

43 [Serbski ludowy ansambl 2005:54 and 61]; [Hendrich 1974:197]; [Sorbisches National-Ensemble [2011].

primarily intended to train Sorbian dancers for the ensemble in classical dance and national dance”.<sup>44</sup> However, the idea did not prevail.

At the “Festival of Sorbian dancers”, held in Bautzen in November 1960 and initiated by the House of Sorbian Folk Art, folk dance creation and sociable dancing were also discussed. Hanka Fascyna gave a lecture titled “With Sorbian Dance for Socialist Cultural Life”, extracts of which were released in *Nowa doba*.<sup>45</sup> In the lecture, she summed up the status of folk dance among the Sorbs and advocated that it should continue to be systematically collected and researched. When combined, these activities could enable continuity in the work, which had not yet occurred, as well as a basis for training qualified leaders for folk dance groups. To this end, better cooperation between the organisations was desirable. Fascyna had suggested to delegate lay dancers to the SNE for some time to train them as dance group leaders. In addition, she pointed out that further training courses would be regularly available, especially those held by the House of Sorbian Folk Art, and that members of the SNE had agreed to lead amateur dance groups. In order to make the programmes more interesting and independent, the repertoire should be extended to include other artistic forms. Fascyna specifically mentioned expressive dance, pantomime, ballet, but above all ballroom and competition dance as well as songs, sketches, recitations and instrumental groups with traditional Sorbian instruments. The response to the 1960 festival was enormous. More than one hundred persons attended, instead of the fifty who had been expected. Participants included members of the Secretariat of the Federal Board of the Domowina and the Department for Sorbian Affairs at the Ministry of the Interior.

As early as 1964, *Nowa doba* reported that lay groups had received systematic professional support from the SNE over the past five years.<sup>46</sup> The dances were gradually approaching “authentic interpretation of Sorbian folklore”, which was due to the choreographers’ efforts to engage with and use appropriate folk dance sources.<sup>47</sup> Thus, in addition to the specialists called in, Sorbian dancers increasingly took on choreographic, dance pedagogic and further training activities, both in the ensemble itself and in Sorbian lay folk dance groups.<sup>48</sup> In 1964, the Domowina planned to establish a central choreographic circle for the coordination of all artistic matters in the field of dance and an artistic advisory board for the field of children’s dances.<sup>49</sup> However, this effort quickly abated. In 1972, Fas-

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44 [Hausmitteilung 1965].

45 [Fascyna 1960:6].

46 [Nowa doba 1964:3].

47 Right there.

48 Right there; [Rozhled 1974:36]; [Serbski ludowy ansambl 2005:34–36].

49 [Nowa doba 1964:3].



Figure 2

*The opening of the second programme of the SNE in Bautzen in 1954; photographer: Kurt Heine; source: Sorbian Cultural Archive at the Sorbian Institute, Bautzen*

cyna demanded that this project be revived and expanded under the roof of the House of Sorbian Folk Art. It was not realized because of “mountains of problems” in the field of Sorbian dance folklore. [Fascyna 1972:325]

The SNE, which still exists today, saw itself from the very beginning as an art and training institute.<sup>50</sup> After the political changes of 1989/90, it was reported in *Rozhlad* that the SNE was a “peculiar propagator of Sorbianism” and acted as a “messenger of national identity” [Kola 1992:54 f]. The negotiation processes between professionalized folk culture as stage folklore, dance groups and sociable folk dancing have since then repeatedly led to intensive internal discussions on tradition and modernity, which are still effective today.

## Conclusion

The institutionalization of Sorbian folk dance after 1945 was strongly connected with the establishment of new organisations, which were based on the activities of nineteenth century national movements. The understanding of Sorbian folk dance as an institutionalized national phenomenon led to the establishment

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50 [Wićaz 1959: 337]; [*Rozhlad* 1974: 36]; [Serbski ludowy ansambl 2005: 48].

of a variety of amateur dance groups. Hence, the establishment of the SNE is not only explained by one of the pillars of institutionalization. It becomes clear how strongly the distinctive developments of Sorbian folk dance after the Second World War are marked by changing political frameworks, but also by interpersonal processes of negotiation and, accordingly, by the established general norms and values. Because of its professionalization, Sorbian folk dance was lifted to a new level, which led to a marked differentiation between professional stage dance and folk dancing in everyday life. The establishment of the Sorbian folklore movement was strongly oriented towards models and bearers of knowledge from Eastern Europe and hence was strongly engaged to certain personalities and their personal images which can clearly be seen within the cognitive pillar. It asserted itself as a canon of norms and a system of values which was manifested in work plans, festival structures and, last but not least, in the new dancing forms of the professional stage folklore.

The newly founded institutions functioned as central bearers of values and norms and opened up both their own and foreign stages as performance venues, whereby the development and presentation of Sorbian folk dance as stage art was the focus. Above all, the multitude of festivals offered the appropriate opportunity or space for the evolution and demonstration of Sorbian collective consciousness. For the development of corresponding programmes, allegedly old sources were used. The theatre and cultural scientist Inge Baxmann describes such phenomena as artificial ritualization that counteracts a perceived lack of social identification, integration and solidarity. The interaction of mass culture and amateur dance groups with a professional national ensemble reveals a desire for a new self-confidence and collective memory. This wish was compatible with the ideas of the socialist party to exploit the Sorbs as an example of a “successful minority policy” (Pech 2003:102ff.). A new social image thus developed and became a privileged place for developing new forms of representation, through folk dance, of the experience of the national community. It contributed to cultural homogenization and anchored internalized collective norms and values through mimetic behaviour.<sup>51</sup>

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51 Vgl. [Baxmann 2000: 193–207].

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# Theoretical Concepts in Ethnomusicology and Study of the Folklore Revival Movement: the Case of the Prague Ensemble Gaudeamus

Zita Skořepová

## *Abstract:*

This chapter discusses two theoretical concepts in ethnomusicology, their applicability to the study of the folklore movement and the potential of these concepts to widen research questions already posed, or to generate new questions. The methodology, based on oral history interviews, focuses on the individual perspective and reflection of the participants' activities in the past and present. How might then actors of the folklore movement be characterized as members of a specific cultural cohort based on their own narratives and answers to particular questions? The first concept of *cultural cohort* comes from a book by the American ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life* [2008]. Turino views different personal features, "habits", as formative elements of a particular identity. People with similar configurations of these traits (thus similar identities) tend to join cultural cohorts and cultural formations. Another theoretical framework is provided by the concepts of *superculture*, *subculture* and *interculture* by Mark Slobin [2000]. On the one hand, the folklore movement officially acclaimed sources and inspirations from musical subcultures (urban people singing and dancing rural songs and dances), but, on the other hand, found its place at a supercultural music level. This concept can thus enrich our understanding of the dynamics between the superculture, subculture and interculture in the research of the folklore movement. Drawing on data concerning the Prague-based folklore ensemble Gaudeamus, the present paper outlines some preliminary findings in accordance with these theoretical concepts.

## *Keywords:*

ethnomusicology, folklore revival movement, Gaudeamus ensemble, Prague, cultural cohorts, musical superculture, musical interculture.

## Introduction

In January 2017, I began participation in a research project on what is known as the *folklore movement* in the Czech Republic. This project was initiated and conducted mainly by members of the Department of Ethnomusicology of the Institute for Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences.<sup>1</sup> The topic was quite new to me as a researcher who had previously conducted research into musical self-presentations of immigrants in the Czech Republic [cf. Jurková et al. 2013; Skořepová Honzlová 2016] and on musical activities of the Czech minority in

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Vienna. Additionally, in comparison with other members of the research team, I am an outsider since I have never been a member of a folklore ensemble. However, as I conducted more and more interviews with members of the Prague ensemble *Gaudeamus* (the first ensemble I interviewed) I became conscious of the immense sociocultural dimension of this phenomenon and its significance for contemporary history [see Stavělová 2017].

I consider this project an essential topic of present-day Czech ethnomusicology, as a result of the following: first, the research team focuses on some twenty-nine prominent or at least important ensembles from various regions of the Czech Republic. The research is thus expected to reveal data related to a dance and musical practice that was and still is part of contemporary Czech choreomusical culture. Second, these ensembles usually have a history of more than sixty years. They were founded around the 1950s and most of them have remained active until the present day. Therefore, their social background encompasses people of several generations and all ages from senior members to young adults. As the data reveals, a dance or musical activity in an ensemble had different meanings for members of different generations. This was especially the case because of the so-called “weight” (burden) but also “weightlessness” nature of this choreomusical phenomenon: to participate in an activity supported by the former communist regime was regarded as “innocent entertainment” on the one hand, but might also be perceived as “inner emigration”<sup>2</sup> on the other.

The unique nature of the research lies in the fact that the biographical and dialogical or semi-structured interviews do not only contain data about the role of dance and music in the narrators’ own personal lives nor merely provide descriptions of each narrator’s participation in a particular ensemble. Many moments in the interviews reveal remarkable reflections on key events and periods of contemporary Czech history (the era of the Prague Spring and Soviet invasion in 1968, the era known as normalization and the beginning of the democratic regime after the Velvet Revolution in 1989). The project offers a unique opportunity to recognize an important role of dance and musical activities in a changing political milieu and its impact on the sociocultural interactions of people who observe different ideological orientations and belong to different generations. Third and finally, although folklore was always associated with rural areas and their culture, the ensembles flourishing within the folklore revival movement since the 1950s were established in cities, and their members, as well as audiences, originated from cities; therefore, the topic belongs to the field of urban

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2 The term used by [Donahue and Kirchner 2003], see also [Stavělová 2017:413]. The phenomenon of “inner emigration” is also well described in a case study by Klára Davidová devoted to the Prague ensemble *Chorea Bohemica* [Davidová 2008].

ethnomusicology. If the city represents an “environment where we find the highest concentration of expressive culture of the present day” [cf. Jurková 2016], this project proves that ethnomusicologists have yet much to study “at home” and often in their home cities.

## Theories

Projects in the social sciences, the humanities and as well as in ethnography or ethnology are sometimes criticized for an absence of appropriate theoretical background or for its mere implicit presence behind the concrete data presented. Admittedly, the theoretical background chosen always determines the formulation of research questions, the choice of methodological tools and reflection of the research data already collected or planned to be collected in the future. This chapter aims to provide insight into a possible theoretical framework for the project, discussing two theoretical concepts which could be suitable for study of the folklore movement in the Czech Republic and which could help deepen or widen the research questions already posed or yet unmentioned. These concepts are in accordance with an orientation in ethnomusicology which emphasizes the anthropological perspective rather than only musicological or choreological ones. The history of ethnomusicology is characterized by several periods in the discipline’s history from comparative musicology to ethno-musicology to the anthropology of music<sup>3</sup> and a gradual shift of its field of study from exotic musics to “ordinary” musical phenomena “at home”. Since the 1960s, ethnomusicological thinking has been divided, primarily in the United States, into musicological – represented by Mantle Hood – and anthropological orientations – with its famous figure Alan P. Merriam, who published his *Anthropology of Music* in 1964<sup>4</sup>. Instead of exploring the dance or music repertoire itself with basically musicological and ethnochoreological methods, this project is based on oral history methods and its scope comprises individuals and their life stories about their own dance and music practice in the context of everyday life, especially during the former communist regime in Czechoslovakia. For these reasons, I propose here the following ethnomusicological concepts which I consider relevant to the key research questions of this project.

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3 Cf. [Abraham and Hornbostel 1994], [McLean 2006], [Kunst 1950], [Merriam 1964] and [Reyes 2016].

4 Nevertheless, this decade is remarkable for different discussions not only about musicological and anthropological methods, but also about problems and challenges of musical transcription and analysis [cf. England 1964].

The first inspiring concept, that of *cultural cohort*, is discussed mainly in a book by the American ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino called *Music as Social Life* [2008]. Turino's primary areas of interest are Latin American and South African musics, but he also published valuable works in the domain of the semiotics of music and on theoretical issues of music and politics. Thomas Turino draws inspiration from the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce [Peirce and Buchler 1955], adopts several key terms and uses them for his conceptualization and description of music and dance phenomena. Before looking at members of the folklore movement and their possible theoretical conceptualization as *cultural cohorts*, I would like to draw attention to his basic terms and the overall view in which Turino regards people-musicians or dancers as members of culture and social groups, and the roles they play in different types of musical activities.

It is helpful to recall some crucial terms that Turino uses with a more or less specific meaning. The first is *habit* which can have different meanings and is normally associated with the works of Pierre Bourdieu and his term *habitus*<sup>5</sup> For Turino, *habit* means "a tendency toward the repetition of any particular behavior, thought, or reaction in similar circumstances or in reaction to similar stimuli in the present and future based on such repetitions in the past" [Turino 2008: 95]. Habits have a special importance in everyday life, because "the repetitiousness of habits offers a high degree of stability and continuity to living". In fact, Turino regards *habits* as constitutive elements of a *Self*. While the *Self* is the composite of the total number of habits that determine the tendencies of everything we think, feel, experience and do, *identity* involves a partial and variable selection of habits and attributes that we use to represent ourselves to ourselves and to others, as well as those aspects that are perceived by ourselves and by others as salient. When we conceptualize or talk about our identities, we usually do not include all possible aspects of ourselves, but rather highlight what is relevant or productive within a given situation, while downplaying other aspects. People typically shape their self-presentation to fit their goal in a particular situation and rarely reveal all the habits that constitute the Self. Identities are thus defined by the invocation of particular habits and their combinations which play the role of semiotic signs. It is especially at this point that Turino finds an important source in Peirce's semiotics [Turino 1999]. In expressive culture and in musical performances, *icons* and *indices* are used as signs of identity. While *icons* rely on some type of resemblance between sign and object (for example, the resemblance of the flute to the male sex organ), the nature of *indices* is based on some type of association: smoke is an index of fire. According to Turino, *indices* are especially important in music and dance phenomena because of the links they provide to

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5 [Cf. e.g. Bourdieu 2005 (1972)].

emotions, experience and memory. *Indices* produce emotional response and social identification. *Icons* are then markers of group identity, whereas *indices* are markers of identity recognized, defined and shared by the members of a group. *Dicent indices*, i.e. words, musical sounds or body movement, should create intended effects and meaning, and people therefore make evaluations based on the presence or absence of *dicent indices*. For Turino, perception and recognition of *dicent indices* is the foundation of authenticity. It is thus important to emphasize that the notion of authenticity is everything that is considered as authentic by people who perceive it as such. Naturally, researchers could then ask narrators to find out which *dicent indices* they recognize in the repertoire of their folklore ensembles; however, questions of this kind do not currently represent a priority for this project.

In discussing *musical activities* and *musical cultures*, it is helpful to define such concepts. Turino's definition of culture is not surprising; it is similar to other contemporary frequently used definitions: culture is "defined as the habits of thought and practice that are shared among individuals" [Turino 2008:109]. All social activities are then *cultural phenomena*: they consist of habits of thought and practice shared among individuals within social groups of varying sizes and specificity and along different lines of common experience and identification. Shared habits are often imitated from earlier generations. Culture has, for many years, no longer been considered as a homogeneous monolith. Therefore, Turino distinguishes between *cultural formations* and *cultural cohorts*. Simply put, culture – produced, learned and reproduced by people – is thus embodied in groups of people of different sizes [Turino 2008:111–117].

*Cultural formation* is defined as a group of people who have in common a majority of habits that constitute most parts of each individual member's self – e.g. habits defining the cultural formation of Czech citizens. Turino gives examples of regional cultural formations or diasporic cultural formations. *Cultural cohort* or *identity cohort* refers to social groupings that form along the lines of specific constellations of shared habits based in similarities of parts of the self. Within a given formation, the members of different cohorts will be guided similarly by a majority of habits of the formation, but will be distinguished as cohorts by emphasis and development of selected habits. *Cultural cohorts* are valuable precisely because they allow for gradual ("part-time") changes in habit and cultural orientation. They can provide an escape from everyday life which can be intensified by the use of selected elements taken from an imagined past or rural life. And finally, people enjoy their engagement in cultural cohorts because it provides an alternative, temporary "place to be".

After this brief theoretical introduction, I will now pose the question whether the folklore movement or, more specifically, members of Czech folklore ensem-

bles, could be considered as a specific cultural cohort. Which key habits shared by a significant number of the folklore movement members might characterize this cultural cohort? Which habits were important and valuable particularly in the context of the communist regime and, later, after the Velvet Revolution? Does a cultural cohort, especially in the case of some folklore ensembles, enable the development of particular habits of a regional cultural formation? Does the cultural cohort of the folklore movement represent a way of escaping from everyday life for its members? Which concrete elements help to create a temporary “place to be”, which is so attractive for some folklore ensembles’ members since they have spent a considerable part of their lives in such an organization?

According to Turino, the cohort is sometimes deeply valued precisely because it provides an alternative to “modern capitalist lifeways” [Turino 2008:155–188]. In fact, cohorts are often set in opposition to capitalist formations. He gives examples of punk and old-time music (American folk, bluegrass), where people search for simplicity and community and where success is not judged in terms of money and fame, as these are considered as ‘selling out’ and failure. Here Turino worked within the context of his own research in the United States during the last decades of the twentieth century. In the case of the Czechoslovak folklore movement, however, this and other similar questions might be put differently. Since folklore ensembles were officially founded and promoted by the former, non-capitalist regime, how was this fact reflected by their members? And how is this fact in accordance with their individual life histories, family, social and professional backgrounds? Would it be possible to consider the activity in ensembles as a way of escaping from the reality of the communist regime, even though these ensembles often performed in contexts, on occasions and at events, at least indirectly, associated with the regime? Even though the ensembles are not professional, are some ambitions of stardom and success present? How do the ambitions of dancers differ from those of musicians? These are only some of the large number of questions which might be posed and considered within this theoretical framework and which could influence the realization of particular interviews, as well as the list of further possible research questions.

While the concept of cultural cohort could be useful for conceptualization of the members of the folklore movement as a specific socio-cultural group, it is also possible to think about the folklore movement as a specific dance and musical culture. Here I would like to refer to the thinking of another ethnomusicologist, Mark Slobin and his book *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West* [Slobin 2000]. Slobin conducted research into the music of Jewish immigrants in America and the musics of Central Asia, in addition to producing theoretical studies in ethnomusicology. In his seminal book, *Subcultural Sounds*, Slobin presents the concepts of musical *superculture*, *intercultures* and *subcultures*. In fact, his con-

ceptualizations refer to Arjun Appadurai's concept of the "global cultural economy" [Appadurai 1996], which was published in the 1990s and is therefore based on the model of a globalized world.

The musical *superculture* may nowadays be characterized as a global musical mainstream, while Slobin describes it as "the usual, the accepted, the statistically lopsided, the commercially successful, the statutory, the regulated, the most visible" [Slobin 2000:29]. The concept rests on three foundational components. First, an industry, including its "alliances with techno-, media- and financescapes, consummated through the ceremony of advertising and justifying" [Slobin 2000:29] which affect men, women and children. Second, the state and its institutionalized rules and venues: state influence and regulation usually affects the musical subcultures through erasure and stereotypes; for example, as Slobin notes, it is easy to observe many "unsung melodies of a hundred micro-musics missing from the classrooms of Euro-America" [Slobin 2000:31]. Another eminent example could be the coexistence of official and unofficial musical cultures and the state regulation and persecution of some musics in the old Eastern Bloc (e.g. rock or underground music during the communist regime in the Czechoslovak context). The third and final component is called by Slobin "the quiet agents of ideology that define the everyday and circumscribe the expressive" [Slobin 2000:33]. The superculture, furthermore, provides a set of "standardized styles, repertoires, and performance practices that anyone can recognize" [Slobin 2000:33], with "standardized" being, I believe, worth emphasizing.

The concept which can be considered the opposite to *musical superculture* is thus *musical subculture*. Often transmitted orally or aurally, it is produced and performed far from mainstream musical stages, media and recording labels and is known to a limited number of musicians and audience members. Active and strong individuals normally play a key role in its creation, performance and distribution. In fact, musical subcultures resemble endangered species, because in many cases they tend to convert to *musical interculturalities*. While the "super-is an overarching category, and sub- evokes an embedded unit, the "inter-" represents a crosscutting trend" [Slobin 2000:12]. Local, regional and transregional musics combine features of both *musical superculture* and *subculture*; therefore, they belong to the domain of *interculture*. Slobin, however, distinguishes between *industrial interculturalities* (e.g. rock music groups in German speaking countries or in the former Eastern bloc); *diasporic interculturalities* (*bhangra* in Britain, although its popularity network extends to the USA, East Africa or Australia; recalling German, Irish or Lithuanian ethnic origins in America), and *affinity interculturalities* – when one listens to another's music or plays in another's band (e.g. a Czech playing the Javanese gamelan). I strongly concur with Slobin that an im-

minently interesting subject for study should be the “interaction, within small groups, between social grouping and with the powers (industry, ideology, bureaucrats and bankers) that set the tone, make the rules and provide the resources” [Slobin 2000:xv].

The majority of so-called “folklore music” around the world could be situated in the domain of *musical interculture*. In other words, these musics are based on selected elements of various *musical subcultures* which are formed and disciplined by *super-* and *intercultural* powers. It becomes obvious then to ask the following questions: which features of the folklore revival movement’s musical creativity are of *super-* or *intercultural* origin and how are the originally sub-cultural elements of dance and music chosen, involved, changed and standardized? How is this fact reflected upon by the members of the ensembles? Were and are they conscious of any *supercultural* formative impacts on any particular elements of their dance or musical activities within the folklore revival movement? Which various authorities determined the “rules of existence” for folklore ensembles during the communist regime? How strong was collective versus individual creativity? What power did ordinary members have – amateur dancers versus creative individuals leading or cooperating with ensembles, e.g. choreographers or music composers? I believe that relevant economic questions should not be omitted either: who provided and provides folklore ensembles with material resources? How are their performances, as well as the acquirement and maintenance of costumes, institutionally financed and sponsored and how does this fact influence the participation of particular members? And what – in the sense of economic as well as cultural capital – do the members themselves invest in their folklore ensembles?

There are basically two ways of tackling some of these questions. First, it is possible to carry out a content analysis of many primary sources and archive materials. Second, many elements addressing these questions could be found in the various reflections within the perspective of ensemble members as actors in the folklore movement revival. A combination of document analysis and the analysis and interpretation of interviewees’ narratives appears to be the most relevant and useful method.

### **Preliminary findings: the Prague ensemble “Gaudemus” as case study**

In the final section of this paper, I offer an outline of some preliminary findings in the sense of brief answers to some of the questions formulated according to the above theoretical background. A predecessor of the ensemble today called

“Gaudeamus” was founded in 1949.<sup>6</sup> At that time, the ensemble did not have a specific name, but a few years later the name “Vysokoškolský soubor Zdeňka Nejedlého” (the Zdeněk Nejedlý University Ensemble) was adopted as a tribute to Zdeněk Nejedlý, the Czechoslovak musicologist, politician and Minister of Education and Labour after 1945.<sup>7</sup> The core of the ensemble consisted of about fifteen students of the University of Political and Economic Sciences (today University of Economics, Prague). At its very beginning, the ensemble had around 140 members who participated in a symphonic orchestra, vocal choir and dance section. In the following decades until the present day, the ensemble experienced its ups and downs and survived two major crises: after 1970, as well as after 1989, when a significant number of its members left the ensemble for various reasons, including political. Nevertheless, thorough research into the history of the ensemble, based on document study and reflection on this history by living witnesses, is yet (2018) to be completed.

The members interviewed entered the ensemble between the 1960s and the 1980s, and thus represent examples of several generations, who present different motivations for joining. The first interviews realized within one of the many ensembles reveal considerable heterogeneity inside the folklore movement revival itself. While remembering Turino’s theoretical concept, more specific cultural cohorts (which may be represented by particular ensembles) might be identified within its scope. Nevertheless, I will try to mention at least some key *habits* shared by these folklore revival people. In the case of the Gaudeamus ensemble, it seems that most of the members were and are from a middle-class background, benefitting from a university education with specializations ranging from technical disciplines to medicine to arts to humanities. Interestingly, while ancestral experience of folklore music and dance practices varies, it is quite often possible to find teachers among them and their family members. In the case of the Gaudeamus ensemble, there are no – at least visible – members of a specific minority. It seems that members were and are recruited from the mainstream public who have some sympathy for folklore dance and music, have exhibitionist inclinations (in the sense of enjoying performing dance and

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6 An important source of information concerning the history of the ensemble represents a collection of memories and texts entitled *50 let souboru VŠPHV – VSZN – Gaudeamus. Sborník textů k výročí založení*, edited by the ensemble’s member Viktor Bezdíček [Bezdíček and Pěkná 2006].

7 Due to his political activities especially in post-1948 Czechoslovak communist governments and his biased appraisal of different Czech classical music composers (the “great” Bedřich Smetana versus the “terrible” modernists Antonín Dvořák, Leoš Janáček and Bohuslav Martinů), Zdeněk Nejedlý, today perceived as a controversial figure in twentieth century history of Czechoslovakia, was an active participant in public life, musicology and politics [For more details, see Křesťan 2012].

music for audiences at public events) and consider their participation in the ensemble not only as a leisure-time activity but also an important source of social contact. Members of the ensemble meet on various occasions in everyday life, and do not only spend holidays together, but also help each other out, by returning favours whereby people of different occupations help each other: for instance, a member who is a dentist cares for the teeth of another member who, being an architect, has designed the house of the former. Furthermore, considerable solidarity is apparent among members, going beyond the many kinds of help to genuine assistance, as in difficult life situations, problems and poor health. Moreover, the interviewees negate the presence of a hierarchy or rivalry within the ensemble, refuting qualitative differences between soloist dancers and the rest of the ensemble.

From the theoretical perspective of Victor Turner [1969], being a member of a folklore ensemble also represents membership in a *communitas*. Interestingly, the Gaudeamus ensemble involves people with various political opinions from leftists to conservatives. The duo of major female dancers, for example, who were the protagonists of numerous important performances and danced together for several decades hold completely different political opinions, although they were tied together not only by dance but by close friendship as well. Another interesting fact concerns the perception of particular performances during events somehow associated with the former communist establishment, such as performances held on May Day or as part of the “cultural programme” during voluntary work sessions or elections in the era of socialism. Practically all the narrators tend to suppress or downplay the negative connotations of such events or they do not view them as negative only, offering instead their own interpretations. These findings, and many others, however, are yet to be compared with the data on other ensembles.

In conclusion, how might Slobin’s theoretical perspectives be applied to the initial data on the Gaudeamus ensemble? The interviewees’ narratives reveal folklore revival creations and performances as a specific choreomusical interculture. Many supercultural elements could be identified within the entire narratives, or their parts, as well as in concrete utterances of the narrators. While the ensemble itself consisted of amateur dancers, singers and musicians, the direction or guidance was provided by professionals, with choreographers having an essential role in repertoire choice and its theatrical adaptation and presentations. Music was composed or arranged by professional composers, and the same applies to costumes or theatrical set design. The key role of a choreographer’s charismatic personality – Alena Skálová is a frequently mentioned personality [cf. Bezdíček and Pěkná 2006] – and that of the ensemble’s director is repeatedly mentioned by all members.

Another potential subject for a large-scale research project is the nature of the supercultural empowering of subcultural sources, or the supercultural impact on the folklore revival movement, manifest in the selection and performance of particular “folk” dances, music arrangements and adaptations, costume selection and production, and negotiation of performance contexts (with significant differences between performing “at home” in Czechoslovakia and performances abroad). It should not be forgotten that the ensemble has existed and performed for more than sixty years and even the narrators themselves identify several distinct periods in the ensemble’s history. It is therefore evident that the supercultural impact and pressures varied according to the overall political situation in Czechoslovakia: narrators note differences between the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and the post-socialist period after 1989. While the 1950s and 1960s are described as an era of enthusiastic and passionate beginnings of the ensemble and also as a period when the ensemble performed quite often and represented Czechoslovak folklore abroad, two crisis periods can be identified in the 1970s and 1990s. After 1968, during the so-called period of “normalization”<sup>8</sup> in Czechoslovakia, the ensemble could not perform abroad anymore and a part of its repertoire of Slovak origin was ruled out by political and cultural authorities, due to its supposedly insufficient quality. For these reasons and others, a significant number of the current members quit the ensemble.

The most recent crisis occurred in the early 1990s. After the introduction of capitalism, the ensemble had to find a new founder and patron instead of the Závodní výbor ROH,<sup>9</sup> which had been cancelled. Thanks to a particular member who had a non-Communist orientation and contacts with “clean” people (meaning they were not members of KSČ, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia), the ensemble was taken over by Vysoká škola ekonomická (the University of Economics, Prague). The beginning of a new period in the ensemble’s history was also reflected in the change of its name: instead of a title that declared an alliance with the aforementioned Zdeněk Nejedlý, the ensemble chose a neutral name, *Gaudeamus*. In the new democratic regime with unlimited mobility, the ensemble has experienced various opportunities to perform in the Czech Republic and abroad, being no longer subject to control by a committee evaluating the quality of its repertoire. According to the members interviewed, the major potential limitations after the fall of communist regime included financial sources, lack of free time and the departure of some members. The number and type of performances depend on the ensemble leadership’s own initiative (and that of

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8 [Cf. Tůma and Vilímek 2012; and Kolář and Pullmann 2017].

9 The local branch of the trade unions, with the literal English translation as “the Works Committee of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement”.

its current patron, the University of Economics, Prague) or a particular member. However, all the members of the ensemble agreed not to perform at any event organized and sponsored by a political party of any orientation.

From Slobin's theoretical perspective, it is thus possible to identify many different fields of supercultural pressures and influences in the ensemble's existence and operation.. Many narratives of Gaudeamus members reveal in what ways these pressures were negotiated or reinterpreted by members who had to use some kind of improvisation or bricolage in their individual activities within the ensemble during the communist era and continue to do so during the contemporary democratic regime.

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# Leaders and Followers.

## Artistic Leaderships and Stage Presentations of Folk Dances in a Slovenian Folklore Ensemble

*Rebeka Kunej*

*Abstract:*

For almost seven decades, the Ljubljana-based France Marolt Students' Folk Dance Group has been a folk dance ensemble (Sln. *folklorna skupina*) which expressively reflects the policies of the folklore movement in Slovenia. The group, established in 1948 by France Marolt, an ethnomusicologist at the Institute of Ethnomusicology, is one of the biggest and oldest Slovenian folklore ensembles. Until 1972, the ensemble was closely linked with the research institute and its scholars. On the one hand, the ensemble was a leader of 'appropriate' folk-dance performances on the stage – an ideal to be followed by other folk dance groups from urban and rural environments. On the other hand, it was a nucleus from which many artistic leaders for other folk dance groups or ensembles originated. The France Marolt Students' Folk Dance Group, which has always operated as an amateur cultural association, was some sort of a surrogate for a professional folklore ensemble, which has never existed in Slovenia. The ensemble's stage performances throughout the seven decades are a true reflection of a cultural policy, and also provide historical insight into Slovenian ethnochoreology and its research interests.<sup>1</sup>

*Keywords:*

folk dance, folk dance group, stage upgrades, artistic leader, folklore activity, Slovenia

The somewhat poetic title of this chapter is borrowed from the terminology of couple dances, which are the predominant form of Slovenian folk dances. As is the case in a dance couple, where one dancer is the leader and the other is the follower, in the field of *folklorna dejavnost* (folklore activity)<sup>2</sup> in Slovenia, some folk dance ensembles can symbolically also be recognised as leaders and others as followers.

The chapter is focused on the role of a single folk dance group; hence, the singular form might seem to be more appropriate in the title. The standard Slovenian

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1 Research of this topic was carried out within the programme "Research on Slovenian Folk Culture in Folklore Studies and Ethnology", No. P6-0111, founded by the Slovenian Research Agency.

2 The *folklorna dejavnost* (folklore activity) is one of the departments currently managed by the *Javni sklad Republike Slovenije za kulturne dejavnosti*, the Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities (formerly the *Zveza kulturnih prosvetnih organizacij*, Slovenian Association of Cultural and Educational Organizations), as part of which leisure, amateur cultural-artistic activities in Slovenia are steered, educated and funded at the state level. Initially, the folklore activity incorporated only folk dance groups; however, since the 1970s, it has also covered vocal and instrumental groups that perform or recreate folk music.

ian term is *folklorna skupina* (a folk dance group), whereas the term *folklorni ansambel* (a folk dance ensemble) is used only rarely while it is occasionally found in English translations of the groups' names. The non-use of the expression ensemble is also partly linked to the fact that Slovenia has never had a professional (national / state) folk ensemble. However, the particular group which the paper concentrates on because of its important role in the country's folklore activity could also be referred to as a folk dance ensemble. In the present paper, therefore, the term ensemble is used for this one particular group and all others are referred to as groups. However, since throughout its history the ensemble has had several artistic leaders, whose work impacted other groups, the plural form needs to be used in the title.

Most 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. Some, albeit few, groups with the longest tradition<sup>3</sup> associate their origins with participation in the ceremonial imperial procession held in celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reign of Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria, which took place in Vienna on 12 June 1908. Groups of locals from various places of present-day Slovenia participated in this event. Clad in folk costumes, they walked past the Emperor's grandstand; however, the procession involved no demonstration of their dance tradition. More commonly, groups believe their establishment to be related to participation in one of the folklore festivals in the pre-war period. In the 1930s, various folklore festivals and events took place in major Slovenian towns (Ljubljana, Maribor, Metlika, Črnomelj), where groups of locals from different places<sup>4</sup> presented their rituals and dance traditions. Although these were, in essence, folk dance groups, they were most commonly referred to as *terenske narodopisne skupine* (local ethnographic groups).

The person credited with giving impetus to the development of folk dance ensembles after World War Two was France Marolt, an ethnographer, conductor, composer, and the founder and head of what is today the Institute of Ethnomusicology ZRC SAZU, who established a folk dance ensemble in Slovenia's capital, Ljubljana. Among other things, the aim of the ensemble, as an exemplary en-

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3 The earliest beginnings of a folk dance group in the Slovenian ethnic territory date back to the first half of the nineteenth century. They originated from the desire to present the dance tradition to those who were not familiar with it. As part of the festivities held in honour of the visit from the Austrian Emperor Ferdinand I in October 1838, a group of locals from Resia, a valley on the western side of the Kanin Mountains, presented their dances and costumes. The members of the present-day folk dance group *Gruppo Folkloristico Val Resia* consider this event the beginning of their ensemble's work, although the ensemble was not formally established until the 1960s [Storia 1991:19].

4 The groups were mainly from peripheral areas of Slovenia, such as the regions of Bela Krajina, Štajerska, and Prekmurje region, as well as a group of Slovenians living in Carinthia.

semble so to speak, was to educate the folk dance groups of cultural-artistic societies and to encourage the work of the “original”<sup>5</sup> folk dance groups. The majority of folklore groups were established under socialism, when a number of cultural-artistic societies were founded in urban and rural areas; in addition to other sections (the most common ones being theatre ensembles and choirs), these societies included folk dance groups. The ensemble founded by France Marolt occupied an undisputed leading role in the second half of the twentieth century, which, on the one hand, resulted from connections with folk dance researchers and, on the other, from the absence of a professional folk dance ensemble.

Slovenia, as one of the six republics of SFR Yugoslavia, was one of the republics that has never had a national or professional folk dance ensemble. Two other republics were likewise without their respective national folk dance ensembles, namely the Republic of Montenegro, which was the smallest part of former Yugoslavia in terms of territory and population, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had a larger area and population than Slovenia, but its ethnic composition was not as homogeneous as Slovenia’s. Other republics of the former Yugoslavia – Serbia, Croatia and Macedonia – founded their ensembles in the late 1940s. The Folk Song and Dance Ensemble of Serbia “Kolo” was established in 1948 in Belgrade [Kolo 2018]; a year later, in 1949, “Lado” – the National Folk Dance Ensemble of Croatia was founded in Zagreb [Lado 2018], and the Ensemble of the Traditional Folk Dances and Songs “Tanec” was established in Skopje [Tanec 2018]. Another professional ensemble was established in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo in 1950, namely the National Ensemble of Songs and Dance “Shota”, which was disbanded for some time (in 1954–1964) [Shota 2018]. The reason why Slovenia, unlike other Yugoslav republics, has never set up its own professional folk dance ensemble was not in its small size or lack of ethnic uniformity – the decision was determined by some other factors and individuals.

It was largely influenced by the belief held by the then head of the Institute of Ethnomusicology, France Marolt, who opposed the idea, fearing that an ensemble based on the Soviet model might misrepresent the Slovenian dance tradition. In his opinion, a folk dance ensemble adapted to the possibilities and needs of the Slovenian (cultural) space should present an “authentic” tradition without any changes or corrections. It should also inspire artists to incorporate elements of folk tradition into their creations. For this reason, Marolt sought to set up an ensemble that operated under the auspices of the Institute.

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5 Folk dance groups were divided into two categories, namely the so-called *izvirne* (original), and *poustvarjalne* (reproductive) folk dance groups. The first category included groups that presented their own (living) dance tradition on stage, while reproductive groups revived dances drawing on primarily written sources.

It is believed that the idea of a professional folk dance group was also opposed by Edvard Kardelj, one of the most influential Slovenian politicians in Yugoslavia at the time. Not long after World War Two, at one of the May Day parades, Kardelj reportedly watched a Slovenian folk dance ensemble whose presentation was inadequate and inappropriate, and he therefore opposed such cultural activities even at a professional level [Ramovš 2018]. Last but not least, it needs to be taken into account that the establishment of professional ensembles dates back to the Informbiro period (1948–1955), i.e. the Tito–Stalin Split, or Yugoslav–Soviet Split. The fact that no professional ensemble was established could therefore also be understood as a symbolic rejection of Soviet models.<sup>6</sup>

In lieu of a professional ensemble, an institute-based folk dance ensemble was established in Slovenia at the time when professional folk dance ensembles were being set up in other republics; in a way, this ensemble was a substitute for a professional folk dance company. The successor to this ensemble is the present-day *Akademsko folklorna skupina France Marolt* (France Marolt Students' Folk Dance Group, hereinafter referred to as the AFS), which was officially established in 1948; however, its beginnings date back to 1945. Over the AFS's 80-year history, its artistic leadership has been entrusted to five people – choreographers, whose work has left a mark on the artistic reproduction of folk dance and impacted the activities of other groups in Slovenia.

## The beginnings in 1948–1951

France Marolt (1891–1951) is considered to be the founder and first leader of what later became the AFS dance ensemble, which was renamed AFS France Marolt in his honour after his death.

Initially, the ensemble consisted of a mere three dance couples who put on their first performance on 22 June 1945 on the occasion of a political celebration. The ensemble was later first joined by some members of youth organisations and labour unions<sup>7</sup> and, in late 1948, also by several members of students' cultural-artistic societies. Ever since, the ensemble has most often performed under the name France Marolt Students' Folk Dance Group and students have always comprised its core. Officially, the ensemble was not established until 1948

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6 In the 1948–1953 period, the Yugoslav Foreign Minister was the aforementioned Edvard Kardelj [Wikipedia 2018].

7 In 1946, the ensemble consisted of 85 members and was divided into two sections, i.e. the so-called first group that numbered 33, and a group for large-scale performances. In the beginning, most of the ensemble's dancers (all amateurs) were workers, who outnumbered university and secondary-school students [Vidregar 1997:13].

– the same year as the first national folk dance ensemble in the then federated Yugoslav state.

The AFS operated under the auspices of the Institute until 1972, when the previously independent Institute<sup>8</sup> became an ethnomusicology section of the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (nowadays ZRC SAZU Institute of Slovenian Ethnology). Up until then, the Institute had been taking care of the ensemble's professional leadership, costumes and all other necessities, as well as the musicians accompanying the ensemble. France Marolt headed the ensemble only in terms of ideas, whereas the artistic leadership was entrusted to the Institute's researcher Marija Šuštar<sup>9</sup> (dance), and to Marolt's wife, Tončka Marolt (music, direction).

In 1934, France Marolt founded and took on the leadership of the Folklore Institute, and shortly after started including the hitherto collected rituals and dances in both scientific papers and popular publications, aiming to awaken the general public's interest in the dance folklore. Even though his research interest was primarily focused on folk songs, his plans after the Institute's establishment also included the exploration and research of folk dance. Marolt set up the collection *Slovenske narodoslovne študije (Slovene Folkloristic Studies)* and published two works as part of it, exploring three rituals from the Zilja Valley (1935) and three rituals from the Bela Krajina region (1936), which included some dances. An overview of the Slovenian musical and dance traditions, which Marolt worked on for the 4<sup>th</sup> IFMC (ICTM) Conference in Opatija, Croatia, in 1951, was published posthumously (1954) as the final work of the collection.<sup>10</sup>

Marolt was not a devotee of science limited to a research setting detached from the real world; instead he preferred pursuing cultural-educational activities<sup>11</sup> – and what he was unable to accomplish by means of words, he attempted to achieve through live performances. In as early as the 1930s, he thus (co) organised the first festivals, which were participated in by the locals from those (peripheral) areas of Slovenia where folk rituals and dances were still very much

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8 Even before that, the Institute had already been operating under various institutions – for instance, between 1945 and 1951, when it became an independent institution, it had operated under the auspices of the Academy of Music.

9 In 1945, a folk dance department was established at the Institute. Marija Šuštar was the department's first employee and folk dance research remained the core of her work up until her retirement in 1966.

10 Marolt presented the dances by means of descriptions and also included some photographs showing a dance couple's or group's dance positions. It was not until a posthumous edition (1954) that some positional kinetograms were also included; however, this can most likely be credited to M. Šuštar, who was responsible for the editing.

11 Marolt was first and foremost known as a conductor of the Academic Choir and the arranger of folk songs adapted for the choir.

alive. He hoped that this would help revive the tradition even in the places where it had already died out. In the first few years following World War Two, festival-related happenings died down to a certain extent; there was, however, more going on in terms of existing and new folk dance groups.

With a view to preserving “authentic dance folklore” [Vuk 1995:12], Marolt and his colleagues at the Institute set up a competent folk dance ensemble, whose aim was:

to use the collected folklore material to reproduce games and dances purified of foreign influences and put on exemplary performances to spread the findings both in the home country and around the world, thus enhancing the authenticity, a genuine image of the Slovenians in music and movement. The ensemble was supposed to perform the dances of all five of Slovenia’s most characteristic parts, i.e. Koroška (Carinthia), Panonija (the Pannonian Basin), Primorska (the Slovene Littoral), Gorenjska (Upper Carniola) and Bela Krajina (White Carniola region) and also directly serve the purposes of the institute’s exploration and research of the dance folklore [Vuk 1952:12].

Marolt’s idea of establishing such an ensemble reportedly originated in his following the example of the then Soviet Union, where large folk dance ensembles existed in as early as the second half of the 1940s. However, not long after, he realised that when it came to keeping alive the Slovenian dance and musical tradition, such large ensembles and the way they performed was not suitable. The available documents reveal that in February 1946 the institute-based ensemble performed at the Ljubljana Opera, presenting Slovenian folk dances to the representatives of the USSR Folk Dance Academy. However, not much is revealed in terms of the real purpose of this performance and the consequences this might have had on the ensemble’s activities.

According to Marolt’s plans, the ensemble was supposed to be comprised of between eight and twelve dance couples<sup>12</sup> and was supposed to collect and document folk games, dances and music with the help of associates in rural areas. Field research was supposed to include observing the dancers and the way they danced; however, this plan did not come to fruition, as field research remained the sole domain of the institute’s researchers and was not conducted by any of the ensemble’s members. Marolt hoped that after ‘purifying the dances of bad foreign influences’ and thus presenting their own choreographic and folk dance

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12 The size of folk dance ensembles is often expressed in the number of dance couples and not the number of dancers in the ensemble. This indirectly reflects the fact that Slovenian folk dance is largely a couple dance.

expression, composers, choreographers and costume designers would work together to present the dances to the audience in a refined form. In this respect, Marolt collided with his original views on the folk dance revival. He had repeatedly come under criticism about Slovenians having nothing but German dances (and none of their own), and – eager to present ‘unsullied’ dances – he became somewhat carried away and started re-constructing the dance tradition, which he presented as native to Slovenia by means of the folk dance ensemble.

During the first few years, the dance ensemble had no musical ensemble of its own. The ensemble’s practice sessions were held to the accompaniment of the piano played by Tončka Marolt, who was on rare occasions joined by musicians playing the piano accordion and, seldom, the violin. Live performances were accompanied by several instruments (the piano accordion, the violin, the clarinet, the double bass) and at major events the dancers performed to the music played by the Bojan Adamič orchestra, the radio orchestra or a military brass band.

Under F. Marolt’s leadership, the AFS presented the folk dances of five Slovenian regions. It performed at various official celebrations, commemorations and congresses in Ljubljana and in the rural areas of Slovenia, as well as in places inhabited by the Slovenian minority in Italy and Austria. During this period, the ensemble toured several cities of the federated state of Yugoslavia (e.g. Belgrade, Sarajevo, Skopje, Pula); however, presentations of folk dances of other Yugoslav nations were not yet included in the ensemble’s repertoire.

## Women’s artistic leadership in the 1951–1965 period

Marija Šuštar (1904–1988) was the only woman to hold the artistic leader position of the AFS. She was assigned this role as a folk dance researcher at the Institute. Her earliest work with the Institute goes back to 1941, but she did not start pursuing her interest in researching dances until after the war, when she took over the Folk Dance Department. She was an important member of the artistic leadership team from the establishment of the institute-based folk dance ensemble onwards – initially in cooperation with France Marolt, and after his death, as an independent artistic leader. She held this position until she retired from the Institute in 1966, when the ensemble’s artistic leadership was taken over by her research successor.

Her research work was marked by several milestones that left a permanent imprint on the field of ethnochoreology in Slovenia. Her main focus was collecting materials by means of fieldwork; she was a pioneer in this area, contributing almost half of all the folk dances documented in Kinetography Laban in the archives. With regard to this, she understood folk dances in a somewhat wid-

er sense than her predecessor Marolt and therefore also documented the dances that evidently originated in foreign countries, but were adopted by the Slovenian people, who regarded them as their own (e.g. *zibenšrit* (the seven step dance), *štajeriš* (Steirisch)<sup>13</sup>). In 1955, she attended the First Congress of Folklorists of Yugoslavia, where she became acquainted with the basics of kinetography and then also attended a course in Ljubljana in 1956.<sup>14</sup> This formed the basis for introducing kinetography into the Institute's work, and simultaneously also laying the foundation for the Institute's dance archive with appropriate records and systematisation. She also authored three volumes of a popular–scientific collection entitled *Slovenski ljudski plesi (Slovene Folk Dances)*, in which she presented the dances of the Slovenian regions of Primorska [Šuštar 1958], Koroška [Marolt and Šuštar 1958] and Prekmurje [Šuštar 1968], using kinetography to document them.

In the 1950s, the AFS became a well-established folk dance ensemble that represented Slovenia. The continuity of the ensemble's annual performances, by means of which the ensemble presents its work to the domestic public once a year, goes back to the period of Marija Šuštar's artistic leadership, starting with the 100<sup>th</sup> performance in commemoration of France Marolt on the occasion of the first anniversary of his death in 1952. Since then, the ensemble has staged such performances annually (the so-called *letni koncert*; annual concert), keeping the tradition alive up until the present day.

In 1953, the AFS went on its first foreign tour (previously it had performed only in Yugoslav countries), which changed the ensemble's concept. In the beginning, the prime motive for participating in the ensemble might have been keeping alive the dance tradition and an opportunity to socialise, whereas later, in the 1950s, for many ensemble members the main reason for joining the ensemble was the opportunity to travel and get to know new places and other countries. In view of the socio-political situation in the socialist country, the folk dance ensemble represented, to many people, a 'window into the world'; at the time, obtaining permission to leave the country was no mean feat and the borders were much more closed than nowadays. In the same year, the ensemble also got its own professional manager, who was employed at a tourist board, which issued passports among other things. The manager took care of obtaining passports for the ensemble's members and organising performances abroad. After they parted

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13 An analysis of *štajeriš* provided the basis for a paper [Šuštar 1960] and a presentation that she gave at a meeting of Yugoslav folklorists in 1959.

14 The course was set up by the ballet dancer Pino Mlakar, the initiator of professional ballet education in Slovenia, who had collaborated with the Rudolf Laban Choreographic Institute in Hamburg before World War Two and learnt all about kinetography. Teaching the course was entrusted to the ballet dancer Henrik Neubauer.



Figure 1

France Marolt Students' Folk Dance Group performance at a foreign festival. Paris (France), June 1961. Source: Institute of Ethnomusicology ZRC SAZU (No. Fgr-124), photographer Studio Rolland.

ways, the ensemble decided against enlisting the services of a new manager.

Moreover, the artistic leadership team expanded the ensemble's repertoire – it did so by attempting to expand the Slovenian programme and by introducing the so-called *južni program* (southern programme) also known as *Jugoslovanski program* (Yugoslav programme), i.e. dances that originated from other republics of Yugoslavia. During its first few years, the ensemble presented only 'authentic' dances and avoided performing dances that the management believed to be of foreign origin<sup>15</sup> (e.g. *štajeriš* (Steirisch), *zibenšrit* (the seven step dance)). M. Šuštar initiated the first attempts at a stage presentation of the *štajeriš*; however, after a negative opinion expressed by Tončka Marolt (Šuštar's sister and France Marolt's wife), she decided not to pursue this.

On the one hand, the introduction of the southern programme resulted from the then Yugoslav policy of 'brotherhood and unity' and, on the other, it reflected the pragmatic attitude of the artistic leadership, i.e. the southern GNI programme

15 Especially if they were of non-Slavic, German origin. The memory of German occupation during World War Two was still very much alive in people's minds, hence referring to German provenance in an official socio-political context was not advisable.

added to the repertoire's diversity and enhanced the ensemble's appeal at foreign folklore festivals (while also making sure the ensemble would receive new invitations to festivals abroad on a regular basis). In 1957, the ensemble entitled its annual concert an *Evening of Yugoslav Folk Dances*; in addition to the Slovenian programme, which was a regular feature of the repertoire, the ensemble also performed dances from Serbia (Šumadija), Croatia (Slavonia), Macedonia (Šopsko Oro) and Vojvodina (Bunjevci), which were not choreographed by F. Marolt or M. Šuštar (as a Slovenian programme), but by other ensemble members based on the dance documentation by other Yugoslav ethnochoreologists. Later on, several other choreographies from these republics were added to the programme, as well as a few from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Glamoč), which had initially not been included at all. In the 1960s, the ensemble's dance programme consisted of six choreographies based on the Slovenian dance heritage, as well as seven choreographies representing the dances of other regions of former Yugoslavia.

With her approach to the ensemble's artistic leadership, M. Šuštar paved the way for her successor, making it possible for him to lead the ensemble to its golden era. Last but not least, the period of women's leadership was also a time when, after completing their university studies in Ljubljana, some of the ensemble members left the ensemble to return to their home towns and share the dance knowledge acquired in Slovenia's capital<sup>16</sup> in peripheral areas of Slovenia to the best of their abilities; in doing so, they (un)consciously followed the same practices of folk dance presentations as the AFS under the artistic leadership of M. Šuštar.

## The golden era and the artistic leader of longest standing (1965–2010)

The AFS's artistic leader who occupied this position for the longest time was Mirko Ramovš (1935–). He joined the ensemble during his student years as a dancer (1955), and six years later he took over as a *répétiteur* of the ensemble's novice section. In 1965, he first took over the ensemble's artistic leadership and

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16 With rare exceptions within the formal education system (the secondary ballet school in the mid-1960s), the greatest focus on Slovenian folk dances was in courses organised from the late 1970s onwards as part of education programmes for amateur culture, which includes the activities of folk dance groups. At the Department of Ethnology of the University of Ljubljana, the folklore course, which includes dance-related theory, was not introduced until the 1980s. Therefore, the majority of embodiment folk-dance experience in this period had to do with participation in folk dance groups / ensembles (in addition to the personal experience in traditional contexts individuals might have had).

a year later, when M. Šuštar retired as the Institute's ethnochoreologist, he was employed by the Institute<sup>17</sup>. The fact that back then the Institute's management still regarded the ensemble's artistic leader as a vitally important function was evident from the way they deal with replacing a retired researcher, i.e. they tried to find a replacement among the AFS members. Individuals' engagement in the ensemble, which may be understood as a form of applied ethnochoreology, thus impacted their chance of getting employed in the research institution.<sup>18</sup>

At the Institute, M. Ramovš continued his predecessor's fieldwork, continuously adding new dances to the Institute's folk dance collection. Between them, M. Ramovš and M. Šuštar contributed almost 75% of all dances contained in the Institute's collection [cf. Kunej 2015:10], which provided a sound basis for both his artistic dance recreations and his publications. In 1980, he published a folk dance anthology entitled *Plesat me pelji (Take Me Dancing)*, and then in the 1992–2000 period, a regionally-based collection of folk dances *Polka je ukazana (A Polka is Ordered)*, which consisted of seven volumes. All his monographic publications were intended for members of folk dance ensembles and those involved in stage presentations of folk dances – and less so for scholars – as this was his way of making it easier for them to access the Institute's material.

Most of Ramovš's analytical studies dealing with particular dances – often highlighting the historical development, as well as choreographic-structural perspectives – were published in the *Traditiones* journal. However, quite a few of the topics discussed provided a basis for choreographies or a thematic concept of the ensemble's annual concerts [Kunej 2015:17–18]. Ramovš's choreographies reflect his ethnochoreological knowledge, while also showcasing his artistic creativity in a subtle way. His choreographies were often a source of inspiration for other groups or amateur choreographers, who thus unwittingly recreated Ramovš's own creations rather than producing their own variations of 'original' folk dances. Although Ramovš was all in favour of choreographies that aimed to present folk dances on stage as realistically and faithfully as possible and to fulfil the idea of living museum, he never denied the fact that his stage presentations were artistic upgrades. This is especially noticeable in the second half of his artistic leadership period and is a result of his search for choreographic diversity on the one hand and a need for his own artistic expression on the other.

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17 His first job after completing his university studies (in Slovenian language) was as a teacher.

18 Ethnology lectures were introduced at the University of Ljubljana in 1945; however, the ethnochoreology course was only taught for a relatively short period in the 1990s (SEL 2004). Searching for a new folk dance researcher in the 1960s, the Institute's management attempted to find (and was successful in doing so) a suitable candidate among the prospective AFS members, i.e. among those who had practical experience rather than the formally educated ethnologists.

As the ensemble's artistic leader, Ramovš created more than 37 dance choreographies [Kunej 2015:18], and also staged the ensemble's annual concerts, which often focused on a specific theme (the common themes included the image of the mazurka as a Slovenian folk dance, dances in folk songs, the first recordings and collectors of Slovenian folk dance etc.). During his time with the AFS, the number of choreographies of the Slovenian programme was continuously on the rise – his aim was to include all the dances of the Slovenian national territory and to avoid excessive repetition of dances in individual stage presentations (choreographies). Ramovš supplemented choreographies based on regional folk dance characteristics with an increasing number of choreographies that were focused on interpreting the dance tradition of selected smaller local areas.

Ramovš was not only a choreographer for his principal ensemble, but also collaborated with a number of other Slovenian folk dance groups. In fact, more than half of his choreographies were created for other groups. At first, he worked mainly with groups whose leaders he became friends with while they were members of the AFS, and later with other Slovenian groups as well. Prior to 1991, he also collaborated with ensembles from other Yugoslav republics, whose stage presentations included a 'Slovenian programme'.

Under the artistic leadership of Ramovš, the AFS was an undisputed leader. Owing to the cultural and social capital attached to the ensemble's artistic leader as a simultaneous folk dance researcher at the Institute, Ramovš's impact on the activities of other groups was not limited merely to him being a model of what an artistic leader was supposed to be like. His influence, which was even greater than the model of artistic leadership itself, was institutional. It was wielded through the organisation that covered the folklore activity as one of the amateur activities (nowadays this function is occupied by the Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities), where Ramovš was a member of the boards of experts that manage and grant financial aid to groups for their regular activities and particular projects. He also gave lectures as part of training courses organised for group leaders and members, and also often performed selector-related functions<sup>19</sup>, which included selecting the 'best' folk dance groups for the national/state (first in Slovenia as a Yugoslav republic and later as an independent state)

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19 He was a selector for the state folk dance group display in 2017 at the age of 82. In 2018, the Fund parted ways with the oldest selectors, thanking them for the cooperation over several decades. The reason for this was supposedly the selectors' age; however, it seems that the Fund's aim is to replace those selectors who are not overly fond of the new trend that favours the so-called artistic folklore over the folklore activity with new selectors, and thus make sure new trends are applied more quickly.

folk dance group displays (Sln. *državna revija folklornih skupin*)<sup>20</sup>. Ramovš has been an undisputed authority on folklore activity [cf. Knific 2015] ever since the mid-1960s and has enjoyed an unrivalled reputation even after his official retirement from the Institute in 2003.<sup>21</sup>

The division between the research and the cultural-educational spheres did not have any truly far-reaching consequences for his artistic leadership, which spanned four and a half decades. The ensemble officially separated from the Institute in 1972, when the Institute lost its independence, becoming an ethnomusicological section within the Institute of Slovenia Ethnology of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, which also resulted in the ensemble's financial and professional support being cut off. Prior to that, it was the Institute that took care of the funding for the ensemble's music and accompanists, the purchases of costumes and suitable rooms of costume storage, and last but not least, the ensemble's professional leaders were recruited from the Institute's employees. From then on, the ensemble's activities were conducted in much the same way as in other folk dance groups that were part of various amateur organisations. Nevertheless, the artistic link between an Institute's researcher and the ensemble<sup>22</sup> was preserved until 2010, when the artistic leadership was taken on by one of the AFS members, a graduating senior of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology studies, Tomaž Simetinger.

During Ramovš's period, the AFS's programme and regular activities, and consequently also other groups, were impacted by some general socio-political changes that occurred at the time. In the late twentieth century, a gradual opening of Yugoslav borders, the improved standard of living, and the transport-related progress, which made it easier for people to travel, resulted in a gradual decline in people's interest in participating in the ensemble.

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20 The Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities implemented a three-level system of folk dance group meetings (Sln. *revija folklornih skupin*), i.e. interregional, regional and state displays. An expert evaluator was appointed for each level and tasked with selecting the groups for a higher-level meeting. The displays are officially not competitions per se; however, they do bring prestige in the sense of groups qualifying for the national level. Also, good rankings often make it easier for the groups to obtain funding for their activities from local communities and cultural societies, as well as sponsors.

21 When they were employed by the Institute, both Ramovš's research successors (Marjeta Tekavec and Rebeka Kranjec) were still members of the AFS; however, there were no plans for them to be appointed as successors to the ensemble's artistic leader. By the late 1990s, the dividing line between the research sphere (the Institute's research tasks) and the ensemble's cultural-artistic activities had already been clearly defined.

22 Another aspect needs to be mentioned in addition to artistic leadership and choreography-related work, i.e. professional support of the Institute's ethnomusicologists. Up until 2002, musical arrangements for Ramovš's choreographies were composed by the institute's associates (Uroš Krek, Julijan Strajnar, Drago Kunej).

In the 1970s, the ensemble numbered over a hundred active members – and including novice dancers (which had the largest decrease in numbers) actually over 150 members. In addition to the senior, first ensemble section, i.e. the most experienced group, the ensemble also had a middle group, a group of musicians (an alpine band, a tamburitza orchestra) and a novice ensemble section. As regards accepting new potential members, aesthetic criteria played an important role, in particular when it came to female dancers. The author recalls that, when she joined the ensemble, there was the maximum height for female dancers marked on the doorframe. Due to a lower interest in dancing among the male population, these criteria did not apply to male dancers to the same extent, nor were these criteria relevant for musicians, i.e. musicality was the single most important factor in choosing them. However, with the decreased interest in joining the ensemble in the early twenty-first century, this height-related criterion was increasingly often overlooked, i.e. if a female was an excellent dancer or singer she could be accepted despite her height. Passing the audition at the end of novice dancers' practice period spanning one year was a requirement for them to be accepted in the so-called middle group – only then did they become equal in status to the members who had been with the ensemble for a longer time and thus also gained an opportunity to perform dances on stage in Slovenia and abroad.

During the Ramovš era, the ensemble toured extensively, visiting all the continents except Australia. In addition to participating in the best known European folk dance festivals, the ensemble also went on tour in the Soviet Union in 1965 [Vidergar 1997:48]. In 1973, the AFS was the first Slovenian folk dance ensemble to go on a tour around the U.S., which differed greatly from European tours both in terms of duration and organisation, i.e. tour preparations lasted for four years, and the tour itself for two months. The ensemble performed the concerts in collaboration with the Tone Tomšič Academic Choir of the University of Ljubljana; however, on the advice of the American manager who had organised the tour they were called *Singers and Dancers of Ljubljana*. During the U.S. tour, the ensemble performed only one Slovenian choreography and four choreographies that were part of the Yugoslav programme.

During the 1990s, the folk dance groups in Slovenia, including the AFS, were impacted by Slovenia's independence and the breakup of Yugoslavia. Up until 1991, the AFS performed both the Slovenian and the Yugoslav programmes. As a result of new state borders, they – like other (major) Slovenian groups, which represented Slovenia and also Yugoslavia at international folk dance festivals – lost or, for political reasons, gave up<sup>23</sup> part of their programme almost overnight,

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23 During the first few years after Slovenia had gained independence, the southern programme was no longer performed on stage; it was, however, occasionally performed in rehearsals while

which depleted their production for at least a brief period. Ramovš had repeatedly pointed out that the purpose of the Slovenian ensemble was to represent the Slovenian dance tradition and this was the reason why, according to Ramovš, the AFS was in 1991 the only Slovenian ensemble that had no difficulty staging a full-length concert using only the Slovenian programme in spite of having given up the so-called southern programme.

Most of the groups that were left without the former Yugoslav dance programme due to political changes have yet to completely recover from it. They are nowadays faced with lack of members and, even more so, programme-related problems, and are also struggling with finding their essence and mission (this is mostly the case for town-based groups). On the other hand, the previously peripheral folk dance groups from rural areas, which performed only the Slovenian programme and even more region-specific programmes, gained in importance and prospered, aided by the political interests of local communities more than ever before. With the moral and financial support of local communities, they started searching for special features of local traditions and successfully interpreted them on stage.

## **New challenges of the twenty-first century (2010–2016; 2016–2018)**

Over the past eight years, the AFS's artistic leader position has been occupied by two individuals. For the first six years, the leader was Tomaž Simetingger (1981–), who started his folk dance career as a member of a local folk dance group in his home town and then joined the AFS after coming to Ljubljana to study at the university. He was entrusted with the ensemble's artistic leadership as a graduating senior in ethnology. Searching for his own path that would set him apart from his charismatic and renowned predecessor, he sought new approaches to the ensemble's stage presentations. In doing so, he tried to make the ensemble's repertoire appealing to new audiences and the market, as the support provided by the student organisation, the local community (i.e. the municipality of Ljubljana) and cultural institutions in independent Slovenia was increasingly limited, which made the ensemble's work more and more difficult. Young peo-

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groups were still composed of a generation of dancers who had in the past performed Yugoslav dances on stage. After Slovenia's independence, Slovenian folk dance groups performing the southern programme on stage were a rarity. Some groups (not the AFS) would later stage the southern programme on anniversaries and as part of their retrospectives (however, the programme was not performed by active dancers, but usually by former dancers who had previous experience presenting these dances on stage).

ple's interest in joining the ensemble has been on the decrease as well. As a result of youth's ever-increasing mobility, the ensemble's travels to other countries are no longer an incentive for them to join the ensemble. Also, the changes related to the course of study and the way young people live their lives today at the start of their professional careers do not leave much free time for regular dance practice sessions or participation in international festivals. Thus, the ensemble's membership has been noticeably reduced in recent years.

Rather than putting great effort into creating 'eternal choreographies',<sup>24</sup> the young artistic leader focused on the ensemble's annual concert, by means of which its work is presented to the Slovenian public. Realising that what the ensemble presented on stage was far from the kind of folk dance that existed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that the ensemble was thus not preserving the dance traditions, made Simetinger want to further enhance the (folk) dance stage presentations and thereby increase the performances' artistic value. During his period, the ensemble's annual concerts became one-of-a-kind stage presentations and stories. The ensemble now devotes most of the time and energy throughout the year to preparations for the annual concerts, which are the highlight of the ensemble's activities and – considering the lack of other performances – give meaning to the ensemble's mission and justify its existence.

Simetinger was the ensemble's first artistic leader who had no relation to the Institute of Ethnomusicology ZRC SAZU and who occupied this position as an expert and at the same time a non-professional. In addition to choreographing for his principal ensemble, he has collaborated with several other Slovenian groups and has undertaken various other types of work, e.g. for the purposes of choreographies he does field research into the past dance culture and holds seminars organised by the Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities, where he was employed part-time for a while. Like Ramovš, he uses the Fund and its education projects as a platform for spreading his own ideas and visions. Moreover, as one of the four co-authors of the *Priročnik za folklorno dejavnost (Handbook of Folklore Activity)*, the first such manual in Slovenia, which was published in 2017, Simetinger has further consolidated his position as a leader in folklore activity.

While Simetinger was the artistic leader, the ensemble, supported by the Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities, staged the first couples'

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24 Some of these choreographies were created in the late 1960s or later and were under the artistic leadership of M. Ramovš performed on a regular basis, representing the ensemble's standard repertoire. As a rule, only such choreographies were included in full-length performances. However, recently there has been a tendency towards fewer conventional full-length evening performances and more and more smaller-shorter performances (with fewer performers and a limited programme) that are intended for either select audiences or tourists.

competition in folk dances (Sln. *tekmovanje parov v ljudskih plesih*) in 2014. The competition had been inspired by a similar event in Croatia, whereas in Slovenia this was something completely new. The competition has since then grown into an annual event<sup>25</sup> with its own circle of followers and a faithful audience. It follows a number of rules, i.e. the stage layout is designed for a single dance couple; the dance length must not exceed three minutes; the dances presented must originate from the Slovenian ethnic territory and can be reconstructed, styled in any way possible, or performed the way they are documented; live musical accompaniment is preferable although not necessary; folk costumes for the dance couple and the musicians are not obligatory. The choreographies presented differ considerably from the established choreographies of Slovenian folk dance groups, while on the other hand, they feature a number of elements that are increasingly common in stage presentations by both Simetinger and his followers of late.

In 2014, after Simetinger successfully defended his doctoral thesis, in which he analysed the dance culture of a selected region from a historical-anthropological perspective, the opinion was repeatedly brought to public notice that Slovenia needed a professional folk dance ensemble and the AFS, or at least professional artistic leadership, was often mentioned in relation to this. Another blow to the idea of professionalising the ensemble was a failed application to the regular call for programme funding by the Ministry of Culture, which had previously provided the ensemble with substantial aid. Simetinger, who had been looking for a job that would support his further artistic endeavours and his existence, abandoned folklore activity in 2016 (for a short period) by way of protest, thus handing the ensemble's artistic leadership to one of the dancers, Anže Kerč, who took over as the acting artistic leader.

Anže Kerč (1992–) has remained the acting artistic leader up to 2018. Like Simetinger, he embarked on his folk dance career by dancing for another folk dance group, but then continued in the AFS during his studies in Ljubljana. He is a graduate in German language and history and the topic of his undergraduate thesis was the dance culture of people living in towns. He has already produced a few choreographies for the AFS's annual concerts, which are now no longer called *annual concerts*, but *annual dance productions*. The assumption that the AFS is still being directed by Simetinger, albeit in the background, has been confirmed by the fact that the ensemble's current aspirations and orientations are similar to the aspirations during the time of the previous artistic leader. The ensemble, and above all its artistic leadership, strives to be recognised not only as

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25 In 2017, the fourth competition was held – an after-movie is available and also a video clip showing the winning couple with the choreography entitled *Ko lutke oživijo (When Puppets Come to Life)* can be viewed at YouTube platform [JK Design 2017; STA – Slovenian Press Agency 2017].



*Figure 2*

*France Marolt Students' Folk Dance Group annual concert. Ljubljana, May 2016. Source: France Marolt Students' Folk Dance Group, photographer Aleš Mulec.*

a principal representative of cultural heritage, but also as an actor of contemporary performing arts, which is inspired by the past, while interpreting, recreating, reconstructing and stylising it in a modern way.

## **Conclusion – going around in circles**

Over the past seven decades, five artistic leaders of the France Marolt Students' Folk Dance Group have striven to arouse participants' and audiences' enthusiasm for the folk dance – for the kind of dance that had by the time the ensemble was founded already disappeared from the Slovenian people's way of life and existed more or less only in the minds of individuals who could still recall it and, later, as an archival record (document) awaiting new interpretations (including interpretations on stage).

The essence of the ensemble is (was) (re)presenting folk dances on stage. However, each artistic leader tackled it in a slightly different way, depending on his/her understanding of the definition of folk dances and the ensemble's mission. In doing so, each of them recognised shortcomings and mistakes made

by the predecessors and aimed to change things, following in his/her individual path.

From ideas of originality and authenticity, to perceiving the folk dance ensemble as a living museum and as a means of preserving tradition and, at a later time, dance art that views folk dance merely as inspiration for dance stories of any kind are the three development stages of artistic recreation in AFS, a Slovenian folk dance ensemble that serves as a role model for numerous other folk dance groups.

However, being role models and worthy of imitation was not the only way the artistic leaders influenced their followers – they also exploited their own social and cultural capital. The society itself has also contributed its share – in the past, it might have perceived this field as a potential source of more political and cultural gains than today, and for this reason folk dance activity used to receive greater financial aid and moral support than it does today.

The function of the AFS, whose beginnings include an (un)successful attempt at folk revival, is now increasingly often regarded as folk (dance) theatre, where costume-clad performers use dancing, music and singing to present stories based on the choreographer's ideas on stage. Nowadays, the performers' actual way of life is connected to the dance presented on stage only as much as the stage representation itself is also part of their way of life. Therefore, when folk dance performers leave the stage, they dance differently – in their own way.

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## **Part 4 Shifting Orthodoxies**



# Set Dancing, Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy: Changing Cultural and Political Landscapes in Ireland

*Catherine E. Foley*

*Abstract:*

The Irish folk revival emerged at the end of the nineteenth century within the context of colonialism. Irish cultural nationalist movements, including the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Gaelic League and the Irish Literary Society all contributed to the development of a national consciousness where Gaelic sport, language, music, dance and literature were promoted and popularized through orthodox discourses [Foley 2012; 2011; 2013]. The Gaelic League, in particular, influenced the development of *Irish* dancing where discourses prevailed surrounding Derridian binary oppositions: authentic / inauthentic; rural / urban; traditional / modern; Irish / foreign. Within the structures of social dancing, a canon of Irish *céili* dances was selected and popularized at Irish social dance events known as *céilithe*. Dances believed not to be Irish were excluded from this canon. Set dancing fell into this category. During the second half of the twentieth century, however, the orthodox cultural-nationalist discourse was heterodoxically challenged. This was largely due to modernity, globalization and a changing political and socio-cultural landscape, which allowed for the emergence of alternative expressions of Irishness. The orthodox discourse associated with traditional dancing was also challenged and this paper critically examines one of these discourses, focusing on set dancing.

*Keywords:*

orthodoxy, heterodoxy, cultural nationalism, Ireland, revival, set dancing

Ethnochoreologists, dance anthropologists and other dance scholars have, since the 1960s, studied various dance practices to theorize how they relate to issues of social, cultural, and ethnic concerns [see Reed 2009]. In this paper I examine orthodox and heterodox discourses in relation to one vernacular dance practice in Ireland, namely set dancing. I argue that the orthodox discourse of the cultural nationalist revival movement of the late nineteenth century, gave way to heterodox discourses during the 1970s within a context of modernity and a changing cultural landscape. These heterodox discourses succeeded in disseminating set-dance practice to communities of set dancing across many sites in Ireland, and indeed the world. These communities of set-dance practice were connected by their shared passion, practice and knowledge of set dancing. However, within this revival, I argue that another orthodoxy was established through formal transmission and popularization of the practice at regular workshops.

## The revival

The folk<sup>1</sup> revival in Ireland emerged at the end of the nineteenth century within the context of colonialism. Cultural nationalist movements, including the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Gaelic League and the Irish Literary Society all contributed to the development of a national consciousness where Gaelic sport, language, literature, and traditional music and dance were promoted and popularized through discourses which provided an orthodoxy or sets of ideas, which laid the foundation for the development of dance practices in Ireland for the most part of the twentieth century [Foley 2011; 1988 [2012]; 2013]. The Gaelic League, in particular, influenced these discourses in relation to Irish traditional dance and in so doing influenced to a large extent the thinking, doing, and developments of its practices. Discourses on Irishness – what it was and was not, dominated these discourses around the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century; these were based on notions surrounding Derridian binary oppositions: authentic / inauthentic; rural / urban; traditional / innovative; Irish / foreign. This process gave rise to the construction of a canon of Irish dances by the Gaelic League, and later *An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha* – the Irish dance organization established in 1930 under the auspices of the Gaelic League to preserve Irish dancing [see Foley 2013; Hall 2008; Wulff 2007]. In effect, the Gaelic League, constructed an orthodox discourse around issues of Irishness which influenced developments in traditional dance practices in Ireland. During the second half of the twentieth century, however, the orthodox cultural-nationalist discourse on Irishness of the Gaelic League was challenged by set dancing enthusiasts [see Foley 2011; O'Connor 2013]. This was largely due to modernity, globalization and a changing political and socio-cultural landscape, which allowed for the emergence of alternative views and expressions of Irishness. This paper critically examines one of these discourses and focuses on set dancing.

## Orthodoxy, heterodoxy and set dancing

The concept of orthodoxy is interpreted here as authoritative, correct, normative or straight, while heterodoxy is interpreted as alternatives to this authoritative position. This interpretation comes via the work on practice by the

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1 I am using the term 'folk' here in line with the title of this volume. However, the term 'folk' was and used in Ireland in relation to the Gaelic revival at the end of the nineteenth century and the later revival of set dancing in the 1970s onwards. Instead, the terms 'traditional' or 'revival' were more commonly used.

sociologist Pierre Bourdieu [1977] who originally used these concepts as analytical vocabulary for sociological and political analysis in relation to the church. Bourdieu defined Orthodoxy as

a system of euphemisms, of acceptable ways of thinking and speaking the natural and social world, which rejects heretical remarks as blasphemies [Bourdieu 1977:169].

Orthodoxy is therefore understood through its relationship with heterodoxy (heresy) and *vica versa*.

The dance form examined here in relation to these concepts is set dancing. Set dances or quadrilles (Sets of Quadrilles) are group dances of four couples arranged in a square formation. They were popular European ballroom dances and were introduced to Ireland in 1816 and were danced throughout the nineteenth century by all classes of society in urban and rural areas – albeit differently, depending on issues such as class, context and patronage. For example, in County Limerick during the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Knight of Glin instructed all dancing masters within his territory to teach the quadrille (set dancing) as it was danced in France and Portugal to all members of society [Foley 2013]. The sets consisted of

five, or six, set or prescribed figures. They were danced by four couples, generally in a square formation with each couple positioned on a side of the square and all facing inwards (sometimes, if there were not enough dancers to make up a full-set as above, a half-set, comprising of two couples facing opposite each other was danced). They were performed to Irish traditional dance music played on instruments such as melodeons, fiddles, flutes, concertinas, etc. Different figures of the dance were performed to particular dance tune types. For example, Reels, Jigs, Hornpipes, Polkas, and Slides were the popular tune types for set dancing [Foley 2011:50].

Set dances as participatory dances were the mainstay of social dance life throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. At the end of the nineteenth century - as part of the cultural nationalist movement of the Gaelic League, an Irish social dance event was constructed – invented by the Gaelic League, called a “céilí” [see Foley 2011; Cullinane 1998]; the first céilí was established in London in 1897; set dances and waltzes were danced at this social event by the middle class Irish – all members of the London branch of the Gaelic League. However, because of the developing orthodox discourses popularized by the Gaelic League surrounding cultural identity, Irishness and authenticity,

a canon of Irish *céilí* dances was constructed to be danced at future *céilí* dance events. In an earlier work I argued

An official canon of Gaelic League *céilí* dances was ... constructed to promote the Gaelic League's cultural nationalism. This included communal dances such as *Ballaí Luimní* (Walls of Limerick), *Baint an Fhéir* (Haymakers Jig), *Ionsaí na hInse* (The Siege of Ennis) ...[Foley 2011:46]

Thus, with the objective to preserve and promote Irish *céilí* dancing, the Gaelic League validated particular dances (for example, the communal dances above) as the canon of Irish dancing. According to Bourdieu “the production of canonical writings accelerates when the content of the tradition, is itself threatened” [Bourdieu 1991:30]. This was the case in Ireland. With the threat of a decline in Irish culture within English colonialism, an Irish cultural nationalism was promoted and popularized through the Gaelic League, among other organizations, and dance was an important ideological tool for its promotion [Foley 2001; 1988 [2012]; 2013].

Set dances, danced at the first *céilí*, were not included by the Gaelic League in the constructed Irish *céilí* dance canon. Set dances came to be excluded from the *céilí* dance canon and were disallowed to be danced at *céilithe* as they were deemed foreign by members of the Gaelic League. Also, in 1936, a Public Dance Halls Act was passed in Ireland which further assisted in the decline in set dancing practices [see Brennan 1999; Wulf 2007; Foley 2013].

It was not until the 1970s, with the advancement of modernity, globalization and a changing political and socio-cultural landscape, that this cultural nationalist orthodox discourse was challenged by middle class enthusiasts of set dancing in Ireland. This commenced with a set dancing workshop with the late dancer, Joe O'Donovan at the Willie Clancy Summer School in Miltown Malbay, County Clare in 1972 and so commenced a heterodox discourse evidenced within a revival of set dancing which to date continues not only in Ireland but in Irish diasporic locations and further afield [see Foley 2011].

The revival in set dancing transcended boundaries of class, race, and age. Organized classes took place in rural and urban areas and set dancers socially engaged in dancing at *céilithe* to live *céilí* bands;<sup>2</sup> these included the Tulla *céilí* band, the Michael Sexton *Céilí* Band, and others. The revival *céilithe* were different to the earlier Gaelic League *céilithe*. The canon of *céilí* dances established by the Gaelic League at the beginning of the twentieth century to be danced at

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2 A *céilí* band is an ensemble of Irish traditional musicians who play Irish traditional dance music live for people to dance to at *céilí* dance events. Instruments include a combination of fiddles, accordions, flutes, concertinas, drums, piano, and maybe banjo.

Gaelic League céilithe was no longer the focus of the 1970s céilithe; the revival céilí focused predominantly on set dancing and it

created a community of set dancers analogous to Turino's cultural cohort (2008) where participants constructed their sense of community around a specific activity; in this instance the activity was set dancing... [Foley 2011:50]

This sense of community was further enhanced through the set-dance structure. In 2011, I argued that the structure of a set dance, two sets of couples facing each other, formed an inward facing micro community of its own, which further contributed to the overall sense of belonging and community within the overall céilí event.

At the revival céilithe, set dancers danced sets for the full evening (20:00–23:00); frequently waltzes were also danced. Céilí dancers came to céilithe for different reasons:

- Sociability
- Belonging
- Stability
- Maintenance of Health and Well Being Through Physical Exercise
- Love of Music
- Reinforcement of Achievement
- Tacit Cultural Knowledge and Heritage



*Figure 1*  
*All Ireland Scór competition. Glenflesk Set Dance Champions, County Kerry, 2009*

MCs (master of ceremonies) at these revival céilithe selected the set dances to be danced and numerous set dances were danced throughout the evening; these included the Caledonian Set, the Plain Set, the Baile Mhúirne Jig Set, and others. These set dances were reflective of traditional dance knowledge and practices from diverse rural localities in Ireland. Within the revival, the number of set dances one could dance as part of one's repertoire mattered for purposes of participation. Many set dance enthusiasts within the revival movement generally knew and could dance up to 30 set dances, which had been formally transmitted, practiced and published [Moylan 1985; Murphy 1995; Lynch 1989; O'Doherty 1995] as part of the revival set dance movement. Before the 1970s revival, however, local rural communities generally danced the one or two set dances, which had been traditionally associated with their locality and its cultural practices. Within the revival, particular local set dances were re-contextualized for the most part, and an institutionalization in set dancing practice developed through formal set dance transmission at organized workshops in Ireland and further afield. These workshops took place in community halls, hotels, pubs, and included set-dance focused package holidays and cruises [see Foley 2011]. Set dances were practiced at céilithe and at competitions in set dancing [*Scór*<sup>3</sup>; *Slógadh*<sup>4</sup> 1970s; see for example, All Ireland Scór competition. Glenflesk, County Kerry, Set Dancers Champions 2009. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1RqYaw9eSk> (2018 February 12)]

This competitive context produced a standardization and a uniformity in practice. Improvisation did not feature. To win in competition was an incentive for both male and female dancers to dance in a uniform and synchronized manner. Winning in competition, as representative of one's local area, was a matter of pride. However, dancers did not necessarily dance their local set dance; they generally danced what set dance might impress the adjudicators and might assist them in winning the competition. In this instance, the Glenflesk set dancers danced two parts of the Roscommon Lancers. Thus through standardization, the heterodox discourse that developed during the 1970s in opposition to the cultural nationalist discourse of the late nineteenth century, gave rise to another ortho-

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3 *Scór* was a festival of competitions established by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in 1969 to promote Irish traditional culture. These competitions occurred during the winter months, when competitions in Irish sports had ceased. They included Figure/Céilí Dancing, Solo Singing, Ballad Group, Recitation/Scéalaíocht, Léiriú Stáitse/Stage Presentation, Instrumental Music, Set Dancing and a Table Quiz. See <http://www.gaa.ie/the-gaa/cultur-agus-gaeilge/scor> (accessed 12 February 2018).

4 *Slógadh* was another competition-based youth arts festival organized by Gael Linn in 1969. See <http://www.gael-linn.ie/default.aspx?treeid=261> (accessed 12 February 2018).



Figure 2  
*The Mullagh Half Set. Ag Déanamh Ceol. RTE. 1973.*

dox discourse, shaped by formal workshops and competitions in set dancing, and the socially established conventions it created.

Phrases such as “too much standardization”, “quantity over quality”, “all figures and no individual dancing” were heard by some set dancers who were tradition bearers and who were critical of the revival. Traditionally, set dances would have been transmitted informally, with dancers observing and participating in set dances at local rural social events. Particular local set dances were danced and aesthetic values and ways of dancing would have been embodied, admired and informally disseminated. In County Clare, for example, a style of dancing known as “battering” was embodied and developed by set dancers in the region and key dancers were admired for their representation and embodiment of this style. Willie Keane (1927-1998) from Doonbeg in County Clare is iconic of this style of set dancing. Performing the Mullagh Half Set with Kathleen Darcy, Tone Darcy and Rita Tubridy, he can be seen on *Ag Déanamh Ceol*, a programme broadcast by the national television station *Raidió Teilifís Éireann* (RTE)<sup>5</sup> in 1973 [see the broadcast here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDC2yJTzbfU&list=P LceXWn6pwwgZqlJLnqWzYrUh2znjjomBH5&index=4> Accessed 20 November 2017].<sup>6</sup>

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5 Raidió Teilifís Éireann is a semi-state company and the national public service broadcaster of the Republic of Ireland.

6 Two couples formed this half set dance: Willie Keane, Kathleen Darcy, Tone Darcy and Rita Tubridy (Clare). Musicians: John Dwyer (Cork) and Paddy Glackin (Dublin) on fiddles; Michael Tubridy (Clare) and Michael O’Connor (Dublin) on flutes.

## Steps and battering

The term battering refers to audible tipping and shuffling with the feet to the accompanying traditional dance music. Dancers move in and out of positions forming figures such as circles, stars, squares and wheels and while they dance they perform particular codified motifs with their feet. Women traditionally did not improvise but maintained these motifs throughout the set dance. Men did improvise with stepping, stamps and battering. One reason for this was that the woman was expected to keep the rhythm steady – to keep the man steady, while he had the opportunity to creatively explore and improvise. Within this rural practice there was therefore a distinct understanding that men and women performed in gendered ways, reflective also of the gendered division of labour in their lives. Within the revival, all dancers - male and female, performed their steps in the same way; improvisation was not a characteristic of the practice within the revival.

Styles of dancing were also associated with places and were named accordingly. The set dance performed by Willie Keane and the other dancers for the television programme noted above was called the Mullagh Half Set. Mullagh is the name of a village in County Clare not far from the Atlantic Ocean – 6.5 kilometres from Spanish Point and about 7 kilometres from the town of Miltown Malbay. According to Bridget Edwards:

Geographical locations are not only coordinates on maps and compasses, not merely particular landscapes. They are cultural, political, and personal icons that evoke images, memories, emotions, and pre-conceptions [Edwards 1996:65].

The Mullagh Set conjures up memories of rural Ireland and its cultural and political landscape at a particular time in its historicity; and set dancers such as Willie Keane, are regarded as local and national icons, not only of the battering style of set dancing of West Clare at that particular time, but also of the rural region itself. Thus, for some set dancers, set dancing is associated with place that evokes cultural memories and emotions associated with these places. Set dancers can therefore embody a sense of place, and in the case of Willie Keane, he embodies his place – West Clare.

Cognisant of the standardization in revival set dancing since the 1970s, there have been attempts by some individuals or tradition bearers to revive local styles of set-dance practice. For example, in Doonbeg, County Clare, the birthplace of set dancer Willie Keane, a festival of set dancing was established in 2000 in Willie Keane's name by his sons John and Packie. Local events such as these co-exist today with more formal competitive events in set dancing.

Within the set dancing revival movement today, many dancers are not aware of local styles of set dancing and, even if they were, they may not wish to dance in these local styles. They attend workshops and céilithe to learn and to practice set dancing and for reasons of fitness, sociality, and a love of dancing to Irish traditional music. Being part of this community requires knowledge of the many set dances which are called and danced at revival céilithe.

## Conclusion

The revival in set dancing in Ireland from the 1970s constructed a heterodox discourse in relation to the cultural nationalist orthodox discourse on Irishness from the closing decade of the nineteenth century. It was welcomed by individuals in towns and cities of Ireland and further afield as it provided them with a social platform to dance and to express a ‘modern’ and inclusive sense of Irishness through set dancing [Foley 2011]; it also provided social and economic opportunities for set dance teachers, céilí bands, hotels, and even holiday organizers of set-dance package holidays and cruises. Without the revival in set dancing from the 1970s, the practice of set dancing may not have survived. However, in the process of reviving and popularizing the practice, a formalization arose, particularly through workshops, which emphasized quantity, and an increased uniformity and standardization; the latter was reinforced through competition. In this chapter, I argued that this standardization gave rise to another form of an orthodox discourse and, in response to this, attempts were made by some tradition bearers of set dancing in rural areas, to revive local styles of set dancing. It remains to be seen, however, whether or not these will impact the already established standardized styles of set dancing within the revival, practised by communities of set dancers in Ireland, the diaspora and further afield.

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# Folklorní mejdlo: Music Revival the Prague way<sup>1</sup>

*Anežka Hrbáčková*

## *Abstract:*

In this chapter, I approach Prague as a fluid soundscape in which music of various genres is created and performed according to distinct concepts and serving various strategies [Shellemay 2006].

This environment allows the creation and negotiation of traditions [Glassie 1995], that move into different directions. One type of tradition, which has a recursive character is connected with the concept of folklore, which constructs meaning and carries out sociocultural change for its actors.

The fieldwork presented here examines this part of the contemporary Prague soundscape, through one of the music and dance events. The regular event, named by the organizers “Folklorní mejdlo”, defines itself as being connected to the world of modernity, currently on offer in the metropolis, and to the world of traditions, authenticity and folklore. The fieldwork focuses on the way the concepts of authenticity and legitimacy are negotiated, how they are assigned to individual actors and objects, how generally the actors of the event undertake the construction of folklore and what the final product looks like.

This work, with its approach to music as a social act [Turino 2008] endorses the ethnomusicological approach and uses the theoretical concept of music revivals [Bithell and Hill 2014].

## *Keywords:*

folklore, revival, tradition, authenticity, cimbalom band

## Introduction: dulcimer-accompanied parties<sup>2</sup>

The first Folklore Party (Folklorní mejdlo) was held in early 2014. The proprietor of the Prague café Neustadt approached a pair of young folklorists<sup>3</sup>, asking them whether they were willing to produce regular folklore events to be held

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1 This article is a revised and extended version of my diploma thesis *Hrbáčková, Anežka: Folklorní mejdlo: současný folklorismus v Praze* [„Folklorní mejdlo“: Contemporary Folklorism in Prague] (Department of General Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, 2017), supervised by doc. PhDr. Zuzana Jurková, Ph.D. The article is part of the Specific Academic Research Project “Pražské hudební světy 2” [Prague Music Worlds 2], conducted at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University.

2 The phrase has been used to define the event by its organizers on its website at <http://folklornamejdlo.cz>

3 In the present article, the term *folklore* is used in an emic manner, i.e. as used by its performers. The related term, *folklorism*, is also used emically, although it is not described by some informants as relevant. If they choose to use the term, then they mostly do it in a way identical to specialist ethnological and folkloristic works. The term *folklorist* is also used in a specific manner: performers use it to describe a person involved in folklore; typically, then, such people include members of music and dance folklore groups, although sometimes the term is

at his café. The organizers began to invite dulcimer bands and the event quickly grew in popularity. Today, the party is held in a café or a publicly accessible venue in the centre of Prague once a month, in the evening of a week-day. What does the event “look like”? At the entrance, a fee is collected by the organizers and their friends: a group of people aged about thirty, some of whom come from Prague, and others from different places across the Czech Republic. After paying a modest fee, each visitor has a colourful ribbon tied to his or her wrist as proof of payment. The organizers (as well as many of the others present) wear elements of Moravian or Slovak folk costumes in addition to everyday clothes, with girls putting flower wreaths or artificial flowers in their hair, and some men wearing folk hats. Most visitors are aged 20-35 (although the event does attract people above as well as below that age category), primarily university students. Regular patrons include people known as “hipsters”. At around seven p.m., the dulcimer band<sup>4</sup>, which is the core element of the event, starts playing its repertoire: folk songs from Moravia, Slovakia, sometimes Bohemia and Silesia<sup>5</sup>. During the night, visitors will stand in front of the band, by the bar, sit at tables or on chairs placed along the walls, drinking, chatting with friends, dancing, singing, sometimes even playing musical instruments, “ordering” the band what songs to play next<sup>6</sup> or just watching the scene and swinging to the rhythm. As early as

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used to denote a person interested in ethnology or folklore studies and, to a very limited extent, a scholar with an academic background in ethnology or folklore studies.

- 4 The organizers invite dulcimer bands from various regions of Moravia or bands who are based in Prague but perform Moravian or Slovak musical folklore. Therefore, the band’s composition is normally identical to that of dulcimer bands in Moravia and Slovakia. The band is led by the first violinist, known as *primáš*, with other string instruments normally including the second violin (also known as *sekund* or *terc*), or – as the case may be – a third violin (also known as *obligát*), viola (also known as *kontr*) and the double bass (known as *basa*). The element of utmost relevance for the overall sound and harmonization is the large cimbalom. The clarinet, by contrast, is not indispensable although most renowned bands do have one.
- 5 The repertoire of the dulcimer bands invited to perform at *Folklorní mejdlo* consists of folk songs. These songs are expected by the informants to be *folk* rather than *artificial*, meaning (as the dichotomy is understood by most of those involved) that they were created by an unknown person in the past and later adopted by *the folk community*. This feature of the songs is often put into opposition with *artificiality* and the concept of songs created by a (commercial) author. Time of origin is of equal importance since no song can be considered a folk song if it is *new, modern*.
- 6 In some of the regions whose folklore the dulcimer bands perform, songs are normally opened by one or more singers before the band actually starts playing, with singers singing the opening lines and being then joined by the leader and, subsequently, the whole band. Later, all those who want to sing are welcome to do so. The actual selection of the song is done by the person who starts singing; thus, “ordering” a song of one’s choice is one way in which a participant can determine the repertoire. As may be evident from the description above, this demands vocal, intonation and performance skills. Unless the person has reasonable vocal skills, the

the first few Mejdlo events, a tradition began of holding a “dance school” – at some point during the night, the audience is introduced to a folk dance (or song) from one of the ethnographic regions, including collective training and performance. The “dance school” lasts about an hour and is followed by more singing and dancing. The official end of the night normally comes between one and three a.m. after the dulcimer band stops playing. Some of the visitors leave for a different bar or – weather permitting – stay outside the venue and go on playing, dancing and singing into the early hours.

In my diploma thesis, I utilized approaches of musical anthropology to attempt to answer the principal question: Why do people visit *Folklorní mejdlo*? The field research, a crucial part of my thesis, primarily involved participant observation and semi-structured interviews with participants of the event. The field itself, however, was conceived in a broader manner, with research partly conducted via social networks and other websites crucial for the organization and the event itself as they serve communication purposes within the group of (potential) participants of *Mejdlo*.<sup>7</sup>

## The ethnomusicological perspective: the concepts of music revival and tradition

In ethnomusicology, the concept of human interaction helped to turn music as an autonomous and decontextualized [Reyes 2009:7] human product into *music as a social act*. The idea relevant to the object of study thus defined is the key concept of the ethnomusicologist Alan P. Merriam [1964], *music as culture*, with music understood as *action* performed by actors whose actions carry cultur-

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band leader may not notice him or her and if he does notice, he may not be able to distinguish what song it is (and if he does distinguish the song, it is still him, the band leader, who decides whether or not to perform the song). It may also happen that more than one participant starts singing, each opening a different song. It is the leader’s task to decide, applying his own criteria. However, the leader is well aware that his own reputation is at stake, as well as that of his band. This practice has been used at *Folklorní mejdlo* since the very beginning and is clearly popular among performers and audience alike.

7 I took this group, which defines itself as folkloristic, to be a cultural cohort as understood by Turino. Note: A cultural cohort of folklorists is active not only during the event as such, but also during rehearsals of music and dance groups within folklore and ethnographic ensembles, during diverse folklore events held in and outside Prague (e.g. summer folklore festivals) or in communication on social networks. Turino notes that although individuals are active within formations and differentiate themselves from others along a diversity of axes which depend on personality aspects characteristic for a given social situation, it is nevertheless possible to identify certain *constellations of habits* within these formations, which influence many of these personality aspects [Turino 2008:112].

al meaning anchored in the culture of the particular group. The values and ideas inherent in it come together to form the music sound which, in turn, confirms, reflects and passes on these values [Merriam 1964:6]. For Merriam, the analysis and description of musical structure is not the end but the means to explore the “cultural” aspect of music sound: understanding the nature of musical structure is enabled and conditioned by understanding actions that result in the musical structure [Merriam 1964:7].

Following this concept, Thomas Turino [2008] introduces the idea of music being a means to proclaim identity<sup>8</sup> and create social coherence, saying: “Music and dance are key to identity formation because they are often public presentations of the deepest feelings and qualities that make a group unique” [Turino 2008:2].

The way music is approached by Merriam’s model based on three components and/or layers and by Turino’s concept of *music as social life* is identical, to a large extent, to the concept of *music as a social object*. The other concept relevant for my diploma thesis was actors’ activity in music revivals. Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill [2014] see revival as a social activity comprising an effort to perform and promote music which is valued as old or historical and is often perceived as endangered or on the verge of extinction, with the ancientness and historicity of such music being perceived as value *per se* by the performers [Bithell and Hill 2014:3]. It is, at the same time, a cultural process for constructing meaning and effecting socio-cultural change [Bithell and Hill 2014:3]. Revival efforts are understood by authors to include a number of intertwined issues and processes. One of these issues, closely related to the performers’ motivation to pursue revival activity, is the way in which music that is considered old or endangered is utilized as an instrument of social activism. Revivalists are seen as agents of social change, driven by dissatisfaction with aspects of the modern world and a desire for change [Bithell and Hill 2014:3–4]. Numerous motivations are offered by these authors; the motivation that seems most relevant for my research is dissatisfaction with some elements of modernity. Modernity, which leads to alienation and confusion rather than unlimited opportunity, is put in opposition against the representation of the past, seen as expressing anti-modernization, anti-industrialization, anti-urbanization, anti-secularization, anti-technology, anti-commercialization, anti-consumerism, anti-capitalism, anti-mass media, or anti-institutionalization [Bithell and Hill 2014:10]. These representations tend to be romanticized, being sometimes imaginary, and always selective.

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8 The construction of identity as an interplay of how we perceive our surroundings and how our surroundings see us, and how these perceptions are reflected in human activity, is explored by Adelaida Reyes [2005], another proponent of the concept of *music as culture*, referring to examples of contemporary music in the United States.

Identifying musical elements and practices as old, historical or traditional – and establishing their value – means selecting and re-interpreting existing historical narratives [Bithell and Hill 2014:4]. The past holds symbolic potential for revivalists, being a source of cultural symbols that can be adapted for numerous purposes [Bithell and Hill 2014:13]. This results in a new or revised historical narrative, with some elements having new roles and serving new purposes. Selectivity of the past – a second issue highlighted by the authors – is evident in the revival itself or, more specifically, in what revivalists do: what environment they create, what rhetoric they use and other aspects of revival. Revivalists are not interested solely in music as such, but also in values that can be projected in music, and in the lifestyle – imaginary to some extent – associated with it. The appeal of the past lies not so much in what it is thought to have been like but in what it should represent and how it can be used to justify present action [Bithell and Hill 2014:14].

The processes of recontextualization and transformation are inherent in all musical performance; despite not being restricted to revival, they are characteristic of it, carrying many aspects relevant for revival research. Inevitably, every new fan will adapt, consciously or unconsciously, the music to his or her own stylistic preferences and performance habits. It is not uncommon that they want to “improve” the tradition [Bithell and Hill 2014:11]. Recontextualization, which occurs prior to this transformation, introduces the object into a relationship of new meanings, purposes and contexts, being a process of profound transformation open to formal changes.

The elements of recontextualization and transformation present in the revival process need to be acknowledged as legitimate to allow for musical and cultural changes to be accepted and for the appropriating group to be considered as legitimate bearers of culture. The act of legitimization occurs through the invocation of authenticity [Bithell and Hill 2014:4]. The three meanings believed to define the word *authentic* (“genuine, authoritative, and deserving of our credence” [Bithell and Hill 2014:20]) make the word a label that has the potential to confer legitimacy to elements of musical culture. This is the way in which revivalists use and negotiate the term.

Bithell and Hill point to the ambiguous role of folklorists<sup>9</sup> in shaping the expert view and research of music revivals. On the one hand, many scholars prioritized music that they viewed as authentic, old and pure, selectively viewing some forms of musical expression according to their own taste and activity, and selectively setting the criteria of authenticity, thus providing space for music revivals. On the other hand, they tended to view revivals themselves as non-authen-

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9 Experts with an academic background in folklore studies, ethnography and ethnology, as well as collectors of folk songs.

tic and thus unworthy of academic interest [Bithell and Hill 2014:6]. The authors say this was because of two deep-rooted intellectual trends which originated in the previous centuries yet may continue to be influential until the present and can indeed be identified in some researchers' approaches. One of them, the theory of cultural evolution, treats folklore as a residual of ancient life styles which are still observed by rural communities. The other trend is associated with national romanticism and a related concept of folk literary heritage and habits reflecting the nation's soul. The combined effect of these two mindsets is that folk music and folk artefacts in general are viewed as a pure / authentic / historical / traditional / ancient cultural expression of a nation, region or ethnic group [Bithell and Hill 2014:6]. When coupled with concerns that modernization might result in reduced cultural diversity, these tendencies led experts to prefer musical elements or forms that were viewed as "pure" and old, while ignoring those "contaminated" by the influence of the foreign, urban or modern [Bithell and Hill 2014:6].

The concept of tradition, as I use it, went through a long development process in history, folklore studies and anthropology. What follows are two of the major concepts that have contributed to the present meaning of *tradition*. The concept of the invention of tradition, introduced by Eric Hobsbawm [Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983], differentiates between *genuine tradition* (also called *custom*) and *invented tradition*. Invented tradition is characterized by strength and adaptability and, when effective, does not require revival or (re)invention [Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:8]. Invented tradition, by contrast, is inauthentic, constructed by social actors, with a false association with the historical past [Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:2].

Henry Glassie [1995], for his part, views tradition as a unified concept with no need to differentiate between authentic and construed versions. Tradition is defined as the dynamics of culture, a process that enables culture to exist in time [Glassie 1995:399]. One of its major features, the fact that it is an intentional creative act deriving the future from the past is independent of when the act happened, how deep into the past it refers and what its link to the past is like. While Hobsbawm's approach presupposes the existence of a real past ("historical past")<sup>10</sup> Glassie believes the historical past to be another sociocultural construct and any differentiation between genuine tradition and invented tradition to be yet another process of construal – invention.<sup>11</sup>

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10 "The fact that cultures and traditions are created, invented – wilfully compiled by knowledgeable individuals – seems a surprise to scholars who cling to superorganic concepts and who invent, in order to sharpen spurious contrasts, uninvented, natural traditions" [Glassie 1995: 398].

11 The example given by the author is that of an old Christmas song, a carol, which, at a certain point in history, was recorded and published in paper song books that helped it to become pop-

The event which, as Hobsbawm believes, can lead to the demise of a genuine, authentic tradition is a break in continuity – the moment when an external intervention interrupts the life of the tradition in the context in which it has lived until that moment. This break in the continuity of genuine tradition, which turns it into invented, new, and false tradition [Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:2], is considered by Glassie to be just an ordinary part of the life of tradition. It is not contrary to change, just to one kind of change: absolute change which interrupts everything, prevents creative adaptation from building up on what was done before, and which causes one tradition to be completely substituted with another [Glassie 1995:395]. Working with tradition is, therefore, always a creative process, inherent in which is a change of context. In other words, the recursive activity associated with revival is not to be regarded as an artificial and inauthentic activity; quite the contrary, it is a kind of tradition – the kind where people “plunder the past to confect new things” [Glassie 1995:405]. Another type of condition is continuous; “running quietly at the edge of thought and beneath common life, this is the inner dynamic of Braudel’s pattern of the long duration”; another, “noisy and conspicuous, is modernization” [Glassie 1995:405]. Today, as in the past, traditions focused on the maintenance of the illusion of stability, progress and revival intermingle, displace and compete with one another. For instance, modernization – progressive tradition where all that is individualistic, material and international is lauded – depends upon the simultaneity of continuity and it is countered by efforts to revitalize the collective, spiritual and local dimensions [Glassie 1995:405] of human existence.

As emphasized by Bithell and Hill, this view of tradition is what allowed for revivals to be investigated from the perspective of relevant disciplines. By contrast, differentiating between genuine and invented traditions tended to push revivals to the margins of academic interest [Bithell and Hill 2014:7–8]. Related to this are the different views of tradition, with Hobsbawm’s break in continuity marking the demise of genuine tradition, contrary to recontextualization [Bithell and Hill 2014:4, 15 ff.], so typical for tradition.

## Folklore as a counterweight to modernity

Throughout my research, I kept noticing a process of negotiation – sometimes more distinct, sometimes less – between what I have called the category of mod-

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ular among townfolk. Thus, due to a break in the continuity of the tradition which carried it in the past, the original and ancient *topoi* became part of invented tradition, with the carol changing status from being “old” to being “new” [Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:7].

ernity and the category of what my informants consider as folklore (and what I call folklore in my writings). More on how my informants' view of folklore is related to authenticity in the sense of genuineness, originality and ancientness can be gleaned from what they said that they found attractive about folklore:

For me folklore means pure authenticity, on account of it being time-honoured material of excellent quality.

Apart from ancientness and other connotations related to authenticity mentioned above, our amateur definitions refer to folklore being something inborn, given, coded in the human genotype:

The thing that fascinates me about folklore is that it has those roots, it's in you, in your genes. Actually, a long time ago, people would play and sing these very songs, so if you really stop and listen carefully, you suddenly realize all those grandfathers and great-grandfathers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers are singing inside you, and it's all in you.

As illustrated above, the participants' accounts often refer to **emotionality**, which is present in folklore music as an emotional charge pulling the audience to itself.<sup>12</sup> Many of the respondents cited their emotional ties to folklore as the primary (or even only) reason why they regularly participate in the event, the emotional power being what appealed to them most when they first developed a relationship to folklore. While for some respondents this seems a motive sufficient enough, others cited further reasons (which, however, have much in common with emotionality and emotional experience), such as the mood characteristic of folklore events. Others, still, said it was the nature of folk music and dance, difficult to specify, that attracted them to folklore:

I suppose you could say the music and the dances are like simple, but they are not; and if you're ready for it, you'll like it. If you open your heart to it, you'll get hooked.

Alternatively, emotionality can be seen as one of the features standing in opposition to modernity, the latter being often associated with emotional estrangement and lack of emotionality in general. In a model of two contrasting categories, emotionality would be directly linked to folklore:

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12 The terms emotionality and emotions are used as emic terms in the sense in which they appear in the participants' narratives which form part of their constructions of folklore.

This is not just an intellectual thing. There are emotions, too, you simply have to have internal ties to it.

For a student of the dance conservatoire, *emotions* and *soul* were what distinguished his compulsory folk dance lessons (which he saw as extremely useless and boring) from a performance by a folk group, of which his former girlfriend was a member:

The Slovak folklore I saw during that performance – now, that was something completely different. It was much more interesting than what I had known before. There was more to it than just the fact that it was faster. Something I can hardly explain, but definitely something we had not been shown at school. (...) we had no emotional ties to it, no soul, nor did our teachers have them, not in the least. (...) we felt we were just wasting time and had no clue why we should do it in the first place. (...) I just put my arms akimbo and did something and I didn't care a thing. It was only later that I found it really beautiful.

Emotionality, as a “symptom” of folklore, or folksiness, serves at the same time as their indicator and, very often, as evidence of folksiness and, thus, the authenticity of action. The connection between one's regional background and one's ability to experience emotions, as well as the participant's emotional ties to folklore, appeared in more than one account. Many of the participants explain their love of folklore in a primordialist manner, as dependent on one's native region. For instance, one respondent, who claims to have inherited her ties to South Moravia from her mother and grandmother who both came from Brno, was herself rather surprised to feel a tie to this very region despite not having spent her childhood there.

Well, it's kind of interesting. I didn't even grow up in that region, you know. But now that I think of it, I sort of inherited it. But I did so via Brno! But what is Brno? What kind of folklore is there in Brno anyway? Pretty nothing. But what works for me is that I just cross the Pálava Hills and I can feel I'm at home. I suddenly feel it, I just know.

Another respondent is a member of a Prague-based folklore group which performs folklore from the Uherské Hradiště region and was born in Prague. However, she does have emotional ties to the region whose dances she learns in the group, having acquired these ties through the group's activities:

If you ask me what my favourite region is, then definitely Uherské Hradiště and Uherský Brod, because that's where the founder of our

group comes from, and she simply has us dance these things. (...) so the town of Uherské Hradiště is what we love, I personally love it, it is a town we all love.

What is often discovered is the inborn quality of one's emotional ties to folklore among those coming from regions renowned for folklore heritage, and the concept of human emotiveness (as a character trait) as evidence of one's (Moravian) regional origin. In many instances, emotionality is put in explicit or implicit opposition to the qualities of *modernity*, defined by respondents as rationality (intellectuality), absence of emotions; in other words, emotionality is a counterbalance to modernity.

A status similar to that of emotionality is also attributed to the concept of **home**: a narrative often found in the accounts of those respondents who come from regions typically associated with folklore is that of **returning** to folklore or rediscovering it in their permanent home of today, Prague. In these cases, the return is associated with their participation in *Folklorní mejdlo*:

I come from the region of Haná, we have a local folk music band. (...) Soon after I moved to Prague, that was it with folklore for me, and so I'm glad I found this event... and the opportunity to remember my folklore experience.

During my first year in Prague, I knew no one involved in folklore, so it was kind of non-existent for me. Then I met a person who did folklore, organized a school of dance, and things started happening again.

I would go to see dulcimer bands; we would come and do a bit of dancing and that was it. In the morning, I woke up and it was over. Strangely enough, that only happened in Prague.

Many of the out-of-Prague respondents said their participation in *Folklorní mejdlo* brought to them a feeling of home, homecoming, which happens at least through folk music, dance and the mood created by folklore. Some even said that listening to dulcimer music makes them feel *they were with their own people*.

Home as a concept that informants associate with folklore is, once again, in opposition to modernity. By reminding themselves of their homes or by searching for a place that will remind them of home, participants construe their concept of home, delimited against the concept of their current place of residence. In other words, Prague is a venue of modernity, disassociated from what home and folklore represent.

*Home*, a place of authenticity and *origin*, does not have to correspond with the respondent's place of origin. One can transmit oneself into this imaginary home, at least temporarily, through folklore and folk music. As pointed out by Turino [2008:156] in his account of the folklore revival in America in the 1960s, the revival resulted from a widely felt longing for the possibility to perform music in order to gain access to places, a past life, other people, home.

Thirdly, folklore provides the opportunity to start and maintain relationships, serving as a **community** or **family**. Thanks to *Folklorní mejdlo*, a community of people sharing a passion for folklore – and, in a sense, folklore itself – becomes a space for meeting other people, sharing common interests and topics, and for starting new relationships. Those who live in this space do not see it as locally defined; on the contrary, it is created where *folklorists* meet (meaning people involved in folklore, actively or passively):

I read this notice that a dulcimer band was coming so I went like: I'm finally going to see a proper event in Prague. You know, I am no fan of ordinary discos. At last, this is something I can attend without feeling strange.

Apart from *music*, *dance* and *songs*, the participants' definitions of folklore contain expressions that explicitly include the social aspect of human action, such as: *get-together with friends*, *communality*, *sense of belonging* as well as *wine tasting sessions* and, naturally, a number of references to the social function of alcohol consumption.

Cultural cohorts [Turino 2008], defined by a common interest, can be found at those events (especially in the fluid musical soundscape of the capital) where members of the cohort get together, participate collectively in music and dance performances and are able to experience a sense of communality:

The good thing for me was that finally, we were going to meet people of the same blood so to speak. People who don't mind brass bands or folklore. People who will not go like: Oh my god, you're crazy! Or: come on, you're so young, do you really like this music?

Cultural cohorts, who define themselves as folkloristic, work not just during the event but also beforehand and afterwards: during music and dance rehearsals, during communication on social networks and the like. Events such as *Folklorní mejdlo* can be efficiently promoted within such cultural cohorts, as suggested by one of our respondents:

I saw my friends were going to participate so I said I would join the event too.

Typically, folklore festivals are where such imaginary communities become real – for a time [Turino 2008]:

When I was past my teen years, things suddenly started moving. My friend and I would go to festivals of our own accord. Since we've been to so many festivals, we've met lots of people, so wherever we go, we always have someone to go to. If you know that park in Strážnice, well, we walk through the park and get greeted like every five minutes and that's really nice. (...) We always start by meeting the musicians (laughs). You know, we're at this age when you just go to Moravia to see the players and dancers. Once we went to Strážnice and met these young players so this is how my friend, Kačka, met her boyfriend who's from Moravia.

The folklore group is a significant social environment for many of my respondents who belong to one; it is a *place they can return to and feel at home*. Furthermore, it is the starting point for building new relationships within the cultural cohort:

You know, sometimes I think it's incredible that I've been a dancer since I was four. I'm so happy though that I found folklore because it's my driving force. If I had nothing but school, I would survive, naturally, but this is something we can call our own. And now we're really enjoying it! (...) you meet someone somewhere and you spend two hours chatting to a stranger just because both of you are into folklore. You know, if you've known folklore for so long you just have to have a strong bond to it. It is really something that gets me fired up.

Another respondent refers to "his own" folklore group, calling it *his extended family*. Similarly, a respondent whose former girlfriend is member of a group likens that group to *family*:

They put in so much time because they are sort of a family, so they really want to be together. It's not like they had to do it but since they like each other, they enjoy being together and so they like getting together.

Some respondents see the *community* of people sharing a love of folklore and related values as an opposition to the phenomena which are associated with modernity and have negative connotations. This is the account of the co-owner of the venue called DUP39, describing what she felt as she first attended *Folklorní mejdlo*, held at the place that she runs:

The first time I saw it I was absolutely thrilled. I'm glad the people enjoy time together singing, communicating, having a pint of beer, but they do it in a sensible way, it's not that they would need to get totally boozed up if I may put it this way. And they have a wonderful time. There are lots of events held at this place, you know, student things where people get drunk and damage the place, whereas these folklore people no – they have never broken their promise. They have a great time, there is a dance school, they all dance, and if you cannot dance, they'll teach you... That's really amazing. I would never expect anything like that to be possible in Prague because I come from Prague.

The Prague folklore cohort (and the cohort of folklorists in a broader geographical sense) presents itself as a venue for natural entertainment, an emotionally interconnected environment, a place they can return to, a home, a family. These values are sometimes placed in opposition to the values of modernity. The emphasis on integrating the respondents into this community is a frequent and obvious topic in their narrative.

## Conclusion

...however, let me just say a few words about harmonies: they are really unusual, they're complicated, more complicated than pop music where there are four chords, you know the kind of primitive long chords. I think folklore comes from those days when people didn't need to verbalize everything. When they didn't feel they had to be rational about everything. And I think we don't have enough of it and people feel this absence and so that's why things like that continue to live because, you know, people realize it's very stimulating and that what you cannot say in words you can say through...those folklore scales.

Unusual harmonies, music that is more challenging than contemporary music and whose roots can be traced to a remote past, music that issues from a non-rationalized view of the world, music that is absent in today's world and this absence is strongly felt. These formulations, often found in the actors' narratives, contain implicit repetitive concepts that point to a single view of two opposing categories that I chose to call modernity [Turino 2008:156] and folklore. Both categories are connected to the concept of time, although each in a different way: folklore comes from the past and is firmly anchored in it whereas mod-

ernity ignores the past; going forward fast, modernity leaves the past behind as something anachronistic. Folklore music is understood by my informants to have potential to survive the pressures of modernity, thanks to all the layers that it contains. Folklore music can be a space for maintaining and starting relationships, and – being participatory – can build a community [Turino 2008:157], not just synchronically but also along the time axis – with generations of ancestors – and enables individuals to know what it feels like to identify with this community. It contains the emotiveness of living an experience, in opposition to today’s absence of emotions, providing the opportunity to return *home*, to the place of *origin* and authenticity.

Using the terms associated with Glassie’s two contradictory traditions – one noisy and conspicuous, called modernization, the other revolving around recursive activity, whereby people “plunder the past to confection new things” [Glassie 1995:405] – actors’ folklore actions can be identified as a manifestation of recursive tradition. This tradition is visible through efforts towards revitalizing the collective, spiritual and local dimensions of human existence [Glassie 1995:405], and cultural revival can be part of this tradition.

Glassie’s concept of tradition as a means of deriving the future from the past, whereby every use of tradition is always a creative process which brings with it a change of the context [Glassie 1995:409], corresponds to the concept of music revival as posited by Bithell and Hill. These authors believe music revival to be a medium for changing the *status quo* of the actors’ cultural environment [Bithell and Hill 2014:29], a change which occurs through a specific manipulation of the central concept. Music is used here as a tool for contemporizing folklore (as well as the folklore region and its authenticity, its past or values inherent in *traditional* rural lifestyle) in a place which is normally considered as lacking in folklore. In their cultural environments framed by the category of modernity, actors want to produce a counterweight to what Glassie calls modernization and Bithell and Hill the present [Bithell and Hill 2014:4]. The process of producing this counterweight involves specific manipulation with the central concept – folklore.

Bithell and Hill maintain that in order for the actors who appropriate the given culture to be viewed as legitimate bearers of that culture they have to be granted legitimacy [Bithell and Hill 2014:4]. Some actors who define themselves as folklorists often discuss informally issues in ethnology and ethnography, with research findings presented in ethnological publications being a frequent topic of heated debate. Therefore, I would have expected my respondents to make references to specialized works dealing with folklore. In narratives, however, specialists with an academic background are rarely attributed legitimacy. Many of the interviews suggest that actors attribute a substantial amount of legitim-

acy to folklorists: leaders of ensembles, organizers of folk events and other persons. Negotiating social capital in order to grant legitimacy occurs through references to the folklore region (legitimacy is granted primarily to actors born in the given folklore region, but also those with distant family ties, those who stay often enough in the region as well as those with less direct ties to it), done either through narrative or music performance.

There is substantial selectivity in what musical body to employ (almost always a dulcimer band) and what repertoire to play, with songs divided into authentic (either through their musical form, dialect used, the ability of the message to communicate or the simplicity of the text or other features) and less authentic, which can be looked down upon. This division is only typical for some of the participants or, more precisely, each participant has a different view of the dividing line between the two groups of songs.

Transformation of musical pieces is rare. On the contrary, actors do their best to perform the songs and dances the way they are known and should any of the participants make any major shifts (change of melody or lyrics), the inaccuracy is pointed out by the others or reflected in some other way.

What makes *Folklorní mejdlo* attractive for its actors is the participatory nature of the music making. It is their experience of active participation, or *flow*, that makes them take part in the event again and again. However, given the wide repertory of regions (reflecting the diversity of folklore regions that the participants claim allegiance to), participation may not be easy.

The actors of the folklore revival *Mejdlo* do not intend (despite the impression made by the promotion campaign) to create a different, new or modern type of folklore. The folklore found at the *Mejdlo* is, in fact, very similar to what can be found at many folklore events of this type held in Moravia, Slovakia and Bohemia; it can thus be called familiar and non-innovative. What is crucial is the concept of an alternative stream which is in opposition to modernity and enables participants to briefly experience the categories of folklore, and the music which – through participation – makes these experiences collective and consequently more real. For “these events are a time out of normal everyday time. (...) Most humans have a need to deeply connect with others; participatory music and dance events are an age-old and humanly universal way to realize this experience (...). Even in cultural formations where such opportunities are not readily available, some people will create them or seek them out” [Turino 2008:188]. In my study, I intended to explain the construction of such opportunities at a place where there is felt to be a marked absence of them, to explore what form these opportunities have, what their process is and how their actors approach the most frequently used categories and concepts.



Foto František Vlček

*Figure 1*

*Folklore Party in full swing; pictured at the front are two members of the band.  
Author © František Vlček.*



Foto © 2016 František Vlček

*Figure 2*

*A member of a folklore ensemble in charge of a folk dance lesson under one of the so-called  
“dance schools”; pictured at the back is the band. Author © František Vlček.*

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# Liberating Tradition: Gender Politics in Late Twentieth Century English Revivalist Morris Dancing

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*Abstract:*

This article focuses on controversial challenges to the performance of an iconic English traditional dance form during the second wave of the English Folk Revival movement in the late twentieth century. The display dance known as ‘the Morris’ had primarily been regarded as an exclusively male custom. During the early 1970s, women claimed the right to perform morris dancing in public but met with a mixed reception within the folk revival movement. Conservative individuals and institutions such as the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) and the all-male national association of revivalist morris clubs, known as the Morris Ring, queried the legitimacy of their actions. Much of the debate centred on claims to historical authenticity and notions of tradition in a context of increased revivalist research and performance.

This article outlines the beginnings of women’s morris and analyses the rationales advanced both for and against female public participation in the dance. Reference is made to changing opportunities for women in English society post World War Two and to the background of the women’s liberation movement. Issues of ‘appropriate’ repertoire and movement are raised in relation to lingering essentialist ideas of dance and gender in the 1970s and 1980s. The article concludes by noting the constitutional change finally made by the Morris Ring in 2018 to acknowledge women as traditional dancers of ‘the Morris.’

*Keywords:*

women, morris, English, tradition, revival, embodied gender

## Introduction

For much of the twentieth century, the traditional group dance known as morris dancing or ‘the Morris’ was regarded as an exclusively male activity. In the 1970s, this male dominance was challenged by the emergence of teams of female morris dancers whose regular performances have subsequently become an unquestionable part of the English folk revival scene. In the beginning, however, the right of women to perform morris dancing in public was by no means accepted by everyone in the folk movement and many new female teams met with opposition. Protestors, mostly male morris dancers, appealed to the past to support their case, notably to the Morris’s supposed originary status as an ancient male fertility rite and to supposed essential differences between male and female dancing.

This article surveys the rise and reception of women’s morris in England in relation to the legitimating concept of ‘tradition’ within the English folk revival-

al and to long-standing cultural attitudes towards embodied gender and performance during a time of rapid social change. In order to appreciate the radical challenge of women's morris in the 1970s, it is necessary to contextualise revivalist morris dancing generally, albeit briefly, in relation to the two major folk revivals evident in twentieth-century England: initially, to the dominant institutions and ideology of the Edwardian (or first) national folk revival of the century's early decades, and then to the post-World War Two movement known as the second folk revival, of which women's morris was a later but important constituent.

## Setting the scene

In contrast to most central and eastern European folk dance revivals, the twentieth-century English folk dance movement was fundamentally an amateur movement with no state or local government funding or direction. When morris dancing came to the notice of revivalist folk collectors at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it existed in regional variants and was customarily performed by men. Organised in teams, they danced on specific calendar occasions in special costume, mostly in their own village or locality. Cecil Sharp (1859-1924) whose later life was dedicated to the retrieval, conceptualisation and revival of so-named English folk dances, focused for his purposes of a national revival on the specific regional morris form that came to be known as Cotswold Morris or later as South Midlands Morris.<sup>1</sup> Cotswold morris dancers, typically six in a team, dressed mostly in white trousers and shirts, with pads of bells tied below their knees. Waving handkerchiefs in each hand and/or clashing sticks, the men were ranged in two files and performed to the accompaniment of a pipe and tabor, fiddle (violin), concertina or melodeon [Chandler 1993]. By the mid twentieth-century, this regional Cotswold style had been disseminated across much of the country as a result of the institutionalisation of the first folk dance revival.

Several first revivalist morris teams were founded in association with members of the English Folk Dance Society which was established in London in 1911 by Sharp and his followers [Schofield 1986]. Sharp became the most highly regarded expert on English folk dancing, a status secured in no little part by his extensive collection, interpretation and publication of dances that he considered to be rural rituals that had survived into the modern age from a prehistoric pagan and indigenous past.<sup>2</sup> There was a ready audience among middle-

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1 Judge [2002]; for further biographical information on Sharp see Karpeles [1967] and Heaney [2004].

2 For critiques of this interpretation see, for example, Buckland [1982] and Forrest [2000:3–27].

class revivalists for such evolutionist interpretations and, following his death in 1924, Sharp's scholarship went largely unchallenged: the subjects of folklore and dance were not deemed worthy of academic attention within English universities. Embraced by amateur folk song and dance enthusiasts, Sharp's interpretation of the origins and nature of morris dancing became tantamount to dogma, especially for his disciples in the English Folk Dance and Song Society. His ideas were also enshrined in a later Morris-dedicated institution called The Morris Ring which operated alongside the Society in canonising Sharp's legacy. Formed in 1934, the Ring was an association of overwhelmingly revivalist morris teams, clubs or sides that was dedicated to preserving 'the Morris' [Abson 1984] and which developed its own internal traditions.<sup>3</sup> As the bastion of Sharp's ideology on 'the Morris', the Ring's unwavering party line was that traditional morris dancing was unequivocally a male fertility ritual. In their beginnings, the majority of Ring sides had close associations with homosocial institutions of the period such as universities, boys' schools, and the scouting movement [The Morris Ring 1949]. Such gendered distinction was reflected in the titles of founder member teams of the Morris Ring such as Thaxted Morris Men and Cambridge Morris Men.

Following the Second World War, the English folk revival began to develop new directions, notably in the formation of folk song clubs, many of which were located in towns and universities [Mackinnon 1993; Brocken 2003]. Club members often constituted the beneficiaries of the 1944 Education Act which had brought university education to a wider demographic than before the War. As a consequence, many more lower-middle and upper-working class young people became exposed to revivalist folk song and dance in various extra-curricular university societies. By the 1960s and 1970s, interest in revival folk performance had extended to the lives and traditional cultural activities of the working people with the result that a number of folk clubs, as well as university-based folk dance societies, spawned new morris teams. The English Folk Dance and Song Society also played a vital role in widening participation in social folk dance under the leadership (1924–1961) of its director Douglas Kennedy (1893–1988) an ardent disciple of Sharp. Annual folk festivals, initially organised by the Society, expanded in popularity, the most significant for the development of the revival being that held in Sidmouth, Devon in south-west England [Schofield 2004]. Here, from the 1960s, instruction in folk dance, including morris (often under the label of 'ritual dance') workshops taught by members of the Morris Ring, were open to beginners, as well as to experienced morris men seeking to improve their technique or to learn new repertoire from Morris Ring teachers. By

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3 See Boyes [1993:160] and, for a more nuanced appraisal, see Heathman [2016].

the 1970s, these festival workshops had become fertile ground to test fresh interpretations of Sharp's collected material. A new generation, well-educated and eager to assume the mantle as traditional English heritage bearers, was ready to question the established authority of the first revival and to seek new and distinctive manifestations of English folk culture. Prominent in this fresh wave of interest in the Morris was Roy Dommett (1933–2015), a member of the Morris Ring and respected morris instructor. Together with husband and wife folk dancers Tubby (Eric) Reynolds (ob. 2011) and Betty Reynolds (1922–2010), Dommett was instrumental in establishing women's morris.<sup>4</sup>

## The beginnings of women's morris

In August 1971, several women, in spite of being ticket-holders, were denied entry to the advertised beginners' ritual dance workshop at Sidmouth Folk Festival. Exclusion was purely on the grounds that they were the wrong sex. Sympathetic to their desire to learn morris dancing and no doubt alert to their legal claims of rightful access, Dommett extemporised a workshop in which he taught a ritual dance repertoire that might have been construed as appropriate for women. Attending this workshop was Betty Reynolds who since the late 1960s, together with her husband, had run the folk dance club at the University of Bath in Somerset.<sup>5</sup> Each week during the university term, young men met to practice as Bath City Morris Men under the instruction of Tubby, before being joined by their wives and girlfriends, now in growing numbers in higher education [Dyhouse 2001] to engage in social folk dancing. In the autumn of 1971, to occupy the time as the young women waited for the men to finish and to meet the women's desire to dance morris themselves, Betty Reynolds instructed them in dances that she had brought back in notated and embodied form from Dommett's workshop. These dances were from the village of White Ladies Aston in

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4 For illustrative evaluations of their work see Bacon [2016 plus other memories published alongside] on Dommett; Parker and Wearing [2011] on Betty Reynolds; and <https://www.morrisfed.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/MM-30-2.pdf> (2018 October 21) on Tubby Reynolds. A collection of Dommett's influential articles for women morris dancers can be found at <https://www.morrisfed.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Roy-Dommett-and-Morris-Matters-Beth-Neill.pdf> (2018 October 21).

5 Details of this early history are principally drawn from *Morris Matters* a magazine focused on women's morris dancing, back copies of which are available at <https://www.morrisfed.org.uk/resources/morris-matters/> (2018 October 21) and my own memories as a researcher of the North-West morris style during the 1970s and 1980s. I was also, during the 1990s, a Cotswold-style morris dancer with Jackstraws Morris, a women's team based on the border of the southern counties of Surrey and Sussex.

the county of Worcestershire (on the border between England and Wales) and the town of Runcorn, Cheshire in north-west England. At that time, White Ladies Aston (for revivalists, dances are designated by their location of collection) was not performed by any Morris Ring team and Runcorn, when collected, had been performed by girls. By the following summer, the young women had formed themselves into a morris team ready for public performances— Bath City Women’s Morris Side - to complement that of the men. The initial impetus was for women to be able to dance Cotswold Morris in public on an equal footing with the men.

Further teams swiftly began to appear in the early 1970s largely as a result of the women’s enthusiasm for and joy in performing morris, their facility to draw upon an established network of personal connections throughout the folk scene, and the speedy organization of specially arranged workshops to facilitate access to technique and repertoire. These included what would become long-standing and influential teams such as England’s Glory (1972) based in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, New Espérance Morris in London (1973), Windsor Morris in Berkshire (1974) and, further afield, Cardiff Ladies in Wales (1973). Ideas to form a national association for this rapid acceleration in new women’s sides took shape in 1975 with the establishment of the Women’s Morris Federation. In this neotraditionalist climate, in which new male morris teams were also emerging, appeals to the past and to Sharp’s interpretation of what constituted genuine morris dancing became part of a national revivalist discourse of authentication.

## Changing concepts of tradition and gendered authenticities

For the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) and the Ring, the concept of tradition was understood as abiding by the legacy of Sharp as curated through their own institutions. This vein of thought defined tradition as unchanging and therefore fixed to the idea of maintaining morris dancing in its guise of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: that is, to the time when Sharp and his immediate disciples collected dances from oral memory and from contemporary practice. Sharp’s definition of ‘authentic’ English ritual dance included criteria of gender and place: to be counted as traditional, the ‘Morris’ should be performed by men and associated with one, preferably rural, settlement. Any deviation, according to Sharp and his followers, signalled degeneration of ‘the tradition’ [Buckland 1982].

In the national policy of the EFDSS, Kennedy [1944:13] had highlighted the importance of returning to ‘the Tradition’ stating that when

this war ends, the E.F.D.S [*sic*] will have the chance to state its second revival... Ideally, the Society should aim at reviving each Morris tradition in the locality where it belongs.

This initiative, however, was to find its fullest expression outside of the Society and indeed of the Ring.<sup>6</sup> From the late 1960s and 1970s, there was great interest in rediscovering folk repertoire in hitherto under-investigated parts of the country and in subjecting existing as well as new knowledge to scrutiny. Novel forms of ‘ritual’ dance and fresh interpretations of existing folk repertoire were re-enacted. Leading second revivalists often contested received interpretations of the folk dance canon as filtered through the major revivalist organisations, preferring to go back to primary sources wherever possible. The result of this, as cultural historian Georgina Boyes [1993:241] astutely observes, was that

[f]or all its apparent innovation and variety, the Revival [*second*] was hidebound by historical theory. Determinedly reproducing a policy of authenticity, it became a more effective vehicle for Sharp’s views than the English Folk Dance Society of the 1920s.

Citation of tradition as a yardstick by which to judge new dance teams became a critical feature among fervent neotraditionalists of the second revival. For many new Morris dancers of this movement, intertwined claims of authenticity and historical accuracy permitted ‘the appropriating group to be perceived as legitimate culture-bearers’ [Bithell and Hill 2014:20] according them status within the folk scene. For many leading female Morris dancers invocation of the past was especially important: historical precedence was vital to the act of legitimization.

There were essentially two major modes of calling upon the past. One was to cite the instrumental role that women had played as performers and teachers of morris dancing during the first English folk revival of the early twentieth century. This route pointed to Sharp’s reliance upon and, by implication, approval of women dancing Morris in establishing the national revival. The other mode was to cite examples of pre-revival female morris dancers, a strategy that often necessitated new historical research. These arguments and processes were often intertwined in support of second revival initiatives.

The espousal and fresh valorization of women’s contribution to the initial revival centred initially on the pioneering work of social activist Mary Neal (1860-1944) whose place in English folk dance historiography had practically been

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6 It should be noted that Kennedy led both institutions during this period. See discussion in Boyes [1993:196–198]. For discussion of how out of touch the Society was with the second revival see Brocken [2003:47–49].

erased.<sup>7</sup> Neal's philanthropic zeal to help impoverished working-class girls in London during the late 1890s and her enthusiasm for reviving English folk dance had resulted in the establishment of the first revival performance of morris dancers in 1905 [Judge 1989]. These dancers - all female - came from the *Espérance* Club that Neal had co-founded in 1897 in order to experiment with drama and dancing in ameliorating the lives of under-privileged young women [Buckland 2014; Heathman 2016]. Taught directly by rural male workers who had travelled to London at Neal's invitation, these young women quickly became demonstrators and teachers throughout England, as middle-class local event organisers sought to enhance their village and school fetes, street carnivals and festivals with the newly discovered 'ancient English folk dances'.

To begin with, Sharp and Neal combined forces to bring about the nationwide revival of England's folk dances. As a result of Neal's enthusiastic and very public initiative, the original face of morris dancing in the pre-World War One revival was decidedly female. This factor was strengthened when in 1909 Sharp succeeded in gaining recognition of English folk dance as part of the national educational curriculum, delivered to children by a teaching profession that was predominantly female [Gammon 2008]. The first folk dance revival depended upon women for its success not only because of their dominance within the state schools but also because dancing in the early twentieth century in Britain was viewed as a particularly female aptitude and practice [Buckland 2011]. Sharp himself, although stating that the morris was a man's dance [1912:42] was publicly beholden to women for success. His later attempt at an all-male demonstration team was tragically curtailed by the war and from the 1920s there were concerted efforts by male dancers within the revival to redefine morris as an exclusively male activity.

Although Sharp died comparatively early in 1924, his systematic institutionalisation of the folk revival through strategies of publication, national competition, state education and establishment of a well-patronised national society guaranteed his legacy. Neal, on the other hand, following a very public argument with Sharp over the nature and mode of transmission of Morris dancing [see Judge 1989:555–574] had eventually moved on to other interests. Her essential contribution to the first revival fell from collective memory and by the mid-twentieth century, she was no longer recalled as a worthy and equal founder of the first national English morris revival.

This situation was to change in the revisionist studies of the 1970s and 1980s when scholar-revivalists challenged Sharp's hagiographical status. In 1989, al-

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7 See, for example, absence of and limited reference to Neal in Kennedy [1950; 1964] and discussion in Boyes [1993:95–96].

though by no means prompted by a wish to validate the emergent women's morris movement, social historian and male morris dancer Roy Judge published his painstaking and well-balanced detective work on Neal in *Folk Music Journal*, the research periodical of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. Focusing on primary sources to explore the relationship and respective legacies of Sharp and Neal, Judge's scholarly argument sealed the undisputed significance of Neal as co-founder of the first revival.

As Judge observed [1989:545] Neal's approach to morris dancing which privileged interpersonal transmission, the joy of dancing and eschewal of written instructions was of undoubted appeal to the contemporary dancer of the 1970s and 1980s. In revolt against the institutional strictures of the Morris Ring and the English Folk Dance and Song Society, many folk enthusiasts of a post-World War Two generation favoured an approach that took them, whether in reality or fantasy, to a closer connection with the so-called working-class tradition bearers of the past and, wherever possible, to those of the present. Visits to watch traditional dancers and customs peaked during this period. Rejecting received opinion and authority, leading second revivalist dancers sought to recreate their own interpretation of the past and, for some women, a historical female precursor such as Neal, who promoted a kinetic transmission of folk dances in which the spirit of the dance, rather than the letter of notation, was both inspirational and confirmatory of their own desires. That Neal had also been a member of the militant Women's Social and Political Union (she took the minutes at the inaugural meeting in 1903)<sup>8</sup> accorded with the equality demands of the later twentieth-century expression of the women's liberation movement. This explicit connection between the campaign for female equality earlier in the century and with Neal's female revivalist morris dancers is enshrined in the choice of name for a London-based women's morris team founded in 1973: the New Espérance Morris.<sup>9</sup>

Whereas female revivalist Morris teams celebrated their connections with the women of the first revival, their male counterparts, a number of whom owed their teams' existence to contributions from female tuition<sup>10</sup> tended not to proclaim such facts. The party line of many in the Morris Ring was that women's support during the first revival was only necessary in order to keep the tradition of morris alive in times when men available to dance were in short supply.

Rather than citing first revivalist practice, however, an arguably stronger claim to be advanced for women's right to be Morris dancers was to cite examples from even earlier, invoking the 'real' tradition. Sharing historical citations within the

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8 For more detail on Neal's life see the website Mary Neal: an untold story, <http://www.maryneal.org/chapter/1895-1905/1003/> (2018 October 21).

9 See the team's website: <https://newesperance.wordpress.com/history/> (2018 October 21)

10 See, for example, Bathampton, taught by Charlotte Oakey and Cambridge by Alice Kerley.

folk revival, often through correspondence or in short articles in folk magazines, helped morris women and their sympathisers to bolster a sense of validity for their activity. There were pre-twentieth century sources for women and morris, some even dating back to the sixteenth century. Their brevity and scattered nature, however, brought difficulties of interpretation, especially when compared with familiar manifestations of morris dancing. Some sources, albeit not typical, spoke of men and women dancing together as morris.

For new revival teams unable to field a single-sex morris team, or preferring to dance with their opposite gender partners in public displays, these historical references to mixed gender teams boosted their own claims to legitimacy. Nonetheless, there was a considerable lobby of revivalists opposed to mixed teams, arguments against this apparently new constitution coming from both men and women. It would appear that Sharp's crucial distinction between ritual dance and social dance was being rigidly adhered to - mixed dancing betokened the social realm of participatory dancing whereas in Sharp's schema, single-sex dancing was more aligned to ritual purposes [Sharp 1912:43]. Thus, as modern female morris dancer Sally Wearing [2018:269] recalls, the discovery of an all-female performance of morris dancing in 1912 from the village of Ilmington, in Warwickshire, a morris dance tradition that Sharp himself had collected and published, caused

[w]omen's teams [*to fall*] on this information with glee – we were delighted to have a Cotswold morris tradition that women had performed in public in the past.

Such evidence was, however, comparatively rare and even this example was not without dispute, given Ilmington's participation in a more localized late nineteenth-century revival. The hunt for a 'true' tradition of women's morris continued.

Where the greatest number of historical examples could be found was in the then relatively under-investigated north-west of England. Sharp and fellow collectors had tended to discount the morris dancing of this region as degenerate even though, in fact, there was a flourishing practice in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries [Buckland 1991]. Contrary to Sharp's principles of 'folk-worthiness' and traditionality, north-west morris dancing in his lifetime was often performed by young women or children; it could be found in urban industrial settings, and it was often performed in organised competition rather than in the desired exclusive ritual context of an annual village festival. Largely ignored by the folk revival for much of the twentieth century, north-west morris dancing had increasingly been performed only by girls from the 1920s onwards

and in the context of carnival competitions [Wright 2017]. In the 1950s and 1960s, this ‘Carnival’ morris increasingly came to the attention of second revival morris practitioner-collectors as a new source of repertoire and also as a means of demonstrating pride in local regional culture. Manchester Morris Men, the revival men’s team established in 1930, had already begun to reinterpret manuscript material and to collect new notations from the north-west area to add local morris dances to their existing repertoire of Cotswold dances. As two of these dancers Daniel Howison and Bernard Bentley wrote in 1960 [45–46], many of the so-called carnival morris dancers had been taught by pre-World War One male morris dancers who had no contact with the national folk revival. Many of these dances had evolved in accordance with the aesthetics of carnival competitions. Notwithstanding, here was a new rich vein of ‘tradition’ to be uncovered, the earliest forms of which might be reclaimed by second revivalists as ‘authentic’ folk repertoire. Following Morris Ring tenets of traditionality, men could recover what was deemed to be rightfully theirs on the grounds of gender and locality - the girls and children had merely curated ‘the tradition’ for a time when adult males could regain their traditional ownership of the dance.

But here too were rich pickings for aspirant morris women who could now point to examples of established continuities of female morris dancing outside of the folk scene. Unlike the young girls of the Carnival competitions, these were principally adults, often with family, and with links or interests in the folk revival movement. Undertaking fresh research in the area, new teams such as Poynton Jemmers (1975), Fiddlers Fancy (1979) both of them in the county of Cheshire, and Rivington Morris (1977) in the county of Lancashire became leaders in the field, gaining approval from many male dancers on account of their repertoire being both highly local and collected from former dancers who were female.<sup>11</sup>

For newcomer women’s sides outside the region, this fresh repertoire not only made for an attractive stylistic alternative to Cotswold morris but also potentially provided them with dances which, judged solely by the criterion of gender, were theirs to perform.. A number of revivalist north-west morris dancers (men’s teams included) resident in the region took umbrage at their local dances becoming national property; aside from ideological beliefs, this antagonism was not surprising given the often considerable investment in researching and re-enacting material and which constituted their claim to be uniquely legitimate culture bearers. It was impossible to police the copying and transmission of dances, however, and many newly performed dances soon became reconstituted as national not local heritage.

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11 See <http://www.poyntonjemmers.net/>; <https://fiddlersfancy.weebly.com/history.html>; <http://www.rivingtonmorris.org.uk/> (2018 October 21).

During the 1970s, other concerns to distinguish traditional from revival practice came to the fore. It was not just a question of historical precedence and regional repertoire but also issues of aesthetics and standards of public performance. Inevitably these could not easily be separated from gender.

## Essentialising gendered movement

Observations on dance technique and women's morris from the 1970s and 1980s are revelatory of deep-seated Eurocentric attitudes towards the moving female body on display. Criticism, predominantly but not exclusively from men, often highlighted physiological differences between the sexes. According to this argument, women were not biologically suited to performing athletic dances, such as the morris, which required strength and stamina.

These arguments, as well as referencing Sharpian ideology on the morris, were redolent of nineteenth-century attitudes towards women and physical activity on the grounds of supposed corporeal incapacity in tandem with binary cultural expectations of gendered movement. According to this lingering yet still widely-held view in late twentieth-century Britain, men were biologically and culturally built to display their masculinity through strength and vigour of movement. Women, on the other hand, perceived as the physically weaker sex, were deemed unable to match this masculine power. The demonstration of a graceful style and a more circumscribed range of movement in terms of energy, directness, height of jump and spatial kinesphere were considered not only more socially appropriate for women but also essentially and 'naturally' feminine.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed some censure combined history with biology: one ex-dancer from Green-sleeves Morris Men, for example, argued that the morris 'was evolved by many generations of countrymen wearing boots, earning a living by heavy work on the land or in the forge' [Masters:1974]. Explicitly eschewing reason in his argument, this morris man appealed to taste and feeling in his claim for male-only morris, concluding that the dance is 'an intrinsically masculine activity by the mere fact of its origin.' His view was shared by a female contributor to the debate:

The Morris has always been a man's dance, developed by, for and through men's bodies, for an essentially masculine ritual.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, morris women, themselves, in the initial days of the movement concurred with such attitudes. Wearing [2018] in her analysis of dances popular

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12 See discussion in Buckland [2011, chapters 9 and 12].

13 Celia Smith [1974]; see too Duke [1979] and subsequent debate about the role of women in morris in the correspondence pages in *English dance and song*, 41 (2): 20, 41 (3): 19, 42 (2), 20: the following year 1980, 42(3): 21; in 1981, 43 (1): 20-21; 4 (2): 20 and 43 (4):24.

among initial women's morris teams, notes the restrictions of much of the repertoire: north-west morris; Cotswold morris traditions with some precedence of earlier female performance, such as that of Ilmington as noted above, or dance traditions that were at least not as physically demanding nor currently in performance by men, such as Wheatley in Oxfordshire), and the genre of garland dances, which historically involved females. These latter dances were often discounted for performance by revivalist morris men largely because of their comparative simplicity (many had been performed by children) and a cultural association of females with flowers. There was a strong belief that women should find a distinctive gendered traditional form, separate from that of the men. 'It is a great pity that we seem not to have any essentially female dances to complement the obviously Male morris' lamented one commentator (George Smith, 1974) who clearly regarded women as lesser beings whose pale imitations of men's dancing should be reserved for private showings. Testimony of this kind not only points to deep-seated prejudice against women but also to a latent fear that the men's fight to be taken seriously as male amateur dancers in public exhibition might be compromised. Kennedy [1944] himself had pointed to this danger. The long-established cultural association of dance with women undoubtedly threatened to raise charges of effeminacy from the general public against men dancing at a time when homosexuality had only recently been legalized (1967). Such overt anxieties were rarely voiced in the public debate.

One female dancer looked forwards to the time when women 'instead of 'mimicking' men, will dance as women, who are proud to be women, not ashamed' [Jankowska 1980:35]. This meant abstinence from certain steps and movements, as had been recommended by Sharp [1912]. The galley, for example, - a step from the Cotswold morris vocabulary in which the gesturing leg is raised away from the body at hip height to then draw an inwards circle in the air from the knee down - was self-censored. Similar athletic steps such as hooks, leapfrogs and split jumps were thought ungainly and thus unladylike.

But even this avoidance of movements perceived to be 'masculine' did not satisfy all critics. In some eyes, the female body itself was deemed problematic for the correct execution of morris dancing. As one male morris dancer [Dunsmore 1974] rather coyly expressed it:

Men have their weight distributed differently from women...[*women's morris*] looks different from what I call the Morris.

Dommett and Reynolds [1979] although great supporters of women's morris, were more forthright in what they evidently considered to be a constructive critique of women's morris. In performing stick clashing, they claimed that, un-

like the free and vigorous actions of men, ‘women appear to move in a way protective to their breasts’ [p. 23]. More indicative of their own distinctly male response to women’s morris was their opinion [p. 23] that

we do not believe anyone can come up with a good aesthetic reason why breasts should fly around in the Morris. Wobbly fat is distracting wherever it is on the body.

These patronizing and offensive comments played into women’s fears of how they looked.<sup>14</sup> Finding an appropriate costume in which to perform already exercised women’s teams who acutely conscious of their body images aimed to avoid the traditional whites of Cotswold Morris (believed to be a more fattening look as well as difficult to keep clean), trousers which might draw attention to their bottoms, and skirts which might fly up when dancing to reveal underwear.

Dommett and Reynolds suggested tailored outfits to keep the movement of ‘fat’ restricted when moving and also advised diet and exercise to maintain a slim physique. Their recognition that some women’s sides already managed “to look gorgeous” only served to underline the sexism masquerading as aesthetic counsel. Employing pseudonyms based on the men’s names, two female dancers [Grommett and Drynosel 1980] retaliated in a spoof letter, pointing out that ‘wobbly fat’ was not an ‘exclusively female’ problem - (Dommett himself, although not singled out here, carried considerable weight as did many male dancers who went without public criticism) - and that many morris men needed advice on their choice of underwear for dancing. The letter drew attention to the unequal criteria clearly being exercised for what was judged to be acceptable as ‘the morris body’, the physiques of women typically coming under greater critical scrutiny. During the 1970s, the women’s liberation movement was very much in the press, inviting ridicule from the more conservative in society who were loath to change the gendered *status quo* and thereby lose power.<sup>15</sup> One male dancer [Wilson 1978:14] queried the women’s integrity of motivation with respect to maintaining the tradition:

are the girls really trying to maintain tradition or are they just trying to show that they are as good as the men?

He went on to suggest that a skewed understanding of the women’s liberation movement lay behind their efforts to compete against men in the Morris. In his opinion, the ritual of morris lay beyond quotidian demands for equality. The young university-educated women of the 1970s, however, no longer were

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14 See Bordo [1993] and Sayers [1993] on this pervasive cultural problem.

15 For an overview see Binard [2017].



*Figure 1*  
*Windsor Morris. This team soon afterwards adopted trousers as their standard costume.*  
*Women's Morris Federation's Day of Dance, 22 October 1977. Photograph by courtesy*  
*of The Morris Federation*

content to remain at home undertaking supportive household chores looking after the children while their morris menfolk regularly disappeared on men-only weekends away during the summer months on morris tours which often centred on the pub and drinking beer [see Harrison 1974]. As dancer Jenny Joyce [1978:12–13] observed:

It is surely no coincidence that women's morris should reappear in the 1970s at the time of changing attitudes towards women. After all, the morris has been there for the dancing all century – it's women who have changed.

## Liberating tradition

During the closing decades of the twentieth century, the number of studies which interrogated and attempted to dislodge long-held beliefs on the nature of tradition expanded, both as a result of investigations carried out by amateur scholar-practitioners and by academics trained in disciplines such as folklore studies, ethnomusicology, ethnochoreology and history.<sup>16</sup> This circulating discourse within the second folk revival, alongside more general changes in gender expectations and in equality laws in British society, soon brought about a more liberal attitude towards women performing 'the Morris' in public. Wider dissemination of new ideas by the 1980s on the concept of tradition, pointing to processes of change and fluidity, gained ascendancy and were often dovetailed with creative and innovative forces within the folk scene.<sup>17</sup> Even the EFDSS in its role as the 'guardian of tradition' had issued a statement in 1978 accepting of women's morris and acknowledging that tradition "lives and changes."<sup>18</sup> As revival morris teams began to celebrate decades of existence, confidence in their own sense of traditionality grew, as did a willingness to be less enslaved to absolute dicta of the past.<sup>19</sup>

Recognition of enjoyment of dancing, the sociability of belonging to a team and the opportunity to travel nationally to meet other like-minded enthusiasts came to gain a higher profile. For many rank and file dancers, strict adherence to tradition as defined by Sharp and his followers was not important. '[T]he joy of dancing and performing comes first' insisted Sally Wearing [1978:25]. Even-

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16 See Buckland [1993] on the expansion in British studies in folklore.

17 Discussion of this phenomenon is beyond the scope of this essay.

18 Cited in *Morris matters* 1 (3):3.

19 See, for example, the conference proceedings of the Contemporary Morris and Sword Dancing Conference of 1988, University of Sheffield, published in *Lore & Language* 6 (2) by The Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, University of Sheffield in 1987 [sic].

tually, the issue of gender came to occupy a less contentious role as the sight of women's morris teams on English streets became increasingly familiar.

By 1980, the Women's Morris Federation (WMF) had relaxed its stand on only admitting women dancers and a year later agreed to accept mixed morris teams, even though the latter had already been catered for in the newly instituted organisation of Open Morris (1979). In 1982, the WMF became open to all morris teams and changed its title simply to the Morris Federation. This development was regarded with trepidation by members of the Morris Ring who continued to hold out against women joining their association. This prohibition often caused particular problems for male teams when their only available musician was female. The Morris Ring held fast to its exclusionist policy even though the world was changing around them. As late as 2011 the Ring was "finally forced by the threat of legal challenges under the Equalities Act to change its constitution to allow women to join".<sup>20</sup>

Even then, this amendment only enabled women to join as musicians or in other organizational roles, not as morris dancers. Whereas the Morris Federation and Open Morris have opened their doors to all genders for almost four decades, the Morris Ring did not remove the obstacle of gender from its constitution until March 2018.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the Ring's fear that the Morris would become dominated by women had been realized: the Morris Census of 2017<sup>22</sup> revealed that gender equality in numbers had not only been achieved but was on an upwards trajectory. Tradition and women, as far as English morris dancing was concerned, had finally been liberated.

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20 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/06/morris-dancing-undergoing-radical-change-with-influx-of-women/>

21 <https://themorrisring.org/>.

22 <https://morriscensus.weebly.com/gender.html>

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# A Neo-Traditional Post-Folklore Revival Movement?<sup>1</sup> The Case of Greece through the Lens of a Folk Dance Club on the Ionian Island of Lefkada

*Maria I. Koutsouba*

*Abstract:*

The folklore revival movement in Europe has been variously studied mainly in the former communist countries, but less so in countries such as Greece where scholarly discussion on its possible transformation over time is very limited. My particular aim in this chapter is to study the transformation of the folklore revival movement in Greece, through the lens of a folk dance club on the Ionian island of Lefkada.

In spite of its relatively small size and population, Lefkada has a large number of dance clubs, and the distinction of holding the oldest International Folk Dance Festival in Greece since 1962. Both factors are indicative of the extensive presence of the folklore revival movement on the island. This chapter examines the dance performances of 'Apollo of Karya', the island's first dance club which is still operative today, in two examples of folklore festivals over a period of twenty years. The transformation that takes place is suggested to be indicative of the way the folklore revival movement itself might be construed as a tradition. In conclusion, I suggest approaching this transformation as a kind of neo-traditional post-folklore revival movement.

*Keywords:*

folk dance club, folklore revival movement, post-folklore revival movement, neo-traditional dance, Greece

## Introduction

In the wider area of the Balkans, the folklore revival movement as manifested in folk dance festivals and clubs is a common phenomenon whose origins date to the period after the Second World War [cf., for instance, Felföldi and Buckland 2002]. This holds true for Greece, where the Second World War was followed by a Civil War (1946-1949). It is important to recognize that, in contrast to many folk revival movements in western Europe, the folklore revival movement in Greece was often presented by local communities who continued to do their local dances in their towns and villages, but now included new contexts of performance. In this sense, the Greek situation constitutes a particular form of folklore revival. Similarly to other examples, however, folk dance festivals and clubs

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1 I would like to express my thanks to Prof. Egil Bakka and Prof. Theresa Buckland for their instructive comments on the paper during the conference, which I have taken into account in this paper.

in Greece were and are involved in the selection and construction of a highly technical and aesthetically homogenized dance tradition and identity that is presented as “authentic”. The Ionian island of Lefkada is a particularly characteristic case of the folklore revival movement in Greece.

The island of Lefkada, located around the middle of the western coast of mainland Greece at a distance of 78 metres from the mainland coast, is the fourth largest of the Ionian islands after Kephallonia, Kerkyra (Corfu) and Zakynthos, with an area of 305.21 square km (35 kilometres from north to south and 15 kilometres from east to west) and around 23.000 inhabitants according to the 2011 census. In spite of its comparatively small size and population, Lefkada presents an extensive folk revival movement for two main reasons. Firstly, an international folk dance festival has taken place on the island since 1955 and, secondly, although the number has varied throughout the years (from five to nine) Lefkada has a large number of folk dance clubs [Koutsouba 1997; 2010a; 2010b; 2018].

In particular, every August, an International Folk Dance Festival is held in the capital, also called Lefkada, as part of a larger cultural event known as the ‘Festival of Arts and Literature’ (or ‘Speech and Art Feasts’ as it is nowadays called by the Cultural Centre of Lefkada [cf. Cultural Centre of Lefkada 2017a; Kopsida-Vrettou 2005]). It has taken place continuously for sixty-three years (1955–2018). The ‘Festival of Arts and Literature’ began officially in 1955 in reaction to the tragic decade of the 1940s, which witnessed both the Second World War and the Greek Civil War. Lefkada became the first town to send a message of ‘Peace, Love and Brotherhood’, as expressed in the ‘Peace and Love’ dancing song, the anthem of the Festival. Until 1962, the ‘Festival of Arts and Literature’ incorporated the Folk Dance Festival in its two-week period of diverse activities. Since then, in an attempt to lengthen the cultural and tourist season, the Folk Dance Festival has taken place independently of the other activities. Given its uninterrupted history, the International Folk Dance Festival of Lefkada, held under the auspices of the Cultural Centre of the Municipality of Lefkada [Cultural Centre of Municipality of Lefkada 2017], is the oldest festival in Greece, and is gaining an increasingly international character.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the island of Lefkada has a large number of dance clubs, six in 1995, five in 2005, and nine in 2017.<sup>3</sup> Three of them were established in the

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2 The Festival’s international dimension has been recognized as for the last two years it has gained the ‘Europe for Festivals, Festivals for Europe’-EFEE’s label, considered to be “the most comprehensive guide to festivals in Europe” [EFA 2017].

3 The six dance clubs in 1997: Music-Philological Society ‘Apollo of Karya’, Music-Philological Society ‘Orpheus of Lefkada’, Music and Dance Society ‘New Chorus of Lefkada’, Society of Popular Dances ‘Pegasus’, Music and Dance Society of South Lefkada ‘Lefkatas’ and Cultural Association of Nydri and its Environs ‘Alexander’.

1960s and the rest from the 1990s onwards. Three of them are located in the capital, with the others scattered over the rest of the island. They have all shared the same dance interests since the very beginning of their existence, namely dances peculiar to the island and to other parts of Greece. This latter feature is a remarkable phenomenon given the fact that an extended repertoire tends to be typical of those Greek areas where there is a mix of people of different origins; this is not, however, the case on the island of Lefkada. Although all the clubs share dance as a common denominator, and it constitutes one of the very first of their established activities, dance is considered to be especially significant since it disseminates the fame of the club through participation in performances, festivities and festivals locally, nationally and internationally. Dance itself does not enjoy any special status, at least in terms of the names of the clubs with the exception of three: the Music and Dance Society ‘New Chorus of Lefkada’, the Society of Popular Dances ‘Pegasus’ and the Dance Society of Lefkada and Cultural Haunt ‘Agermos’. Despite occasional differences [Koutsouba 1997; 2010a; 2010b; 2017], the dance clubs state similar aims in their Articles, namely the maintenance, promotion and expansion of cultural institutions and traditions primarily in Lefkada and, secondarily, in Greece.

The way this applies to the dances of Lefkada is noteworthy since, for the dance clubs, “Lefkadian” dances are restricted to the performance of the pre-War (Second World War) rural “indigenous” dance repertoire, meaning that pre-War urban, pre-War rural “foreign” as well as post-War dance repertoires are excluded. The exclusion of the pre-War urban dances and of the post-War dances from other parts of Greece can be understood if dance clubs are conceived as messengers of either exclusively rural repertoires or of “traditional” Lefkadian dance. However, the exclusion of pre-War rural “foreign” items from the performance of “Lefkadian” dances cannot be explained on these grounds.

In this manner, the dance clubs, expressing the official aspect of dance, impose on Lefkadians and outsiders their own interpretation of what “Lefkadian” dance is.<sup>4</sup> In other words, dance clubs on the island of Lefkada are also involved

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The five dance clubs in 2005: Music-Philological Society ‘Apollo of Karya’, Music-Philological Society ‘Orpheus of Lefkada’, Music and Dance Society ‘New Chorus of Lefkada’, Society of Popular Dances ‘Pegasus’ and Cultural Centre of Sfakia Municipality.

The nine clubs in 2017: Music-Philological Society ‘Apollo of Karya’, Music-Philological Society ‘Orpheus of Lefkada’, Music and Dance Society ‘New Chorus of Lefkada’, Society of Popular Dances ‘Pegasus’, Cultural Association of Nydri and its Environs ‘Alexander’, Cultural Association of Saffkiotes ‘The Light’, Cultural Association of Nikiana’s ‘The Skars’, Dance Society of Lefkada and Cultural Haunt ‘Agermos’.

4 The totality of the dances performed all over the island of Lefkada forms a complex local dance profile. This profile, according to data provided by Lefkadians themselves, can be categorized to identify the aforementioned dance repertoires (pre-War rural “indigenous”, pre-War

in the selection and construction of a particular and aesthetically homogenized “Lefkadian” dance tradition and identity that is presented as “authentic”. This is also important, considering that participation in the dance club used to be and still is a very important social activity for the islanders who are in fact members of all these clubs. They support them since these kinds of dance clubs active on the island of Lefkada and in Greece in general do not receive state support.<sup>5</sup> However, even in this case, i.e. the definition of what “Lefkadian” rural dance is, does not seem to be stable and unchanged over the years in which the dance clubs have participated in the folklore festivals.

Although the folklore revival movement in Europe has been studied in various ways mainly in the former communist countries, it has received less attention in countries such as Greece [cf., for instance, among others, Bakka 1999; Buchanan 2006; Felföldi and Buckland 2002; Maners 2002; Zebec 2005; Koutsouba 2007; 2010a; 2010b; 2018]; discussion on its possible transformation over the years is very limited. The particular aim of this chapter is to study the transformation of the folklore revival movement in Greece. More specifically, considering that folk dance festivals and clubs constitute integral parts of the folklore revival movement in Greece, I closely examine a folk dance club in Lefkada, namely ‘Apollo of Karya’. This is the island’s first dance club still active to the present day. I pay special attention to its performance of “Lefkadian” dances in two examples of folk dance festivals, twenty years apart.

## The folk dance club ‘Apollo of Karya’ of the Music-Philological Society ‘Apollo of Karya’

The folk dance club ‘Apollo of Karya’ of the Music-Philological Society ‘Apollo of Karya’ (Mousikophilologikos Omilos ‘Apollon Karyas’) is located

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urban, pre-War rural “foreign” and post-War dance repertoires) and refer to dances performed within ‘living tradition’, i.e. ‘dances still being performed after World War II or those dances which can still be reproduced or identified by the people concerned, as part of their own culture’ [Torp 1990:16]. Imported forms of popular modern dances such as disco, pop, rock, etc., are not included in this categorization [cf. Koutsouba 1997; 2007; 2010a; 2010b; 2018].

- 5 Opportunities for travelling in general, and abroad in particular, are one of the main reasons why many of the locals attend the dance classes. The social dimension must be pointed out particularly since such trips started about 55 years ago when life on the island of Lefkada, particularly in its periphery, was stricter than at present. Thus, the islanders, by participating at some point in their lives in one of the few activities occurring during the winter months, are both receptors of new dance ideas and of various cultural elements too. This is even more important given the young age of the participants in the dance clubs, as most are between the ages of 5 and 30; after that age, if they wish to remain in contact with the dance club, they are usually involved in the committee or dance teaching [Koutsouba 1997].

in the village of Karya, a mountainous village in the centre of the island with access to many places and to the capital of the island, with around 1,000 permanent inhabitants; moreover, Karya is one of the two main villages of the island (the other one being Agios Petros-Saint Peter) and is known among both Greeks and foreigners for its rich cultural tradition and activity.<sup>6</sup> It is said that the origins of the Society are found in the improvisatory and amateur theatre company of the village, whose history dates back to the middle and late eighteenth century. This claim can be found both in written texts [Vrettos 1991:53-54] and in statements by villagers such as Petros Stavrakas (*kokoros*)<sup>7</sup> who was an active member of the theatre and conducted some research into its origins [Koutsouba 1997].

Emerging from the efforts of these theatre companies to bring about a local cultural awakening, the Music-Philological Society ‘Apollo of Karya’ was founded (informally in 1955 and formally the following year by presenting its Articles) and named after the ancient Greek god, Apollo, who was worshipped on the island. Music and dance schools were thus formed, the very first two on the island, becoming an indication of the prosperity and development of the village. At that time, both schools shared one teacher, the non-Lefkadian Nikos Thanos (*morinas*), a music teacher who also assumed the responsibilities of the dance school as there was neither a dance teacher available on the island nor enough money to bring someone from elsewhere.

Within a short time, the dance school became quite famous through performances not only all over the island and at the International Folk Dance Festival of Lefkada, but also through performances all over Greece and abroad (Italy, France, Spain, Sweden, former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and others). Later, Theodoros Katopodis took over as a dance teacher, followed by his student Evthymios Stavrakas who is the current dance teacher. Both were practical teachers, in the sense that they had not learned dance at an academic institution. Since 2003, Evthymios Stavrakas has been joined by his daughter who has studied Greek traditional dance at university [Koutsouba 1997; 2017].

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6 The village’s fame derives from a number of reasons. First of all, it is the village where an increased interest in dance led to the foundation of the first dance group of the island. Secondly, it is the village to which all the people, islanders and scholars, guided me during the fieldwork in answer to my question of where to look for “dance people”. Thirdly, although restricted to the local fair, the village is well-known for its dance activities worldwide. For instance, Pamela Westland writes that ‘in the mountain village of Karia [sic] there’s a 2-days festival of folk songs and dancing on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> in honour of St. Spiridon [sic]’ [1989:56], while Dana Faracos includes in her list of festivals the fair at Karya ‘Ag. Spyridon at Karia [sic], when the people bring out their old costumes...’ [1994:142].

7 The use of nicknames is a common practice in Greek villages, including the village of Karya in Lefkada, the purpose being to differentiate between locals who share the same full name [Koutsouba 1997].

In terms of what *Karsani*<sup>8</sup> are taught at the dance club and consequently perform on stage within the “Lefkadian” dance tradition, the practice of ‘Apollo of Karya’, is similar to that of all the dance clubs of the island: that is, the selection and combination, in various ways, of a certain number of the island’s dances that constitute the pre-War rural “indigenous” dance repertoire. These dances are *Miliá* (apple tree) dance, *Lemoniá* (lemon tree) dance, *Barboúni* (red mullet) dance, *Karavákia* (small ships) dance, *Bállos* dance, *Th(e)iakós* dance, *Patináda* dance, *Tétzeris* (pot) dance and, sometimes, *Yiannis o Meratianos*, *Mara-thianos* or *Peratianos* dance. These dances, performed in this specific context, constitute the presentational dances of Lefkada [Koutsouba 1997; 1998; 2000a; 2005; 2009; 2010a; 2010b; 2010c, in press] according to Nahachewsky’s [1991] conceptual categorization, i.e. dances ‘...often performed on formal stages... where the physical and cultural distance between performers and audience is greater’ (p. 1). In addition, it should be noted that in the case of the island of Lefkada, these dances, currently performed only on stage, *do not constitute a revival* since they were performed by the islanders among themselves until fifty years ago [Koutsouba 1997] and can thus be considered as within ‘living tradition’.

### **Bállos dance from the folk dance club ‘Apollo of Karya’**

*Bállos* will be used in this paper as an example of a dance performed by the folk dance club ‘Apollo of Karya’ in two instances: at the International Folklore Festival of Lefkada in 1995 and at an Athenian Folklore Festival in 2015. The status of the two instances should be mentioned at this point as participation in them is of similar importance, locally and nationally respectively. More specifically, participation in the International Folk Dance Festival is considered the most important annual performance of the dance clubs on the island of Lefkada. This attitude is justified because of the international nature of the event and the dance clubs’ long preparation, which lasts a whole year. Participation in the International Folk Dance Festival is equally important since this is the venue for the simultaneous presentation of all the island’s dance clubs, offering them, as it does, a chance for comparison that results in a thorough organization of every aspect of these performances, which, in turn, demonstrates economic, social, and dance power.

Likewise, participation in various folk dance festivals and similar dance activities all over Greece and abroad is a common practice for dance clubs in Greece,

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8 *Karsani* (plural of *Karsanos*) refers to the inhabitants of the village of Karya.

including ‘Apollo of Karya’. Participation in these events also demonstrates economic, social, and dance power for a dance club and there is unofficial, latent competition among the local dance clubs regarding the number and the venue of the festivals. The capital of the country, Athens, is thus held in high esteem. One of the Athens festivals is called ‘Meeting of Traditional Dances at the Petra Theatre’, organized by the Municipality of Petroupolis, one of the suburbs of Athens acknowledged for its long involvement in cultural activities [Municipality of Petroupoli 2018]. The Municipality organized four such Meetings between 2011 and 2017. In 2015, at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of Traditional Dances at the Petra Theatre, ‘Apollo of Karya’ was one of the participating clubs. Among the rest of the dances, *ballos* was also performed as a “Lefkadian” dance representative of the island.

As far as the dance is concerned, *Ballos*, originating from the verb *valizo* that means ‘to dance alone’ [Holden and Vouras 1976:21], is generally considered to be a dance characteristic of the Aegean islands [Micronis 1993]. It is also performed on some of the Ionian islands, namely Kephallonia, Zakynthos and Lefkada. On the island of Lefkada, however, the word *ballos* was used by the dance clubs to refer to a certain type of *syrtos* (*kalamatianos*)<sup>9</sup> that incorporated improvisatory elements which had been standardized after the introduction of the dance into the dance clubs. This opinion was expressed by almost all my informants during my fieldwork in the 1990s, whether dance teachers or “dance people” of the village of Karya or the island of Lefkada such as Katopodis [1993; cf. also 1996; Thermos 1994; Stavrakas 1994], some of whom demonstrated the improvisatory elements. However, they also mentioned that the name *ballos* was unknown before the introduction of the dance to the dance clubs. Instead, the people, i.e. the first male dancers who wanted to improvise in order to demonstrate their dancing skills, would ask the musicians to play a specific melody of the *syrtos grigoros* dance. It was this melody that later brought the name *ballos* to the dance clubs of Lefkada.

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9 Despite the various interpretations of its name, *syrtos* literally means either to pull, more exactly to lead, or refers to the fact that the feet remain close to the ground without leaps [Holden and Vouras 1976:84]. *Syrtos* is performed all over Greece with many local variations. On the island of Lefkada, *syrtos* appears in two forms, as *syrtos argos* (slow *syrtos*) and as *syrtos grigoros* (quick *syrtos*). Their distinction, with both accompanied by many different songs, is based not on the form of the dance performed but on the way this form is performed and on the tempo of the music. More specifically, the two kinds of *syrtos* performed on the island of Lefkada refer either to the form of *syrtos kalamatianos* dance – a one-segment form having a dance phrase with four kinetic motifs – or to the form of *syrtos stadyo* – a dance phrase similar to the construction of *syrtos kalamatianos* but with two kinetic motifs and with leaping steps. Both forms may be performed in combination during *syrtos argos* and as *syrtos grigoros* although they do maintain their distinctive form even in this case [cf. Koutsouba 1997:165–170].

In both instances under examination, *ballos* is performed by the members of the dance group of the dance club of 'Apollo of Karya', shifting in space with simple movements, using steps in middle level (as defined in Labanotation) and jumps, their bodies held upright and straight. The formation is an open circle that moves predominantly to the right. Both men and women take turns as participants, dressed in the traditional wedding costume. The dance in both instances is led by a man. Stylistically, dance forms in both examples present uniformity, as 'the dancing body... is shaped, constrained and invented by society' [Grau 1998:72] that "forces" the body to move according to its rules.

Analysis of the performance of the dance<sup>10</sup> at the International Folklore Festival of Lefkada, reveals *ballos* to be a two-segment, heterogeneous, isometric, alternating dance form in terms of grouping. It has a binary rhythm and 2/4 metre. The first part has sixteen rhythmic motifs. It consists of four repetitions of a one-section phrase which has four kinetic motifs that form a heteromorphy of the type of *syrtos (kalamatianos)* dance. The second part also has sixteen rhythmic motifs. It consists of eight repetitions of a one-section phrase that has two kinetic motifs forming an unspecified type. This is possibly indicative of the improvisatory character of this part. Both parts present a dimensional congruence and a fixed succession in dance and music. At the end of the dance, the rhythm of the second part turns to a seven count and 7/8 metre. However, this does not affect the performance of the dance as the improvisatory kinetic motifs adjust to the new rhythm. The handhold is hands with bent arms in the first part and with hands not joined in the second part.

In the performance of the dance at the Athenian Folklore Festival, *ballos* is also a two-segment, heterogeneous, isometric, alternating dance form in terms of its grouping. The first part is identical to that performed at the International Folklore Festival of Lefkada, but there are differences in the second part which is improvisatory in character. The male dancer of the first couple, although adhering to stage conventions, improvises when he and his partner cut away from the circular formation. Both parts present a dimensional congruence and a fixed succession in dance and music. At the end of the dance, the rhythm of the second part turns to a seven count and 7/8 metre. This does not affect the performance of the dance, however, as the improvisation adjusts to the new rhythm. The handhold is hands with bent arms in the first and second parts, with only the first couple's hands not joined during the improvisation in the second part.

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10 *Bállos* dance in both instances is analyzed by using the structure-form method of analysis proposed by the 1974 IFMC Study Group for Folk Dance Terminology [cf. also Giurchescu and Kröschlová 2007] as this method has been modified and applied to Greek folk dance by Tyrovola [2001] and to rural Lefkadian dance by the present author [Koutsouba 1997; 2007b; 2010c]. The technical terms used in the present paper derive from the aforementioned method.

## A neo-traditional post folklore revival movement in dance?

What then is the significance of this analysis? In this case study, at least, under the influence of the folklore revival movement, through folklore festivals and folk dance clubs the performance status of the “Lefkadian” dance, has been transformed from staged to that of “traditional” staged. In particular, though in both instances the dance group follows the rules of the stage, the performance of *ballos* by the folk dance club ‘Apollo of Karya’ at the International Folklore Festival of Lefkada shows features such as the standardization of traditionally improvisational parts, use of choreographic devices, and an extensive use of choreography in simple dance forms; in contrast, at the Athenian Folklore Festival, twenty years later, *ballos* is performed closer to the way it was traditionally performed.

**Table 1:** Performance of “*ballos*” dance in the village of Karya

Who	Where	What	Why
<i>Karsani</i> i.e. villagers of the village of Karya	Traditionally in participatory contexts (at least until 50 years ago)	A <i>syrtos grigoros</i> dance was performed in the form of <i>syrtos (kalamatianos)</i> with improvisations to a specific melody ordered by the first male dancer at any point of time (i.e. a two-segment dance form). The name <i>ballos</i> was not used.	Male first dancers showing their dance skills.
<i>Karsani</i> i.e. villagers of the village of Karya who are members of the dance club ‘Apollo of Karya’	Folklore revival movement: International Folklore Festival of Lefkada (1995)	<i>Ballos</i> dance (named as such after the introduction of the dance clubs on the island) was performed with a fixed two-segment form (standardization of music) by all the dancers (locals who are members of the dance clubs) who use choreographic devices and standardized improvisational parts that are performed by all the dancers simultaneously.	Maintenance, promotion and expansion of cultural traditions of Lefkada. Official aspect of what rural “true” “authentic” “Lefkadian” dance is.
<i>Karsani</i> i.e. villagers of the village of Karya who are members of the dance club ‘Apollo of Karya’	Folklore revival movement: Athenian Folklore Festival (2015)	<i>Ballos</i> dance (i.e. keeping the name acquired after the introduction of the dance clubs on the island) was performed with a fixed two-segment form (i.e. keeping the standardization of music) by all the dancers (locals who are members of the dance clubs) but with no improvisations or standardization of improvisational parts by all the dancers as only the first couple of the circle cuts out of the circle and the male dancer improvises (i.e. what used to be traditional).	Maintenance, promotion and expansion of cultural traditions of Lefkada. Official aspect of what rural “true” “authentic” “Lefkadian” dance is. Male first dancers showing their dance skills.

After six decades of the folklore revival movement on the island of Lefkada during which the “Lefkadian” dance tradition has been sustained in certain ways at folk dance festivals by the folk dance clubs of the island, a new version has emerged; one that is indicative of the way the folklore revival movement could be perceived *per se* as a performance context of dance tradition. This performance context itself might be considered as a post-folklore revival movement.

When I first started to deal with this issue, the term post-folklore revival movement came to mind. *Post* in the sense that the folklore revival movement, at least in the case under examination, (because of the way “Lefkadian” dance has been performed i.e. its transformation into a dance performance), appears to have undergone successive stages, i.e. stages that come after, later, subsequent to what had previously taken place. In support of this, I should state that the first time I encountered this kind of improvised performance, at least in a context outside the island, was in 2015.<sup>11</sup>

During discussion following presentation of my paper at the conference on the folklore revival movement held in Prague 2017, an alternative term was suggested, that of *neo-traditional* instead of *post-folklore*. The term neo-traditional was introduced into dance discourse by Egil Bakka in 1999 in order to characterize the Norwegian folk dance revival in the context of the ‘neo-traditionalist movement of the late 1960s’ [Bakka 1999:71]. Bakka refers to ‘the neo-traditionalist trend among folk dance enthusiasts who wished to retain the idea of revival, but saw the need to redefine its material...’ so as to keep its ‘contact with its roots’ [Bakka 1999:74]. In that sense, what is presented by the dance club ‘Apollo of Karya’ in the second instance can be perceived without any doubt as neotraditional in terms of dance.

It seems then that a kind of neo-traditional manner of presenting dance has been selected to be performed by the dance club ‘Apollo of Karya’ at a folklore festival held in high esteem, taking place outside the island. Thus, for the first time, new content was attributed to the folklore revival movement that had not been presented up to that point, at least in the case of the performance of “Lefkadian” dance in a context of this kind. This was not by chance; over the last ten years or so, there has been ongoing debate in Greece about what and how to per-

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11 After the 2015 performance of ‘Apollo of Karya’, I came across many more similar ones around the same period, for instance performances in the village of Karya or at other festivals, re-singing of the songs that accompany dances that were forgotten or not used during my fieldwork in the 1990s [Koutsouba 1997]. Without any doubt, the change of perceptions of the way traditional dance has to be performed on stage that is related to the dance teachers’ background, as well as the results of the fieldwork carried out in the 1990s during which many things were revealed, played a decisive role in this transformation. However, this is another issue and one beyond the scope of the present paper.

formed traditional dance on stage and whether this kind of performance has to be fully choreographed according to theatrical conventions or if traditional features of dancing need to be set for performance on stage.

Might, then, this kind of revival be termed a *post-folklore* revival movement in Greece? Based on the above, such a designation appears logical given that it follows on from what used to happen before the Second World War. Furthermore, if the way of performing the dance is taken into consideration as well, i.e. transitioning from staged to “traditional” staged, then the use of a neo-traditional strategy (improvising on stage) to suggest greater authenticity indicates that this Lefkadian example of 2015 should be characterized as belonging to a *neotraditional post-folklore revival* movement.

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# Dance and Revival

## — from a Swedish Perspective<sup>1</sup>

*Mats Nilsson*

*Abstract:*

The article outlines the background to the Swedish dance revival of the 1970s and the impact on today's dancing of folk dances. The primary idea is that folk dances are not the dances of the people but a product of folk dance clubs. Folk dances were stylized in folk dance clubs from 1880 onwards, mainly for presentational purposes. The revivalists of the 1970s wanted the folkdances to be participatory and become closer to popular dances. Today, dancing at folk dance clubs co-exists with the revivalist dancing, mainly at folk music festivals and other dance events outside the folk dance clubs.

*Keywords:*

dance, revival, Sweden, folk dance, popular dance

The title of this article contains three concepts that frame the content of the paper. Dance, Revival and Sweden is a combination that will be introduced briefly in the following. I myself was active in the revival process as a dancer, although this text is a product of another aspect of my life, that of an academic researcher.

“Dance”, at least here, means cultural structured movements. The word culture indicates that the movements are done by humans, while structure suggests that not all movements in a culture are dance. In the Swedish context, music can be added as an important part of dance. When it comes to social dance, dance for fun and all kinds of folk dance, there is always music that is connected in some way to the movements that make up the dance.

“Revival” points to a process of reusing something from the past. This past does not have to be very distant, but what was done, in this case some sort of dancing, has often died out or fallen into oblivion. After a while, dances are re-discovered and reused, and this process is often referred to as a revival, or sometimes a revitalization. In general, and for most people in the folk dance community in Sweden, the revival period was the 1970s. But the revival concept can also be used for an earlier period, from around 1880 to about 1920, even though I prefer to call what happened then a transition rather than a revival. Furthermore, between 1920 and 1970 there was a build-up for what was to happen during the 1970s. In line with the general understanding of the dance revival period

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<sup>1</sup> Based on a paper with many video examples that cannot be used in the present article.

in Sweden taking place in the 1970s, I will refer to the earlier period, when the build-up for the coming revival was in process, just the pre-1970s.

“Sweden”, the last of the three concepts in the title, is a geographical area and national state as well as a culture created and living inside that area. Last but not least, there is Swedish culture alive outside Sweden, and there are many Swedish cultures in Sweden, as well as cultures that might use other adjectives.

## The pre-1970s

Around 1880, Philochoros, the first folk dance club in Sweden, was founded by a group of students at the University of Uppsala, Sweden’s oldest university. Dances performed by people in rural areas were arranged for the stage and new dances were created in a rural style [Korsfeldt and Wahlberg 2005]. Philochoros toured Sweden and the neighbouring countries with their stage shows, triggering the establishment of folk dance clubs in many places [Bakka and Biskop 2007].

As early as 1914, the first films with folk dances performed by a folk dance club were filmed at an international fair in Malmö (Baltiska hallen), with the king of Sweden in the audience. At about the same time, in around 1915, another film was made in Gothenburg where the local folk dance club performed in the big central town park (Slotsskogen). On both occasions, the repertoire and style from Philochoros dominated, i.e. not the popular dances from the countryside, but the stylized way of dancing from the standardized club versions.

During and after World War One (1914-1918), jazz music and dance came to Sweden. This was something rather different to the older popular dance and music which was similar to the dance and music in Northern Europe. It was the new couple dances such as the one-step, two-step and foxtrot that became the dances of the younger generations, replacing the older polska, waltz, polka and quadrilles.

More and more folk dance clubs were established in reaction to these new dances, inspired by Philochoros, and in 1920 the National Folk Dance Association of Sweden was founded. These new folk dance clubs primarily used the repertoire from Philochoros, but also created new dances and standardized the way they were danced, unifying their style. In the following years, up to around 1970, the Swedish folk dance canon was gradually developed, drawing on this repertoire. The dances have a certain background in, or a style similar to, the older popular dances in the countryside; however, as I will try to explain, they became a genre of their own.

In 1925, two other categories were created, namely the division between modern dance, mainly foxtrot, and old-time dance, mostly waltz and polka versions.

These two categories, i.e. genres, became institutionalized as a result of the establishment of the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation, which used these terms in its programme lists. There was a separate programme with old-time dance music and other programmes with modern dance music. This is the start of the division of popular dancing into two separate genres, old-time dance and modern dance.

This means that in the early twentieth century there were many dance genre words that were related to one another in different ways: folk dances and old-time dances both have certain links to the past and to the pre-industrial society, while modern dances tend to belong to the industrial society. On the other hand, old-time dances and modern dances are what I will call popular dances – folk dances, however, are not. In 1928, the folk life researcher Ernst Klein noted that “folk dances are not the dances the people dance” [Klein 1978]. Klein filmed and researched what and how people from the countryside danced, and it was obvious to him that folk dances were not danced by people, but by other groups that romanticized and standardized the dances enacted by people. In short, *popular dance* (in Swedish *folklig dans*) is what people dance just for fun, at social gatherings. These events are less formal and more ecstatic than when *folk dance* (in Swedish *folkdans*) is performed. Folk dances are selected and standardized popular dances, constructions in the spirit of national romanticism and are more formal and emblematic.

Klein’s ideas do not seem to have influenced in any particular way the folk dance communities, at least not until the late 1950s and into the 1960s, when the relicts of vernacular, local dances with roots in the 1800s were documented by many enthusiasts [Helmersson 2012]. Among them was the folk-dance teacher Henry Sjöberg who became the most inspirational and influential person in the coming revival years. When he saw old people dancing, he immediately thought it was a strange way to dance and asked himself “What are they doing?” [Nilsson 2016]. Sjöberg realized, just like Klein before him, that he had seen the old dances danced in a way different to when they were performed in the folk dance clubs, and started a small crusade against the folk dance canon with its roots going back to Philochoros, which was danced and presented in the folk dance club performances. “They are lying,” he announced several times when he heard or read the folk dance statements and what was said about dance history.

## The 1970s revival

When the 1970s arrived, the components for a revival, or revitalisation, were close at hand. There was the canon of folk dances performed in folk dance clubs, scrutinized by the ideas, oppositions and inspiration from Klein and Sjöberg.

The films and documents featuring vernacular dances produced by these two, and many others, showed that folk dance was a genre of its own, not the popular dances of the people, the “folk”. At the same time, or rather somewhat earlier, there was a folk music revival that inspired and fed the dance revival. The Swedish dance and music polska (not polka!) was of particular interest for the revivalists [Nilsson 2017]. This couple dance has a special uneven  $\frac{3}{4}$  beat and is seen by many dancers and musicians as the crown of Swedish music and dance. There was, naturally, also a substantial amount of participatory popular dancing of modern dances, especially foxtrot, and old-time dances like the waltz, polka and schottische in dance halls and at outdoor dance platforms in the 1970s. The revivalists wanted the polska danced to folk music to be a popular dance genre in the same manner – with flow and groove and fun and flirt.

One must not forget another important aspect of the 1970s dance revival in Sweden, namely a similar process active in folk music, often referred to as the Folk Music Wave. One of the main objectives for the revival dancers was better cooperation with musicians that would help make music an even more vital part of the dancing. Furthermore, the music and dance revivalists shared the goal of going back to the roots, meaning to find the link to tradition other than the folk dance movement, and to support “popular” rather than “folk” dance and music. Using similarities between dance varieties rather than differences, not least during dance training, turned out to be an inspiring and challenging idea that Sjöberg supported.

In summary, there were three main goals for the revivalists: first, more participatory dancing instead of presentational; second, more fun and less “right and wrong”; last but not least, more opportunities for dancing to good dance music. This music was provided by the folk music revivalists, who, in a similar way to the dancers, opposed the older, organized folk music association. In many ways, this was a reunion of music and dance at dance events like *danshus* (dance house) and *spelmansstämmor* (outdoor folk music festivals).

## The aftermath of the 1970s

What is the outcome and result of the 1970s revitalisation in 2018? The goal of having more participatory dancing, not least the polska, just for fun to good live music, remains, as does the goal of popular dances paralleling many other dance genres. Folk music festivals and folk music clubs with dance (folkmusikkaféer/danshus) were hard to find before the revival; today, they are an important part of the events where folk musicians and polska dancers from outside the folk dance association meet stricter dancers, dancing and having fun together.

On the other hand, presentational folk dance with its roots going back to Philochoros continues, but there is more differentiation in the form of presentation [Nilsson 2014]. Display dancing, where a folk dance group shows dances without any complicated choreography or set design is the core activity in folk dance clubs. A few dance groups perform more elaborate presentations, in the frame of contemporary dance, something that I will call theatre art dancing on stage. Using folk dances for competitions is rare in Sweden, even though there have been some attempts. The only event which has gained some significance is the world championship in Hambo, held since 1965, where thousands of dancers compete to be the best dancers every year. Dancing for the polska award (polsdansmärket) is also an annual event with roots in the revival years. There are no winners, but participants do receive a medal in bronze, silver or gold saying that they know how to dance the polska dances as described in the books.

Before the revival, there were no folk dance teachers but only leaders of the associations that organized folk dance displays, in addition to dance teachers who taught foxtrot and tango, but did not offer instruction in folk dances or polska. Today, there is education for folk dance trainers at university level and it is possible to become a professional folk musician at the Music Academy. These teachers and professionals offer courses and teach folk dance and music at school or in workshops, something that was unknown before the 1970s.

## Summary

In short, the 1970s folk dance revival did not happen in a vacuum. It was the result of more than fifty years of canonization, standardization and strict choreographies of dances that were referred to as original and authentic dances of the people. Most of them, however, were choreographed in folk dance clubs and had never been danced by people outside the folk dance association. The style and way of dancing was very distant from how popular dances were danced.

The revivalists wanted to infuse more blood and flow into the dances and opposed the repertoire and style of dancing in the folk dance clubs. Instead of being correct, we, i.e. I and other revivalists, wanted fun and good dance music. This desire led to the creation of new dance events like folk music cafés and dance houses where musicians and dancers met just to have fun together, not to display Swedish folk music and dance to an audience.

Today those dance houses and folk music events still exist, parallel to the older folk dance associations' clubs and their dancing of the older canon. Consequently, dances like the polska are danced in many different contexts today that exist side by side in contemporary Sweden.

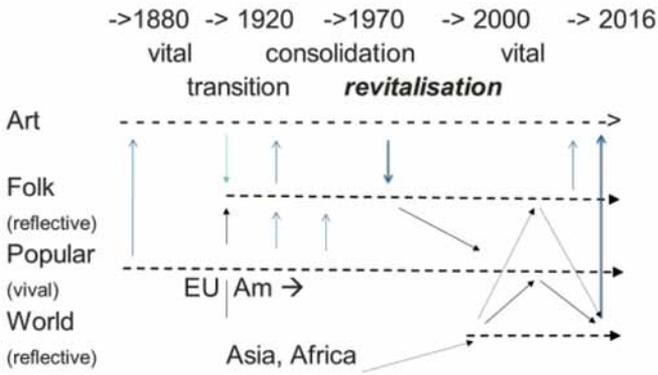


Figure 1

Before about 1920 there were transitions of popular dances to the first folk dance clubs and to the theatre art dancing scenes. The National Folk dance is started 1920, and continued to use popular dances and transformed them to folk dances, thereby creating the folk dance canon of today.

## Sources

My own experience as one of the revivalists, meeting Henry Sjöberg and discussing his ideas and the old written sources, and the films by Ernst Klein.

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# Participatory and Presentational Folk-Revival in Capitalist and Socialist Formations: The United States and Hungary in the 1970s

*Colin Quigley*

*Abstract:*

This essay uses two examples of instrumental music with dance revivals, referred to as choreomusical, to extend the ethnochoreological notions of participatory and presentational dance performance. The ‘old-time’ instrumental music and dance revival of the 1970s in the United States and the ‘dance-house movement’, likewise centred on dance and instrumental music, which appeared in Hungary in the same years are described and juxtaposed with one another. They are identified as participatory choreomusical revivals. A key commonality is found in their aesthetic ideology of spontaneous and interactive improvisation in the co-performance of music and dance. Both examples are characterized as loci of opposition to the contrasting dominant political and economic systems of capitalism in the United States and the late reform-socialism of Hungary at that time.

*Keywords:*

participatory performance, presentational performance, choreomusical, old-time music, dance house movement, capitalism, socialism

The term ‘folk revival’ covers a multitude of sins. It is used throughout Europe and North America to refer to such a wide variety of social and artistic practices that one might challenge its continued value as an analytic category. Nevertheless, the use of ‘revival’ persists both within the self-defining discourses of such phenomena and as a convenient academic shorthand, referring to instances of self-consciously past-oriented music and dance practice. ‘Folk’ revival connotes music and dance practice shifted from rural community-based sources to new urban contexts. Cultural moments of folklore revival were common and widespread throughout Europe and North America during the second half of the twentieth century.

While the particulars of folk revivals vary greatly among the nations in which they took place, an overarching contrast between the western-democratic and eastern-socialist states is commonly noted and generally acknowledged [Malm and Ronström 2000]. A coordinated system of dance groups, ranging from professional state ensembles to village-level amateur groups, was typical of the socialist states within the Soviet sphere; a more fragmented pattern of loosely associated networks of local practice typified dance-based folk revivals in the western democracies. This social-structural contrast would seem to be congruent with the emphases on solidarity or individualism within the socialist and capitalist sys-

tems respectively. These two approaches to a selective appropriation and transformation of traditional music and dance by a modern elite, for use in contemporary settings from sources with perceived continuity to older, simpler, smaller scale social settings of ongoing traditional practice, can be usefully characterized along an axis of presentational and participatory characteristics.

In what follows, I will juxtapose two examples of participatory music and dance revival: that of ‘old-time’ music in the United States and that of the Hungarian ‘dance-house’ movement. Both had their initial impetus in the early 1970s and despite the opposing political economies and very different histories from which they emerged and in relation to which they find much of their respective meaning and significance, both have surprising similarities that I experienced as an old-time musician and dancer visiting dance-house events in Hungary, albeit much later, in the 1990s. I will argue that much of this similarity is due to their participatory choreomusical character. My aim in bringing these two examples together is to explore generalizations suggested by framing their pairing in terms of concepts that I have extended from Thomas Turino’s ethnomusicological work into the domain of dance, illustrating the potential of comparative work on the topic of folk revival. At the same time, I will introduce these two examples by sampling relevant material from their rather extensive respective academic literatures.

## Participatory and presentational performance

The participatory-presentational distinction is a key idea in ethnochoreology. While it is foreshadowed in some ways by Hoerburger’s concept of ‘first and second existence’ folk dance (1968) and is related to the distinction later explored between folklore and folklorism [Smidchens 1999], this specific usage in relation to dance has been most directly addressed by Andriy Nahachewsky [1995, 2001a]. He originally examined performances of ‘the same’ Ukrainian traditional dance in its village-community social settings and on stages, performed as a show for an audience. His comparative analysis of such examples through Labanotation shows clear morphological and structural differences between them, which he accounts for as a consequence of their respective participatory or presentational character.

The participatory/presentational terminology has more recently achieved a much wider usage and application as part of a larger scheme proposed by anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino.<sup>1</sup> He conceives of them as

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1 Turino leaves open the possibility of new kinds of music production emerging in the future along with new technologies. It is worth noting here that he seems unaware of the ethnochore-

two of four 'social fields' which also include so-called high-fidelity and studio-art recording. He argues that the consequences of the participatory/presentational contrast can be heard in aesthetic characteristics specific to one or the other field of musical production. Turino provides comparative case studies in order to identify and classify the aesthetic characteristics of the two. Some of his generalizations regarding these differences in the aesthetics of musical sound find parallels in Nahchewsky's observations of the participatory/presentational contrast in dance movement. The boundary between presentation and participation, however, is a porous one. The undeniable participatory social dimension of presentational dancers is lived off-stage, as it were; while, the public presentation of the participatory old-time and dance-house life can be accommodated as desired, without dominating its experience. Many hybrid examples can be cited. Turino, for example, distinguishes 'simultaneous' from 'sequential' participatory performance,

in which individuals or small groups take turns - as in the center of a samba de roda dance circle, or in karaoke, or in the Prespa wedding singing described by Jane Sugarman. Although sequential participation in a sense moves a step closer to presentational performance, it may still best be understood in relation to the participatory field if the ethos that everyone in the event should perform is operative. [Turino 2009:101].

While the complexities of the possible interactions and shifts among all four fields of musical performance invites further investigation, ethnochoreologists, especially in Europe, have already explored many possibilities in the transformation of traditional dancing from participatory to presentational in some detail. They identify several varieties of choreographic strategy employed by presentational folk-ensembles resulting in such styles as stylized, authentic, ethnographic, and theatrical, among others.<sup>2</sup>

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ological use of these terms, despite his inclusion of 'sound and movement' in the dimensions of performance to which he makes reference. The question of how ethnomusicology has treated dance as a kind of musicking is one I am pursuing in a forthcoming work.

- 2 Nahachewsky [2001b] reviews the literature which analyses strategies for shifting dance from social to stage performance. It is mostly from the 1970s, that is the same period in which the participatory revivals I discuss here were taking place, and comes mostly from socialist countries in which cultural control was tighter, relative to Hungary in those years. For this discussion in relation to Hungarian folk dance, which was not a topic for study in ethnochoreology, see Martin 1980. In the American context, there has been less attention paid to this topic, although it does arise within the discourse of the Square Dance revival that took place between the World Wars, and which was more presentational in its performance character. Likewise, discussion of appropriate choreographic transformation is not uncommon in the discourse

However, reconceptualizing the presentational performance of participatory dance as a social field of cultural production, rather than merely a contrasting orientation to dance stylization, shifts our understanding of the phenomenon into a wider domain than categorization and evaluation of the choreographic or musical characteristics.

For, once Turino has proposed and explicated the four fields scheme, he goes on to consider the participatory and presentational in terms of their relationship to the contemporary hegemonic capitalist cosmopolitan cultural formation. He argues that,

presentational performance ... fit(s) best with the profit goals and competitive values of capitalist societies. As relatively cooperative, egalitarian spaces that are about sociality, bonding, and fun, rather than about hierarchy, competition, financial achievement, or the creation of art objects, participatory performance provides a powerful experiential model of alternative values and ways of being for people in capitalist societies. Repeated involvement with participatory performance creates a special social space for habit change necessary for developing alternative, sustainable ways of living [Turino 2009:95].

I agree, but would argue from my examples that presentational performance (at least in the domain of folk revival), has been equally well 'fitted' to the former socialist societies of eastern Europe; and, furthermore, that the assertion that participatory performance can be instrumental in at least exploring, if not developing and establishing, alternatives to dominant 'top-down' systems also applies just as well to some revival music and dance practice in the former socialist-bloc of eastern European countries. In socialist formations, presentational folk-dance ensemble practice facilitates the exercise of aesthetic-ideological control through the person of the choreographer-director as so directed by an authoritarian central power. In the capitalist context, the social actors who exert control over presentational choices are guided by an omnipresent market ideology. In both contexts, participatory counter-moves shift the agency in performance choice back to the participants. The values structuring folk-revival aesthetics in these two cultural formations are quite different, but their projection through presentational performance operates in the same way. Their respective presenta-

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among performers of Appalachian clogging [see Jamison 2016]. Among academic folklorists in the U.S. discussion of strategies for participatory to presentational transformation has centred less on concert staging than on presentation formats within folklife festivals and similar contexts explicitly meant to facilitate inter-cultural education and communication [Cantwell 1991, 1993; Kurin 1997].

tional aesthetic ideologies derive from and are sustained by the power structures in which they are situated. The participatory practice of choreomusical sociality, on the other hand, requires a continual discursive reaffirmation among the members of its cohort to establish and maintain their core aesthetic-ideologies. This is a grass-roots bottom-up, democratic process that complements the ‘alternative’ value systems being espoused. This is what the old-time revival and the dance-house movement have in common, and why they feel so alike, despite the very different histories in which they find their meaning and the systems to which they offered an alternative.

## Folk Revival in Europe and North America

In Europe, folklore revival has its roots in presentations of peasant culture inspired by conceptions of this population as the bearers of ‘folklore’, understood to express an essence of national culture preserved and perpetuated in the rural segment of society. National festivals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, informed by this notion, mainly intended to represent the ‘folk’ of a country to its own inhabitants as part of a nationalizing project. Each European nation-state, East and West, has its own history of this phenomenon which was manifest in performances of theatricalized folk-inspired choreographies and/or orchestrated musical ensembles [Ronström 2008].

After World War Two, new festivals and ensembles were created to represent a folk which, in this period, had been reconceived as a broader social category including urban workers as well as rural peasants; at the same time, the intended audience for these institutions of cultural presentation became more international in character. Throughout the former Soviet sphere, professional state folklore ensembles became a major vehicle of state propaganda [Shay 1999]. Transformed by imposition of western theatrical aesthetics which set new standards of technique for musicians and dancers, these ensembles became important models for amateur ensembles in many countries, where their influence continues to be felt into the present day.

In Western Europe and North America, there were few professional folklore ensembles of the Eastern European type. Distinctively different contexts for performance of traditional music and dance, however, arose in North America and many western European countries, along with a wave of folk-music interest in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>3</sup> In this period small folk-music groups replaced large ensembles as the norm. The instrumental repertoire of these folk bands of-

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3 See for example [Rosenberg 1993; Goertzen 1997; Smidchens 1996].

ten provided the live accompaniment for self-consciously renewed forms of traditional social dancing. In Hungary this phenomenon took the form of an integrated music-dance social practice that was spearheaded and largely directed by a very small core of activists. In the U.S., the phenomenon was more dispersed in its development, though led by a small number of key ‘influencers’, as we might call them today, whose high profile had an impact throughout the cohort and which could be felt all across the country.

## The American folk and old-time music revivals

In the Anglo-American world, ‘the folk revival’ is commonly understood to refer to the flourishing of a folk-inspired youth-oriented commercial music in the mid-1950s. The song, *Tom Dooley*, recorded by the Kingston Trio in 1958, is likely to be the most widely known example of this genre that intersected at that time with

a rich and energetic tradition of folksong scholarship and performance extending back at least into the regional festivals, folkdance societies, and outing clubs of the 1920s, but which in the larger historical perspective belonged to a particular family of theatrical, literary, and musical representations of folk culture that had begun in America on the minstrel stage in 1830 [Cantwell 1996:7].

By the time this folk-revival was drawing to a close in the mid-1960s, as marked by Bob Dylan’s now infamous performance on electric guitar at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965, a subsequent surge of interest in southern string-band instrumental music (fiddle, banjo, and guitar) had already begun. The distinct Old-Time Music revival that flourished through the 1970s, into the 1980s, and beyond is usually traced to the key influence of the New Lost City Ramblers, a group which performed faithful reproductions of the rural music of the American South as they had been commercially recorded, beginning in the 1920s [Allen 2010].<sup>4</sup> The members of this band, Northern urbanites with strong links to the folk revival, along with many others similarly inspired, went south in search of survivors from this earlier era. They found many of them, but also encountered a continuing tradition of instrumental music being played in that style. This came to be known as ‘old-time’ music. The songs of political action and social justice that had been so important in the earlier folk revival lost their centrality.

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4 But see also [Jabbour 2014], who notes that the Ramblers were more song oriented than the instrumental ensembles that became the mainstay of the old-time revival scene.

This next wave of revival musicians celebrated the authenticity of their sources, hewing closely to the fiddle, banjo, and guitar techniques they learned from those sources. The old-time revival, which was well underway by the time I became caught up in it in the 1970s as a college student in New England, was centred on a shared set of counter-cultural and youth-oriented values in what might now be called an aesthetic-affinity cohort or virtual community-of-practice networked across the country; a form of social organization that was soon to become the norm in the then still nascent world of internet driven social networks in which we live today.

If the transcendent collective experience of singing ‘We Shall Overcome’ together across a variety of social barriers can be said to exemplify the folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s [Cantwell 1996], a shared experience of the driving and insistent rhythms of Southern Appalachian string-band dance music provided the beating heart of the old-time revival. Its perceived authenticity, carefully constructed and policed, located it in opposition to the commercial world of popular-music entertainment and provided a locus for independent self-expression among a generation coming of age at that time. This was not music one listened-to, it was music one made for oneself. As a member of the Highwoods String Band, one of its most widely influential bands during the 1970s, summed this up,

Ironically, the more well-known we became, the less necessary we were to the growing old-time music scene, since one of the messages of the music is to do it yourself – unplug it and take it home! [Turino 2008:169; Lupton 2018].

Focused on this genre of instrumental dance music, it is not surprising that old-time music became frequently integrated with dance. So-called Appalachian Clogging, a transformation of step-dancing traditions from the region, became one locus for this meeting. Cloggers were commonly to be found at old-time music gatherings alongside the fiddlers, banjo, and guitar players, making music with their feet.<sup>5</sup>

The Green Grass Cloggers were the most influential of the many clogging groups that formed in the 1970s [Jamison 1995; 2015:158–163]. As they travelled around the country, like the Highwoods Band, they inspired countless others among the old-time revival cohort, as Jamison describes it,

I was captivated by the free-spirited, dynamic choreography and rhythmic footwork of these young performers. It looked like fun and I want-

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5 This idea that clogging is making music is explicitly stated by one of the dancers in the documentary *Talking Feet* [Seeger and Pershing 2007], the most comprehensive overview of Appalachian step dancing.

ed to do it too... I was invited to join the Green Grass Cloggers, and in subsequent years I became aware of the significance of this influential group. They not only popularized their unique repertoire of steps, but they also established a non-competitive style of dancing that now, more than forty years later, can be found across the United States as well as in the British Isles. [Jamison 2015:158-159].

Old-time music also came together with another revived dance idiom, contradancing, which took its models from traditions found in New England. Contradancing spread along with enthusiasts who carried its initial impetus from New England in the early 1970s to towns and cities across the country as they moved away, often following academic paths to middle class professional careers [Turino 2008:163 ff. and Carlin 1995]. Along the way, its connection to traditional New England music was replaced by a more open attitude towards accompaniment, consequent on the limited availability of musicians playing traditional fiddle-led dance music. Old-time music, by this time well established in many centres around the country, became a significant component of the contradance band sound.

If the ideology of clogging emphasizes freedom and individuality, contradance discourse emphasizes community [Hast 1993; Dart 1995]. John Beale investigates one such scene that flourished during the 1970s and 1980s in Bloomington Indiana, site of the Indiana University main campus, which was an important hub in the old-time music network [2005]. His focus is on the relationship of revival to community, and he emphasises the struggles of this community to maintain a non-commercial and amateur character in its organization and practice, despite pressures that were driving its musicians and dance leaders towards professionalization. Many of the musicians aspired to and succeeded in creating performing careers for themselves but, nevertheless, maintained an egalitarian ethos and non-professional role in the dance context. The strength of their shared counter-cultural value system brought members of the local scene together, but the unfettered shared choreomusical experience sustained their sense of belonging and the functioning of their community.

Turino, who is himself an old-time banjo player, has discussed the old-time revival as participatory musicking [Turino 2008:155–188]. Taking a broadly semi-otic anthropological approach to making sense of the old-time revival, he generalizes from this example:

Participatory music and dance have special qualities and characteristics for creating solid feelings of community and identity. Sounding together articulates and realizes a special way of being together,

and the style of particular sounds—whether rap, punk, country or old-time—carries specific indexical meanings that further define the nature and identity of the community being brought forth through performance. [Turino 2008:157].

## The Hungarian Dance-House Movement

Many young folk musicians and dancers of the same period in Europe directed their efforts against older forms of staged folk music and dance, especially forms cultivated by the large professional state folklore ensembles.<sup>6</sup> In common with the American old-time music revival, many of these traditional music revival groups of the 1970s were dedicated primarily to dance music. Perhaps most famously, young people in Budapest began to cultivate traditional dancing faithful to its social practice in Transylvanian villages and its spontaneous live accompaniment with dance music that was likewise faithful to those sources. They mounted such an event for the first time in 1972 and the *tánc ház mozgáalom*, dance-house movement, was born. For the founding musicians and dancers, who came from several performance ensembles in Budapest, and the thousands who were soon flocking to similar events throughout the country, this ‘new’ way of performing ‘Hungarian folk music and dance’ provided an appealing alternative to the theatrically choreographed and musically arranged forms in which it had been available up until that time. This dancing and its music took place outside the controlling oversight of the state authorities that dominated so much of Hungarian cultural life at that time. Not political enough to represent a direct challenge or threat, the dance-house meetings fell into the category of ‘tolerated’ activities that were only lightly monitored. They became a place within which young people could experience, and in some cases express more directly, their dissatisfaction and opposition to this system. For the young generation in Budapest, according to ethnologists Balogh and Fülemlé,

the dance house as a subculture with its interpretation of tradition was able to create common identity and worldview with an intrinsic notion of an oppositional stance to the prevailing political doctrine... The dance house, together with rock-music, self-organized sports, literary circles, film clubs, and amateur theatres, was part of the everyday recreational activities of urban young people and the channels for the expression of freed emotions and critical opinions. These circles

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6 See [Frigyesi 1996] for an account of its beginnings focussing on the broadly oppositional character of its emergent aesthetic.

of activities provided alternatives to the official, centrally organized, communist youth movement's mandatory ideology [Balogh and Füle-mile 2008:42-43].

Like the American old-time revival, the Hungarian dance-house movement was 'a response to the conditions of life' that followed World War Two. In the late 1960s- early 1970s these conditions were radically different in the two countries, but the increasing ease of communication across national borders through then new mass-media in that period fuelled an emergent generational consciousness which reached into parts of the Soviet-bloc such as Hungary, which was experiencing a period of milder political suppression during late reform-socialism. I have written elsewhere on the history of the Hungarian dance-house movement and the revival of its Transylvanian string band music and its story has been well documented by academics and described by its founders in print, both in English and Hungarian [Halmos 2011; Quigley 2014; Sebő 2007]; it is also already familiar to ethnochoreologists, and I will not rehearse it again. It is relevant to note here, however, that throughout the dance-house movement's history, the founders and leading lights of its subsequent development have consistently argued that it was not a primarily political phenomenon, nor was it driven by nationalist sentiment. Halmos writes

From the very beginning, the dance house movement has treated the folk cultures of Hungary's non-Magyar ethnic groups, and indeed, of every nation, as treasures of coequal value (and, in this sense, followed a principle and a practice that anticipated the 'Common European House' idea by some twenty years) [Halmos 2000].

What they have insistently asserted is their commitment to what I have called a core aesthetic ideology [Quigley 2012], spontaneous improvisatory dance performance together with live unscripted musical accompaniment.

Balogh and Füle-mile [2008:49] describe the movement, and in so doing, draw attention to each of the main features of participatory choreomusical revivals in turn.

The dance house movement had a specific ability to establish a wide network of small circles of peoples who behaved not as part of a passive audience but from time to time actively participated in the re-creation of a cultural product ... The sensitive interaction between the dancers and the musicians or among the dancers is very similar to the traditional circumstances of dance in the original context. While improvised dancing requires skill and effort to learn, it can be done on

very different personal level of knowledge, no one is excluded, and first and foremost participation is voluntary... The process of the active creation of dance gives exceptional joy in comparison with the keenly memorized mechanical processes of fixed choreography. These grassroots circles of voluntary groups of sociable young people sharing similar ideas, tastes and world-views provided a real alternative in the period of socialism, when participation in the communist youth movement, school events, commemorations and political demonstrations were all mandated and ideologically manipulated. It was a real shift from the disfavored compulsory passive presence to a voluntary, emotionally supported active participation, which also created a strong feeling of commonality and solidarity [Balogh and Fülemlile 2008: 49].

## Juxtapositions and conclusions

Happening worlds apart during the same decades, both old-time and dance-house revivals were related to a more widespread youth culture phenomenon of the period. Contacts with likeminded musicians and dancers from other countries, although fleeting, could be profound in the connections experienced and significant in their consequences. Stories of contacts between founding dance-house leaders and the folk music scene in Sweden in the early 1970s, during the Hungarians' participation in the Swedish Falun festival and with one another at a Yugoslav festival of the time, circulate in their respective revival discourses and are documented in more formal histories of both Hungarian and Swedish folk revival histories. Ronström writes about the parallel between the Swedish and Hungarian revival movement:

the stress on improvisation became in a way a stress on self-determination and re-establishment of the individuals' roles in the large structures, in society at large... To improvise, or at least to try, became a way of taking command, acquiring power at least over yourself and your own actions. Thus dancing and music-making became a field where individuality could be developed and expressed, in a society which seemed to leave too little room for individual expressivity [Ronström 1998].

The old-time scene in the U.S. and the dance houses in Hungary were at an even further remove from one another than the Swedish connection and without, as far as I know, direct contact until later. But in 1981 American revival fid-

dlar and folklorist Alan Jabbour was visiting Hungary on an official academic exchange. ‘The Hungarian fiddlers were playing and the schnapps was flowing’, he writes. At one point ‘the word got out that the tall American played the fiddle’. A Breton band held the floor when Alan was asked if he would like to play a tune. ‘I agreed’, the story continues, and the Breton fiddler ‘turned and communicated with her band in a language I could not understand. But I could tell... they were debating what tune in their repertoire the tall American might know. Finally she turned again to me and said brightly in English, “Do you know Over the Waterfall?”’.

This was a stunning question, because in the 1960s Alan had himself learned this tune from his traditional fiddling mentor and taught it to his immediate circle of young musicians. Their band played it regularly and by 1968, when they included it on their recording *The Hollow Rock String Band* it was in wide circulation around the United States. This exchange and sharing of a fiddle tune in a participatory moment of muisicking in a multi-national revival setting is a signal instance of shared aesthetic ideology bridging large cultural gaps.

Both revivals provided a context almost perfectly suited for remaking oneself within a community of shared values. Discussing what movements of youthful rebellion brought to the folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s in America, Cantwell notes that the dedication of young revivalists to mastery of song, instrument, or dance was more than mere pastime or hobby. He quotes American poet Carl Sandburg to emphasize this point, ‘the development of the musical skills to perform a self-accompanied folksong can leave psychological traces more permanent than that of a parlor game or cosmetic jewelery’ [Cantwell 1996:326]. Pete Seeger, an icon of the folk revival, Cantwell continues, ‘understood the psychosocial project in which the revivalist was engaged, ... having been similarly transformed himself’ [329]. Key figures in both the old-time music revival like the folk revivalists whose lives Cantwell documents, abandoned their studies and planned careers, choosing, as was said at the time, to ‘go back to the land’. According to Béla Halmos, as quoted by Frigyesi from earlier publications,

I perhaps do not exaggerate if I say that the youth of the movement including ourselves, were looking for a ‘wholeness’ of life in these songs and dances. These old people have inherited a human dignity, not only beautiful dances. They learned how to work, how to celebrate. This is what we wanted to learn while we were learning from them and playing with them, and perhaps we succeeded somewhat. [Frigyesi 1996:71].

Into the 1970s in the U.S., when the mainstream popularity of folksong had faded, many committed revivalists and the younger old-time music and dance enthusiasts like myself, endeavoured to create a life that resonated with the values of the folk music they cherished: ‘a life radically less reliant on the accumulation of money; a life of participatory, not vicarious, recreation, with a recognition of the importance of small community to such enjoyment ... The cottage crafts, organic gardening, home canning, wood heating, natural foods, natural fibers, natural childbirth ... came into American life from young adults for whom folk music had become, in [folklorist] Barbara Kirshenblatt Gimblett’s phrase, “the site of resistance to the centralization of power”’ [Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1988:151 in Cantwell 1996:350]. Speaking for the generation that created the dance-house movement in Hungary, Sebő, summed up the same idea nicely, ‘we didn’t save the music, the music saved us’.

Having been at college and come of age myself in the old-time revival of the 1970s in New England, I used its resources in just this way, finding my self-defining activities, values, and social cohort through my banjo playing, fiddle playing, dancing, and dance leading. When I encountered the dance-house experience directly and intimately at the Válaszút dance and music camp in central Transylvania in 1994, I felt that I knew what was going on, even though my theoretical and practical knowledge of the music, the dance, the songs, not to mention language, was minimal and inadequate to the task of participating competently in the activities. I have a vivid memory of standing to one side after the evening of dancing itself had ended, where a large group was gathered outside by a fire. Young musicians were playing along with elderly musicians from whom they had learned, the dancers were gathered about, some still dancing, but most singing together in a spirit of great comradeship, even intimacy. Some years later, however, and much further into my ongoing investigation of the dance-house scene in central Transylvania, I wrote that although the socio-musical process of revival in the Transylvanian case indeed had many features in common with the old-time and contradance scenes which I knew at first-hand, I came to realize that I understood little of what it all meant to the participants there. It took me a good few years more to fully appreciate the import of their performances, requiring knowledge on my part of new languages, different histories, and choreomusical subtleties which I am still mastering [Quigley 2004].

This paradoxical pairing of a sameness with which I felt so familiar coupled with such profound difference has stayed with me ever since and I would argue that this points to an opportunity to consider the processes of cultural production at work in folk music/dance revival, in an abstract way, somewhat independently of their contingencies. The differences are profound, as suggested by the short accounts given earlier of the (eastern) European and American cultural history

within which these two examples arose. Interpretations of their meaning and significance are quite rightly usually set within the histories of these very different societies. Cantwell's book, on which I have drawn extensively, after all interprets the folk revival as

a relatively short-lived response--flowing out of various elite, progressive, radical, avant-garde, bohemian, and popular cultures and movements into the commercial marketplace, with little coherent ideology of its own but derived from many ideological traditions--to the conditions of life in America after WWII primarily as they affected young people on at the threshold of adulthood [Cantwell 1996:355].

Balogh and Fülemlé devote almost the entire first half of their essay to a recapitulation of post-war social history in Hungary to account for the multiple messages the choreomusical aesthetic ideology of the dance-house revival carried with it, combining to reinforce its appeal between 1972 and 1989. As their abstract of the essay states:

The process of disintegration and folkloristic discovery of traditional peasant culture in Hungary and in Transylvania, communist peasant policy, and the connections between cities and villages are discussed alongside the phenomena of revival and issues of identity [Balogh and Fülemlé 2008:41].

Across Europe and North America during the 1970s and into the 1980s, participatory choreomusical folk revival became an important focus in the lives of many young middle-class people. Shared conditions of modernity at mid-century fuelled a turn to the 'folk' and their music/dance as a source of authenticity on which to build an alternative aesthetic ideology outside the scope/reach of the dominant power structures of both the capitalist West and the soft-socialism in Hungary.

As participatory idioms, old-time and dance-house share many musical and choreographic features that typify this field, including the improvisatory spontaneous choreomusical co-performance which I have emphasized in this account of their commonalities. These are meta-stylistic features of the music and the dance, however. Their specifics of ensemble, rhythm, melody, timbre, and so on, are very different indeed and, I have argued, not easily translatable [Quigley 2018]. They share as well the main elements of the 'recipe' for revival outlined by Livingston: 'the presence of core revivalists, revival informants, a revival discourse, followers, activities, and associated enterprises' [1999:71]. But the ways

in which these components were organized, coordinated, and institutionalized in American old-time and Hungarian dance-house practice are significantly different in ways that reflect the democratic West and the more authoritarian socialist East. It is in their inspiration and at their moments of inception that their similarity is strongest; the consequences of their differences become more clear as they mature and become more formally institutionalized within their contrasting political economies. That process, however, is a topic for another time.

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# 'We All Know That, Don't We?': Situating Scholarly Knowledge about the Czech 'Folklore Movement'

*Vít Zdrálek*

*Abstract:*

This chapter is a reflexive contemplation of the 'common sense' in Czech music folkloristics/ethnology from the point of view of the Czech ethnomusicologist whose personal as well as research experience has, significantly in this context, been formed *outside* the Czech folklore and folkloristics/ethnology practices and discourses. Partly based on reflexive ethnographic observations of the ongoing research project 'Weight and Weightlessness of Folklore: The Folklore Movement of the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in the Czech Lands' (2017-2019) hosted by the Ethnological Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences, partly based on autoethnographic self-inspections of the author's experience of the 'alien affect' towards the dominant Czech folklore discourse in the Czech-German 'borderlands' of the 1980s and the 1990s, and partly discussing the post-1989 folkloristics/ethnology versus anthropology debate and the less pronounced, but no less acute music folkloristics/ethnology versus ethnomusicology debate in the Czech Republic, the text formulates what it hopes to be the key questions for understanding the *positionality* of Czech music folkloristics/ethnological knowledge and creates an intellectual space for *self-reflexive* disciplinary *discussion* which it sees as critical for the future of Czech music folkloristics/ethnological research.<sup>1</sup>

*Keywords:*

Czech music folkloristics, Czech music ethnology, post-communism, positionality of knowledge, self-reflexivity

'We all know that, don't we?' goes a frequent rhetorical question during the seminars we as members of the ongoing research project 'Weight and Weightlessness of Folklore: The Folklore Movement of the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in the Czech Lands' regularly hold. 'No, we do not, or at least I do not', flashes an answer in my head. But what is it that the group of researchers knows or thinks it knows? And what are or ought to be the implications of such knowledge? Does it mean that everything is so clear that further questions need not be asked? If such is the case, what do we need the research project for in the first place? Or is the project meant for 'mere documenting' or 'filling in' the ready-made slots? And to whom are things already clear? Who are the people in the research group? Ultimately, indeed, *what* should be clear to *whom*? It seems that

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a special relationship between *what* as the object of knowing and *who* as the knowing subject is being established here. It is the nature or quality of this relationship, the *positionality* of knowledge, that caught my attention when I first came into touch with the project in September 2015 and it became my primary concern and mutually agreed-on research focus since I became a member of the research grant team in January 2017. In this chapter, I am going to elaborate on these and some other questions, all related to the problem of positionality, and I am going to do it from the position of an outsider to the ‘folklore movement’ and the surrounding scholarly discourse.

In the first part, I discuss how I became involved in the project and what is my role in it given my outsider perspective. In the second part, I further elaborate on motivation behind the positionality of the researcher, in this case my ‘alien affection’ against the backdrop of ‘common sense’ of the folklore discourse in the Czech Republic. In the third part, I develop on an analogy between the post-1989 folkloristics/ethnology versus anthropology debate and the less pronounced, but no less acute music folkloristics/music ethnology versus ethnomusicology debate to highlight some potential critical benefits and to point out the key sites for critical scrutiny of the music-ethnological practice and its language. In the concluding part, I develop on the distinctions between the different methodological perspectives of both respected fields to formulate what I consider to be the critical questions for understanding the positionality of music-ethnological knowledge in the Czech Republic. The overall aim of the chapter is to challenge the reader to step back a little from the immersion in one’s own disciplinary routine practice and experience and to create a critical intellectual space for self-reflexivity.

Before I start, two brief disclaimers need to be made. First, as will be clear from the first part of the text, I am entering the field of Czech folk(lo)re music studies from scratch. Furthermore, I believe the core of my potential contribution lies precisely in this outside perspective. However, I do not ‘preach the truth’ to anybody and I hope it will not be interpreted that way. I am much humbled by the deep inside knowledge of my fellow colleagues involved in the project. During our regular seminars, I have been constantly reminded of the complexity of the ‘folklore movement’ issue. What I would like to offer, though, is a reflection from what I would call a perspective of the ‘sympathetic outside’.

Second, by folk music studies I refer to the Central European research practice historically established as the study of local or national folk musical traditions perceived as one’s own or in some kind of relation to it, whereas by ethnomusicology I refer to the predominantly Anglo-Saxon academic practice, historically established as the research of usually different world’s musical traditions from a supposedly external and global comparative perspective and as opposed to for

example folk life studies. Music folkloristics and ethnology would fall under the former, whereas the anthropologically-informed ethnomusicology would fall under the latter. I deliberately use the words ‘perceived as’ and ‘supposedly’ to create a space for a critical distance. By doing so I want to make clear I do not take these attempts in definition for granted but rather as part of the problem.

## Entering the field: in search of perspective

Being a Czech, but intellectually inhabiting and researching in the field of South African popular musical culture and ethnomusicology for almost a decade, I had felt a profound debt towards music ethnology in my home country and its traditional research topics – local music folk(lore). As far as it is possible for an uninformed Czech, I knew very little about Czech and Moravian folklore, I did not know the researchers and, perhaps worst of all, I did not know the scholarly discourse. As an ethnomusicologist teaching in the Department of Musicology at Charles University in Prague, I felt compelled to learn more about it so that I would be able to provide my students with some insight into this important Czech academic tradition. I also felt a professional need to get to know my colleagues in this close, yet unfamiliar field. Having just completed my doctoral studies, I truly welcomed the invitation to what turned out to be one of the initial meetings in September 2015, aiming at writing a research grant application for this current project. What role could have I been assigned, though, given my inexperience in this field? It was agreed that I could make effective use of my strangeness to the topic and the folklore research milieu, providing the ‘insiders’ some sort of outside perspective. But how did we arrive at this, perhaps not that obvious, point?

It virtually emerged from my initial observations. During the first meeting, the group of people consisted of about ten mostly senior music ethnologists, all of them from the Institute of Ethnology, The Czech Academy of Sciences, a key institution in Czech scholarly tradition of studying folklore.<sup>2</sup> As a nearly complete outsider, I was struck by the extent of shared pre-understanding to the topic of the ‘folklore movement’. I was surprised by the level of familiarity with the topic and even with a kind of ‘group spirit’ suggesting of a homogeneity I would not have expected to find among scholars. The explanation, however, came soon as

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2 The tradition of folk music research, historically more or less directly linked to the current Institute of Ethnology, The Czech Academy of Sciences, includes a series of research institutions and projects since 1905 with a notable break in the 1970s and 1980s during the political period of the so-called ‘normalization’ [for more see Pospíšilová and Nosková 2006; see also Woitsch and Jůnová Macková 2016].

I realized that virtually all the people in the room had been or still were involved in the ‘folklore movement’ as its practitioners, moreover, often important ones given their authority earned by their often life-long performance experience, the research expertise and their affiliation with a respected academic institution.

So, prior to their academic work, there already was a long-term non-academic shared practical experience and, along with it, significantly, also a prehistory of mutual social relationships they had developed as practitioners in various folklore groups and as experts assuming various positions in the ‘movement’s’ institutions and during its events. All these factors contributed to the unique atmosphere and specific social dynamics I observed and learned to understand during subsequent research grant events. At times, it almost felt as if I was sitting with a folklore group itself rather than with a group of researchers, such was the power of the spirit of communality, of industriousness, and of an ethos of mutual agreement. Practice *and* research seemed to remarkably merge into a *single discourse* and it was precisely this overlap that caught my initial attention.

What must have seemed completely obvious to them, did not seem obvious to me. To clarify what I mean, I am going to draw a brief parallel. Having quite a familiar experience of the musicological environment, I am constantly fascinated with the involvement of many musicologists in the classical music practice as musicians, critics and educators. However, I tend to see it as an overlap of roles not to be taken for granted. What does the readiness to pronounce aesthetic judgements of taste [Bourdieu 1984] mean for the actual musicological scholarship? Do not they, perhaps, become part of the discourse they are supposed to study too much? How do they critically distinguish between these roles of being participants *and* researchers at the same time? What space is left for a distanced critical contemplation as a necessary condition of any scholarship when there seems to be no boundary but a rather messy space of undifferentiated knowledge production? How do we navigate our scholarly practices through the muddy waters of inevitable clashes of interests and agendas? I do not obviously plead for any ‘disinterested research’ which is, indeed, impossible, but for taking our positionality seriously.

These and other questions whirled in my head during that first ‘folklore movement’ research seminar I attended in 2015. During a follow-up discussion with the leader of the project, then still in preparation, Daniela Stavělová, I raised some of these questions expressing also my variously conditioned critical perspective of folklore practices and discourse I am going to discuss in the following section. I suggested that my outside perspective – institutional, discursive and experiential – could be potentially useful to the project and it was agreed that I would provide the researchers with a reflexive critique. It was also agreed that my involvement in the project will take the shape of participant observa-

tions during the meetings, seminars and other activities related to the project (I was even assigned a portion of the shared workload) and, most importantly, of interviews with the researchers. In other words, I stood at the start of an *ethnography* of a scholarly collective working on an oral-historical research project on the ‘folklore movement’ in the Czech part of former Czechoslovakia between the 1940s and the 1980s.

By virtue, the current writing can only be preliminary at this stage. I do not systematically work with the interviews as they are still incomplete, so I mostly rely on my participant as well as auto-ethnographic observations which I try to critically engage with literature. Nevertheless, I hope the chapter may usefully document the work in progress. As part of the ongoing research project, which is to be published towards the end of the second year (out of three) of the grant, it may still also have an impact on the thinking of my fellow researchers and hence the final research result. In fact, its abbreviated core version was already read at the international symposium ‘Folklore revival movement of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in shifting social, cultural and political contexts’ organized as part of the research grant in October 2017, where it stirred up a lively debate.

### **Positioning the researcher: between common sense and alien affection**

Why do I ask all these questions in relation to a well-established research area such as folk music studies in the Czech Republic? The anthropological answer would simply be that it is because our task is to critique common sense [Herzfeld 2001:1]. In order to see the common sense as not that common after all, one needs to get a perspective, a critical distance. As a Czech ethnomusicologist studying, until recently, South African religious popular culture, which had meant to inhabit very different academic and broader cultural contexts, and as someone virtually untouched by the study of Czech folklore I hope my perspective is unfamiliar enough to offer a fresh view of the old field.

Besides, as a critical point of view and as the means to explain my experience, I use what the feminist scholar Sara Ahmed called an ‘alien affect’. She used it to describe an affect of alienation towards a shared agreement about matters the majority considers joyful and unproblematic. In other words and in general, it is an affective alienation towards emotionally positive common sense [Ahmed 2010]. It is this affect of alienation I have regularly experienced as someone coming from a geographical area virtually erased from the modern Czech and Moravian folklore imagination and the surrounding discourse, the Czech-Ger-

man ‘borderland’. I make this concept of an affective alienation a useful tool to highlight my perspective.

At least since Kenneth Gourlay’s critique [1978] of Allan Merriam’s ‘sciencing’ vision of ethnomusicology [1964], the importance of understanding position(ality) of researchers in relation to generating music ethnographic knowledge has moved to the centre of attention in ethnomusicology. Closely following the trend in cultural and social anthropology culminating in publications such as the edited volume *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* [Clifford and Marcus 1986], ethnomusicologists came up with their own reaction to the ‘crisis of representation’ in the postcolonial context, up to then barely reflected upon. Significantly for our post-communist context, although quite understandably due to different historical developments of the respected fields, neither the first nor the second enlarged edition of *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology* [Barz and Cooley 1997 and 2008] offered the slightest discussion of the specific ethnographic condition in the Central and Eastern European folk music research.

So, how have I been conditioned and, perhaps, even biased in my research? I grew up in the Ore Mountains or Erzgebirge (in German) or Krušné hory (in Czech), in a small mountain town above the world-famous spa region of Karlovy Vary or Carlsbad (in German). Once a glamorous hub of the Czech German-speaking culture where Goethe and Beethoven used to spend their time and Dvořák’s *New World Symphony* had its continental premiere, the region became – starting from 1945/6 – just another part of the vast depopulated and further undifferentiated area called the ‘borderland’ (*pohraničí*) in Czech public and political discourse [Brenner 2015:199–232]. This is because, during the years 1945 and 1946, almost three million Germans, mostly living in this ‘borderland’, were forcibly moved out of Czechoslovakia based on the application of the principle of the collective guilt and punishment for the Second World War.

In the aftermath, the deserted land and industries, villages, towns and cities, if they were not destroyed, began to be slowly, though never completely, repopulated by a new and extraordinarily diverse mix of people coming from all over Czechoslovakia, including Czech-, Slovak- and other ‘related’ languages-speaking minorities from across the border. The slogan of the day was ‘to make the borderland, finally and forever, Czech again’ [Brenner 2015/2009:199–232]. The point I want to make is that it was precisely this early experience with the culturally uprooted society in the making, which, besides other factors, never allowed me to take cultural and national identity for granted, including its supposed musical expression in the form of national folklore.

I cannot say for sure there was no live folk music performed in our town when I was growing up in the 1980s and the 1990s, but I can safely say I cannot remem-

ber any. In my experience, folk music performance was solely reserved to music education classes. Accompanied by our teacher either on the piano or the violin we would have sung Czech and Moravian songs from our music textbooks which offered their specific selection<sup>3</sup>. We could not have sung from memory because, except perhaps for a few exceptions, we wouldn't have known the songs from live experience. Furthermore, the fact that *all* these songs were *always* from *somewhere else* (the provenience was given next to their titles in the textbook) puzzled me as a child no less than their strange dialects which no one of us as children spoke and for which purpose the songs were probably provided with a glossary. In effect, I found it difficult to relate to these folk songs from *elsewhere* more intimately and even if I liked them, their singing seemed to me a bit artificial. It never occurred to me as a child, though, that there *could* perhaps be songs also from *our* region and I cannot remember anyone suggesting of such a possibility. It was simply a non-issue, a common sense. In that 'common sense', our region neither existed in music textbooks, nor in other spheres of national musical life of those days.

Besides, the extent of cultural fragmentation of this society in the making was truly immense and there was no or just a very limited common ground. If anything replaced the missing shared cultural background after 1945 it was the new culture of official public performances, the liturgies of the communist political order, the various annual spectacles by which the agreement between the governing and the governed was regularly re-confirmed, regardless of how formal it increasingly became towards the end of the 1980s. To describe the musical landscape of these events, I can only remember the sound of brass bands playing their generic repertory of Czech brass band music (*dechovka*), quite regardless of regional origin, either live or from the town's public-address loudspeakers. This is not to say there were no musicians with a genuine folk music background in my town, but they would have formed just tiny 'micromusical' cultures<sup>4</sup>, islands of private performances or performances for variously limited audiences such as gypsy musicians, singers of different religious bodies and even a handful of German-speaking musicians who were either allowed or ordered to stay.

It was not until I was 18 that I heard the original local German music performed live. To fulfil an assignment for the 'Folk song' course in my music ed-

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3 There was a clear effort to cover the traditional 'ethnographic regions' and to offer some fresh compositions too. Religion-related songs were obviously scarce, including Christmas carols, while quite a few other songs supporting various political agendas such as the 'brotherly friendship' with the Soviet Union or – progressively in this case – anticolonialism and internationalism found their way into the textbooks.

4 The term micromusic is used with a reference to Marc Slobin's *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West* [Slobin 1993].

ucation study programme, I decided to ask a local German female musician, a singer and the zither player Berta Růžičková, whom I knew but had never heard before, for an interview and to record her performing a couple of local songs. She performed music from her native Egerland (the region of the upper Ohře river basin) and songs by her favourite and in his days locally a very popular musician Anton Günther (1876-1937) from the mountain ridge village of Boží dar or Gotesgab (in German). It was for the first time in my life that I heard music bearing an authentic spirit of the place and of the landscape where I lived. The music sparked my interest, and even more so because, back in the classroom, I could have revived a musical world so unique and different from the music gathered by my classmates from regions with more conventional socio-demographic histories. This experience made me question the politics behind the hegemony of a specific selection of Czech and especially Moravian folk music that got to represent the Czech national culture since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and which makes the core of the ‘folklore movement’ repertory till today.

Where is the music that belongs to the landscape I was growing in and into, I began to ask. Where is the music of all the people who lived all around here not so long ago and who shaped its physical and cultural landscape for centuries? What was the soundscape of the towns moulded by deep river valleys and the villages scattered on mountain plains like? Despite some of the original music being performed by its former inhabitants, the so-called Sudeten-Germans, and their descendants in Germany and elsewhere [Präger 2014], the musical ecosystem and the whole cultural landscape filled with sounds and poetics of their homeland has been lost. There has been a void of silence instead, a musical void not dissimilar to what Philip Bohlman described in his methodological text on how to study ‘the field of the past’, referring to the Austrian region of Burgenland which, significantly, is also a borderland [Bohlman 2008:264].

As many others who began to deal with this historical heritage since the 1990s<sup>5</sup>, I developed a nostalgia for the lost world. But is not nostalgia, after all, among the core driving emotions behind so much anthropological work as David Berliner reveals in his introductory chapter to *Anthropology and Nostalgia* [Berliner 2015]? Neither did I read Milan Kundera’s *Joke* (1967), a novel so musicologically revealing as demonstrated by Michael Beckerman [1996], nor did I watch Karel Vachek’s mocking documentary *Moravian Hellas* (1963) at the time, but when I saw a Czech or Moravian folk costume or heard the ‘folklore voice’ or the sound of the cimbalom, I began to see it and hear it not only as just a slight-

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5 There is a number of scholarly as well as educational activities going on, for example, under the auspices of the civic organization called Antikomplex (<http://www.antikomplex.cz/>) since the 1990s. A brief discursive analysis shows nostalgia as one of the key driving emotions underlying their activities and textual production.

ly strange cultural expression but, regardless of the particular intention, as politically charged cultural fakery and even cultural violence. To use Sara Ahmed's language [Ahmed 2010], I developed an *affect alienating* me from the dominant folklore musical culture.

I am, indeed, aware of the elusiveness of terms such as 'fake' (in contrast to 'authentic') in this context and of the subjectivity of this self-reflexive and partly auto-ethnographic description I have just provided. However, I found it important to illuminate the sources of my affective alienation towards the commonsensical folklore imagination and discourse. I tried to clarify motivations behind my critical perspective because they are constitutive of my position as a scholar and constitutive of the positionality of knowledge I produce in this context. I tried to describe what I would call a genealogy of cultural discomfort, of an alienation of affect, which I see as a useful tool to initiate cultural critique.

### Between music ethnology and ethnomusicology: the post-communist debate

The post-1989 era in the Czech Republic has been marked by debates between protagonists of traditional 'local' folkloristics, rebranded anew as ethnology in the 1990s, and 'Western' anthropology, both social and cultural. The latter was represented mostly by scholars who went to exile during the communist regime, established themselves at Western universities and who – in their view – faced hostility to their attempts to (re)introduce anthropology into the Czech academia and to reform and perhaps even transform local folkloristics/ethnology, which they saw as isolated and lacking in theoretical as well as practical research standards, into what they saw as world-standard anthropological scholarship [see for example Skalník 2002]. These debates, which took place in dozens of articles in well-established journals such as *Český lid* (*The Czech Ethnological Journal*, the main bulk published between 2004–2006) or in neophytes such as *Sociologický časopis* (*Czech Sociological Review*, namely the special issue 2007/43(1)), were often very emotional as protagonists of both camps bitterly defended their positions based on *different* experiences of *different* academic cultures on *different* sides of the so-called Iron Curtain. The debates may serve as a revealing window into an ongoing transformation of the Czech post-communist academia in general and anthropology and folkloristics/ethnology in particular, if anyone ever decides to study it.

Several issues resurfaced during these debates, concerning the research practices of local folkloristics/ethnology, in this case their often unreflected historical position in the national project they had helped to build and maintained for

a long time through the discursive production of knowledge about 'folk' culture as the main *resource* and at the same time an *expression* of the imagined national culture. Going well beyond the insider-outsider and emic-etic dichotomies, these discussions revealed, in the first place, the depth of difference between the 'Western' and the 'Eastern' historical academic experiences and theoretical practices. Moreover, from the performative perspective, this difference in discursive production can be productively seen as lying not merely in different *representations* of the (factually) same as in producing virtually different *objects* and, ultimately, different (ways of) knowledge. In this context, studying how knowledge becomes situated, how and why it happens the way it does in a particular context and what it produces seems to be of utmost importance.

Despite the strategic practice of an easy rebranding of folk music studies or music folkloristics as music ethnology or even as ethnomusicology in the post-communist academia, I see the practices of these intellectual traditions as rather distinct. In the already mentioned and analogical rebranding of folkloristics as ethnology and even as anthropology and, of course, in the debates surrounding it (see the debate in the above-mentioned journals), we can sense value-based assumptions, both evolutionary and geopolitical. These disciplines tend to be seen as evolutionary stages where, at the same time, the evolutionary line of progress points westwards. But we should not, for example, think of the local tradition as agenda-driven, whereas the Western tradition as not so and therefore ready to serve as a supposedly 'neutral' or more 'objective' point of view. Indeed, the one is as historically, socially, culturally and politically situated as the other. The task for the researchers of whatever scholarly tradition is to critically engage with their intellectual genealogies and by doing so to delineate their true significance.

To critically elaborate this idea, however, I would suggest that while ethnomusicology has more or less successfully tackled its colonial heritage via the ongoing debate informed by the postcolonial critique, it is my impression that in the Central European tradition of folk music studies, the national(ist) discourse began to be critically reflected upon only recently and as the proverbial blind spot continues to operate on the level of discourse: assumptions and biases; research objects and themes, its designs and methods; styles of writing and genres of publications; and, ultimately, the language we speak about it all. Hence, for example, the historical ignorance of the musical past of the Czech-German 'borderlands' in scholarly discourse. It is important to remember that the discourses tend to perpetuate themselves regardless of intention, they so to speak operate us, unless we actively and critically oppose them by developing sophisticated theoretical strategies. It may seem a superficial observation but already a fleeting look at the frequency of the use of words such as nation and folk (and they both have

specific connotations in our part of Europe) in the names of institutions, journals, events, and even as part of descriptive and analytical language, signals the presence of an elephant in the room. What to do with nation and folk then? Or, perhaps, even more acutely what and how to do *without* them? These may sound as odd questions, but they should be asked seriously, even though the answers may not be at hand.

If I think of the difference between the two disciplinary traditions, local and Western, I do not think in the above-mentioned value-based terms, but rather in terms of their actual ability to reflect upon their practices critically. When speaking about ethnomusicology and folk music studies my point is not to think in, in my opinion, conceptually unproductive frameworks such as intellectual colonization, hegemony or domination, in terms of centres and peripheries, the West and the East, as is the case in some either apologetic or aggrieved opinions expressed as part of the folkloristics/ethnology–anthropology debate [for a summary see Buchowski and Červinková 2015]. Instead, I suggest with Skalník [Skalník 2013] that we measure intellectual progress by the success in critically engaging with our own theoretical practices whatever they are, that we measure it by its analytical sharpness, its ability to pursue the problem beyond the horizon of the obvious and to break the circular nature of argumentation loops based on reified conceptual stereotypes seeing things where there are just variously embedded constructions. It will take a considerable critical effort to work against the discourse, to develop new conceptualization and language liberated from this burdensome heritage; this, however, is the way of a scholar.

## Conclusion: situating the music-ethnological knowledge

The case of the Czech ‘folklore movement’ and its study make this intellectual endeavour truly interesting. As I have observed, a clear majority of the members of the research team was or still is involved in its activities and performances as *practitioners*. Besides invaluable benefits such as for example deep first-hand factual and long-term experiential knowledge, rich personal and social networks etc., from an ethnographic point of view, the insider position poses well-known problems, mainly the notorious ‘blind spots’. But still, is it not an ultimate advantage to have such a familiar knowledge of one’s field? Is it not also ethnomusicology’s goal to ‘make the strange familiar’ via long-term participant observation?

A considerable number of research methods and approaches have been used or at least tried in ethnomusicology since its inception, long-term in-depth ethnographic research lying at the core of its contemporary practice. Indeed, the em-

phasis placed by ethnomusicologists on field research experience and the value assigned to it marks out the red thread of the discipline's identity among other music studies. The ability to get the primary insight and somewhat also a taste of the 'primary' experience of the musical performance through direct musical participation has become – although also fruitfully criticised [Bigenho 2008] – the *sine qua non* of any research deserving to be called ethnomusicological. In this context, it is important to note, though, that despite new methods such as ethnomusicology at home or auto-ethnography it is still generally assumed that, in most cases, the researcher enters the so-called field from the *outside*. And if not, it is believed that the intellectual process of defamiliarization in such a case is usually more difficult than getting to know a completely strange field.

What about the situation where the researcher is not only a near complete *insider* but from his or her authoritative institutional position sometimes even consciously and openly engaged with the practices and the people he or she studies? What about the distinction between emic and etic perspectives in such a situation? To what extent is it reflected upon in the actual research? How do the writing styles and usual formats and genres of production lend themselves to self-reflexive elaborations? Does it allow for a view of the tradition in a broader historical and political context? Auto-ethnographic method, self-reflexivity, ethnography 'at home', a richly theorized ethnographic description, practice as research or, perhaps, applied ethnomusicology would come to the ethnomusicologist's mind as possible methodological solutions to analytically fruitfully framing the specific situation. These would be some of the critical self-scrutinizing approaches that an ethnomusicologist would most likely assume. But this is not quite what folk music scholars usually do as far as I know. So what knowledge do they produce? Do they even know it?

Harsh questions. But I think scholarly work deserves its name solely on condition that the knowledge presented is clearly acknowledged as situated and its actual positionality carefully described. The less I see these large issues thought through and debated in relation to the local historical, political, social and cultural conditions among Czech music folklorists and ethnologists, the more essential I consider it to cultivate their discussion for any reasonable development of the studies of our region's folk(lore) musical cultures, including their modern forms such as the 'folklore movement'. Being aware of the past ambiguities of its political functions, its uses and abuses, its weight and weightlessness, if you wish, regardless of its practitioners' awareness or intention throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and facing the current resurrection of identity politics and revived ethnic nationalism across Europe, and its post-communist part in particular, such questions call for an even more thorough and engaged critical debate as to what roles and positions should the researchers assume when engaging with

this prominent cultural practice in order to meet the highest critical standards of their craft. I hope the current project, of which this contribution is just a minor part, may serve as a good start.

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# **Folklore Revival Movements in Europe post 1950**

## **Shifting Contexts and Perspectives**

**Edited by**

**Daniela Stavělová and Theresa Jill Buckland**

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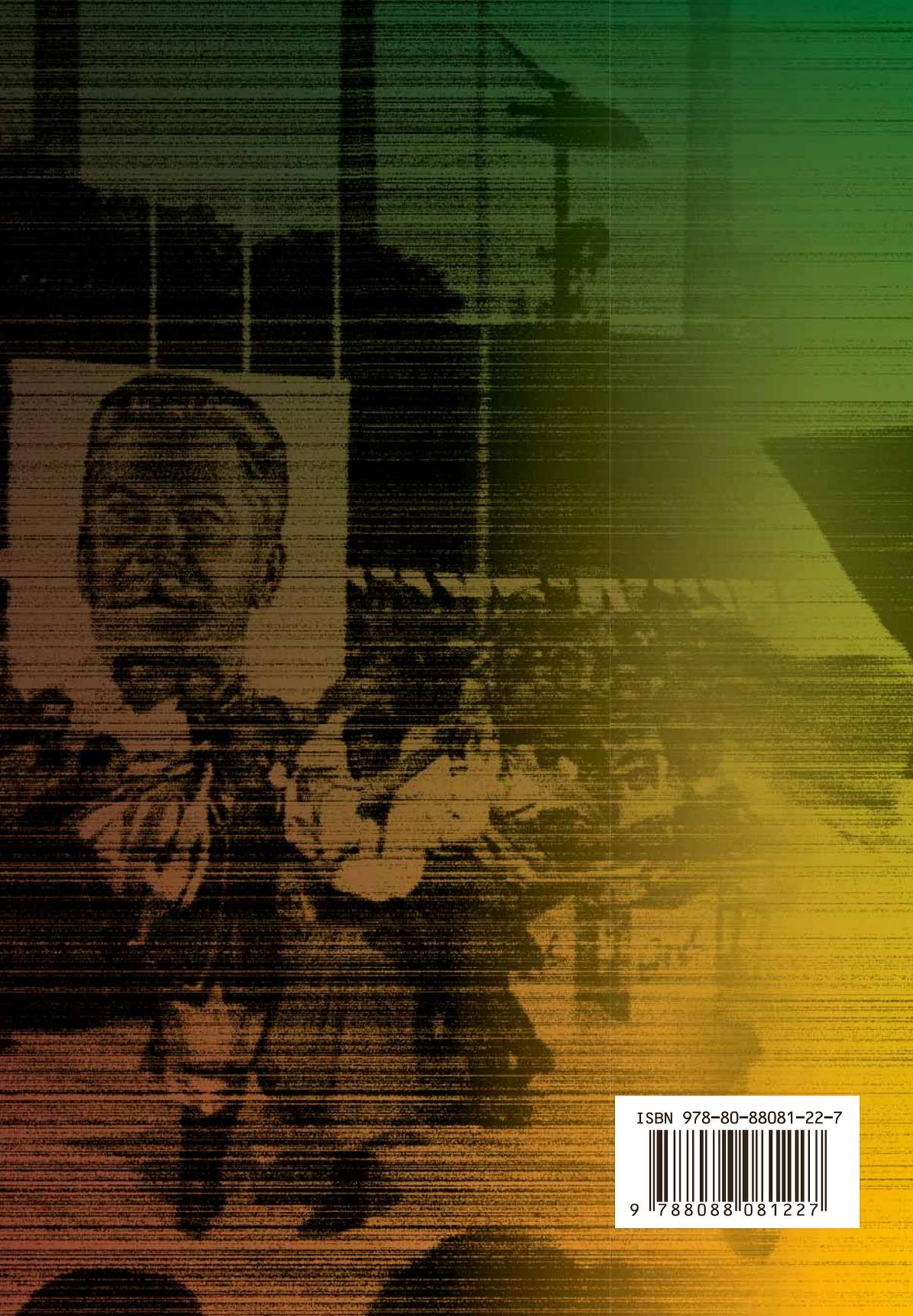
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