

## **ANTHROPOLOGY OF DANCE CULTURE –** Possibilities, directions, connections

*The programme is implemented within the framework of the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Cooperation Programme, ROHU446 – EduCultCentre, the project Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cultural incubator for performing arts, organised by Csokonai Theatre.*

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## Publisher's foreword

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PÉTER GEMZA

As the director of the Csokonai Theatre, I had in mind when writing the project that I wanted to create a strong foundation for the cultural development of our region, with the Csokonai Theatre in Debrecen at the centre of it.

The idea of establishing a dance company was a constant theme in my work as theatre director and plans for its creation had been made earlier, but at the time it was still difficult to finance. So I had to take a different approach in order to achieve this goal. I saw the potential for the development of dance culture in the region in the need to support and encourage teachers in the region and to form a community of dispersed dance teachers. I combined these two objectives in a project. On fifteen occasions, we have brought together dance teachers from the region for meetings with the best in their field.

The other important principle was to strengthen the scientific background that supports the strengthening and professional fulfilment of the dance culture region. From my studies in dance anthropology, I know the important and forward-looking role of Hungarian dance research in the international scientific community. The founding works of the discipline were written in Hungary long before its emergence in Europe. The opportunity to publish a volume in Debrecen that would fill a gap, summarise the present situation and chart new paths, seemed an exciting possibility.

I first described this vision in 2015 when I was planning the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border regional programme. The possibility of creating a dance company, a strong professional background and the continuous improvement of the quality of post-graduate education were therefore the objectives of the long-term programme that was finally implemented within the framework of the Romanian-Hungarian Interreg project. Fifteen serious professional weekends are now over. The dance troupe of the Csokonai Theatre has been formed and the reader has in his hands a book which, with the help of a broad professional collaboration, is the first book of studies on the anthropology of dance in Hungary, which is of international interest.

The vision required a partner such as the Department of Ethnography of the University of Debrecen and an excellent researcher such as Dr. Máté Kavecsánszki, who is not only a great specialist but also a good organizer, who took on the entire professional and logistical work.

It is possible to create a vision alone, but it is only possible and worthwhile to realise it together with others.

I very much hope that we have planted a seed that will produce strong shoots on both sides of the border in the future.

Peter Gemza

# Dance Anthropology – The Anthropology of Dance Culture. Searching for a Way and Possible Interpretations in Spring 2023 (introductory thoughts)

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MÁTÉ KAVECSÁNSZKI

The series of dance anthropology conferences held in the spring of 2023 within the project of the Csokonai Theatre in Debrecen was a challenge for the organisers in several respects. On the one hand, we not only had to reflect on the reputation of dance anthropology in Hungary, its achievements to date, its relationship with related studies, and the possibilities and ways forward, but we also had to reach out to experts including dance researchers with a real anthropological or ethnochoreological perspective, on the one hand, people who have come into closer contact with the study of dance culture, mainly through their anthropological fieldwork, and, on the other hand, people who represent borderline disciplines and thematic areas, thus enabling us to broaden our interpretative horizons. Last but not least, we also paid attention to the fact that the researchers we approached should be connected in some way (at least as representatives of a partner institution),<sup>1</sup> with Debrecen, the Department of Ethnology of the University of Debrecen, and to the composition of a professional staff that could provide theoretical and scientific background – representing a regionally focused applied scientific status - for the dance art aspirations of Csokonai Theatre.

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<sup>1</sup> The above mentioned partner institutions are: the Department of Ethnology made a cooperation agreement with the Hungarian Association of Ethnochoreology in 2016, which was renewed during the conference in 2023. The Theoretical and Methodological Research Institute of Hungarian Academy of Arts became a partner of the department in 2023. The HUN-REN-DE Ethnological Research Group works alongside the Department of Ethnology.



As far as we know, there has never been a conference in Hungary specifically dedicated to dance anthropology, which is also the title of the conference. Meeting the above challenges has created a complex field of spectacular successes and reckoning lessons that is a characteristic of any new initiative.

As the Csokonai Theatre wanted to organise conferences specifically on dance anthropology in order to fulfil its commitment to the tender, we had to consider what the name would mean in 2023 in Hungary. This required taking at least two aspects into account:

1) The disciplinary specificities of the field of dance anthropology, its theories and methodology in international academia. In this respect, it was particularly important to grasp the broadest possible epistemological horizon, which ultimately justifies the name of the volume (*Anthropology of Dance Culture*). This is a validation of the tradition which, from the 1980s onwards, resulted in a new form of dance science as a result of a change of approach in dance research. The change in approach did not primarily mean a critique of previous approaches, but rather a new focus of research, which shifted from structural analysis to the analysis of the social context of dance culture, and in which a cultural and social science approach gradually took over. The „new dance studies” that emerged during this period, while not rejecting the importance<sup>2</sup> of a structural analysis or a structuralist approach to dance, turned to the social, historical, political and economic contexts of dance. This kind of „new dance scholarship” played a dominant role internationally in the research of the second half of the nineties, with the ambition to interpret the moving body as a „text” and to „read” it in order to investigate individual and communal identities.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, Susan Leigh Foster’s book *Reading Dancing*, published in 1986, was a major step forward. In this book the author looks upon dance as a readable text, following a structuralist model, as a cultural product, the analysis of which allows for the interpretation of the underlying structures

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<sup>2</sup> The fact that the two are not the same, especially in the oeuvre of György Martin, becomes clear from Csilla Könzei’s study (Könzei 2020: 254–269), although László Kürti had also referred to this earlier (Kürti 1995: 144.)

<sup>3</sup> O’Shea 2021: 23.

of social systems.<sup>4</sup> Foster's approach has also led to important changes in thinking about dance history, as it has focused not on formal, genealogical typological analysis, but on its contexts. This is not without precedent, of course: the structuralist approach and semantic turn<sup>5</sup> in dance anthropology that emerged from the 1970s onwards, in addition to structural analysis, also sought to gain a deep, explicitly anthropological understanding<sup>6</sup> of the social context of dance, while at the same time social meanings and representations received much less attention,<sup>7</sup> so that the socio-cultural significance and role of dance could not be fully illuminated. Criticisms of structuralism were mainly directed at the question of representations that are difficult to decode by linguistic methods, which already implied the later postmodern critique. Thus, later, taking poststructuralist critique into account, the more nuanced consideration of historical and social contexts was no longer neglected. The essays in the volume *Corporealities*, edited by Foster, focus on dance as a choreography of historical, social and aesthetic relations, which, together with the aforementioned relations, are embedded in a complex system of power networks.<sup>8</sup>

Overall, the interpretation of dance as a social phenomenon required interdisciplinary approaches and intensive, theory-oriented and methodological interaction with relevant related disciplines. According to Janet O'Shea, the international foundations for the new dance studies were laid mainly by empirical cultural studies (folklore, anthropology, ethnography in the broad sense), dance analysis, philosophy (especially aesthetics and phenomenology) and history.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the process of the development of dance studies in Hungary, the first texts of Western dance studies came from anthropology, since one of the best (visual) ways of seeing the „Other” was dance culture. And in anthropological analysis, the study of dance went hand in hand with

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<sup>4</sup> Foster 1992. See especially the foreword, p. XVI–XVIII.; and the third chapter of the book [Readings in Dance's History: Historical Approaches to Dance Composition]: 99–185.

<sup>5</sup> Kürti 2014: 741–742.

<sup>6</sup> See for example the works of Adrienne Kaeppler and John Blacking: Kaeppler 1991: 11–21; Kaeppler 2000: 116–125; Blacking 1983: 89–99.

<sup>7</sup> O'Shea 2021: 27.

<sup>8</sup> Giersdorf 2020: 61. See also Foster 2005a: X–XVI.; Foster 2005b 1–26; Tomko 2005: 159–182.

<sup>9</sup> O'Shea 2021: 25.

the interpretation of other phenomena of culture, so that the relationship between them could be articulated more quickly. Moreover, in anthropology, the study of bodily processes was a given task. This question, in turn, takes us back to the period in the history of anthropology before the emergence of the "new dance studies".<sup>10</sup>

2) We also had to take into account domestic disciplinary traditions and practices, given that the same scientific names may carry differences both in the Hungarian-international context and within our country.<sup>11</sup>

Today dance studies do not have an autonomous status in Hungary, and its research topics and methods can be related to different disciplines. Although in the classification of disciplines of the National Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences, the discipline of dance and movement is included in the field of arts, there is no field of dance studies in the humanities, and in the nomenclature of the MTA dance and movement is not even included, while musicology appears as an independent discipline.<sup>12</sup> *Dance research therefore has no independent academic status in Hungary.* Although it does have an academic working committee, which is part of the Ethnographic Committee, since folk dance research, the most theoretically and methodologically mature branch of Hungarian dance studies, has a world-class history going back many decades. This means that in the nomenclature

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<sup>10</sup> The study by Gábor Biczó in this volume examines the topic in details, and see also Kürti 1995: 149; Kürti 2014: 740–742.

<sup>11</sup> Taking into account the history of dance research in Hungary, during which especially folk dance research has been able to acquire direct disciplinary characteristics, at the same time specializing in different readings and thematic areas, creating dance folklore, ethnochoreology, and a structural analysis and notational system that is well or poorly integrated into the latter, but with the most complete theoretical and methodological apparatus of all. Alongside these is the field of dance anthropology, creating a series of overlapping fields of knowledge. László Kürti was the first in Hungary to publish a comprehensive study on the theories and methods of dance anthropology, while at the same time criticising the unconditional and uncritical applicability of linguistic models, functionalist and structuralist concepts (Kürti 1995: 137–153). Later, in several other articles, he encouraged the Hungarian researchers to get acquainted with international dance anthropological theories, research topics and approaches, and at the same time he made an invaluable contribution to the dissemination of these theories and approaches in Hungary.

<sup>12</sup> <https://mta.hu/doktori-tanacs/tudomanyagi-nomenklatura-106809> [retrieved: 24.08.2023.]

of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, cultural and social anthropology is for the time is classified under ethnography.

Of the possible sub-disciplines of the future dance studies capable of integrating disciplinary theories, methods, readings and topics, but at the same time with its own disciplinary image, the title of this volume refers to only one: anthropology, which is itself as diverse a field of knowledge, comprising sub-disciplines, readings and topics, but integrating them, as this could be true for the integrative dance studies in the future.

As always, when trying to make sense of the interdisciplinary position of an elusive field of knowledge, we have to navigate a dense web of overlapping boundaries and sub-disciplinary sensitivities. Anthropology, too, has produced many sub-disciplines in its history over a century and a half, in dialogue with other disciplines. *Does dance anthropology exist among these or is it more of a thematic area?*<sup>13</sup> However, dance anthropology itself has its own preferred research themes, such as ethnicity, local identity or the relationship between dance and politics. What is the relationship of dance anthropology to other subdisciplines of anthropology and sociocultural anthropology, such as the anthropology of art, and how does it contribute to maintaining the integrative character of anthropology?<sup>14</sup> *What does the anthropological study of dance as an act with cultural and social meanings actually mean, and how can dance anthropology be integrated into dance studies that is multidisciplinary in character but also has an autonomous disciplinary identity?* This integration is perhaps facilitated by the fact that in the study of traditional dance culture in the Hungarian context, the approaches that may have previously been rival approaches, such as the debate and discourse surrounding dance folklore and dance anthropology, are gradually becoming less and less rival,<sup>15</sup> in fact

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<sup>13</sup> The legitimacy of „Western” dance anthropology was also subject to a number of criticisms, even in the 1990s: the question of its status as an independent science was raised by Drid Williams in 1991, but after that, dance anthropology really started to boom (in details see Kürti 2014: 740–748.). It is not the aim of this introduction, of course, to discuss the different trends and approaches in dance anthropology (e.g. functionalist and neofunctionalist, structuralist and embodiment theories, phenomenological choreology, etc. – about these see Kürti 2014: 740–748).

<sup>14</sup> All this in such a way that the very existence of anthropology itself is sometimes a mystery. See Biczó 2018: 15–16.

<sup>15</sup> This has also happened in ethnography and cultural anthropology, see Mészáros 2021: 1; Kotics 2020; Lajos 2020. About ten years ago, I also described the relationship between dance

they represent different research traditions rather than mutually exclusive disciplinary theories and methods.

But there is still one question that is essential from the perspective of dance anthropology. What is dance anthropology in Hungary after all?<sup>16</sup> How do those who call themselves dance anthropologists define themselves and their activities, and how do they differ from other professional communities? For example, from anthropologists who, although they are highly engaged in the field of dance culture, do not call themselves dance anthropologists. This refers to several of the authors of this volume. Is dance anthropology what it is because of the research topic, the methodology or the institutional framework and tradition that closely interacts with the latter? Does it have its own methodology and epistemology, which, as a complex network of theories and methodologies from many social science and humanities disciplines, makes it part of an integrative dance science, or should it be treated as a subfield of anthropology (i.e. anthropology similar to anthropology of religion, museology, economics, politics, ecology, philosophy, medicine, digital, visual, etc.)? *What phenomena and to what depth must dance be studied in order to call it an anthropological analysis of dance and not something else?* This should be done in such a way that the analysis, narrowed down to an anthropological approach, does not appear to be a shortcoming to a researcher from another field of dance studies. This will make it possible to avoid or blunt the controversies that affect scientific competences, promoting the integrative, multidisciplinary character of dance studies.

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fölklore and dance anthropology more in terms of differences, although I had already referred to the importance of cooperation between the two traditions. Kavecsánszki 2015: 15–22.

<sup>16</sup> The institutional framework of dance anthropology in Hungary is still evolving, with only one institution (the Department of Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Szeged) offering higher education even at the level of specialisation, and it is not very common as a specialised anthropology course. However, it is important to note that research associations are very much involved, for example the dance anthropology reading group organised by the Hungarian Association for Ethnochoreology. This association also serves as a forum of the Hungarian dance anthropologists, representing the connections between ethnochoreology and dance anthropology in Hungary. There is also the question of exactly what qualifications a dance researcher should have, although it may seem obvious that an anthropologist of dance would be an anthropologist and/or ethnographer. And it is not even a question of who in today's Hungarian higher education teaches dance anthropology to students? In other words: who are those who are working to ensure the academic supply of dance anthropology in the higher education environment?

In formulating the basic ideas that define dance anthropology research, we can consider the following.<sup>17</sup> The subject of the research: the dancing person and their communities (not primarily the dance itself!). The associated epistemological horizon is not dissimilar to that of ethnography and cultural anthropology, resulting in a hybrid knowledge combining empirical methods of analysis from the social sciences with hermeneutics from the humanities.<sup>18</sup> The most important attribute of the researched object is its community character (and even community involvement), the social and cultural realities of which constitute the environment of the object of analysis. Dance anthropology is therefore the study of the dancing human community, in which dance is *one* manifestation of a complex cultural system. Whether we call it dance anthropology or dance culture anthropology depends on the breadth and depth of the contexts of analysis. The wider we open the door to the study of the cultural and social context surrounding the phenomenon of dance, the more we move towards the latter name and towards an integrative anthropological approach (theories and methodologies).

At the same time, it should be stressed that the consideration of the *social and cultural environment (often not in equal proportions), and the deep and complex interpretation of these two, is not only a specific feature of dance research, which is often called direct dance anthropology.* Because, for example, ethnochoreology, which is accumulating more and more significant theoretical and methodological results in Hungary,<sup>19</sup> also takes into account the social and cultural, even ideological and economic-political context, and does not separate this from the formal-structural, movement and musical

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<sup>17</sup> Csaba Mészáros, in the context of interpreting the core of anthropological and ethnographic research, has set up a model that seems to be perfectly applicable in the present case. In my view, the theoretical framework of interpretation presented by Mészáros and applied to ethnography - cultural anthropology, as in the case of Imre Lakatos, can greatly help in understanding the relationship between dance anthropology and dance disciplines in general. See Mészáros 2021: 14–16.

<sup>18</sup> see Mészáros 2021: 15.

<sup>19</sup> see Varga 2021: 275–288, especially pages 279–283. The *Ethnochoreology* international symposium held in 2018 in Szeged, organized by the ICTM Study Group and the volume with the papers of the conference must be highlighted because of its international relevance. The symposium was primarily focused on the political contexts of dance culture. See Apjok – Povedák – Szőnyi – Varga (Eds.) 2021.

analysis.<sup>20</sup> Hungarian *dance folkloristics*,<sup>21</sup> which has been reorganized since the 2000s, is inherently cultural research, although the results of the historical approach typical of earlier research now require a strong critical reading, and are inherently descriptive, in which the presentation of the cultural, social, political, economic background remains only background, and is not connected with the presentation of dance culture, so there is no contextual analysis.<sup>22</sup> In fact, it is the complex, contextual approach that has emerged since the 2000s,<sup>23</sup> mainly through young dance researchers, which creates a link between the different strands of dance research (dance folklore, dance anthropology, ethnochoreology, and micro-historical research on the history of dance), while at the same time bringing the interpretative horizon closer (thematically, and in terms of the network of personnel and professional institutions). Critical dance studies<sup>24</sup> is yet another subfield, which also maintains strong links with postmodern anthropological studies.<sup>25</sup> There is thus *a convergence between the disciplines concerned in terms of the subject of research - dance or dancing and its social and cultural contexts*.

With the convergence of disciplines, the outlines of an integrative dance science are emerging. The institutional and personnel conditions for this are already in place. The process of institutionalisation has been intensified, and we hope that this will significantly reduce the disciplinary fragmentation of dance science and will greatly help to develop interdisciplinary sensitivity, thus strengthening interdisciplinarity. New institutions have joined HUNREN (earlier ELKH and Hungarian Academy of Sciences), Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute for Musicology, which has been considered a base institutions for decades. The Dance Studies Working Committee of the

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<sup>20</sup> On the importance of the combined use of social science approaches and ethnochoreological research methods, see for example Varga 2020: 182–183.

<sup>21</sup> Fügedi – Varga 2020: 206. In this introductory essay, I do not analyse the interdisciplinary relationship between ethnochoreology and dance folklore.

<sup>22</sup> see Varga 2021: 284–285.; Varga 2020: 173, 182.

<sup>23</sup> see Varga 2020: 174.

<sup>24</sup> Critical dance studies is a comparative and interpretative field: "critical dance anthropology is a historical social science whose primary task is to map, archive and compare the movement culture of humanity and to ensure its further use (artistic, pedagogical, etc.)". (Kürti 2014: 745.)

<sup>25</sup> For a nuanced account of postmodern anthropology following the critical turn, see Biczó 2018: 18. (especially footnote no. 21), and 171–185.

Ethnology Committee at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was established in 2010. It provides a platform of dialogue for researchers of different areas of dance studies. In 2011 the Hungarian Association for Ethnology, in 2020 the Hungarian Association of Dance Studies were re-organized, and in 2021 the journal *Táncstudományi Tanulmányok* was relaunched after a 15 year long hiatus. The journal is an excellent representation of interdisciplinary and integrative approach of dance studies. The dance research activities of higher education institutions, and specifically the training of research professionals is on the rise. At the Ethnology Department of University of Szeged dance folklore and dance anthropology specializations are available, and within the framework of MA training students can choose the *Choreomundus* major. There have been a large number of PhD theses on dance studies at the doctoral programmes of the ethnology departments at the University of Debrecen and Eötvös Loránd University. These theses show an interdisciplinary character. There has been intensive research conducted at the Vályi Rózsi Library, Archives and Dance Studies Centre of Hungarian Dance University, which also contributes to the research with a large number of publications. Recently the Research Institute of Art Theory and Methodology of the Hungarian Academy of Arts have contributed to the studies on dance theory and dance history with relevant publications. The number of research projects and research groups supported by grants is expanding, the number of periodicals in the field is increasing, and modern dance methodology volumes are being published that can be used specifically in education.<sup>26</sup> With the increasingly intensive dialogue between experts with different backgrounds and representing different fields, and the creation of common research forums and platforms, Hungarian dance studies entered a phase of deepening theoretical paradigms and methodology.

Dance studies, as a future integrated field of knowledge, can incorporate modern theoretical and methodological tools and new paradigms of interdisciplinary studies, which can enable the discipline to be developed. All this should be based on the classical approach inherited from its predecessors, which is specific to the Eastern European context, and which is „based on a

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<sup>26</sup> Among others the journal entitled *Tánc és Nevelés*, published by the Hungarian Dance University.



factual approach to the social context, functions and movement of dance”<sup>27</sup>  
Integrative dance studies must also have its own analytical method, or even several, depending on the subject area, which is suitable for the analysis of its specific subject, i.e. dance.<sup>28</sup>

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Most of the authors of the book are ethnographers and anthropologists. Thus, the nature of the volume, the representation of narrow disciplines within the field of dance studies and of borderline topics outside it, is due to this on the one hand, and to the disciplinary traditions of the Department of Ethnology at the University of Debrecen (the preference for ethnographic and anthropological research topics) on the other. The volume is a patchwork-like contribution to the interpretation of an academic sub-discipline, both in terms of the topics and the researchers addressed. However, it does not aim to decide whether it belongs to anthropology or dance studies. It is a diverse selection that broadens the scientific horizon, encourages interdisciplinary dialogue and a more integrated anthropological and dance approach rather than isolating disciplines, promotes complementarity and argues for methodological diversity and flexibility. The volume as a whole is a proposition, born out of the spirit of polyphony and inclusivity, to contribute to the disciplinary development of an emerging integrative dance studies and to a collaborative interdisciplinary discourse. The papers included in the volume are related

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<sup>27</sup> Fügedi – Varga 2020: 207.

<sup>28</sup> This is particularly important in the field of structural analysis of dances. The importance of using a suitable notational system to find the right method for analysing dances has been stressed by János Fügedi on several occasions. I agree with his views: „If ethnochoreology is to look beyond the political, social, anthropological or ethnographic contexts of dance to the *dance itself* and its expressive, immanent aesthetics, there is no easy way. *There can be no real dance science without the literacy of dance.*” Fügedi 2018: 94. I would like to add here that Sándor Varga, for example, in his study on the transformation of the Central Transylvanian *botos* dances, notes that the transformation of the dance type is not only to be interpreted in the context of economic and cultural policy, but „the transformation is also indicated by the formal changes of the above dances, so studies on forms and structures - because of their evidential value – are important for anthropological research as well.” Varga 2021: 285. Also: „The combination of social science approaches and ethnochoreological methods of investigation, which are able to understand the formal-structural characteristics of dance and dance music, has therefore become necessary today. This requires the cooperation of specialists with a wide range of approaches to dance, given the now very diverse body of knowledge.” Varga 2020: 182–183.

to the anthropology of dance culture precisely because of their borderland nature and heterogeneity.

This volume contains a total of twenty-four articles by seventeen authors, including this introductory essay.

Within the *Theory of Anthropology* thematic unit, there are two studies that specifically approach the interpretation of dance culture from the anthropological field of knowledge. *Gábor Biczó's* paper presents some elements of the dance cultural studies of Boas, Malinowski and Evens-Pritchard and their place, role and context within holistic anthropological research topics. The paper argues that dance culture, or any instance of its manifestation, i.e. dance, cannot be understood without the analysis of the socio-cultural conditions that make it possible. Thus, clarifying the context is both an inalienable element and a prerequisite for interpreting dance phenomena. *László Koppány Csáji* also approaches the interpretation of the scientific horizon of anthropology by creating a broad context of the history of the field. Among the sub-disciplines of anthropology, he deals primarily with the emergence and current situation of the anthropology of art, presenting in a nuanced way its possible interfaces with dance anthropology, which could lead to an expansion of theoretical perspectives for research on the anthropology of dance culture.

The thematic unit of the volume entitled *History of Dance and Music*, represents the disciplinary borderline already mentioned in the introductory essay. *Máté Kavecsánszki* presents international examples of social historical approaches to the research of dance history. In his article he draws attention to the importance of taking into account the broad social, cultural, economic and political contexts of the dance phenomenon in dance anthropological research as well as in the research of dance history, and that in many cases historical methods are also necessary. *Nóra Ábrahám* deals with a very specific chapter of the early phase of dance research in Hungary. In her paper, she presents a sub-area of dance research in the 1940s, which was also oriented towards cultural politics, through an examination of the compilation of the dance atlas, one of the great undertakings of the period, revealing a series of institutional and personal interconnections. *Anna Mária Bólya's* ethnomusicological study is essentially about music history. It also

raises questions of dance history in relation to the chain and circle dance culture of the Balkans. Her paper is not only a summary of research and attempts to define musical asymmetry, but also proposes new approaches to the interpretation of the phenomenon.

In the thematic unit *Studies of Traditional Dance Culture*, there are papers specifically dedicated to the study of „folk dance” in rural communities. *Sándor Varga*’s study is a significant contribution to the question of the spatial division of traditional dance culture in the field and to the study of the traditional dance and music culture of a group of villages in the Mezőség. *Vivien Bondea*’s study deals with the local dance repertoire of Magyarfalu in Moldavia. Her paper is an excellent case study of holistic dance anthropological research, linking the transformation of community dance culture to macro- and micro-historical processes and identifying interrelated ecological, political, economic and socio-cultural factors that result in the transformation of the dance repertoire. Through the example of Nyírvasvári, *Henriett Szabó* examines the process of transgenerational transmission of Roma dances, providing an excellent example of how the study of dance culture can not only be the subject of direct dance anthropological research, but can also contribute to a nuanced understanding of sociocultural processes in other anthropological fields of community culture research.

The next chapter in the book is entitled *Preserving Traditions, Local Heritage*. Although the topic of the papers published here is strongly related to the previous block, they focus on local revival phenomena, local attempts of preserving traditions and the construction of traditions. *Melinda Marinka* examines the processes of staged performance and community organisation in the context of the study of the Kálla wedding dance as an element of local heritage, thus providing another case study of dance anthropological micro-research in a broader context. Another study by *Henriett Szabó* focuses on the place of dance in the community processes of mixed-ethnic Nagyecséd, showing how it influences the life of the local society and the development of inter-ethnic relations. In her paper, she interprets dance culture as an essential factor of local socio-cultural reality, the anthropological study of which is part of a complex analysis of community processes. Closely related to his study is the paper by *László Felföldi*, who also chose Nagyecséd as an

example. The author describes the practices of building and preserving local cultural heritage in the context of music and dance traditions. The paper pays particular attention to the multi-generational model of tradition-keeping, the socio-cultural interpretation of which and the lessons to be drawn are essential in the case of a multi-ethnic community. We also include two studies by *Jose Antonio Lorenzo L. Tamayo* in this thematic chapter, both of which are fascinating examples of anthropological analysis of dance culture in the Philippines. In the first, he analyses dances that are now part of the Roman Catholic paraliturgical tradition, dances that originally had a function in fertility rituals, thus exploring the processes of transculturation in the case of dances. In another paper, the author presents an anthropological analysis of the dance of passage, also within the Catholic tradition, focusing on the perspectives and experiences of the participants.

The thematic chapter on the *Folk Dance Movement* includes two studies. *László Felföldi's* study examines the sources of socialist cultural policy in Hungary (1949-1989) related to folk dance and folk music culture, highlighting the political ideological dimensions of preserving traditions and outlining its impact on the processes aimed at preserving traditional knowledge. *Anna Székely's* article deals with the organisation and functioning of the Hungarian folk dance community and the characteristics of revival folk dance through her research based on literature and participant's observations. A notable novelty of her work is that she approaches the issue through theories of subcultural research.

In the thematic part of *Schools and Dance Education* *Éva Bihari Nagy* analyses the emergence of dance knowledge in the 21st century public education system, mainly on the basis of the contents of the curricula. In her writing, she not only gives a broad and in-depth overview of the issue, but also draws attention to a number of difficulties and structural problems that have not been little addressed in detail. The paper by *Anna Mária Bólya* presents the conclusions of the innovative development of a dance history course based on virtual reality and the results of the scientific research programme necessary for the creation of virtual curricula. *Attila Gilányi's* study is closely related to this, as it presents the technological background and the platforms of virtual reality application in the context of the aforementioned dance history course.

The article by Ádám Mikulics outlines the educational history of the former Hungarian State Ballet Institute, while at the same time drawing attention to terminological problems that are still difficult to solve with regard to the definition of folk dance and character dance, which may be the subject of future research.

The studies in the last thematic unit - *Stage, Theatre* - reflect on questions of art theory in the context of the theatrical representation of dance. *Nóra Ábrahám* deals with the circumstances, symbolic content and space-specific characteristics of the monumental movement art works of the 1930s in Budapest and Szeged. Her writing also touches on the possibilities of interpreting mystery plays and morality plays in terms of movement art and art theory. *Emese Lengyel's* study provides an insight into the professional and political-ideological debates surrounding operetta dance in the era of Hungarian socialism (1949-1989) through the works of Ágnes Roboz on the operatta stage, using the surviving documents of her attempt to rethink the genre in the theatre and the articles on the subject in the journal *Táncművészet*. Ádám Mikulics' study examines the creative work of Zoltán Zsuráfszky, reflecting on the problem of authenticity in theatre folk dance. He analyses in detail the process of staging *Bonchida* three times, the underlying artistic concept and the contemporary narratives. The article by Ákos Windhäger outlines a possible reading of *The Tragedy of Man* by Imre Madách on the basis of Scruton's works, in the context of interpreting different directorial concepts of staging. His essay concludes our volume with a discussion of choreographic experiments in the London stage death dance, which has long been overlooked on stage.

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## Anthropology theory

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Gábor Biczó  
László Koppány Csáji

# The Anthropology of Dance Culture

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GÁBOR BICZÓ

Dance is a complex socio-cultural phenomenon that has been much and widely studied in the history of anthropology. Its richness of form and its situational variability allow researchers to attempt to interpret this universal cultural phenomenon from different theoretical perspectives in anthropology. A closer look at the subject, however, reveals that the need for a general analysis of the subject, at least from an anthropological approach, is confronted with theoretical difficulties that seem insurmountable. The paradox of the definition of dance means that any general definition in anthropological terms excludes the validation of the particularity and situational separateness of the dance as its essence in the analysis. For how, for example, can the common attempt to describe dance as a movement that is the realisation of a series of steps that are generally characteristic of a musical (or other) rhythm and its speed bring us closer to understanding.

The etymological background of the concept also provides little support for an anthropological understanding of dance. The fact that the noun „dans”, formed from the Old German or French verb „to drag”, „to pull”, „to move”, became a generic category in the modern sense of the word, and how it developed into a general category along semantic and logical principles, does not really support the disciplinary study of dance culture.

The sub-disciplinary field specialised in the general study of the dance phenomenon, the dance ethnology, which emerged in the 1960s, must be distinguished in its aims from the attempt to interpret dance culture anthropologically. While dance ethnology is primarily concerned with a general analysis of the entity nature of the dance phenomenon - structure of movement, structuring, spatial management, etc. - the subject of dance anthropology is an attempt to understand culture and social forms as expressed in dance.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this short paper is to offer a brief insight into some of the basic issues in the anthropological interpretation of dance culture. In the

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<sup>1</sup> Kurath 1960: 234; Kaepler 1991: 11–21.

first section of the text, the disciplinary framework for the interpretation of the topic is outlined through four major theoretical notes, while in the second section, contexts of the dance cultural studies of three prominent researchers - Boas, Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard - are examined.

### **1. Theoretical aspects: four comments**

1) Firstly, the discovery of dance culture as a subject of research happened early in the history of research. Evolutionism, the framework theory that underpinned the emergence of cultural anthropology, identified dance as a consequence of the process of general evolution. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), a polymath of his time, addressed the question of the principles of general evolution in his book *Fundamental Principles*, published in 1862. In his work, which was motivated by a critical approach to science, he attempted to formulate the philosophically indisputable principles of existence. He argued that all things can be described in terms of the elements of creation, existence and disintegration (equilibration). The general principle of this, as well as the essence of the existence of the universe, is determined by rhythm. Rhythm plays a decisive role in the emergence of phenomena and, according to Spencer, in the process of their elimination.

*„We find quite similar phenomena in the origin and gradual differentiation of poetry, music and dance. The rhythms of speech, sound and movement were originally interrelated. This unity is still found in the barbarian tribes of today. The savage peoples accompany their dances with certain unison chants, with clapping and music of rude instruments; the movements, the words and the sounds are measured; the whole ritual is related to some war or sacrifice, and has a dominating character.”<sup>2</sup>*

Spencer thus treats dance as a gradually evolving autonomous and complex phenomenon that has developed over historical time and as a result of a process of differentiation, and notes that its distinctiveness from any other form of cultural activity or mode of action is clearly distinguishable by its entity-specific characteristics.

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<sup>2</sup> Spencer 1909: 425.

2) Secondly, it seems that the attempt to describe the separateness of dance in general terms is an issue that can be well analysed within the framework of phenomenology. The tradition of a phenomenological interpretation of dance is relatively recent, having emerged only in the mid-1960s. An undoubtedly important milestone was Maxine Sheets Johnson's book, *The Phenomenology of Dance*, which drew inspiration from the late aesthetic analyses of the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty.<sup>3</sup>

The subject of the phenomenology of dance is ultimately an attempt to answer the question of the essence of the entity nature of the dance phenomenon. What is the elementary general essence that underlies any variation of any dance activity. In other words, from the point of view of a phenomenological approach, the intention here is to explore how the general essence of dance is manifested in the individual activity, i.e. how the general is present in the particular „form“. From the aspect of phenomenology, every dance is different from all the other dances, although the creator's intention is both to show the general, i.e. the same thing (the dance), and the particular, i.e. to show in a different way what is essentially the same.

The meaning of this perhaps somewhat abstract formulation can be easily explained with an example. A well-known and somewhat clichéd reference is the scene that has been regarded as one of the best film adaptations of dance of all time, performed by Anthony Quinn in the title role of the Greek character *Zorba the Greek*. The story, based on the biographical novel by Nikos Kazantzakis, follows a writer living in England who, on a visit to his native country, meets the bohemian and vivacious Zorba. In what has become famous as the closing scene of the film, the two men part ways and say goodbye after the disastrous failure of their joint venture. Zorba, who has been patronising the awkward writer as a master of life, has by this time initiated his "disciple" into everything except one thing: dancing.

This remarkable performance is a phenomenological representation of what dance represents as an entity by virtue of its distinctiveness. In order to allow what it essentially presents to emerge, we cannot help but bracket

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<sup>3</sup> Johnstone 1966.

out our prior structures of understanding. The event nature of the dance, in the Gadamerian sense, its solemnity given in its spatial and temporal separateness, is the inalienable essence of the whole phenomenon and of the action (dancing) that exhibits it.<sup>4</sup> As Johnstone put it, the dance creates its own space in which it can express the totality of its boundaries and the meaning constructed within this.<sup>5</sup>

3) Thirdly, in anthropological terms, the separateness of dance from the point of view of the observer (spectator) is given substance by its constructed meaning. In other words, dance is, in hermeneutic terms, a meaning-bearing and meaning-filled phenomenon. The relationship between dance and its recipient can be described as a triad of showing the meaning created in the form of action, the search for meaning in this form, and thus the attempt to understand it and the interpretative work that follows. In anthropological terms, any instance of dance culture is a complex phenomenon embedded in a social context, part of the contextual system of socio-cultural reality, which can be deciphered according to its characteristics.

An example that illustrates the anthropological significance of the hermeneutics of dance is Geertz's interpretive approach. In his study entitled *Religion as a Cultural System*, he paid particular attention to the analysis of the Rangda and Barong ritual dance (drama) observed on the island of Bali.<sup>6</sup> Although the precise genre of the archaic rite is difficult to classify, the first anthropological interpretations defined it as a dance in essence. Margaret Mead and her husband, Gregory Bateson, an anthropologist with a background in communication theory, compiled an anthropological documentary film, *Trance and Dance* in Bali, from their footage of the rite observed on the island between 1937 and 1939. The film, and later Geertz's description, strongly emphasises two aspects. On the one hand, the highly complex nature of the rite and its elaborate structure. According to the basic story, many variations of which are performed on the island, Rangda, essentially a witch-like, scary, plague-spreading creature, fights Barong, a comic and usually four-legged mythical character played

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<sup>4</sup> Gadamer 1994: 62–67.

<sup>5</sup> Johnstone 1966: 54.

<sup>6</sup> Geertz 2001: 72–118.

by two men. The fight, which is fought with varying degrees of success, does not, as the story goes, end in a clear victory for either side. In addition to the structure of the dance drama and the analysis of the sujet, anthropological interest focused on the relationship of the characters involved in the rite to the event. The actors, who gave interviews about their experiences, spoke of the world conjured up in the context of Rangda and Barong's struggle as an actual reality. They identified the situation created in the dance with reality. In addition, the relationship of the other party involved in the ritual, the audience, to the ritual raised equally important questions for the researchers. It is striking that some of the spectators fall into a trance as a result of the rhythmic music, music and movement, performed with bells and drums, which accompany the dance, the action and the performance, and are characteristic of Bali culture. The unconscious emotional outbursts that characterise the trance state are, however, under the control of a third group of ritual actors, the „sober” spectators, who keep the events under control in order to avoid self-harm or the disruption of the ritual. The brief summary also shows that, in anthropological terms, the functioning of the rite, the cultural function of the act, presupposes an understanding and interdependence between all three parties, the performers, the spectators exposed to the trance and the „sober” viewers. This is realized by the interpretation of the content performed in the rite. So the depth to which the performers identify with their roles, when and why the trance-induced spectators want to intervene in the struggle - typically in support of Barong - and how the „sober” perform their role of controlling events are all a function of understanding the story, that is, what is being performed in the dance.

The language of dance is a sign system that makes meaning accessible by decoding the constructed spectacle. The meaning is hidden, the message is not directly available, it requires a hermeneutic effort. The key to unlocking meaning is to know the sign code of dance, just as understanding the story of Rangda and Barong requires cultural knowledge, an aesthetic initiation. The question here is always the same: can the viewer see the story from the perspective of the dancer, thus establishing an understanding interrelation between performer and recipient?

4) Last, but not least, as a fourth introductory remark, we should pay attention to the multifunctional nature of dance as a fundamental issue for the anthro-

pology of dance culture and as an inseparable link between the three aspects listed above. Cultural anthropological studies recognized early on that dance is a total and complex cultural phenomenon that can serve multiple functions simultaneously. Besides the recognition of its character as an occasion and an event, various systems of typification, categorisation and classification have been developed. In addition to the ritual and profane character, the social relations, such as the system of male and female roles, or the function of a social process, raise a number of analytical aspects. From the perspective of a functional approach, what they have in common is that they all ultimately seek to answer the question: what purpose does dance serve?

A good example of the recognition of the multifunctional character of the dance phenomenon in the history of anthropological research on dance culture is the interpretation of the Sioux sun dance. The example shows how dance functions as a combination and accumulation of different cultural functions and how its representative function is realized in situative practice. From Fred Voget's writings and from a number of other studies, it is clear that the much-studied sun dance is essentially an elaborate initiation rite, a communal event that culminates in the process of young warriors' coming of age.<sup>7</sup> According to the strict order of the choreographed ritual, the young people tie leather bands to their breasts or backs, which are then attached to a young tree. The test of courage involves the young person dancing against the sun, silently enduring the pain until the straps are torn from their bodies. In this dramatic test the extent to which suffering can be endured, the audience supports the dancer's movements with rhythmic accompaniment, which complements the sound of the whistle that the young person blows during the performance. It is clear that the dance event serves several parallel functions from the community's point of view. It is at once a test of courage, a religious ritual, a social-community event and an aesthetic performance.

The four interdependent and complementary theoretical frameworks for the anthropological study of dance culture allow for the analysis of the interrelations between the complex entity nature of dance and its socio-cultural context. In anthropological terms, dance is a complex form of action in cultur-

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<sup>7</sup> Voget 1984.

al time and space, which presents its phenomenological essence as a distinct position, creating meaning and seeking meaning for its recipients, and which in most cases is characterised by several parallel functions. In the following, we will briefly illustrate the complexity of the anthropological study of dance culture by presenting three classic examples.

## **2. Three classic examples**

The study of dance has been an important research topic since the beginning of anthropology as a discipline, practically since the last third of the 19th century. For example, Lewis Henry Morgan, in the first outlines of his major study, *Ancient Society*, mentions dance as a substantive subsection of his work, and as evidence of the common origin of the North American Indians.<sup>8</sup> Morgan's evolutionist approach did not, of course, examine the characteristics of the separate nature of the dance phenomena conceived as cultural universals, but on the contrary, studied the common constituents, the elements that justify the unilinear theory of evolution. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the mention of dance culture as an organic anthropological subject is a remarkable historical-scientific issue. From the point of view of the history of science and the complexity of its approach, Franz Boas's work stands out as a milestone in the anthropological study of dance culture among the early research.

### **a) Boas and the Kwakiutl**

As a pioneer of modern anthropology, Franz Boas (1858-1942) interpreted dance as a complex socio-cultural system. His holistic vision played a decisive role in the development of his approach, made possible by his wide-ranging interests and studies. As is well known, the young scholar, who immigrated from Germany, was at home in many disciplines, from geology to philosophy and history, and was of course extremely well versed in the ethnological works of the period.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Trautman 1987: 118.

<sup>9</sup> Biczó 2019: 43–61.



In 1892, after his first job at Clark University, Boas took an adventurous job at the World's Fair in Chicago as a specialist in the preparation of displays to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Columbus' voyage.<sup>10</sup> After the closing of the exhibition, he worked in various museums until 1896, and made an invaluable contribution to the development of the concept of the emerging cultural anthropology and the museum as a relevant scientific institution.

It was during this period that Boas became more immersed in the Kwakiutl culture, to the study of which he devoted many decades of his later career. As one of the organisers of the exhibition, his task was to present the indigenous cultures of North America in a scholarly way that the general public could understand, and it was natural that as part of this work he should pay particular attention to the Kwakiutl customs and way of life that he knew so well. Living on Vancouver Island and the coastline to the north-west of Vancouver Island, the tribe had an extremely rich culture, primarily based on salmon fishing. Representing this in museums was a difficult task and Boas recognised this and took a new approach to presenting the culture authentically. His idea was to use the 'live-image' (diorama) compositional technique, which was becoming increasingly common in museum exhibitions of the period, to present objects, tablets and texts representing indigenous life not in isolation but in complex scenes. The life-size, dressed figures displayed in the exhibition space were not placed randomly, but as characters of a complex life situation or custom. The authenticity of the approach was obviously based on the fact that the researcher was well aware of the function, meaning and internal structural context of a situation, such as a ritual, i.e. understood the cultural situation intended to be presented in the museum's space.<sup>11</sup>

According to the surviving documentation and photographs, Boas took painstaking care to ensure that scenes of cultural significance were as authentic as possible.<sup>12</sup> He often took part as an actor in a ritual or dance scene he observed in the field, in order to represent his observations with scientific objectivity as part of the museum representation process. It became a widespread view in the field of science during the period, as his pupil Alexander Goldenweis-

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<sup>10</sup> Pepper 2018: 18.

<sup>11</sup> Boas 1974: 297–300.

<sup>12</sup> Jacknis 1988: 75–88.

er later put it, that dance is a universal human cultural phenomenon, one of the most complex anthropological topics, and much more difficult to describe than family relations or house types.<sup>13</sup>

In developing the diorama as a paradigm of practical value, Boas paid particular attention to the presentation of a kwakiutl dance rite. The kwakiutl initiation rite is effectively a dance drama that takes place over four days and engages the entire community. The sequence of events is as follows: a young person awaiting initiation is abducted by spirits, transformed and turned into a cannibalistic creature in the form of a raven or a gadfly, which returns to the community as a man-eating bird. The second part of the rite is about the taming of the young man, his reintroduction to his community, which results in his becoming a full member of the male community. Dance is the structural cultural component that organises and holds together the whole sequence of events. On the one hand, it serves as a means of keeping in touch with the spirit of the ancestors and, at the same time, of gaining the support of the spirits. Boas has recorded twelve variations of the *Hamatsa* rite, which, in his opinion, demonstrates that cultural variability is one of the most important characteristics of human social communities.

He understood dance as a holistic cultural phenomenon in the context of the diorama method. The ritual dance performance, as reflected in the representation, was seen as an inseparable part of a specific social context, in which a full-fledged representation of culture was then realized. Boas identifies dance as the cultural and functional essence of ritual, linking the different stages of the religious and social life of the community.

#### **b) Malinowski's research and the social function of dance**

Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942), a British anthropologist of Polish origin, conducted his research on dance primarily through the study of acts performed as part of ritual processes. As part of his fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands, which lasted approximately two years and was partly carried out

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<sup>13</sup> Goldenweiser 1910: 284–286.

under compelling circumstances, he devoted much of his time to the rituals of indigenous communities.<sup>14</sup>

One of his first writings on the subject of dance culture, referring to his field experiences, was written in 1916. His analysis, entitled *The Spirits of the Dead in the Trobriand Islands*, reflects the basic ideas of his later functionalist approach.<sup>15</sup> The primary function of dance is to serve the community's specific social needs. In his study, as in his later writings on the Trobriand Islands, he devoted much attention to the phenomenon of the *Milamala* feast and the ritual practices associated with it, in which dance plays a prominent role. In his approach, the *Milamala* is both a social and a religious-magical event, a "harvest" feast linked to the yam harvest. He observed it in the villages of the Trobriand Islands. The distribution of the harvested produce, which is gathered together, begins with a dance performed by the men. However, the dance's economical function is complementary to and practically inseparable from its communal function, which is linked to the occasion. In this sense, the dance rite performed as part of the celebration provides an opportunity to organise, strengthen and forge new social ties, thus encouraging the community networks to remain functional. The celebratory nature of the *Milamala* is reinforced by the fact that the dancers' costumes are distinctly casual, different from their everyday attire, which also emphasises the event's distinctive character. Malinowski accurately describes the use of kazoo feathers, the system of decorative motifs for body painting and the use of headdresses, which together reflect the social importance of dance in the community.

Another essential function of ritual and the dance performed as part of it is that it plays a prominent role in organising not only intra-group but also inter-group social relations. Visits to neighbouring communities begin with the parties greeting each other with a dance. This is followed by the presentation of gifts and the ritual exchange of goods, which is also a means of expressing social status.

The analysis of the *Milamala* ritual in Malinowski's early research highlighted the complexity of the tradition and the dance activity that drives the whole of the associated celebration as a complex event of social life, which

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<sup>14</sup> Biczó 2019: 80–87.

<sup>15</sup> Malinowski 1916: 353–430.

in a functional sense plays a key role in maintaining and strengthening the internal relations of communities. It has also shown that dance is a cultural activity that is also crucial for the establishment and regulation of relations between communities and for the functioning of the economic and social system.

### **c) The social role of dance in Evans-Pritchard's research**

As a final example of a brief overview within the framework offered by the present paper, I will outline one of the most significant research projects on dance by Evans-Pritchard (1902-1973), a British social anthropologist. As is well known, Evans-Pritchard conducted most of his research in Africa. However, the highly educated researcher did not only carry out academic research, but also served in several wars in the British army, which was inseparable from his knowledge of local cultures, especially in Sudan.

One of Evans-Pritchard's first research projects in the Zande community in 1926 brought him face to face with the question of the social significance of dance culture. In his early study, *The Dance*, published in 1928, he studied the Zande beer dance in outstanding detail.<sup>16</sup> His analysis, of course, does not even come close to the quality of theoretical synthesis that would later be represented in *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*, published in 1937. Nevertheless, this early study of dance anticipated an approach that treated dance culture as a phenomenon of pivotal social value.

In one of the initial findings of his paper, he stated that dance is often studied by researchers as an independent action, which he believes is a misinterpretation. He argues that dance is an important and complex social practice, and that research into its physiological and psychological aspects is only useful for understanding its social significance. In his view, dance is a structured social event that inevitably confronts us with questions that are important for defining the subject. In other words, what is the social value of dance, what needs does it meet and what role does it play in the life of the community?

Evans-Pritchard elaborated on some of the general issues related to the phenomenon of Zande dance culture, and then explored the social value of dance

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<sup>16</sup> Evans-Pritchard 1928: 446-462.

through a specific example. In his view, it is important to understand that the community produces an extremely diverse range of dances, and the classification and categorisation of these is of outmost importance. A systematic overview helps us to understand the multiple social aspects of dance and the many ways in which it is related to society. In the case of the zande, he emphasized that dances can be divided into dances with instruments, dances without accompaniment or dances linked to social roles and situations. However, this formal category does not hide the fact that often different social actors have their own dances linked to their status, or express their current status in the form of a dance that is adapted to a specific social situation. For example, the dance of elderly men can be distinguished, or the dance of the boss's sons, but the Zande also includes different dances for funerals and for work.

The more extensive analytical part of his paper then deals specifically with the phenomenon of „beer dance“. Accompanied by music, gongs and drums, and a chorus, the dance is a highly regulated and collective occasion that engages the whole community.

As can be seen in the Evans-Pritchard diagram, the choreography of the dance, the way the actors take their places on the dance floor, is intrinsically sophisticated. At the centre of the dance circle are the two musicians, the drummer (D) and the gong player (G). The solo singer (A) and the inner chorus (B), standing to his right and left, are in practically the same position. They are followed in the next concentric circle by the men (M) and finally, on the outside, the women (W). The figure does not indicate it, but in addition to the dancing women, children who sometimes join in the rhythmic movement form the outermost loose circle. The dancing is led by the chief's son or another decent young man, which is an extremely prestigious position.

In his analysis, Evans-Pritchard showed that behind the clear set-up, there are complex social rules that are at work as a result of the dancing. According to his research, the zande "beer dance" is a local event whose participants are socially connected to each other in different ways. They are brothers and sisters, members of magical communities, many of them blood relatives, perhaps brought up together as children, or people who live close to the place of the event and are therefore familiar with it. Evans-Pritchard has also looked

at how dance troupes have sections where members of smaller cohesive sub-groups dance together, such as relatives or friends. The dance also provides an opportunity for mothers to publicly introduce their children to the community for the first time. A further important and noteworthy context is that dancing provides an opportunity to initiate a relationship between boys and girls. Since men and women dance separately, there are strict rules for contact between them in public spaces, and sanctions are imposed for breaking these rules.

It is clear that the social value of dance for the Zande is its cohesive role in guaranteeing the control and peaceful maintenance of social relations. Evans-Pritchard has thus linked the anthropological study of dance culture to an understanding of the functioning of society and has demonstrated that dance is not an isolated socio-cultural element of our lifeworlds. Dance functions in complex contexts that dance itself expresses, that it helps to sustain and, last but not least, that it helps to control the social life of which it is a prominent product.

## **Summary**

This brief overview has only dealt, by way of introduction, with some of the basic theoretical issues in the anthropological study of dance culture and the arbitrary selection of classical authors who have taken part in the study of the subject. The paper has argued that dance culture, or any of its ad hoc manifestations, i.e. dance, cannot be understood without an analysis of the socio-cultural conditions that make it possible. This means that clarifying the context is both an inalienable element and a prerequisite for interpreting dance phenomena.

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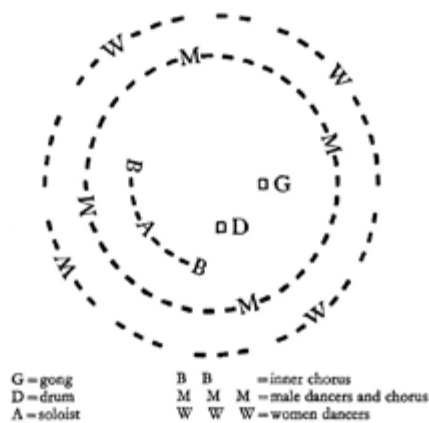
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Zande beer dance (illustration by Evans-Pritchard)

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# Use of space, movement, art – and dance (on the relationship between the anthropology of art and the anthropology of dance)

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LÁSZLÓ KOPPÁNY CSÁJI

From the birth of positivist sciences, and even from the Enlightenment, the specialisation of disciplines can be observed. The concentration of research on increasingly narrow disciplines has led to the decline of a broader, ‚holistic‘ vision. Most disciplines saw the world through an ever smaller window. A welcome exception, however, was the emergence of cultural anthropology in the last third of the 19th century, along with<sup>1</sup> a few other later initiatives. Throughout its century and a half of history, its ability to self-reflect has enabled it to evolve from the world of „Mr Tyler’s science”<sup>2</sup> and positivist descriptions of the cultures and societies of exotic peoples into an interpretative, integrative and highly innovative science. It has been able to renew its theoretical and methodological framework from time to time, redefining its questions and basic assumptions. This is the reason why, after evolutionism, historical particularism, diffusionism, cultural relativism, functionalism, structuralism, structural-functionalism, symbolic anthropology, interpretative<sup>3</sup> anthropology and many other trends, new theoretical trends are emerging in the „post-postmodern” world. So even postmodernism, which sometimes envisages the end of science, has not finished this process.

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<sup>1</sup> To give just one example, the linguistic turn or discourse theory also brought about several theoretical innovations useful in science, but they rather influenced existing disciplines through their approach..

<sup>2</sup> The British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor was the first to use the term anthropology. The new science he initiated took root in America within a few decades. But in France, for example, the word sociology was long used to describe scientific studies that would today be considered anthropological research. The terminology is still not coherent. Eriksen 2006: 13, 25.

<sup>3</sup> The forms *interpretív* / *interpretatív* are both used in Hungary, see for example. A. Gergely et al. 2010 (eg.. 207.). It would be useful if either the university departments or the Hungarian Association of Cultural Anthropology (MAKAT) standardize the terminology.

Anthropologists, who played critical roles in the history of science, have given new perspectives to this science, recognising the „teething problems”, the one-sidedness and errors of existing and previous theories, but not always starting from scratch, without annulling this knowledge. The experiences of their anthropological predecessors have been built on each other in a reflexive way.<sup>4</sup> The increasingly intensive use of the results of the co-disciplines and the dialogue with them opened up a new interdisciplinary horizon at the end of the 20th century. In order for anthropology to retain its integrative character, it is important to be aware of its fundamental values and, in the face of highly exciting case studies and focused research, not to neglect its theoretical and comparative orientation.<sup>5</sup> As Evans-Pritchard pointed out half a century ago, cultural and social anthropology cannot be effectively and thoroughly cultivated without a knowledge of the history of science.<sup>6</sup>

Alongside (and perhaps because of) the great broadening of his scientific horizons, we can also observe a counter-process. With the explosion in the scope of anthropology and in the literature on anthropology in the second half of the 20th century, anthropology itself gave rise to a series of sub-disciplines, such as the different worlds of anthropology of religion, ethnicity studies, urban anthropology, political anthropology, gender anthropology, etc. The anthropology of art and, separately, the anthropology of dance were born in the 1960s and 1970s as part of this thematic specialisation. In my paper I will examine how the concept of the anthropology of art and the relationship

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<sup>4</sup> see also Geertz 2001: 224.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen – with a metaphor taken from Clifford Geertz and Godfrey Lienherdt – wrote that in an anthropological study we can cook up a stew from theory the size of a rabbit and ethnographic field work the size of an elephant, making sure that the rabbit’s taste does not become dominant. Eriksen 2006: 46.

<sup>6</sup> Several decades later, he added an appendix to the text of a 1937 volume that is still considered a seminal work, in which we can read this essential thought: „*Sometimes people say that anyone can make observations and write a book about a primitive people. Perhaps anybody can, but it may not be a contribution to anthropology. In science, as in life, one finds only what one seeks. One cannot have the answers without knowing what the questions are. Consequently the first imperative is a rigorous training in general theory before attempting field-research so that one may know how and what to observe, what is significant in the light of theory. It is essential to realize that facts are in themselves meaningless. To be meaningful they must have a degree of generality. It is useless going into the field blind. One must know precisely what one wants to know and that can only be acquired a systematic training in academic social anthropology.*” Evans-Pritchard 1976: 240–241.

between dance anthropology and the anthropology of art have changed over the last half century, and what changes I envisage for the future.

I would like to point out at the outset that I am not a dance anthropologist. I approach dance anthropology (or in other words „the anthropological study of dance culture”) from the context of the history of science, art anthropology, religious anthropology and the history of science. In the course of my anthropological fieldwork<sup>7</sup> in the Carpathian Basin and ethnological fieldwork in various parts of Africa and Asia, I have been confronted with the role of dance and its borderlands in a number of cases, from funerary rites to sacral spatialization, to the complexity of the body’s movements - or immobility, its „silences.” However, my writing is primarily of a theoretical and historical nature, so - also for reasons of space - I will only present two short case studies to support my argumentation.

Whether we like it or not, sciences and scientific disciplines do not exist as independent galaxies, but interact and are legitimised by their credible answers (their social relevance, if you like) to societal questions. On this basis, they can attract science funding and induce science policy decisions. How a science or discipline defines itself, its competences, its theoretical framework and its methods, therefore has a major impact on the human and financial resources it needs to achieve its goals. This results in an ever-changing and dialectical relationship between the self-image of the sciences and - as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy - their success in society. It is important to draw the boundaries of our discipline in such a way that it can provide competent and nuanced answers to the questions that concern many in a changing world and in newer relevancies.

Although art has attracted attention<sup>8</sup> from the dawn of anthropology as a work of art that goes beyond pragmatic activities, that seeks to achieve aesthetic value or symbolic communication and/or as a culture-dependent, specific communicative phenomenon, the anthropology of art as a discipline

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<sup>7</sup> The similarities and differences between the orientations and fieldwork methods of these two often synonymous sciences have been highlighted by many (eg.. A. Gergely et al. 2010). There is no doubt, however, that the definition of these concepts and their relationship to each other varies almost from country to country.

<sup>8</sup> Layton 1991: 4.

in its own right only emerged in the second half of the 20th century.<sup>9</sup> As important as the antecedents of art anthropological „reading books”<sup>10</sup> may be, the early essays examined art as a segment of the society or material culture under study, rather than as a basic human creative activity.<sup>11</sup> Until the middle of the 20th century, art itself was not analysed as such, but as specific cultural art phenomena of particular societies - their techniques, motifs, parallels and functions - with a predominant focus on the visual arts.<sup>12</sup>

Visuality may have become a focus because it required - apparently - less prior training and knowledge of the arts than, for example, the study of music, dance or theatre. The late emergence of art as a separate anthropological discipline may also have been due to the hierarchical approach of colonialism in the late 19th century. According to this view, „primitive peoples’ were, from a Western (evolutionist) perspective, backward in their development and consequently produced a simpler material culture that could be more easily analysed by any trained scientist. Our scientists placed professional (or elite) art hierarchically above folk art, even in relation to their own culture. Primitive art, popular or folk art, was exciting as part of the culture, it was not comparable to Western „elite” art.<sup>13</sup> The latter was not dealt with by anthropology, but by art history and other art theories. The division of the disciplines’ competences also had an impact on the way art was perceived. One could list examples of hierarchical approaches, from the idea of *gesunkenes Kulturgut*<sup>14</sup> (descending cultural goods) to the interpretation of difficult-to-understand sayings and folk songs as textual deterioration.<sup>15</sup>

The complexity of the situation is illustrated by the fact that from the end of the 19th century, European and American avant-garde artists were already fascinated and extremely inspired by the works of „primitive art”. In

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<sup>9</sup> Haselberger 1961.

<sup>10</sup> eg.. Forge 1973; Morphy – Perkins 2006.

<sup>11</sup> eg.. Morphy – Perkins 2006: 1.

<sup>12</sup> see also. Firth 1973: vi.

<sup>13</sup> see also. Morphy – Perkins 2006: 1–2.

<sup>14</sup> Naumann 1922.

<sup>15</sup> Ildikó Tamás draws attention to how the image of folklore and the people has strongly determined (and narrowed) the interpretation of the artistic creative process, and made it difficult to conduct a more nuanced research on children’s narratives. Tamás 2019: 584.

addition to the visual artists, the work of Franziska Boas and Rudolf Laban<sup>16</sup> in the first half of the 20th century can be included here - but they approached the field as artists, not as scientists. Let us not forget that folk music has inspired many people since the Romantic era, but especially since the mid-19th century. Think, for example, of Antonín Dvořák's *Slavonic Dances* (Op. 46) or Sergei Rachmaninov's *Three Russian Folk Songs* (Op. 41). But far more forward-looking was the way Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály and László Lajtha looked at folk music. His idea of a 'pure source' on a par with art music, even fertilising national culture, was ahead of its time, but it was truly pioneering in thinking about art as a human creative process. Although the history of anthropology does not consider the collections of Bartók, Kodály and Lajtha as fieldwork in the anthropology of art, and their analyses do not belong to the anthropology of art, there are many similarities in their approach and depth of thought.<sup>17</sup> The artistic process of creation in its dialectic of individual and collective, and the recognition of the importance of the musical mother tongue, are still dominant ideas in the anthropology of art. Bartók and Kodály could not yet apply discourse theory<sup>18</sup>, nor Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's sociology of knowledge<sup>19</sup>, in which the individual and society are both shaping and shaped, and thus stand in a dialectical relationship. In addition to the so-called linguistic turn, these new theoretical approaches have greatly contributed to the development of the anthropology of art. Consider, for example, Clifford Geertz's influential 1983 paper *Art as a Cultural System*<sup>20</sup>, which he could hardly have written without knowledge of these new findings.

The dichotomy of West and primitives had seemingly disappeared by the last third of the 20th century, but the notion of the „developing world” maintained a transformed trinity of „West, East and developing world” that was also hierarchical.<sup>21</sup> As I mentioned, carvings, paintings, textiles and masks, etc., were readily compared by anthropologists and ethnographers

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<sup>16</sup> Toepfer 1997; Wisotzki 2021. Expressionist dance, or dance as a form of expression and as a therapeutic tool, also emerged in the first half of the 20th century.

<sup>17</sup> see also. pl. Bartók 1921.

<sup>18</sup> Foucault 2001 [1969].

<sup>19</sup> Berger – Luckmann 1966.

<sup>20</sup> Geertz 2001: 271–303.

<sup>21</sup> For the new issues brought up by the post-colonialist myths of development and development discourse see for example. Csáji 2018.

until the birth of art anthropology in the 1960s.<sup>22</sup> The analysis of rituals and folk customs was not perpetuated for aesthetic or artistic purposes, but for descriptive purposes, or to interpret their functions and their role in the social structure. They were of interest only as phenomena necessary for the description and analysis of societies and cultures, and not as creative artistic activities. In the last third of the 20th century, Victor Turner's theory of 'social drama' brought about a significant change in this area, because it emphasised the dynamic and dialectical relationship between rites, art and socio-cultural context.<sup>23</sup> In addition, he was keen to include European examples in his analyses.

The seventies and eighties saw a series of new directions in the theoretical approach to anthropology. After the emergence of interpretive and symbolic anthropology, James Clifford and George Marcus's 1986 book *Writing Culture*<sup>24</sup> opened up a new perspective of importance for the anthropology of art. Not only in his approach to the field, but also to scientific writing and the role of the researcher, he loosened the boundaries between science and art that had previously been considered stable. In the postmodern era, art has penetrated science, and vice versa. By the 2000s, not only had the boundaries between science and art widened, but the juxtaposition of the two ways of thinking had, in many people's view, become out of date.<sup>25</sup>

Until the turn of the millennium, the visuality-centredness of art anthropology was clearly prevalent. In addition to the reasons for this situation, the fact that by the end of the 20th century the discourses of the disciplines dealing with art and the powers of the specialised disciplines had already been established (and jealously guarded) may have contributed to its maintenance. Moreover, the established channels of communication (journals, research workshops, learned societies, international scientific organisations,

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<sup>22</sup> The aforementioned disdain was also implicitly expressed in the scientific view that everything in folk art and „primitive” object art has a symbolic meaning and function, so the role of creativity and playfulness, which has no direct function or meaning, was neglected. (Csáji 2013; 2019). The myriad other forms of artistic creation (dramatic rites, dances, songs, music, etc.) have also attracted attention - but the application of anthropological questions and approaches to art has been negligible in this field.

<sup>23</sup> Turner 2002.

<sup>24</sup> Clifford – Marcus 1986.

<sup>25</sup> Schneider – Wright 2020.

conferences) cannot easily integrate the practitioners of another discipline, its specific language and its different rules. In the humanities, inter- and multidisciplinary has long met with strong resistance, but has become an increasingly legitimate aspiration since the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries.

In the history and development of the anthropology of art, the „primitive peoples focus” and the visuality-centredness have made it very difficult to engage in dialogue with other disciplines and to develop an integrative approach to the anthropological study of the arts. The historical, cultural and aesthetic study of literature, dance or music was already being carried out by other disciplines, and it was difficult for anthropology to find its place and position itself among the disciplines of art theory. In the last third of the 20th century, the aesthetics of folk art was also being researched more and more intensively<sup>26</sup> by ethnography (folklore studies), but the aesthetic evaluation of folk embroidery and carvings had been undertaken by many people since the end of the 19th century.

Ethnologists, ethnomusicologists and anthropologists who were well versed in dance started their own workshops and journals from the turn of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>27</sup> However, the role of dance in the anthropology of art has been overlooked even when it would have been obvious to include it in the analysis.<sup>28</sup> In the title of my paper, I have highlighted the use of space and movement as possible points of connection. Therefore, although I mentioned a number of other examples in my presentation, I now want to illustrate, through one short case study, how dance anthropology is linked to various other anthropological perspectives.

In the 1930s, a German choreographer (Walter Spies) and a Balinese dancer (Wayan Limbak) collaborated to create the now world-famous dance drama *Ketsak*, known from Ron Fricke’s film *Baraka*.<sup>29</sup> The work, which is an interference between the local interpretation of the Indian Ramayana epic and Balinese Hindu movement culture (sacred dances, shamanistic rites) and 20th

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<sup>26</sup> eg. Voigt 1972.

<sup>27</sup> Grau 1993: 22.

<sup>28</sup> see also Paulme 1973.

<sup>29</sup> Stepputat 2010: 278.

century modern dance, has taken such strong roots in Bali that it has become one of the most emblematic local traditions. This is why James Clifford, in introducing the concept of the modern art-culture system<sup>30</sup>, highlighted it as one of the most striking phenomena of social and cultural transformation in the 20th century, with its barely separable fusions of folklore and professional art.<sup>31</sup> The ritual dance show, which includes firewalking, has become a major tourist attraction in Bali, and in my experience, it is regarded by locals as an „ancient” local knowledge passed down through generations.<sup>32</sup> It is not easy to determine which element of the choreography of the dramatic play can be considered a dance performance, since, for example, the hand movements of the members of the so-called „monkey chorus”, sitting in a circle of several rows, also evoke the spontaneous atmosphere and the behaviour of the audience surrounding the fighting area, which, based on my own field experience, becomes an independent entity as a crowd.<sup>33</sup> The performance, which is rich in dialogue-based drama and dance elements, often includes improvisational elements, such as a shamanistic ritual of walking on a parade (cf. the artist as shaman)<sup>34</sup>. Because of the spatiality, dance and movement’s subtle transitions, it would be a major simplification to consider it only in terms of dance anthropology, social drama, local or even ethnic specificities, dense descriptions of cockfights, local tourist or political anthropology. Because of the improvisational elements, a multitude of behavioural patterns and individual interventions appear in *Ketsak*’s dramatic performance. It is far from clear by whom and with what artistic contribution this multifaceted communal rite has been created and re-constructed from time to time in Bali. The phenomenon also calls into question the dichotomy between folklore and professional art.

For half a century, the discourse on art as a fundamental dimension of human existence has been revived not only in anthropology. Already in antiquity (e.g. in Aristotle’s *Poetics*), several disciplines have formulated attempts to reinterpret the questions posed in the *Poetics* and to reflect

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<sup>30</sup> Clifford 1988: 100, 223.

<sup>31</sup> This can only be captured in a much more limited way by the concept of *folklorism* of the Tübingen school.

<sup>32</sup> see also Dunbar-Hall 2001: 174.

<sup>33</sup> see also Geertz 2001: 150–151.

<sup>34</sup> Walters 2020.



contemporary reality.<sup>35</sup> We shall not forget that the sciences are competing to extend their own competence, to extend the validity of their scientific answers, to legitimise their own role. Literary history and literary theory, for example, have for generations thematised the study of texts considered to have literary value, so that an ‚anthropological approach to literature‘ could hardly be considered. The structuralist approach of some anthropologists, such as Claude Lévi-Strauss in mythology studies, has been echoed by literary historians, and in the 1960s the idea of an ‚anthropology of literature‘<sup>36</sup> was even considered, however, anthropology was not considered legitimate by the literary and linguistic disciplines for the study of literature<sup>37</sup>, and some have proposed the use of a more narrowly focused discipline, the ‚anthropology of reading culture‘, instead of literary anthropology.<sup>38</sup>

A similar situation could be reported in theatre, design and many other arts. To me, it is curious that the *metaphor* highlighted in chapter 22 of Aristotle’s *Poetics* as the basis of artistic thought has only relatively late inspired analysts of non-verbal art, even though it has been perhaps the most important basis of creation since the dawn of mankind<sup>39</sup>, and is recognisable in the material and even dramatic arts. An important milestone was George Marcus and Fred R. Myers’ 1995 volume *The Traffic in Culture*, where music and (social) drama were prominently featured in the analyses.<sup>40</sup> Alfred Gell, in his 1998 work, proposes that art should not only be considered in terms of form, aesthetics, meaning and communication, but also from the perspective of the behaviour of the acting, creative human being as agency, the human activity that shapes his or her social environment.<sup>41</sup> Again, this presupposes a dialectical - discursive „network domain“ - relationship<sup>42</sup> between the individual and his or her environment, the artist and his or her audience. By the turn of the millennium, it had become clear to many that the findings of network theory, discourse theory, philosophy of art and social philosophy,

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<sup>35</sup> see also Dissenayake 1974.

<sup>36</sup> see for example Rippere 1966.

<sup>37</sup> see also Maryl 2012, 182.; Al-Gharib 2020: 96.

<sup>38</sup> Maryl 2012: 183: 194.

<sup>39</sup> Morriss-Kay 2010: 163.

<sup>40</sup> Marcus – Myers 1995.

<sup>41</sup> Gell 1998: ix.

<sup>42</sup> White – Mische 1998.

ontology, epistemology, as well as anthropological linguistics (cognitive semantics), ethology and sociology could not be ignored in anthropological research.

But the breakthrough came at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries with the recognition of the inevitability of intermedia art and digital culture. This ‚new terrain‘ was alien to most disciplines. To this day, folklore studies in Hungary is still struggling with the dilemma of how to interpret folklore in the online space.<sup>43</sup> However, anthropology quickly extended its field of research to digital reality. Paolo Apolito, Robert Glenn Howard, Trevor Blank, Sarah Pink and many others are just some of the anthropologists who have set new directions and added new aspects to the study of this new dimension of society and culture. The recognition of the fluidity of genres and genres in the online space has become unavoidable,<sup>44</sup> as has the research into the interaction between online and offline spaces.

I would like to give you one example of the landslide-like changes in the anthropology of art in the last decade. In 2012, the Anthropology of Art Working Group (ANTART) was founded in Paris within the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA), and held its first scientific meeting at the 2014 international conference in Tallinn. At that time, most of the anthropologists of art were still working on visual anthropology, but dilemmas were emerging that were drawing attention to the more general problems of art and anthropology. Who is the anthropologist writing for, to what extent can the contemporary art world and art itself be the field of anthropology, what are the common ground between art and anthropology, and above all: what are the main questions facing the anthropology of art today? Learning the specific language of each art seemed to be comparable to the process of learning the language of „foreign peoples” by an anthropologist, learning the language of subcultures and their social language. The workshop ”Encountering Concepts in Art and Anthropology” dealt with the similarities and differences between art and anthropological cognition, the similarities and differences between the two kinds of knowledge, and the problem of the correspondence between concepts. It was characterised by a new epistemological orientation instead

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<sup>43</sup> Mikos 2010; Tamás 2021.

<sup>44</sup> Pink et al. 2016; Tamás 2021.

of the previous hermeneutic, interpretative approach. The researchers were concerned with the nature of knowledge and the role of the subject and emotions in cognition. To further discuss the issues raised at the workshop, ANTART launched a blog in preparation for the workshop on the anthropology of art at the EASA conference in Milan in 2016. In the following years, the inclusion of performing arts and other non-figurative arts in the anthropology of art has been increasingly emphasised beyond the role of online spaces.

On 21-22 September 2019, a conference organised by EASA, CARMAH (Centre for Anthropological Research on Museums and Heritage) and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany, had a particularly self-reflexive theme: "The Trouble with Art (Philistinism, Iconoclasm, and Scepticism of Art in Anthropology)". The conference raised several questions that I address in this paper in terms of the self-definition and vision of the anthropology of art. The new approach was characterised by a preoccupation with different forms of knowledge and the interplay between creativity and subjectivity. It was pointed out that the approach of anthropological hermeneutics (the „interpreting” science) also presupposes a kind of hierarchical relationship: the interpreter knows more, par excellence, hierarchically higher than the one he interprets. The working group has evolved into a network, now called the ANTART Network, as a result of expanding peer-to-peer links.

At the 2020 EASA conference in Lisbon, ANTART addressed a fundamental question in the anthropology of art, with a panel entitled "Anthropology and Art: on the dynamics and polemics of situating definitions of art". In addition to the panel, ANTART also co-organised an exhibition to accompany the EASA conference as an integrative and innovative presentation of the anthropology of art to the professional and general public. It openly announced its intention to become a common platform for anthropological research in visual, audio and performing arts. At the 2022 EASA conference in Belfast, ANTART has already organised three panels on 1) Engaging with aesthetic forms: approaching the sociopolitical embedding and agency of arts, 2) Hopeful chronopolitics: contemporary art and ethnography, 3) Arts of the decolonial. The themes illustrate their increasingly assertive image. In November 2023, they will hold their next conference, "Re-worlding Relations:

Anthropology, Art, and Design”, in Newcastle. In addition to practical issues, the epistemological problems of sensory experience and knowledge formation will be the focus of the conference. From theatre to music, from intermedia to visual arts and design, and other arts, the organisation aims to provide an integrative platform for discussion and debate.

The relationship between cognition, fieldwork and science and art has been a growing concern for contemporary anthropologists over the past two decades. The ‚epistemological turn’ can be observed outside the ANTART working group, so the change has not only started within EASA. To give just one example, the 2020 book *Art, Anthropology, and Contested Heritage*<sup>45</sup>, which explores the artistic aspects of human faces, death, and memory, emphasizes the importance of the study of emotions and the subject in anthropological and artistic research.

Hungarian cultural anthropology gradually recognised the importance of art anthropology in the 2000s. Already at the turn of the millennium, Lajos Boglár raised the importance of the anthropology of art.<sup>46</sup> The Department of Cultural and Visual Anthropology at the University of Miskolc also deals with the relationship between art and anthropology (art anthropology is also included in its training profile). Nevertheless, although it deals with art in several articles, even the extended edition of *Antropólia – etnológia (Kultúratudományi kislexikon)* does not have an article on the anthropology of art, it only contains the terms ethno-aesthetics, aesthetic anthropology and ethnology of art proposed by Lajos Boglár.<sup>47</sup> Barbara Kisdi’s textbook on the history of anthropology does include the anthropology of art as a separate chapter.<sup>48</sup> Declared by the organizers - the Hungarian Society for Cultural Anthropology (MAKAT), the Institute of Theory of the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design (MOME) and the newly founded MAKAT Workshop of Art and Design Anthropology - as the first Hungarian academic conference on the anthropology of art, the event, entitled ”Art + Design +

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<sup>45</sup> Schneider 2020.

<sup>46</sup> Boglár 2001.

<sup>47</sup> A. Gergely et al. 2010.

<sup>48</sup> Kisdi 2018.

Anthropology”, was held on 6 December 2022 at MOME, and in line with the organizers’ image, design anthropology was given a prominent role..

The anthropology of dance is currently on a different path from the anthropology of art, and its organisations are largely separate. A striking example of this in Hungary is the negligible overlap between the 2023 dance anthropology conference series in Debrecen and the aforementioned 2022 art anthropology symposium in Budapest. There are, of course, similar issues, such as the nature of art or the analysis of dance/art as a human activity, the role of creativity and emotions. The problem of the definition of dance remains a very exciting and inescapable issue, as it is a question that prompts self-reflection time and again.<sup>49</sup> Due to the intensive dialogue with dance theory, choreography, ethnomusicology and other co-disciplines, dance anthropology approaches are still a very diverse and rich palette.

Dance anthropology, dance ethnology - in contrast to the first decades of art anthropology - has been (and has been created) from the very beginning of the discipline, usually by people who were themselves either artists or at least well versed in the given art form. This partly internal perspective has had a significant impact on the approach, but has also provided a situational advantage in terms of understanding and knowledge of the field. At the same time, however, it has also reinforced the sense of separateness, making it more difficult to find common ground with a ‚simple’ anthropologist working on African masks, Indian textile techniques or even body painting. The need for dance anthropology as a discipline in its own right was first raised by Gertrude Prokosch Kurath, who stressed the overarching role of concepts of dance and the importance of studies within the broader dimension of human existence and cognition (the human being who perceives, responds and creates reality).<sup>50</sup> Later, however, both dance anthropology and the emerging discipline engaged in a more intensive dialogue with ethnomusicology, ethnography, choreography, etc., and were concerned with the aesthetic, functional and interpretative research of movement culture, dance culture and the individual dances.<sup>51</sup> Andrée Grau also draws attention to the fact

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<sup>49</sup> Royce 1977: 3–16; Hanna 1988: 16–18; Williams 1991: 5–7.

<sup>50</sup> Kurath 1960.

<sup>51</sup> Hodgens 1984.

that dance anthropology<sup>52</sup> and dance ethnology have also followed quite different paths in Europe and the USA.<sup>53</sup> This is not to say that some exciting theoretical approaches have not attracted the attention of art anthropologists because of their innovative and holistic approach. Joann Kealiinohomoku, for example, points out that from an anthropological perspective, ballet can also be understood as an ethnic dance.<sup>54</sup> Continuing this holistic approach, Adrienne Kaeppler analyses modern dance, ballet and all other dance, as a universal form of human behaviour.<sup>55</sup>

Although, again, I am not a specialist in dance anthropology, it seems to me that, despite the examples above, dance anthropologists tend to formulate their conclusions in their own narrow intercultural context, with little connection to these „big questions“. This has also contributed to the fact that the integration of this undoubtedly important discipline into the new framework of the anthropology of art has hardly begun. One exception is Judit Lynne Hanna, who takes a broader perspective on the relationship between the performative arts, especially dance and music.<sup>56</sup> The concept of *performance theory*<sup>57</sup>, which has had a significant impact in several disciplines, has undoubtedly played a role in the emergence of this new horizon.<sup>58</sup> Since the 2000s, the concept of performative arts has become a catalyst for linking dance with theatre and other arts.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the increasing attention of art anthropologists to music and even architecture, in addition to the visual and oral arts, in defining the nature of art, if anthropology - including dance anthropology - cannot be properly integrated into the contemporary scientific and artistic „big“ discourses, it is to be feared that it will have to take up a defensive position and may be

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<sup>52</sup> Grau also rejects the term „anthropology of human movement“, which he believes would broaden the focus of the study.

<sup>53</sup> Grau 1993: 21–22.

<sup>54</sup> Kealiinohomoku 1983.

<sup>55</sup> Kaeppler 2000.

<sup>56</sup> Hanna 2010.

<sup>57</sup> The word *performance* was introduced into German and French from the 1970s, and then into other languages of from English - signalling an important shift in approach: the importance of individuality, performance, the role of the audience and the interaction between the individual and the social group. Shephard 2016: vii–viii.

<sup>58</sup> Schechner 2003.

<sup>59</sup> see also Royce 2004.

discredited in the contemporary discourse and academics.<sup>60</sup> Recognizing this, Hanna - in parallel with the aforementioned anthropological endeavours in the field of art - draws attention to the role of cognition and emotions as important anthropological aspects.<sup>61</sup> Dance anthropology could, of course, be of interest (and dialogue) not only to the anthropology of art, but also to other anthropological disciplines. One such area is ethnicity studies, for which anthropology is a major catalyst.<sup>62</sup> Returning to the first thoughts of my paper, specialisation should not make us, as *sui generis* holistic anthropologists, forget that our science is fundamentally about understanding, interpreting and analysing the „human” and the „other”. In the 20th century, it is working *expressis verbis* to promote a more empathetic world in which our scientific questions are linked by a thousand threads.

In the first decades of the 21st century, we are living in times that are revising the functioning and legitimacy of individual sciences, redefining the relationship between sciences and disciplines. One important direction of change is the inevitability of interdisciplinary dialogue and the extent to which each discipline can formulate credible responses to the challenges and changes of the contemporary world. From its beginnings, anthropology has pursued a kind of holistic, dialectical approach to the human, to the comparative analysis of social and cultural difference, from a perspective of the over-view (participant observation, in-depth sustained fieldwork) to the under-view. This is why it has been able to constantly renew itself. In the specification of disciplines, we cannot ignore the susceptibility to this overall picture, or at least to comparison. Its theoretical and methodological approaches, which have been self-reflexively re-thought and re-thought, and the diversity of these approaches, have meant that anthropology has maintained its capacity for innovation to this day. I have also described in my writing the emergence of anthropology of art as an integrative discipline - as its attention has expanded beyond the visual and material arts to include dramatic, verbal and intermedial, and then digital arts. This is not

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<sup>60</sup> see also Sütterlin et al. 2014.

<sup>61</sup> Hanna 2015.

<sup>62</sup> see also pl. Zografou – Pipyrou 2011.

to say that individual sub-disciplines such as dance anthropology or literary anthropology should not continue to go their relatively separate ways, but that they should be more receptive to each other and to common issues, to think together, to harmonise their conceptual frameworks and approaches. Without this dialogue, both the anthropology of art and the anthropology of dance would be threatened by the inevitable withering away of disciplines that are becoming increasingly fragmented and thus isolated. In my paper, I have described how the international cultural and social anthropology profession has recognised this and is calling for the establishment of a larger - and thus more credible - disciplinary unit. In my view, this effort should be joined by scholarship from Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries, as their experiences could contribute greatly to a more nuanced and holistic approach to global anthropological issues.

The anthropology of art goes far beyond simple formal, technological, aesthetic and functional comparisons, and even beyond social, historical and interpretative (hermeneutic) contextual analysis. Of course, it is about these too, but its attention is ultimately directed towards a better knowledge and understanding of man as a value-creating being, an exploration of the multiple and never definitively modelable aspects of emotion, art and knowledge creation and transmission. It therefore also incorporates the findings of art history, psychology, linguistics, or even ethology, etc., depending on the specific research question. It is always necessary to find the right theoretical background and research and analysis methods for a given question. These can then be used to reformulate the questions themselves. Our theoretical orientations and methods not only have an impact on our questions, but also limit the answers we can get to them. The wrong question cannot have the right answer - without theoretical and methodological reflection, our questioning can easily become peripheral and irrelevant to contemporary scholarship and society.

The research directions and methods of art anthropology have changed a lot in the last century. While still considering the specialised study of individual arts to be legitimate, we also call for more integrated, interdisciplinary and human-centred research. I have given concrete examples of such efforts that started in the 2000s.



Undoubtedly, the definition of „anthropology of dance culture” better describes the current situation and aspirations of dance anthropology, but narrowing it down this way would continue the process of specialisation that preceded the integrationist efforts of the 2000s and would work against a more comprehensive anthropological approach. I fear that this narrower self-definition would limit the possible perspectives and the ‚scope’ and legitimacy of dance anthropology. To what extent does it limit dance anthropologists in integrating their own discipline into the new theoretical framework of the anthropology of art that is emerging in the 21st century? In my opinion, this description, which is undoubtedly appropriate to the current situation, reflects a kind of status quo rather than a future-oriented approach. The new horizons of the anthropology of art that emerged in the 2010s also offered new opportunities for further reflection on the achievements of dance anthropology and for putting the experience and knowledge acquired into a new dimension.

The human body as an artistic medium can also provide a space for the study of many other frontiers in addition to dance culture: body painting, body decoration, fashion, sacred and profane spatiality, proxemics, movement culture and behavioural patterns, etc. Art as a playful, experimental field of communication, which is both discourse-dependent and aesthetically interpretable, and which affects both the emotions and the intellect, and which unfolds in individual creativity, would provide ample scope for dance anthropology to share with art anthropological interpretations. The subject and field of dance anthropology is also very important for other disciplines of art anthropology. Isolation would limit this horizon unnecessarily.

It would also be necessary to extend our anthropological sensitivity to contemporary art theory issues: among these, the anthropology of emotions and the study of discursive knowledge could play a prominent role. The dialectics of individual creativity, humour, experimentation and community patterns, as well as performativity, could provide for increasingly nuanced analyses. In recent decades, the anthropology of art has moved from a phenomenological and hermeneutical approach towards an epistemological one. An „anthropology of emotions and knowledge” could open up new areas for the study of art and other related forms of behaviour and creation. In my writing, I attempted to explore aspects of dance anthropology (or, in other

approaches, the anthropology of dance culture) that could allow it to be more organically integrated into the anthropology of art, which is dynamically expanding its theoretical perspective. Indeed, I am convinced that both the anthropology of art and the anthropology of dance could benefit greatly from this integration.

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## History of dance and music

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# Fragments for the Social History of Early Modern Dance Culture

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MÁTÉ KAVECSÁNSZKI

*„[...]a law was once passed here in Geneva to prohibit dancing in general [...] I admit the intention was right, for it would be difficult to find meaning in dancing, except as an invitation to whoredom. I also admit that not all men and women behave like fornicators when dancing, but when we consider the true nature of dancing, we see only a clever trick of indecency that opens the door to Satan.” (John Calvin, 1555, Geneva)<sup>1</sup>*

*„Since God has not yet taken the whip from us, and since the corruption increases from day to day, therefore until the Lord brings peace upon us, let no one dare to dance, to play the violin, to sing the lute, to play the virginals.” (1610, Debrecen)<sup>2</sup>*

## The city

In Geneva, in 1546, on the proposal of John Calvin, the Small Council enacted a law and the Consistory enforced the closure of the town taverns and the ban on dancing. However, soon afterwards the ineffective ban was lifted.<sup>3</sup> In many respects, mid-16th century Geneva became a model for European Protestant communities, both in terms of Calvin’s anti-dancing stance<sup>4</sup> and the official ban on revelry, and its ineffectiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Magyar 2015: 67. About the date of the sermon see Magyar 2015: 79.

<sup>2</sup> As quoted by Balogh 1973: 58–59. See also Bogdán 1978: 198.

<sup>3</sup> Magyar 2015: 62., 67. The third appendix of Balázs Dávid Magyar’s study offers a valuable source of information on the acts prohibited by the council of Geneva from 1490 to 1564. See Magyar 2015: 80–82.

<sup>4</sup> In Calvin’s Commentary on Galatians and Ephesians there are notes on the prohibition of all kinds of dance, although these were largely ineffective, according to his own sermons (Magyar 2011: 32–34.). Calvin viewed dance as an act full of debauchery and lust, which opens the way for the Satan (on Calvin’s views see Patay 1935: 33.), thus he considered the prohibition rightful, in order to prevent women from debauchery (Magyar 2011: 33.). Calvin dedicated two of his sermons to dance in the 1550s. The first accompanied his commentary

The decree, quoted from Debrecen in the early 17th century, was the result of an almost century-long moral theological struggle in „Calvinist Rome”. Protestantism in the 16th century, with its many denominations and tendencies,<sup>5</sup> launched a vigorous attack on certain forms of dance, dancing and its accompaniments. The question first appeared on the moral-theological level, then in ecclesiastical legislation, in synods, and finally in municipal administrative decisions - especially where ecclesiastical and secular government were closely intertwined - such as in the Calvinist ”respublica” of Debrecen.<sup>6</sup>

The example of Debrecen is not unique in the 17th century. With the rise of the Reformation, ecclesiastical bans on dancing and on the culture of entertainment as a whole were on the rise. In the 16th century, in some areas of Hungary, which was divided into parts, we find a number of restrictive measures in this respect, indicating that regulation and discipline were increasingly shifting from the moral theological level to the competence of secular regulators. Ernő Czóbel, though not a social historian, pointed to one possible explanation to all this in a very perceptive way:

„Around the Battle of Mohács, a fierce and widespread agitation against expensive opulence and luxury begins in Hungary, at the same time as the Reformation spreads more strongly and suddenly. The literature, which at that time was almost exclusively written by Protestants, was full of mockings and lamentations on drunkenness, tavern-going, ostentatious dressing, lewd revelry, lavish feasting and of attacks against expensive, costly way of life.”<sup>7</sup>

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the municipalities and jurisdictions that had the right of self-government tried to keep the phenomena of the entertainment

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on 1Tim 2,1–2, and is quoted at the beginning of this paper. The other was part of a sermon on the seventh commandment: ”Dancing is the province not of the chaste woman, but of the adulteress” (see Magyar 2015: 68). And later: ”Where dancing is, there the devil is” (see Magyar 2015:68).

<sup>5</sup> See for example Kavecsánszki 2019: 352–353.

<sup>6</sup> Of particular relevance here is the link between the city and the College it maintained. Up until the Age of Enlightenment, members of the Consistory of Debrecen were also members of the City Council. See Győri L. 2008: 93.

<sup>7</sup> Czóbel 1963: 324.

culture within strict limits. The opening hours of pubs and other wine-tasting places and cellars were strictly regulated. In particular, many sources have survived from the early modern Protestant towns and cities with a large bourgeoisie class. Here are some examples:

A 1532 decree in Banská Bystrica (Besztercebánya in Hungarian, now in Slovakia) stipulated that weddings, which had previously lasted three days, could only last one day. In both 1539 and 1542, it was decided that the wedding feast could last from morning until 2 p.m. It was also at this time that late-night revelries in the spinning mills were banned.<sup>8</sup> In Banská Bystrica, from 1550 onwards, those who broke the city's decree about weddings in silence and without music had to pay 10 gold forints. The city capped the number of guests invited to the wedding at five tables and stipulated that the wedding could last only one day. It could only be held on Sundays - and then only until 4 p.m. - and was strictly forbidden on weekdays. The statute also stipulated how the dancing was to be performed and the number of musicians. In addition to regulating the wedding feast, the city also imposed strict rules on tavern-going.<sup>9</sup> In 1537, Kremnica (in Hungarian Kőrmöcbánya, today in Slovakia) issued a decree forbidding drunkenness: taverns and pubs to close at 9 pm, but after 9 pm, it was forbidden to go out, play music, dance, feast, even at home, under penalty of fines and corporal punishment.<sup>10</sup> In 1545, the city council of Sibiu (Szeben, now part of Romania) forbade immoral acts in the *Spielstube* (playrooms), preventing girls and boys from staying together.<sup>11</sup> In Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvar, Romania), in 1571, Ferenc Dávid appealed to the city authorities to restrict carnival parades and revelry. The Council decided to set a time limit for revelry in the streets and taverns, and to punish disorderly persons with the penalty of being locked up in the 'kalicka'. The ban was repeated in 1573, apparently because it was ineffective, but it did not apply to the prohibition of 'decent' revelry.<sup>12</sup> In 1616, in Košice (Kassa, Slovakia), the night drinking and dancing of students was heavily criticised.<sup>13</sup> At the time

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<sup>8</sup> Czóbel 1963: 332.

<sup>9</sup> see Graus 2005: 344–348. For a more detailed description see Czóbel 1963: 334.

<sup>10</sup> Czóbel 1963: 332–333.

<sup>11</sup> for more details see Czóbel 1963: 333.

<sup>12</sup> Kovács Kiss 2010: 9.

<sup>13</sup> The decree is quoted by Takács 1979: 101.

of the recapture and the siege of Buda revelry was forbidden throughout the country. As this was very difficult to enforce, they simply insisted that there should be no music or dancing in the pubs after 9pm.<sup>14</sup>

Similar provisions from the early modern period relating to the customary context of dancing could be listed over pages and pages, and certainly many sources remain unexplored in this respect. Rather than listing them, however, I would like to focus on two questions: 1) Why were these provisions finally made and why do we find more of them in the Protestant areas? Through this we can examine the status of dancing in the contemporary thinking and its role in moral theology.<sup>15</sup> 2) It is a returning question of how rules of a moral-theological nature can be put into practice, how they appear in rural life, for example. Through this, we can take a further step towards exploring the socio-historical context of folk dance culture.

## **The church**

The early modern church was a disciplinary power.<sup>16</sup> From the start, Reformation sought to interpret the events of the past and present theologically, developing its own particular view of history and a moral theology based on it. This view of history in the period of Protestant orthodoxy (from the mid-16th to the mid-17th century) was a conception of time that can be traced back to St Augustine and was rooted in Luther's and Melancton's notions on time. This was replaced from the mid-17th century onwards by the so-called Ger-

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<sup>14</sup> Zolnay 1986: 315–316.

<sup>15</sup> It should be added here, of course, that the struggle to obtain the right of municipal self-government also played a prominent role in the creation of secular administrative decisions of the Protestant spirit. In the early modern period, the farming towns and villages with market right fought fiercely with their secular or ecclesiastical landlords and sought to extend their municipal rights. These settlements were attracted to the Helvetic doctrines and were keen to elect Reformed ministers to support their political aspirations. At the same time, however, the demand for Protestant morality was on the rise (see Bucsay 1985: 38–39). The link between the spread of the Reformation and urban self-government was first suggested by Bernd Moeller, who argued that German imperial cities saw in the Reformation an opportunity to counter imperial (and Catholic) centralising tendencies. He points out that Ulrich Zwingli, for example, based his theological ideas on the close intertwining of urban and ecclesiastical communities, which led to a very significant interconnection of ecclesiastical and secular magistracy, for example. For a detailed summary of this approach see Kiss 2011: 13–14.

<sup>16</sup> For more details see Kavecsánszki 2021: 77–89.

man Lowland (Coccejusian or Burmannian) view of history of the Puritan period.<sup>17</sup> A special group of moral theological reflections and parables are those sources that condemned the profane revelry of the 16th century or attempted to regulate it in principle. The analysis of these documents is of importance not only for the history of culture and the church, but also for the local history of the popular culture of the period. This is particularly true of the sources relating to the use of the body and, through it, to dancing and revelry.<sup>18</sup>

The Reformation and its moral teachings had to become a daily practice, a habit and a way of life, according to the aspirations of the church leadership. To do this, it had to create a very specific and wide-ranging set of rules in all areas of life, including the use of the body. A particularly important task of this new trend in contemporary moral theology was to clarify the role of the body, in addition to a new understanding of spirituality. „Protestantism’s denial came from the struggle against justification by deeds, which became, in effect, a struggle against deeds.”<sup>19</sup> This applied particularly to the actions of the body, including dance and its accompaniments. As well as creating a moral theology of the body, the Reformation had to translate it into everyday practice, and thus into ecclesiastical and even secular legislation. In the cities that came under Protestant control - some examples of which I have cited above - these became secular rules in the form of municipal statutes, since even Calvin argued that acts punishable by God should also be punished by the secular authorities.<sup>20</sup>

In early modern Hungary and in Transylvania, the anti-dance moral theological ideas<sup>21</sup> about dance, which were born in the spirit of the Wittenberg view of history, began to be put into practice at the synods. Among the many synods of the 16th century, however, there are relatively few that deal specifically with dance. One of the earliest of these is the Second Synod of Erdőd in 1555,

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<sup>17</sup> About the historical perspectives of the Protestant Church see Csorba 2011: 145.

<sup>18</sup> For more details see Kavecsánszki 2021: 70–90.

<sup>19</sup> Ronchi 1991: 21.

<sup>20</sup> Kálvin 1559: II. IV. xx. 2. 748.

<sup>21</sup> The Wittenbergian view of history was a framework for interpreting events that considered the crises of the present as divine retribution for sins committed in the past, thus consciously spreading a sense of decadence. The writings, sermons and moral treatises produced in this context paint a specific, theologically based picture of the moral condition of the peoples of the Carpathian Basin. For the interpretation of resources about dance from the Wittenbergian perspective, see Kavecsánszki 2021: 83–90.

which warned clergy against attending events that included dancing, weddings, drunkenness and drinking.<sup>22</sup> A similar approach was taken in the provision of the Synod of Gönc of 1566.<sup>23</sup> In 1576, the CouSynod of Hercegszöllös took a much clearer stand against dancing, forbidding it not only to churchmen, but to all decent Christian people.<sup>24</sup> According to the puritanical decrees of the Synod of Enyed in 1564, dancing clergymen in Transylvania were first fined, and then, in case of further insubordination, they were disqualified.<sup>25</sup> The Synod of Oradea of 1577 discussed the issues related to the customary environment of dancing in a relatively extensive way.<sup>26</sup> The 44th provision of the Upper-Hungarian synod of 1595 contains a resolution against dancing, prohibiting all forms of dance for the clergy.<sup>27</sup>

It is clear that the Protestant church's government at the synodal level has been quite vigorous in its efforts to combat dancing and its customs. Although the prohibitions applied primarily to clergy, the interpretation of dancing as a moral vice is clearly outlined. I cannot undertake a detailed discussion of the Protestant moral theology's position on dancing here,<sup>28</sup> but I do seek to answer the question of how the type of source material considered above can be used to identify social and cultural historical features. This requires the application of a theoretical base and methodological canon that is essentially specific to historiography.

### **The social history of dance culture – international perspective**

Representatives of historiography are typically not interested in the historicity of dance itself (unless they are dance historians specifically investigating the characteristics, history and change of formal and structural issues), but rather in the cultural-historical phenomenon through it - as is typical of holistic dance anthropology, which goes back to the limits of the

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<sup>22</sup> Erdődi II. zsinat, section VIII. Kiss 1881: 37–38.

<sup>23</sup> Gönci zsinat, section 12. and 13. Kiss 1881: 444.

<sup>24</sup> Hercegszöllősi zsinat: 1577. 30th section. See also: Czóbel 1963: 337.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted by Kiss 2011: 186.

<sup>26</sup> Nagyváradi zsinat, section 12., Kiss 1881: 692.

<sup>27</sup> Felső-magyarországi cikkek XLIV. Kiss 1881: 720–722.

<sup>28</sup> See Kavecsánszki 2019: 349–359; Kavecsánszki 2021: 84–89; Kavecsánszki 2022: 221–238.



living past.<sup>29</sup> The cultural environment of dance and its relationship with it is the subject of research. Typically, research related to new cultural and social history<sup>30</sup> and dance studies focuses on the dance history and social history aspects of contemporary dance culture. In this respect, there is a *social history of dance and dance culture* as a research direction. For example, in a study published in 2010, Erich Wimmer used documents from the Würzburg archdiocese and city offices to reconstruct the city's dance history, and in the title of his work he explicitly used the term *Social History of Dance* (Sozialgeschichte des Tanzes).<sup>31</sup> Reinhard Sprenger, in his study of the peasant festivals of late medieval Germany, stresses the continuous flow of dances between social strata and thus the existence of a unified dance tradition in terms of form and structure. His study not only describes the cyclical nature of peasant festivals according to the seasons and the dance forms associated with them (e.g. spring and summer outdoor dance forms), but also addresses the question of the accusations levelled against certain dances (e.g. sexual content or imitative acts).<sup>32</sup> He therefore provides a case study of the „utility” of dance culture from the perspective of social history.

A popular topic in social and cultural history is the study of folklore and popular forms of entertainment, which includes a deeper or more superficial understanding of dance and its contexts. Peter Burke's research in

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<sup>29</sup> On the possibilities of historical anthropological research of dance culture see Kavecsánszki 2021: 70–71; Kavecsánszki 2023.

<sup>30</sup> There is no coherence in the name of new social history as a field of study. The historiographical vision, often called postmodern, includes research fields such as the history of mentality, the history of everyday life, microculture, the new cultural history, and their separation from historical anthropology is often unclear. However, István M. Szi-jártó suggests that all of these should be included in the overall group of the new social history. See Szi-jártó M. 2003: 9–10. Accordingly, I refer to the research directions that can also be called cultural history and social history as new social history in this study, taking into account the new theories that have emerged in postmodern historiography since the 1960s, i.e. since the conceptualisation of the term, which go beyond the postmodern approach. I also note that there can be a theoretical difference between cultural anthropology and social anthropology, i.e. focusing on culture or society. See Sárkány 2008: 445–446. András Szekeres, following Ginzburg and Lévi, makes the same distinction: Szekeres 2003: 20. I would also like to add that one of the most important innovations of the new social history compared to the old social history is that while the traditional approach was mainly quantitative, the new one focuses on qualitative studies. It is important that the new social history is also a social history oriented towards cultural history. For more details see Kavecsánszki 2021: 70–77.

<sup>31</sup> Wimmer 2010: 673–683.

<sup>32</sup> Sprenger 1989: 215–224., especially 218–221.

this area is now considered fundamental and even a source of inspiration for research in this field. Burke's presentation of early modern forms of entertainment was very thorough, but he dealt with dancing and its contexts from a structural point of view. His theories on the process of civilisation and the early modern "invention" of leisure have been the subject of much criticism, but his merit in expanding the thematic and methodological scope of the historical study of entertainment and culture is undeniable. In many cases, it was precisely the criticisms that led to the launch of intensive, much more in-depth analyses of social history. In one of his studies, Joan-Lluís Marfany, among others, looks for qualitative differences between the era of capitalism and the pre-capitalist era of 'entertainment', and points out that the analysis of this issue requires a much more sophisticated social historical methodology than Burke's approach. They shed light, for example, on the antecedents of the Christian churches' condemnation of 'useless acts' and on the counter-effects of the rise of the 'work ethic', especially in the early modern period, on the judgement of leisure activities.<sup>33</sup> In his view, the scant evidence of early modern sources suggests that, in addition to their very industrious productive activities - which were their framework and condition of life - the peasantry of the time enjoyed the pleasures of life, its physical pleasures, games and dances, in their little leisure time, just as they had in earlier centuries and later. The most important sources on this, ironically, are the disapproving and condemnatory manifestations of the higher social classes.<sup>34</sup> Marfany gives a specific example from an inventory of a Catalan village near Barcelona between 1481 and 1500, in which the estates of a poor peasant, a tailor and a farm labourer included two flutes, a lute and a complete set of bagpipes, the latter being one of the most important instruments in dance music. He cites a number of similar sources related to peasant work, dance and music, from the medieval centuries.<sup>35</sup>

One well-documented commonality of the Calvinist model of church discipline is the operation of the Huguenot consistory of Nimes, which has been analysed in depth by Philippe Chareyre and Raymond Mentzer. Be-

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<sup>33</sup> Marfany 1997: 177–179.

<sup>34</sup> Marfany 1997: 179.

<sup>35</sup> Marfany 1997: 179–180.

tween 1561 and 1614, there was a strong opposition to various popular entertainments, especially dancing. In this period 1,085 cases are mentioned and 304 cases between 1605 and 1614, all closely linked to the prohibition of carnival and charivari. However, the studies found that it was precisely in the case of these popular entertainments that action proved ineffective in the long term.<sup>36</sup>

*In my view, the groups of sources that have already been explored in many cases by historiography and church history can prove useful not only for social and mental history research, but also for dance history.* In recent years, I have researched the phenomenon of dance and dancing primarily from the perspective of the Protestant churches, using mainly social historical methods. This is not a completely new approach, of course, but research specifically on the social history of dance culture is still very rare.

Since the 1960s, social history and the history of mentalities increasingly focused on the impact of the Protestant and Catholic Reformation on early modern societies.<sup>37</sup> Knowledge about the reform of popular culture has been growing, and even data specifically related to the history of dance have been added, which, however, have often remained unreflected in dance studies. Although the advancing disciplinary power of the church and later the state also had a major impact on dance culture, the two phenomena were often not interpreted within a common disciplinary framework. I am referring to the fact that the intention to influence dance culture from the outside - the success of which is irrelevant here - is part of a process that is both social and cultural, which was identified, for example, by Max Weber<sup>38</sup> and later by Gerhard Oestrich<sup>39</sup> as a programme of social disciplining (Sozialdisziplinierung), by Peter Burke<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Kiss 2011: 93–94.

<sup>37</sup> Kiss 2008: 318.

<sup>38</sup> On the origins of Weber's theory of Protestant ethics see Molnár 1994: 5–10.

<sup>39</sup> Gerhard Oestrich looked at this process in terms of the development of absolutism as a process of 'nationalisation' and assessed social discipline as a political and social outcome of absolute monarchy. Oestrich 1968: 335–338. About the disciplinary powers of the Protestant Churches see also Oestrich 343. Also Kiss 2008: 319.

<sup>40</sup> Burke 1991: 245–246.

as a reform of popular culture, by Norbert Elias<sup>41</sup> as a civilising process, and by Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard<sup>42</sup> as a confessional process.

I believe that our knowledge of this process can be enriched by examining changes in dance culture and by reconstructing mental patterns of thinking about dance. One of the central questions of early modern social history research is the relationship between ecclesiastical and secular power and the communities they increasingly sought to regulate and discipline. The study of dancing is only of limited use as a model for this, since, unlike adultery or public crimes, for example, which were also secular matters, the offence of dancing could rarely be interpreted as a crime that also fell under secular authority. It therefore remained essentially a moral transgression, unless it was associated with conduct that was also punishable by secular authorities, as the early modern municipal administrative decrees cited at the beginning of this paper may serve as an example.

The attitude towards dancing and dancing, mainly in principle and to a lesser extent in practice, is an important and well-analysed area of contemporary mentality. Protestantism, especially Calvinism, paid a great deal of attention to popular and popular cultural phenomena, including dancing, and sought to suppress and control them. The domination of Calvinism, as it was once practised in certain regions, would, according to Weber, „for us, simply represent the most inconceivable form of ecclesiastical control over the individual.”<sup>43</sup> As Weber put it,

„In fact, the Reformation did not mean the general elimination of the church’s dominion over life, but rather the replacement of the previous form of dominion with another. In particular, an extremely comfortable, at the time practically imperceptible, in many cases almost formal, domination of the whole way of life was replaced by a regulation of the whole

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<sup>41</sup> Elias 2004: 465–555.

<sup>42</sup> Confessionalisation is the theory of a denominationally neutral approach to the process of social modernisation in the early modern period, which, along with the emergence of modern denominational churches, played a crucial role in the process of homogenisation, the development of absolutist centralising institutions, the construction of social discipline and the reinforcement of a denominationally defined cultural and political identity. See Kiss 2008: 320–321. For a detailed description see Reinhard 1983: 257–277; especially on the cooperation with the secular powers in the formation of the new order and norms 265–266.

<sup>43</sup> Weber 1995. 27. For similar approaches see Kiss 2011: 7–8.

way of life, which was extremely burdensome and at the same time very serious, and which penetrated into every sphere of private and public life.’<sup>44</sup>

Weber’s statement, which has since provoked much controversy, was essentially about church discipline<sup>45</sup> in the congregation, and he described it as a powerful „top-down” process. This idea has since come in for a lot of criticism. Heinrich R. Schmidt, looking at the Bern area, concluded that church disciplinary bodies could be effective because there was an internal need for regulation in society and some social groups simply adopted the church’s moral guidelines because they fitted their own interests and values.<sup>46</sup> A more nuanced approach to the issue has been greatly aided by historical anthropological and historical ethnographic research. For example, Robert Scribner’s historical anthropological research refutes Weber’s position that, in his view, gave too much space to processes of desacralisation and civilisation, and that Weber overestimated the practical significance and impact of social control.<sup>47</sup> It is true that in the case of dance culture, too, Scribner’s arguments apply, since by all indications the prohibitions related to dance culture had very little effect on a larger time scale.<sup>48</sup>

In my research, I not only ask how the theological position of the Protestant Church in Hungary in the early modern period was shaped in relation to dancing and its customs,<sup>49</sup> but also how it was put into practice. This is related to the Reformed church’s discipline, to the role of the Protestant ecclesiastical and secular powers in regulating society and moral order. Weber’s idea - perhaps now indeed obsolete - rightly drew attention to the question of the social and mental organizing power of the Reformed church’s discipline,

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<sup>44</sup> Weber 1995: 27.

<sup>45</sup> Kiss 2011: 7. For the adaptability of Weber’s theory to Hungary and a critique of the theory, see Molnár 1994: 10–23., 129–139.

<sup>46</sup> Kiss 2011: 28. See also Schmidt 1995: 11–13; and 351–359; and the criticism of Max Weber’s theory 360–361.

<sup>47</sup> See Kiss 2011: 15–16. For a more detailed explanation see Scribner 1993: 475–494, especially 493–494.

<sup>48</sup> For a more detailed description see Kavecsánszki 2021: 88–89.

<sup>49</sup> For a more detailed description see Kavecsánszki 2019; 2021; 2022; 2023.

and to the new forms of community discipline in the age of the Reformation, one of the instruments of which was precisely church discipline.<sup>50</sup>

The Protestant dance bans of the 16th and 17th centuries, and the similar but more practicable jurisdictional regulations, could not abolish either dancing or the newly spreading fashion of couple dancing (even in Hungary), which was the most objected to by the Church. Prohibition merely hindered the spread of the custom for a time, especially in settlements where church and secular control were closely intertwined. This shows precisely that the impact of Weber's powerful control mechanism has been greatly overestimated in previous research. Indeed, even the notion of a top-down disciplinary process, as formulated by Peter Burke (and earlier by Gerhard Oestreich and the proponents of confessionalisation theory), which he argued led to a cultural schism between the people and the elite, seems to be too strong. Martin Ingram, for example, proposed the introduction of the notion of *cultural consensus* as opposed to Burke's strong conflict theory, when he analysed early modern sources - such as visitation records and ecclesiastical court documents - which are much more revealing of the relationship between church elites and local communities, through an examination of the custom of English charivari (Rough Music).<sup>51</sup> Ingram demonstrates that the critics of charivari were not only from the elite, but also from a much broader social spectrum, and that the supporters and even defenders of charivari included people from the elite. Similar conclusions were reached by Robert Scribner in his analysis of carnival celebrations in early 16th century German towns.<sup>52</sup> In doing so, he demonstrates that the custom carried common meanings for the wider society, meaningful to all of them, which is a condition for the survival of cultural points of contact between the social classes. The custom of charivari is such a *point of contact*,<sup>53</sup> and I believe that this could be proved in relation with

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<sup>50</sup> Kiss 2011: 19.

<sup>51</sup> Ingram 1984: 79–113.

<sup>52</sup> Scribner 1978: 322–324.

<sup>53</sup> Ingram 1984: 102–113. In Hungary the custom of Charivari, Katzenmusik was particularly prevalent in Sárret as a form of punishment of the local community against those who violated the moral order. The aim of the ritual was to reassert and strengthen the moral norms and values of the community. The nightly disturbance, usually used against an adulterer or a remarried partner, was implemented through the use of wedding taunts and other sexual symbols, also taken from the wedding context. For more details see Kotics 2001a: 13–26.

the dance culture of the early modern period. Scribner even questioned the Protestant attempt to reform popular religiosity, which was also a criticism of Burke's position.<sup>54</sup>

So the question is how this effectiveness or lack of it can be reflected in dance culture. To do this, however, it is necessary to see the theoretical and practical side of the reform effort on the part of the Protestant churches. As Réka Kiss's research, among others, has shown, church discipline - which is the practical side of the question in the case of dance culture - was a very diverse practice, both in time and in region, which did not operate in the spirit of universal Calvinism, but according to local embeddedness and tended to enforce the principle of consensuality with local communities. Summarising Scribner's findings, Réka Kiss also notes that the local practice, the actual functioning and the impact of the Reformation cannot be seen as a process that was exclusively top-down (from the religious elite to the people).<sup>55</sup>

## **The village**

So what can a new social-historical approach towards the study of dance culture in our country do with these theories and opinions? Of the many possible approaches, I will now highlight only one: the question of the social control represented (intended to be represented) by the early modern churches, primarily in the rural lifeworlds of Hungary.

The space of action of the peasantry has always been limited by „power”, it has never been completely free,<sup>56</sup> and this can never be ignored when interpreting the mechanisms of peasant popular culture. It is well known that the *techniques of power* and the idea of *social discipline* have become a very

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Based on archival data, József Kotics also analyses a Charivari event from 1864. See Kotics 2001b: 49-46. Béla Kálmán from Biharugra (and indirectly from Zsadány) published data related to KAtzenmusik in his short description. The three-day custom of „zángózás” known in Biharugra is also a travesti of the wedding tradition (the first day is the calling, the second is the snail-making, and the third is the wedding). See Kálmán 1954: 540. For an interpretation of „zángózás” as a legal folk custom, see Beck 1991: 43-46. For a comprehensive overview of international examples, see i.a. Darnton, 1987.

<sup>54</sup> Kiss 2017: 18.

<sup>55</sup> Kiss 2011: 17.

<sup>56</sup> Kaschuba 1990: 62.

popular topic in social studies after the cultural turn, and behind this topic there is a double ambition. On the one hand, understanding the mentality and thinking of the discipliners who create the regulatory mechanisms, especially the micro-powers<sup>57</sup> (together with a description of the techniques of discipline), and on the other hand, grasping the space of action, the decisions and the driving force of the culture of those who want to exit the disciplinary process.<sup>58</sup> This led to the complete and comprehensive examination of this field of social conflict.

Looking at the sources of dance history, from the early modern period onwards, we see a proliferation of actions, reforms or bans against forms of folk entertainments, dance customs and dance in general.<sup>59</sup> The study of the so-called dance bans has not escaped the attention of dance historians, but the social and cultural history of dance has yet to be fully interpreted.

*The convergence of history and ethnography in the study of early modern popular culture has already been particularly fruitful.<sup>60</sup> Following this path, prohibitions on dancing can be placed in the broader context of knowledge about social discipline. In this way, the ideological foundations of social discipline can be mapped and the close relationship of dance prohibitions to the mental universe can be determined.* It is not the dance rituals that are the novelty of the period, as they have existed since the early Middle Ages, but their role in mental space.

Dance and its entire context of habits can be understood as a form of social behaviour and as a way of examining mechanisms of social control and discipline. These mechanisms can relate to the dance event itself, or to the

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<sup>57</sup> According to Foucault's theory of power, macro-powers are formal legal institutions, while micro-powers are disciplinary mechanisms that operate in the everyday sphere of life. See Gyáni 1997: 159.

<sup>58</sup> For the dance culture of the early modern period see Kavecsánszki 2021: 83–89.

<sup>59</sup> Examples for such studies are Maác 1952: 115–118; Pesovár 1983: 255–285. Among the most recent works on resource analysis and the history of mentality the studies of Péter Tóvay Nagy are outstanding, see for example Tóvay Nagy 2004: 169–260; Tóvay Nagy 2016: 197–215. The work of the research group at the Hungarian Dance University must also be mentioned. The research group has published several volumes of sources and descriptions within the framework of the research program entitled *A magyar színpadi táncművészet forrásai (Sources of Hungarian Stage Dance)*. for more details see Péter Tóvay Nagy's study, *Szentpéteri István táncbíró predikációja*: Tóvay Nagy 2018: 9–26.

<sup>60</sup> Báth 2005: 47.



dance and through it the use of the body. In the case of the early modern examples, the disciplining powers<sup>61</sup> of local society were the Reformed Church and its representatives, and the secular rulers of Protestant communities (such as town councils).<sup>62</sup> At the same time, we cannot ignore the macro-level processes that shape and influence the collective and individual mentality of the Church and the State and their actors as well.<sup>63</sup>

The practical application of disciplinary ideology in the localities of a given period can be well studied by means of micro-level analyses, if the necessary resources are available.<sup>64</sup> In addition to the studies on moral theology developed by the new Protestant churches and the institutional system, as well as the activities of preachers and pastors, it is particularly important to examine the rural communities and, where possible, the individuals involved.

The dance event, together with its customs, is one of the organising bodies of the local community, the regulation of which became particularly important from the 16th century onwards. Here, too, the analysis cannot avoid reconstructing the life-world of early modern rural communities, the mental universe that defined the framework of thought and action. Rainer Beck, in summarising his social history research on early modern villages, finds that the rules of behaviour established in Counter-Reformation Bavaria even extended to gestures.<sup>65</sup> The representatives of the ecclesiastical authorities called on the population to give up all customs, traditions and pleasures which, according to theological interpretation, served „weakness and sin”. As Beck put it, „the church’s claim to power and supremacy seemed overwhelming.”<sup>66</sup> However, it is also true - and this is confirmed by the examples of domestic dance history - that the villagers were not necessarily a passively receptive mass, and therefore the situation between the representatives of power and the subjugated was more conflictual than harmonious. *Micro-level research should also explore, with regard to dance life, how much room for*

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<sup>61</sup> Blasius 1990: 12.

<sup>62</sup> I will cite just a few examples from the corpus of literature on the decrees and decisions of the local secular authorities governing the moral life of Protestant communities: Czóbel 1963: 301–366; Zolnay 1986: 315–316; Takács 1979: 99–102.

<sup>63</sup> For more details see Kavecsánszki 2021: 70–89.

<sup>64</sup> See Kavecsánszki 2021: 84–88; Kavecsánszki 2022: 221–238.

<sup>65</sup> Beck 1990: 44.

<sup>66</sup> Beck 1990: 44.

*manoeuvre the church representatives had, and to what extent did the clergy have to adapt to the village's own moral order?*<sup>67</sup> By analysing the relationship between the Bavarian villages and the church, Beck recognised that the interests of the village and the church were not always the same, and that there could be a structural contradiction between the church's expectations of behaviour and the customs of village culture.<sup>68</sup>

It is possible that the new set of behavioural norms emanating from the courts of the late medieval Renaissance, which essentially represented<sup>69</sup> a new wave of civilisation, also brought about changes in dance culture. The sources of the 16th and 17th centuries emphasized the dance form with a more closed interlocking, with rotations and turns.<sup>70</sup> Regardless of when these dance forms appeared and spread, or how common they were - whether they were present at all - in popular or folk dance culture,<sup>71</sup> the representatives of the Church, wherever they saw or read or heard about such dances, could have been spurred to action even as a source of inspiration. The question is, however, to what extent did the chants of Protestant preachers actually influence the collective habitus of local communities and transform their behaviour and space for action? Dance history research can only partially answer this question. While social control did indeed become more and more widespread between the 16th and 19th centuries, and this may have had an impact on the mentality and habitus of those who were controlled, the spread of new dances and dance forms could not be prevented despite all the moral

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<sup>67</sup> Dániel Bárány's study provides examples of the methodology, the theoretical background and the sources that can be included in the research of this field. Bárány 2013: 9–42. An excellent example of a historical folkloristic analysis of the relationship between norm-following and norm-breaking pastors and their congregations can be found in Réka Kiss' study: Kiss 2013: 100–124. Another study by Bárány about dancing priests also reflects on this topic. Bárány 2020: 129–139.

<sup>68</sup> Beck 1990: 45.

<sup>69</sup> Elias 2004: 112–134, 501–519.; Burke 1991: 315–316. Norbert Elias's work on the civilisation process, published in 1936, was regularly reprinted in later decades, but it kept the theory afloat and served as a source of inspiration for further research. See for example Klaniczay 1981: 759.

<sup>70</sup> The contributions of these sources became known in the works of György Martin and Ernő Pesovár, here I only refer to Pesovár's book. Pesovár 1993: 7–58. For a convincing review of the sources see Kürti 2017: 1029–1041; Kürti 2018a: 159–171; Kürti 2018b: 113–135.

<sup>71</sup> On the significance of the words "popular" or "folk" in the description of dance culture in early modern research, see Kavecsánszki 2021: 74–77.

pressure. In many cases, this is due to the fact that *the relative permanence of the historically evolved rural living conditions, the entrenched, slowly changing order of values, did not necessarily mean that people and their thinking were conservative*. Ultimately, it is the latter that has prevented the immobility of the peasant world, which has long been assumed by research.<sup>72</sup> As Kaschuba put it, the „sense of tradition” is a more weighty argument than the „pressure to innovate” from outside, but at the same time the community is able to decide on any innovation itself.<sup>73</sup>

Only in the rarest of cases did the inhabitants of an early modern village leave a trace that could be the basis for microhistorical analysis. Sometimes, however, dance descriptions of specific individuals or narrow groups of named individuals are found in the sources. However, these sources are not suitable for drawing formal and structural conclusions about the history of dance, and they usually indicate cultural links between social strata in abstract ways.<sup>74</sup> The subject-oriented life-world analysis of which Dülmen described<sup>75</sup> is practically impossible on the basis of these sources. In the clerical records, it is not possible to infer the whole life of individuals, but only a single everyday manifestation, usually a breach of the rules. From their world view, only a particular aspect of formal religiosity can be grasped. In this respect, however, the visitation records can provide much valuable information.

The Hungarian visitation records make numerous references to disciplinary cases in the 17th century related to dancing and the dancing environment. These provide a sketchy picture of how the moral theology presented in the previous chapters might have been put into practice. But even these sources are not sufficient to delineate the space and mode of

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<sup>72</sup> Wolfgang Kaschuba has described this vision as “a romantic still life of peasant life in the context of tradition”. See Kaschuba 1990: 58–59.

<sup>73</sup> Kaschuba 1990: 63.

<sup>74</sup> These are data from sources that have been classics in Hungarian dance folklore for decades, such as the dance of the hajdúk, the sword dance, the dance of Pál Kinizsi, Bálint Balassi or even the dance of the Hungarian Prince Pál Esterházy. Their classical dance folkloristic interpretation can be read for example in the work of Ernő Pesovár (Pesovár 1993: 7–58.). The authenticity of these sources (in terms of dance history) was questioned by László Kürti, who considered them unsuitable for dance historical analyses and for the reconstruction of historical processes. For example: Kürti 2017: 1029–1041; Kürti 2018a: 159–171; Kürti 2018b: 113–135;

<sup>75</sup> Dülmen 1990: 90.

action, since they merely record the moral transgressions in most cases. Participation in dances, for example, often appears as a reason for neglecting the church services.<sup>76</sup> The combination of drunkenness and dancing provided the practical life experience for the moral theological tradition analysed earlier. In the minutes of the visitations, there are frequent instances of practices (such as feasting in the spinninghouses) whose prohibition was formulated as a general principle by moral theologians and in synodal decrees.<sup>77</sup> The Reformed Church considered many manifestations of the culture of laughter as the beginning of fornication. In Endre Illyés' list, for example, this included carnival, dancing, women dancing in men's clothes, excessive use of music, foolish dancing, lewd dances, and even ball games between boys and girls.<sup>78</sup>

The sources, however, are mainly about the relationship between the wedding and drunkenness. Among the sources, there are some that explicitly draw attention to the conflict between the dancing and the expectations of the local community and the church. In 1616, for example, the pastor of Bar-kaszó (now Баркасове, Ukraine) was the subject of a complaint at a diocesan meeting because he did not preach on Sundays and, among other things, because he danced.<sup>79</sup> In 1673, the pastor of Gógánváralja (today Gogan Varolea, Romania), Mihály Disznajói (Reformed Diocese of Küküllő), had a disagreement with the village teacher, who accused the priest of „letting the dancing go free” in the village and of allowing carnival celebrations.<sup>80</sup> The cause of the conflict between the teacher and the pastor was clearly not only escalated over the dancing and the carnival, but the pastor's „liberal” views on the issue also provided ground for moralizing attacks.

From these cases, we see that, in accordance with the above-mentioned decisions and sermons, dancing is also linked with other breaches of norms in the corpus of visitations in cases of church discipline. Dancing as a moral transgression does not therefore appear in isolation, but in conjunction with many other transgressions, demonstrating the general moral state of the

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<sup>76</sup> Pocsainé Eperjesi 2007: 135.

<sup>77</sup> Pocsainé Eperjesi 2007: 140–141.

<sup>78</sup> Illyés 1941: 105.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted by Illyés 1941: 79.

<sup>80</sup> KükEhmLvt prot. I/2. 1713. 490. Quoted by Kiss 2011: 174, and 178–179.

,accused'. In Transylvania, the ecclesiastical moral guidance of Orbaiszék (now Romania) is also excellently documented, but the sources of the notebooks on dancing from this region are mostly from the 18th century. In these cases, the offence of dancing is linked to the spoiling of a party or to the custom of "guzsalyoskodás", which served as an initiation to sexuality for young people before marriage.<sup>81</sup> Enikő Szőcsné Gazda presented the practice through examples from Orbaiszék. According to the old interpretation of the holiday, the Lord's day of rest lasted from Saturday evening to Sunday afternoon, so Sunday night revelry was no longer included in the prohibited period.<sup>82</sup> The records from Orbaiszek show that adults who allowed dancing in their houses on Sunday had to face more serious punishments than the young people who danced - similar cases also appear in the Zemplén visitation records discussed below.<sup>83</sup>

The 17th-century records of church visits in Zemplén (now Hungary and Slovakia) provide an insight into the period between 1629 and 1671, based on the visitations of István Csulyak Miskolci (dean: 1629-1645), János Simándi (dean 1646-1653), Pál Tarcali (dean 1653-1669) and János Szentpéteri (dean 1669-1672). The source material of the Zemplén region is particularly important because the followers of the Helvetic Reformation and Lutheran doctrines lived side by side in the region under the rule of the Reformed dean of Zemplén in the 17th century.<sup>84</sup> In the church visitation records of the 17th century in Zemplén, references to the offence of dancing are rare, although swearing, cursing, slander, violence, drunkenness and fornication were common. It cannot be assumed that dancing was not practised, but it is even more likely that no particular attention was paid to the matter when the church was visited, and where it was, it is clear from the evidence that it was an otherwise forbidden act.<sup>85</sup> The records also mention sometimes that practical decisions were taken specifically against dancers. In 1653, for example, the dean of the Reformed diocese of Küküllő issued a decree: "After

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<sup>81</sup> About the custom of "guzsalyoskodás" see Szőcsné Gazda 2001: 35–37.

<sup>82</sup> O. Em. Lvt., II/4. 20. published by Szőcsné Gazda 2001: 139–140.

<sup>83</sup> An example from the 18th century is described by Szőcsné Gazda 2001: 140.

<sup>84</sup> Miskolci Csulyak [2008]: 438–439.

<sup>85</sup> For the description of these see Kavecsánszki 2023.

this, dancers shall not be given lodging, and those who give them lodging shall be banned from the church.<sup>86</sup>

This solution, however, is very far from the suggestion of some preachers, such as Mihály T. Gyulai: "The dancers shall be bound to the ground by chains, just as Phineas did it with the impures."<sup>87</sup> *Ultimately, dancing and the spread of new dance forms could not be prevented, just as Protestant ethics in the Weberian sense did not develop in Hungary.*<sup>88</sup> *In this respect, the denunciations of our preachers remained words shouted in the wilderness.*

## Summary

An important condition for a new approach to the study of dance culture, whether in its historicity or in its present, is to focus on the second part of the word, culture. Following the cultural turn, this has become fundamental in the most diverse fields of study in historical anthropology, microhistory, Alltagsgeschichte, history of mentalities, new cultural history, etc.

When developing a methodology for interpreting the role of dance culture in the lifeworlds, the approaches of cultural anthropology and historical anthropology can be very attractive, especially because of the necessity to interpret cultural phenomena in a comprehensive way and to grasp lifeworlds in a complex way. However, the attributes of the resources available and their specificity limit their applicability. Yet adequate procedures for interpreting the past of cultural phenomena in other related disciplines can be helpful, in particular that of historical studies.

One possible way of doing this is to move away from the descriptive history of dance and apply the methods of the new social history, to interpret dance in the most complete socio-cultural reality of the time (!), to the extent the rare sources on the past of dance culture allow.

It is mainly the representatives of the new cultural history and the new social history who emphasise that a historically determined mental universe provides the framework for human thought and action, and that culture can thus

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<sup>86</sup> KükEhmLvt prot. I/1. 1653. 48. Published by Kiss 2011: 178.

<sup>87</sup> Quoted by Tóvay Nagy 2004: 193.

<sup>88</sup> For a summary see Molnár 1994.

be understood essentially as mentality. In this way, the entire lifeworld and the ways of acting within it must be reconstructed. Researchers in this field are also concerned with the representations of social practices, on the one hand, and with the often hidden cultural schemas that may have been the direct drivers of behaviour in the past, on the other. This justifies that *dance research with a social-historical approach should also question the symbolic and representational practices of dance life in the context of the former mental universe.* In this approach, *the focus is not on dance as a form, but on dance as culture,* the processes and subjects that create and influence it, and the mental contents associated with dance and dancing. On this basis, the new social-historical approach to dance research aims to investigate the place of dance culture in former lifeworlds. This means not only the dance itself, but also the cultural determinants of dancing, including the environment, the position of this environment in the local culture, and even the thought patterns related to the phenomenon of dancing, such as the moral judgement of dancing. One of the most important elements of this approach is to understand the role of the actors who perform cultural phenomena. One of the greatest novelties of the postmodern and then critical historiographical vision was precisely that it transformed the people of the countryside, the serf, the peasant, the rural citizen, etc., from the object of history into the subject of history and thus into its active participants. In this way, for example, the ability of serfs and peasants to act independently was recognised, not only politically but also culturally. The peasant, the common man, the villagers - whatever we call them - can be treated as creators and decision-makers of dance culture, and not merely as dancers, participants in the dance. In this way, the peasantry can be seen as innovators in dance life. They are agents of the past who did not exist as an outcast from history, and they are not the antithesis of modernity. It is in this context that all the factors, both material and spiritual, that play any role in the creation of (dance) culture, in decision-making and in action, become an important aspect. It is in this context that the peasant as an agent of his own time can be interpreted in retrospect. *Dance culture can be interpreted as an outgrowth of community mentality, identity, thinking and choices of values. The changes in dance culture are the consequences of social, economic, mental and political stratification deep within the community.* A series of changes can thus be traced, in which the

community's values and mentality were shaken in several waves. *Accordingly, the analysis of dance, body movements and gestures also helps the study of the social history of local communities in the past. This also affects research in social history, providing it with new areas of investigation and new results.*

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# The experiments and theories of dance research in the 1940s – Presentation of the dance atlas

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NÓRA ÁBRAHÁM

My study is a continuation of my previous paper on youth education in the 1940s.<sup>1</sup> In my previous study, I presented the dominant role of folk dance in youth education efforts, alongside the category of stage dance as a symbolic content of folklore phenomena in urban culture. Very little information is available on the dance research that started in the 1940s. The history of research on Hungarian dance folklore in this period sketchily discusses the works of István Molnár, Emma Lugossy and Sándor Gönyey.<sup>2</sup> However, during my research in the spring of 2023, I found the documents of the dance registry in the ethnological data archive of the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest. Based on my data exploration, this gives a very accurate picture of the living dance culture of Hungary in the 1940s, its ethnic characteristics and the methodology of dance research that was taking its first steps.

In a historical-cultural anthropological approach, my research seeks to explore the symbolic bodily representation of the dance culture which is a product of the synchronous operation of society and culture.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, my study attempts a contextualised interpretation of the results, theoretical basis and practice of dance research that began in the 1940s.<sup>4</sup> By this I mean the theory of cultural morphology, based on geo-historical foundations, as a fundamental principle of ethnological research in this period.<sup>5</sup> At this advanced stage of my research, the exploration of Budapest's stage dance

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<sup>1</sup> I am currently a PhD student in the Cultural Anthropology programme of the Doctoral School of History and Ethnology, University of Debrecen.

<sup>2</sup> See Martin 1979; Martin 1995; Felföldi – Pesovár 1997. These works contain descriptions of dance motifs, choreographies, but no methodological or research history data. See Molnár 1947; Lugossy – Gönyey 1947.

<sup>3</sup> Klaniczay 1984: 23–25. see Kürti 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Hofer 2009: 214.

<sup>5</sup> The ethnological study of dance and the application of the theory of cultural morphology were formulated by Gyula Ortutay in 1934. The first results of dance research in the 1940s were based on this theory, and its task was to explore folk life and dance culture. See Ortutay 1934; 1937; Erixon 1944; see Varga 1939; Sylvain 1991.

culture reveals a surprising picture of how popular culture in urban spaces exists. In the process of urban acculturation of folklore, the interplay between the theatrical application of dance, ballroom dance and dance folklore research can be revealed. In addition to the new Hungarian music, the creation of a new Hungarian dance style is given special importance in the space of the theatrical stage . This is an important issue for the creation of stage experiments and plays, because one of the artistic expressions of the current period is the style of folklorism. In the 1940s, dance in the theatrical space, after the dramatic dance ballad, develops the concept of folk dance on stage by reworking dance folklore. From 1945 onwards, ideological social changes made the knowledge of folk song and folk dance the norm in youth education.<sup>6</sup> The young people who visited the rural settlements made it their mission to get to know the dance culture of the countryside. The research and interest also shaped the learned behaviour of the body in public social spaces, following the social norms and ethical rules of the current historical period, which also brought about changes in the contemporary dance fashion. The research of folklore served as a basis for inspiration for the form of stage folk dance, which determined the tools of bodily expression and resulted in its specific character. My present study attempts to present the Dance Registry, the methodology and the reviewed results of dance folklore research, which was created at the Institute of Ethnology Research, the basis of stage folk dance.

My hypothesis is that in the 1940s, academic research into dance folklore played a role in the creation of a theatrical tradition among urban youth. The first research results of the 1940s describe the self-image of certain groups of people, and the symbolic representation of the dance culture as expressed and shown to the outside world. My case studies present the collection of the Bodrog data collections and the research on the dance tradition of the Székely people of Bukovina. My questions are: What was the purpose of the Dance Registry? What theoretical basis was it based on? What impact did it have on the evolving style of stage folk dance?

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<sup>6</sup> Papp 2008; Kardos 1980.

## Introduced the Dance Registry

While researching the work of Olga Szentpál, a dance researcher, I found data that prove that some of her works were written earlier than the dates on them.<sup>7</sup> My research required an exploration of the cultural policy principles and institutional history associated with dance research at the time. This is how I came across the documents of the Dance Registry of the Institute of Ethnology, and by reviewing them I realised that there was a connection between the youth movement, scientific research and the development of folk dance on stage.

In the history of the Dance Registry, the first important date is 1940. In that year Gyula Ortutay addressed the Institute of Hungarian Studies to record and register the cultural forms of ethnic groups.<sup>8</sup> Ortutay also asked the Institute to record the year-on-year changes in the social and cultural integration of internal migration.<sup>9</sup> The Institute of Ethnology, founded in 1945 from the Centre for Landscape and Ethnological Research, was „aimed at ethnographic, ethnolinguistic, anthropological and ethnohistorical research of the Hungarian people, and to make the research of the Eastern European peoples in this field widely known”.<sup>10</sup> The Institute’s task was therefore not only to collect dance folklore, but also to explore internal migration. The aim of the dance registry was to record the state of dance culture at the time. According to Péter Morvay’s notes, the aim was to create a dance atlas, modelled on the ethnographic atlas, by exploring the historical layers and types of dance culture and dance life.<sup>11</sup> This work produced „significant

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<sup>7</sup> These works include the studies of Márta Belényesy on the dance culture of the Székely in Bukovina, and Olga Szentpál’s analysis on forms. See Belényesy 1958; Szentpál 1958; 1961.

<sup>8</sup> In the research carried out by the Institute of Hungarian Studies and the Péter Pázmány University in Budapest folklore and ethnography had a prominent role. This was where the first steps into the creation of the dance registry were taken. The research of folk dances was a new direction, which involved the collaboration between the students and teachers of the ethnography department and the Institute of Ethnology. See: <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-magyar-neprajzi-lexikon-71DCC/m-732AC/magyarsagtudomanyi-intezet-732EB/> [Retrieved: 26.07.2023.]

<sup>9</sup> Ortutay 1947. see Belényesy 1958: 3.

<sup>10</sup> As quoted by Kósa 2001: 190.

<sup>11</sup> Morvay 1949: 3; Morvay – Pesovár 1954.

scientific and moral results”<sup>12</sup> The Dance Registry was the result of a network of collections made with the help of village teachers, pastors and young people who became amateur folk dancers and ethnographers. The Registry, with over 400 entries, documents the dance culture of the period between 1946 and 1949. It contains correspondence, maps, collection boxes and dance descriptions. It highlights the ethnic characteristics of the country at the time, the traces of the relocation and displacement of ethnic groups and nationalities and their impact on dance culture. Most of the documents were produced between 1948-49. Later the Ethnographic Museum, the University Institute of Ethnography and the Dance Association also requested the data, which eventually ended up in the Ethnological Data Repository of the Museum of Ethnography.

The excellent results of the two studies that I intend to describe prompted the extension of the research work to the whole country.<sup>13</sup> This began in 1948, with the active participation of students of the University of Theatre, ethnographers, trained dancers, film-makers and musicians.<sup>14</sup> The success of the 1948 cultural competition (in which the dancers of the former Gyöngyösbokréta also participated) was an important milestone. The first period of collection lasted until 1949, and was partly processed and published as choreographies in the journal *Táncoló Nép*, published by the Dance Association, for the youth education movement.

In connection with the processing of the collections, I also think it is necessary to shed light on and interpret the scientific theoretical work that was carried out in the background. The first successful monographs of the Institute of Ethnology’s research were not published in the 1940s.<sup>15</sup> The Institute was closed due to Ortutay’s ministerial decree, thus the fate of the

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<sup>12</sup> Halász (ed.) 2010: 27.

<sup>13</sup> This was accompanied by the national ethnographic and dance collecting competition, the results of which enriched the work of the Institute of Ethnology. The documents of this competition can be found in Anna Pór’s dance registry and in the Ethnological Repository of the Ethnographic Museum.

<sup>14</sup> According to the registry, the following people were involved in the collections: Olga Szentpál, Tihamér Vujcsics, Zsuzsa Merényi, Ágnes Roboz, Mária Ligeti, Edit Kaposi, Lajos Vass, Bálint Sárosi, András Béres, Gyula Varga, Miklós Rábai, Mária Szentpál and György Martin. Source: Dance registry in the Ethnological Repository of the Ethnographic Museum.

<sup>15</sup> Paládi-Kovács 2018: 114.

results of the research work carried out up to that time was also in question.<sup>16</sup> Ortutay proposed that the work of the Institute of Ethnology, which had been closed in 1949, could be continued from 1951 under the auspices of the Institute of Folk Art. Thus, the collection work that began in the 1940s was still going on in 1951-55, according to the documents. However, the fate of the collected data became questionable again in 1956, and the processing of the data was interrupted. In 1958, the Dance Registry was finally transferred to the ethnological data archive of the Museum of Ethnography and has remained intact ever since.

In the following, I will present the deeply evaluated results of the dance folklore research between 1946-49, which means the work exploring the dance culture of the Székely people in Bukovina and the research carried out in the Bodrogek. To do this, I need to briefly discuss the theoretical apparatus that the researchers could have presumably used when designing the methodology of the collections and interpreting the material.

### **Basic theories and areas of European ethnology**

At its birth, European ethnology was concerned with the study of people's lives and the comparative study of society and culture. Its main objective was to describe culture as the inherited tradition, way of thinking and habitus of the human community.<sup>17</sup> Intellectual content and technical methods rooted in the tradition created by the community produce cultural phenomena. The products of this are the intellectual and material goods created by the human community, which are also differentiated by geographical area and historical periods. Ethnology considers the products of material culture (such as material folk art, crafts and material culture related to economic activities) and spiritual culture (all forms of folk poetry, music folklore and dance folklore) as cultural phenomena produced by conscious action. The conceptual interpretation of phenomena is based on an analysis of type - content and form

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<sup>16</sup> The 1950s was a pivotal year for Hungary in many ways. Geographically, because the existing system of counties changed. Budapest expanded its agglomeration areas and the former 14 districts grew to 22 districts. In many cases, counties were merged, thus changing the district and territorial categories, as well as the county seats in many cases.

<sup>17</sup> Erixon 1944: 4.

- function. This is also the basis for the theory of cultural morphology, which thus allows the study of the customs and folklore products associated with the life of a settlement and community.<sup>18</sup> The essential points of ethnology's people-centred approach to society and culture are thus time, space, the communities of the different social classes, the interrelationship of cultural memory spaces and the visualisation of phenomena in intellectual culture.<sup>19</sup>

It was first applied in Hungary in ethnomusicology, then in ethnography and finally in dance folklore.<sup>20</sup> This includes the work of Béla Bartók, László Lajtha, Gyula Ortutay, Péter Morvay, Márta Belényesy, Edit Kaposi and Olga Szentpál, who have all worked on the analysis of music and dance folklore.<sup>21</sup>

The summary of the literature on the European mainstream of dance research, presented in the work of Sándor Frigyes Varga, published in 1939, serves as a precursor of the research trend of dance folklore in the 1940s. In this book there is also room for historical, ethnological and aesthetic research. In addition to the artistic manifestations of the European cultural region, he considered the comparative treatment of the dance material in a synthesis of the comprehensive aspects of comparative ethnology.<sup>22</sup> In his review of the European literature, Varga also categorised, evaluated and assessed methodological specificities. The artistic treatment of dance was the historical category, in which he listed the works of music historians who had worked on the biographies of dance masters from the Renaissance onwards, and then on the choreographers who were associated with the development of the ballet genre. In his presentation of ethnological research on dance, Varga outlined three possible lines of research, drawn mainly from

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<sup>18</sup> Here it is important to highlight the chronological evolution of ethnological theories: Adolf Bastian's „*Gesellschaftsseele*” theory from 1869; Hans Neumann's „*Gesunkenes Kulturgut*” theory from 1921–22; Leo Frobenius's „*Kulturmorphologie*” theory from 1921; Sigurd Erixon's theory of „*Regional European Ethnology*” from 1937–38. See Erixon 1944. Gyula Ortutay planned the ethnological and psychological study of dance in the framework of cultural morphological analysis. See Ortutay 1934: 128. Ortutay's first students were Márta Belényesy and Edit Kaposi. In her book, Márta Belényesy, like Ortutay, refers to Curt Sachs' book in her endnote. Edit Kaposi cites Károly Marót's work on ethnological research. See Sachs 1937: 208; Marót 1940: 279; Kaposi 1947; Belényesy 1958. See also Morvay 1949.

<sup>19</sup> Erixon 1944: 7.

<sup>20</sup> Here I am referring to Bartók's theory of the analysis of Hungarian folk music. Bartók 1966: 105.

<sup>21</sup> Bartók 1966; Lajtha – Gönyey 1937; Ortutay 1934; 1937;

<sup>22</sup> Varga 1939: 27.



the work of German, English and Danish scholars.<sup>23</sup> The first possible line of approach was a morphological analysis of the archaic dance material of European dance culture based on ethnic and musical grounds. The second way was to explore the sacral-dramatic-pantomimetic-masked dances of Eastern cultures. The third was to analyse the rites of life and customs of the cultures of natural peoples. As a possible line of approach to the question of dance aesthetic analysis applied to expressive movement, he explored the art-theoretical approach that included the works of Emile Jacques-Dalcroze and Rudolf Lábán, mentioning also the first book by Olga Szentpál and Máriusz Rabinovszky, published in 1928.<sup>24</sup> In addition to the presentation of scientific works, Varga urged the early publication of the extensive research results that have established the development of Hungarian dance science.<sup>25</sup> By the end of the 1930s, two paths had emerged in Hungarian dance research. One was ethnological dance folklore research based on research carried out in villages, the other was the development of a content and formal analysis of urban dance art, focusing on the body and dance. Dance folklore research was based on the work of the organisation that was transformed in 1945 from the Institute for Landscape and Ethnological Research into the Institute of Ethnology.

At the Institute of Ethnology, dance research was given special emphasis. Here, ethnographers, dance choreographers, musicians and filmmakers worked together as a team, complementing each other's work.<sup>26</sup> The researchers analysed the dance folklore, breaking it down into its structure and structural forms, and then reworked it as a stage dance form, choreographed and published it. This work was carried out between 1947-48 by appointed dance teachers working in the National Free Association of

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<sup>23</sup> Varga 1939: 27–35.

<sup>24</sup> Varga 1939: 65–69; Szentpál – Rabinovszky 1928.

<sup>25</sup> Varga 1939:77.

<sup>26</sup> Here is a list of the members of the research groups: Ethnographers: Márta Belényesy, Imre Bereczki, Sándor Gönyei, Edit Kaposi, Péter Morvay and Aurél Vajkai. Choreographers: Zsuzsa Bene, Anna Hermann, Emma Lugossy, Zsuzsa Merényi, Miklós Rábai, Mária Szentpál and Olga Szentpál. Folk Music researchers: György Kerényi, János Manga, Lajos Vargyas, Lajos Vass, Rudolf Vig, István Volly and Tihamér Vujicsics. Cameramen: Lajos Erdős, Sándor Gönyey, László K. Kovács, Emma Lugossy and József Teuchert. See Morvay 1949: 390.

Hungarian Dance Teachers, and then between 1949 and 1950 in the Dance Federation.

In the research of folk dance, the aesthetic analysis of the dance (motif, structure and performance) was of particular importance in the definition of style and type.<sup>27</sup> This is where the research of dance folklore and the application of content and formal analysis of urban dance art applied to the body and dance were linked. This was the basic theory of the taxonomy and movement analysis of Olga Szentpál's school.<sup>28</sup> With the collaboration of her students, Szentpál adapted this theory and together they compiled a possible typology of dance types and dance styles of the landscapes. The continuous choreographic publication of the research results became the basic work of the emerging folk dance style adapted to the stage. Young people who became ethnographers and amateur folk dancers from Folk Colleges also collaborated in this work, and these collections were also received here. An effort was made to explore the state of dance life in Hungary in the Bodrogek of Zemplén County, among the Székelys of Bukovina, in Galgavölgy of Pest County, the three Matyó villages of Borsod County, the Szigetköz bordering Csallóköz, in Rábaköz, Göcsej, Somogy, in Cserehát of Abaúj County, Mátraalja, in Kiskunság, Nagykunság and Békés.<sup>29</sup>

In the three-year period beginning in 1946, the Institute of Ethnology produced two significant works of research, with the contribution of Olga Szentpál, containing reviews. They were published as monographs by Márta Belényesy and Edit Kaposi, in 1958 and in 1999, respectively. One of the books is a summary of the dances of the Völgység (in the Tolna-Baranya county collection the dance culture of the Székely community from Bukovina who settled in Kéty), the other is a summary of the collections of the Bodrogek (Cigánd). It seems that since the authors worked together as a research team,

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<sup>27</sup> This is evidenced by the dance analysis questionnaire and dance analysis dictionary found in the Ethnological Data Repository of the Ethnographic Museum, which Olga Szentpál wrote for the Institute of Ethnology in 1949. In it, the terms used to define style and type are: movement character, performance style, tempo and time signature. See: Szentpál 1949. Péter Morvay's study also highlights this. See: Morvay 1949: 393; 1952a: 19.

<sup>28</sup> Szentpál – Rabinovszky 1940.

<sup>29</sup> Morvay 1949: 391.

none of them can be called a monograph that is purely one individual's work.<sup>30</sup> The work of the research team sought to capture the specificities of dance life, following historical, ethnographic, choreographic and musical principles.<sup>31</sup> The research methodology itself, however, is based on the ethnological school of Adolf Bastian, which explores the socio-cultural context of the people by examining their geographical location and historical background. Through fieldwork, it analyses the collective representations of the population, which involves a comparative study of the folklore heritage still present in cultural life.<sup>32</sup> In adapting ethnological theory, we can also recognise the theory of cultural morphology that emerged from Leo Frobenius' interpretations of the cultural sphere-cultural degree. The concept of a culture circle is defined as the totality of cultural phenomena of groups of people in contact with each other due to their geographical location.<sup>33</sup> Another interpretation is that the cultural sphere is an interacting region in which the cultural phenomena of different ethnic groups change, evolve and develop as a result of coexistence in different historical periods.<sup>34</sup> If this is interpreted in the spirit of Ortutay's efforts, then the community of bodies and their kinetic bodily representation in public space is a cultural phenomenon that represents folklore, which changes its form according to the fashion of the historical age as a result of coexistence. In all cases, its content is a symbolic representation of the fundamental characteristics of popular culture, as an interaction between the elements of the folklore of learned bodily movement and the elements of popular knowledge. A method was set up which defined the type and style of dance material on the basis of an analysis of the content (dance types of historical dance styles) and formal process (age boundaries of dance knowledge, dance

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<sup>30</sup> Several sources emphasize this. On the one hand, in the use of terms used to analyse dance, and on the other, in the records of the collections. The monograph *Csárdás*, published in the 1950s, is also the result of a joint effort. It is referred to by Edit Kaposi when summarising her academic work. OSZMI Táncarchívum fond 58.

<sup>31</sup> The historical-geographical method was featured in Gyula Ortutay's book *Magyar népismeret*, while the ethnological perspective was described by Sándor Varga in his book *Bevezetés a táncirodalomba*. See Ortutay 1937: 6; Varga 1939: 34. See also Erixon 1944.

<sup>32</sup> Koepping uses the concept of collective representation to define the research methodology of the ethnological school of the time. See Koepping 1983.

<sup>33</sup> The theoretical work by Frobenius is quoted by Sylvain 1996: 485.

<sup>34</sup> Voge 1975: 350.

events and folklore) of contemporary dance life.<sup>35</sup> Comparisons were made on the basis of works exploring the culture and dance life of ethnic groups living in other areas of Hungary.<sup>36</sup> This method therefore not only explored local dance life, but also looked at ethnic influences and the European connections of dance. This is also evidenced by the data set of the dance registry that has been explored so far.

The development of the dance culture was determined by the conscientious work of the dance masters until 1946, which included the learning and active practice of the contemporary urban dance fashion. In the dance life of the rural community, the concept of Hungarian dance was synonymous with the Csárdás dance. In addition, the periodical fashion of ballroom dancing was also part of the dance scene. According to the data of the Dance Registry, the age of the people living in the community in the 1940s represented a distinct category in terms of dance skills. This governed not only participation in the dance events but also the types of dances learnt. Those born before 1900 learnt historical ballroom dances. And for those born after 1900, modern ballroom dances were included in the dance repertoire. This was differentiated by the possible coexistence of ethnic groups-nationalities living together, and the artificial creation of communities in rebuilt/resettled communities, towns and cities.<sup>37</sup> I have analysed the data of the dance and music culture of the Székely people from Bukovina living in the Völgység region of Tolna-Baranya county and the dance culture of Cigánd in the Bodroglóköz. In addition, the dance registry also preserved the dance and music documents of the Sokác, Rác and Bunyevác communities living in Baranya County, collected by Tihamér Vujcsics. It also contains a description of the dance life of the Romanians, Slovaks and Hungarians living together in Békés County, as well as the dance culture of the northern (dances of Slovaks and Hungarians living together in Hont and Gömör counties) and southern areas that were reannexed to Hungary in the 1940s (dances of Székely, Rác, German and Hungarian

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<sup>35</sup> Belényesy 1958: 56-97.

<sup>36</sup> Bácska, Szatmár, Békés, Felvidék. See Belényesy 1958: 70.

<sup>37</sup> This is based on the contents of the dance research questionnaires found in the Ethnological Data Repository of the Museum of Ethnography.

people living together in Bácska), which together form the data of the dance registry broken down by settlements.

### **The early period of dance research (1946-49): the monographs of the Székely collections of Bodrogek and Bukovina**

The primary reason for collecting dances was to collect and record the disappearing dance culture of the territories annexed by the Treaty of Trianon and then regained by the Vienna decisions. In addition, Gyula Ortutay's aim was to follow the cultural changes in the integration of the communities living together.<sup>38</sup> At the Institute of Ethnology, the cultural life of the ethnic groups living together in the areas of the cultural regions was explored. In the early days of the research, Péter Morvay relied on the people's school network, enlisting the help of teachers and priests to explore the still-living dance culture.<sup>39</sup> In these works, I can clearly see the ethnological methodology that was used to explore the dance culture and write these monographs. Both works share the same methodology, which records the community's dance life, dance habits, dance types and the specificity of the way the dances are performed. However, as the primary focus of the research was to explore dance culture, the basic conceptual framework (definitions) of dance was also adapted for analysis.<sup>40</sup> By describing dance life and dance habits, the dance registry would not have fulfilled its task, which included the definition of dance styles and types. For me, the work of the three authors in dance research forms a unity in that I see Olga Szentpál's dance aesthetic theory, Edit Kaposi's dance history-folkloristic results and Márta Belényesy's approach to settlement history. In practical application of the theory, the elaboration of separate parts of the ethnic specificity of a community living in a geographical area, the historical definition of a dance type and a dance style, together constitute the creation

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<sup>38</sup> Belényesy 1958: 3.

<sup>39</sup> Péter Morvay was a member of Sándor Karácsony's Regös scout group, and he received his degree at Péter Pázmány University in 1944. See Halász (ed.) 2010:16.

<sup>40</sup> Among the basic concepts of dance research we find the ideas of Szentpál - Rabinovszky taxonomy, slightly extended and applied specifically to folk dance. See Szentpál - Rabinovszky 1940; See also Szentpál 1949.

of a well organized collection of dances.<sup>41</sup> It is essential to define the notion of motif, movement style, movement sequence, sections as basic structural principles, choreography, performance style, dance skill and the application of the basic concepts of dance character (plasticity-rhythm-dynamics) to the analysis of style and movement aesthetic.<sup>42</sup> These are the definitions of the content and form of dance culture, without which we can only get partial results of the dance life of the settlement. The historical definition of the movement repertoire and its ethnic and aesthetic characteristics make it possible to describe the dance life of the community and its customs in the context of dance events in their entirety.<sup>43</sup> The motifs of the dances found in the collections, their variations and figure combinations were used to define the characteristics of the dance. By comparing the contemporary dance life with the historical source descriptions that could be found, a possible system of dance types was established, which included not only Hungarian dances but also ballroom dances.<sup>44</sup>

It is important to note that I found incomplete editions of both of the works I have analysed as examples, and that I found additional elements in two archives.<sup>45</sup> Edit Kaposi collected and recorded the dance culture of the Bodrog region, showing the cultural memory of the community linked to dance. However, this work is not just the monograph published in 1999, but it also includes the dissertation written in 1948 and the ethnological data sheets kept in the Ethnographic Museum.<sup>46</sup> The same is true for the monograph on the dance culture of the Székely people from Bukovina, written by Márta Belényesy. Its otherwise coherent units are also divided into three parts. The first is the published monograph, the second is the dance records published in the book *Völgységi táncok*, and thirdly, I discovered other parts in the manu-

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<sup>41</sup> See Szentpál's analysis of forms 1948; 1961.

<sup>42</sup> In the introduction of her doctoral dissertation, Edit Kaposi mentions the aesthetic, characterological and artistic evaluation of dance as part of the methodology developed for the comparative study of village dance life. See Kaposi 1948: 2.

<sup>43</sup> See Belényesy 1958: 94.

<sup>44</sup> An example for this is Edit Kaposi's book from 1952, entitled *Népi táncainkról*. See Kaposi 1952.

<sup>45</sup> These are the Ethnological Data Repository of the Museum of Ethnography and the dance archives of the National Museum and Institute of Theatre History. I would like to thank Zsuzsanna Tasnádi and Tamás Halász, the directors of the archives, for their kind cooperation.

<sup>46</sup> See Ábrahám 2023.

script of Lajos Kiss's musically oriented work. In this, Kaposi and Belényesy's work agree in that they also attempted to provide a historical chronology of dance types and styles, which in their description of the living social dance life they uncovered demonstrated the presence not only of Hungarian dances, but also of historical and modern ballroom dances, which were still very common at the time.<sup>47</sup> This is how these initial studies described dance culture in its entirety, including the forms and generational specificities of the dance types associated with dance in cultural memory.

### **The results of the first collections of the 1940s and a comparison of the data in the dance registry**

The collection I have analysed, which presents the dance culture of the Székely population of the Bodrogeköz and Bukovina, provides very important data on the state of Hungary's population in the 1940s. The peculiarity of the works included in the dance registry is that they consist of a lot of small data, and it is by putting them together that they gain their complete form and their holistic contents. In my opinion, the particular importance of these works is that they are completed by the analyses provided by the musicians.

According to my research results, the dance life and the contemporary dance culture of the villages of Cigánd and Kéty can be mapped thanks to the work of Edit Kaposi and Lajos Vass in the case of the research on Bodrogeköz, and thanks to the work of Márta Belényesy, Olga Szentpál and Lajos Kiss in the case of the Székely-Bukovina collection. These works present the dance culture of the 1946-49 years, the dance life of the communities. In the collection from Bodrogeköz, Edit Kaposi and Lajos Vass revealed the dance culture of a Hungarian community which they considered to be endogamous, in which, in addition to the Csárdás, the dances of the actual dance trends (historical and modern ballroom dances) were present.<sup>48</sup> In Kaposi's description, the population of the settlement was not open to newcomers. In the cultural memory of the community, the dance taught by the dance master was part

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<sup>47</sup> See Szentpál 1948.

<sup>48</sup> Kaposi 1948: 27.

of the village community's dance tradition. The nuances of the dance life, in addition to the knowledge of the age and dance styles, were shaped by the positive and negative foreign images - the specific presence of Germans and Russians - that entered the memory and determined the community's attitude to dance.<sup>49</sup> The positive outsider image included, in addition to the figures of the Emperor, Kossuth, Petőfi, Bem, Klapka, Görgey, the respectful category of the Hussars and the outlaws. As for the negative outsider image, Kaposi's collection recorded the presence of the shepherd (Romanian) and the German and Russian soldiers at the time. Kaposi also highlighted the importance of the dance master's practice and positioned the dance of the Csárdás in the dance life of the community alongside the contemporary trend of dance teaching. Kaposi saw the stylistic definition of the village community's dance culture in the historical definition of words with old or long-undefined meanings. These in Edit Kaposi's research are:

- Dance school styles known by those born before 1900 (rezgő, padikáter, padipatinő, krájpólka, bosztonvalcer, valcer, french quartett, vánsztep, fox, macsics)
- The Csárdás that everyone knows (Csárdás, Hungarian solo, trio csárdás, konyhatánc, Round Csárdás)
- Fashionable dances known by those born after the 1900s, popular since the 1920s (tango, waltz, foxtrott, slowfox, swing, horsy-horsy).<sup>50</sup>

And in the formal definition of community dance life, she listed two distinct categories:

1. dances linked to dance-customs as a form of social interaction,;
2. stage dances (the performance of the Gyöngyösbokrétás group).<sup>51</sup>

Edit Kaposi also described the changes in the dance scene between 1900 and 1945. She also identified the group that organised the dances and their location. In the list of organisers she included the Reformed boys' and girls' associations (1900-1920), the Levente associations, Christian Youth Association (1923-1944) and the parties that emerged from 1945 onwards (the Smallholders'

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<sup>49</sup> Kaposi 1948; 1999. See Ábrahám 2023.

<sup>50</sup> This category of style was based on the data provided by interview subjects Julianna Dócs Herczik Jánosné (born in 1897) and Erzsébet Fülöp (born in 1902). See: Kaposi 1948: 32–33.

<sup>51</sup> Kaposi 1999: 21.



Party, the Hungarian Peasant League, the Hungarian Communist Party).<sup>52</sup> And the dance events were moved from the traditional dance hall to the pub, the cinema room and then to the community centre. The Gyöngyösbokréta, in its use of costumes exclusively for dancing and its exceptional dancers, has invoked a sense of the community's traditional role and the representational role of dance.

Márta Belényesy's monograph described the state and periodic changes in the material and spiritual culture of the Székely population of Bukovina. It is a work that recognizes the application of cultural morphological theory.<sup>53</sup> Belényesy wrote about the resettlement of the Székely people of Bukovina, which considered the the dance fashion as binding instead of the dance tradition.<sup>54</sup> According to the monograph, the change occurs only from 1944 onwards. On the issue of dance events and dance organization, mentioned as the spiritual culture of the Székely population in Bukovina, it mentioned that if they could not organize their own dance events, the Székely people joined the dance calendars of the nationalities living with them, which helped the process of adopting dances of foreign origins.<sup>55</sup> Thus, this can be seen as a much earlier period of change in dance culture. It is precisely these research findings that prove that local dance culture evolves according to the community's ethnic coexistence, religion and cultural content in the manifestation of its own cultural image and outwardly presented self-identity.<sup>56</sup> As a community bonding event, the dance also includes current fashion dances in the sense of a fun function. The dance master's practice in the community from 1920 to 1946 was mainly based on the types and styles of dances of foreign origin of the youth.<sup>57</sup> In addition to the Csárdás, the csördögölő and the silladri, the historical grouping of the dance repertoire mentions types of ballroom and fashion dances (landler, contra, valcer, polka, mazurka, quadrille, Hungarian, rumbai, vierschritt) and eastern peasant dances (sirba, hora-mare, rushanska).<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Kaposi 1948: 42.

<sup>53</sup> Belényesy 1958: 47–49.

<sup>54</sup> Belényesy 1958: 83–34.

<sup>55</sup> Belényesy 1958: 84.

<sup>56</sup> Belényesy 1958: 52.

<sup>57</sup> Belényesy 1958: 101.

<sup>58</sup> Belényesy 1958: 90–92.

Data of dance music analysis from the 1940s clearly support this view. However, in his work Lajos Kiss also links ethnic specificities to the types of dance music on the basis of his analysis of the historical layers of folk music.<sup>59</sup> This gives an insight into the life of this ethnic group, which shows the effects of the migration of the Székely people from Bukovina after the Madéfalău mass killings, the resettlements and the migration to Hungary.<sup>60</sup> Examples of this are dance music and types of dances, as the collection shows. In the process of migration, the Székely population of Bukovina first formed a community with Ukrainians and Rusyns. Then, as a result of the resettlement to Bačka in 1941, they lived together with Serb, Romanian and German nationalities. The 1944 resettlement in Tolna and Baranya counties also left its mark on the dance culture of the Székely population of Bukovina through contact with Germans and Hungarians. In the light of this, the monograph published in 1958 needs to be supplemented with regard to the historical events and the research results of Lajos Kiss. In this analysis, the Csárdás will be the „local” dance. A The Ruthenian Rushanska is a type of male dance. Names of dances of foreign origin: „árgylánus”-Romanian Silladri, the South-Slavic „bűdös vornyik”, the German „viriceses-kalup-galopp-seggdöngölös-toppantós-fenyegető”, which is a type of polka, the Waltz called „karbahányós”. The dance called „Ádámé” is a unique revelation of the contact with Jews who lived in Ukraine.<sup>61</sup> This example clearly shows the migration of this group of people within the country in the 1940s. The Székely people, as an ethnic group with its own identity, incorporated the cultural influences they had experienced during their forced migration into their dance culture as a result of the coexistence. The internal migration in Hungary started in 1938, and the reattachment of the territories was also carried out in this period.<sup>62</sup> With the end of the German occupation and World War II and Hungary’s defeated

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<sup>59</sup> Kiss Lajos 1958. Source: documents of the dance registry, Ethnological Data Repository of the Museum of Ethnography.

<sup>60</sup> In the 1940s, Gyula Ortutay also carried out collections during the period when the Székely people from Bukovina settled in Bácska. See Paládi-Kovács 2018: 108.

<sup>61</sup> Kiss 1958: 3–11. See also Belényesy 1958: 112–120. The views on the origins and adoption of the dances could have been greatly nuanced by an analysis of the dance music.

<sup>62</sup> The 1st Vienna Arbitration in 1938 resulted in the re-annexation of Hungarian territories previously given to Czechoslovakia; with the 2nd Vienna Arbitration in 1940 Hungary received Transylvania. See Kókai 1943:3.

position, the composition of society changed again. Due to collective guilt, the foreign ethnic groups living in Hungary were deported, and the migration of Hungarians from abroad to the motherland also shaped the dance culture that was still living at that time. The dance culture of rural communities was similarly shaped by youth education efforts dating from 1946. This line of movement was already shaping the dance life of rural youth by teaching them regulated choreography. Based on the examples examined, this induced the following changes in the dance culture of the villages:

1. In Cigánd, the Csárdás became the representative dance type. In addition, youth education efforts led to a separation between the dance culture of the youth and that of the older population of the village. In the period after 1946, young people became part of the movement.

2. The Székely inhabitants in Kéty incorporated dances of foreign origin into their own dance culture under the dance names they had given themselves during the migration, as a result of living together with the nationalities. In the period after 1946, they also became involved in the socialist movements.

Research shows that the Gyöngyösbokréta groups did not disappear. At the 1948 Budapest cultural competition, they appeared as a rural movement dance group with a constant turnover of young people and performed their dance tradition „choreographed”.<sup>63</sup> According to the documents, this category includes the dance groups of Cigánd in Bodrogeköz and Kéty in Tolna county, which preserve and perform the dances of the Székely people from Bukovina. This, according to the current results of my research, gave rise to the specific concept of folklore tourism. In the following section I will describe this.

### **The fate of the dance registry at the Institute of Folk Art**

The cultural competitions that started in 1948 continued with the participation of the dance companies that were formed and evolved constantly. Based on the data found in the dance registry, this movement, built up from people's

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<sup>63</sup> See the list of dance groups of village cultural competitions recorded by Morvay. See the source entitled 1952. Source: dance registry, Ethnological Data Repository of the Museum of Ethnography.

colleges, provided the opportunity for academic work to continue. After the dissolution of the Institute of Folk Studies, research into dance culture was carried on under the direction of Péter Morvay, and under the aegis of the Institute of Folk Arts with the supervision of Jenő Széll. Mátyás Rákosi's Minister of Culture, József Révai said the following:

„(..)We could learn folk art styles from the village groups. We could learn again how to sing a folk song, how to dance folk dance in the style required by that dance or song... Folk song and folk dance are the gift, the contribution that the peasantry gives to our new, nascent socialist culture. It is one of the unchanging (sic!) foundations of this culture...”<sup>64</sup>

So for the movement, the dance collection could continue. Morvay also made it a priority to research dance from a historical perspective, and in this he considered a comparative study of the 19th and 20th centuries to be important. The importance of this was demonstrated by the initial examples I have presented. This is confirmed by the analytical methodology developed on the basis of the Institute's work, because the negation of community, geographical location, historicity and movement analysis has taken dance out of its original context, even though this is an essential point of exploring dance culture. Morvay also called for a description of the motifs and structural elements of dance. In addition to the study of the relationship between music and dance, he also paid particular attention to the study of the Csárdás.<sup>65</sup> The two works that I have examined (the Bodrogek and the Székely collections) serve as examples of the in-depth processing of data. The dance research group at the Institute of Ethnology can also be seen as a result of the development of the landscape-region approach formulated by Olga Szentpál in 1949.<sup>66</sup> Organisational change and the multi-level operations changed the way the studies were done.<sup>67</sup> The ideological

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<sup>64</sup> Péter Morvay's 1952 report on the establishment and work of the Institute of Folk Art entitled *Tánckutatásunk és Népi tánc kultúránk ügye (Our Research of Dance and the Issue of Our Folk Dance Culture)*. See Morvay 1952 a. Source: dance registry, Ethnological Data Repository of the Museum of Ethnography.

<sup>65</sup> This will be the monograph based on the work of Edit Kaposi and Olga Szentpál. See Szentpál 1954.

<sup>66</sup> Szentpál introduced the concept of regional dances in 1949. See Szentpál 1985: 135.

<sup>67</sup> In addition to collecting and cultural competitions, this work plan also includes the promotion of the rural folklorisation of new dances. See *Népművészeti Intézet Néprajzi Osztályának munkaterve*. See Morvay 1952 d. Source: dance registry, Ethnological Data Repository of the Museum of Ethnography.

demands integrated into the scientific work made it necessary to revise the previous work of the institute by applying the Stalinist linguistic model, and thus the work analysing the data of the dance registry had to be revised.<sup>68</sup> Due to the changes of county boundaries, the registry had to be reorganised, and art education and the training of scientific cadres was now based on a new approach, the univocal application of the Soviet model. The Soviet model was based on the application of a linguistic model rather than an ethnological one.<sup>69</sup> From this period onwards, the collections of dances were primarily concerned with Hungarian dances, and only tangentially with ballroom dances and dance types of the nationalities.<sup>70</sup> Péter Morvay called on the staff of the dance education institutions (State Ballet Institute, College of Drama and Physical Education), which were also being re-launched and established in this period, to develop curricula and educational programmes including folk dance and ethnography. Morvay considered the primary guiding principle of authenticity in the artistic application of folk dance culture to be pivotal.<sup>71</sup> In many ways, this followed the basic idea of Elemér Muharay's Art Academy, but in its approach it drew on the work and knowledge of Olga Szentpál and Edit Kaposi.<sup>72</sup> Thus, the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People's Republic, accepted the arguments, and established the Institute of Folk Art in 1951 under the direction of Jenő Széll, which operated in this form until 1958. The sites of the work, which collected dance material mainly from Hungary, were revisited with the help of village teachers and pastors on the basis of the network of contacts already established. In 1951-55, the work of the Institute of Folk Art was extended to the whole country in order to further research dance life. The villages were regularly

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<sup>68</sup> Morvay 1952a.

<sup>69</sup> In compiling the bibliography, only literature on dance published by post-liberation and neighbouring folk-democracies could be used, because as a tool for practical work, it was also considered a weapon of cultural policy. See: Decision on the bibliography to be compiled by the Institute of Folk Art. Source: dance registry, Ethnological Data Repository of the Museum of Ethnography.

<sup>70</sup> This is what we see in Martin's and Pesovár's dialectical analysis. This is what László Felföldi tried to make up for in the revised volume. See Martin 1995. See also: Felföldi – Pesovár (ed.): 1997.

<sup>71</sup> Péter Morvay used this expression. See: Morvay 1952b.

<sup>72</sup> This is evidenced by the criteria used to describe contemporary dance life, the grouping of content and the instructions for describing the movement material of the dances in the *Útmutató népi táncaink gyűjtéséhez (Guide to the Collection of Folk Dances)*, published in 1953. See Morvay 1953: 24-31.

visited by self-taught collectors, dance troupes and appointed ethnographers. The dance registry could have been the basis for several monographs, dance atlases, dance glossaries and teaching aids, but this work was never fully published. In addition to the monographs of the two studies I have evaluated, the 1954 volume of *Somogyi táncok (Dances from Somogy)* and the 1960 book *Gyermekjátékok (Children's Games)*, which could be used as a teaching aid, were published.<sup>73</sup> According to documents, there were several discussions about Ernő Pesovár and György Martin taking over this job, as they became the „scholarship cadres” from 1953.<sup>74</sup> Finally, in 1958, when the Institute of Folk Art was transformed into the Institute of Folk Culture, the dance registry was, after long negotiations, integrated into the Ethnological Repository of the Museum of Ethnography.<sup>75</sup>

## Summary

The work of the Institute of Ethnology sought to explore the dance life of the country at that time, the culture of the ethnic groups living together and their dance tradition. In the light of the initial findings, it reconstructed the specific habits and dance memories of the Székely population of Bukovina and the Hungarians living in the Bodroghöz region. It also shows that this process was not only about exploration. The continuous collections, which were carried out in stages from year to year, also showed how the youth education efforts were integrated into the dance culture of the countryside and the village, how elements were left behind and how the community created for itself a „Hungarian identity” or outwardly presented self-image, which made it suitable to serve the institution of folklore tourism that has been in

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<sup>73</sup> Morvay – Pesovár 1954; Sz. Szentpál (ed.) 1960.

<sup>74</sup> Morvay 1952 a: 22. See the written documents of the dance registry about the work carried out under the supervision of the Folk Art Institute. Source: dance registry, Ethnological Data Repository of the Museum of Ethnography. Istvánné Éri, Ferenc Pesovár, Bálint Sárosi and Imre Vavrincz also received scholarships.

<sup>75</sup> This was agreed between Gyula Ortutay and Jenő Széll according to the Decree of the Council of Ministers No.9/51/I./6 M. T., § 2.§.3. The agreement was signed on 30 November 1954 by Péter Morvay, Péter Kovács, Elemér Muharay and Ernő Pesovár. The specific date of delivery was fixed between 1 and 15 December 1954, but due to legal disputes it was finally completed in 1958. See Morvay 1954.

existence since then. Thus, it is in this period that the interest in rural dance culture, collection and processing, which started in the capital, triggered the development of dance folklore into stage folk dance.

At the same time, young people in the countryside also learned from young people in the capital. In addition to demonstrating their dancing skills, they developed a representational strategy to show their identity. This process of interaction from the city and back to the city highlights the change and transformation of the cultural phenomenon of dance.

The movement highlighted only the „Hungarian” part of the dance culture in the content of the dances, partly preserved and constructed thanks to the cultural competitions, and put it at the service of folklore tourism. The rest of the dance culture (the ballroom dances) was neglected, as a counter-effect, remained integrated into the dance life of the community. Old people no longer danced all the dances, and young people learned other dances and had other ways of socializing. Thus, by the mid-1950s, the rural community’s dancing habits had changed from those of the 1940s. Dance folklore was undergoing a dynamic change during this period, as the examples show.

The cultural approach of the Institute of Folk Arts, which also had a political motivation, kept alive and gave priority to „tradition-keeping” through competitions and the representational role of stage folk dance in order to serve the movement. First through the creation of the Master of Folk Art Award in the 1950s, and then through the television competition „Röpülj, páva” in the 1960s.<sup>76</sup> This is why the amateur movement of folk ensembles was able to preserve and re-learn the dance culture in many ways, to which Budapest’s stage folk dance has contributed greatly. Academic research highlighted and promoted the relevance of this ideological shift.<sup>77</sup>

What I would like to highlight through this paper is the theories used in the early days of dance research and their application. This period saw the beginning of an aesthetic analysis of dance folklore and a holistic exploration of folk life, which proved to be of particular importance for later research, school curricula and academic work. In my opinion, the material collected by the In-

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<sup>76</sup> The prize was established by the decision of the Council of Ministers, No 10440/1953. See Felföldi – Gombos 2001.

<sup>77</sup> Following this, Olga Szentpál and Edit Kaposi focused on the historical study of dance.

stitute of Ethnology on Hungarian dance culture in the 1940s is a missing link in our knowledge of the history of dance research, as only with this knowledge can we form a complete picture of our own dance culture and its research history. I believe that the exploration of the early period of dance research and the processing of the dance registry is therefore significant because it offers a different perspective and presents the dance life in Hungary together with the social conditions.



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# A Possible Interpretative Framework for the Question of Axioms in Ethnomusicology

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ANNA MÁRIA BÓLYA

If you listen to the following examples of Balkan folk music, the time signature will not be easy to determine: *Veligdensko oro*, *Cigančica*, *Žensko pušteno oro*.<sup>1</sup>

The closest I have come to musical asymmetry is in Macedonian folklore, one of my main areas of research. According to the Croatian (Yugoslav) folklorist Ivan Ivančan, asymmetrical time signatures in the former Yugoslavia are most characteristic of Macedonian and Bulgarian folklore. „Their interpretation is difficult for others, but for Macedonians it is natural.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, it is a musical phenomenon that those who use it „absorb it with their breast milk”, while those of other ethnicities, to whom it is not close, find it difficult to understand.

## What is asymmetry?

In the case of asymmetric rhythm, we immediately encounter difficulties in defining it, and this issue is still present in the literature today. First of all, it should be noted that, although Béla Bartók used the term „Bulgarian rhythm”, the word „meter” or „beat” would be perfectly correct instead of „rhythm”, since we are talking here about types of beat.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1GXV2Nml84> [retrieved: 14.07.2023.]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrbabJwoHX8> [retrieved: 14.07.2023.]

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nrF\\_BAxFdw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nrF_BAxFdw) [retrieved: 14.07.2023.]

<sup>2</sup> Ivančan 1964: 32; Bólya 2021a: 67.

<sup>3</sup> Kárpáti 2006. Bartók consistently uses the term „Bulgarian rhythm”, but when he indicates the time structure of his pieces of this title with fractional numbers at the beginning of the piece (for example  $2+2+3/8$ ), he is in fact defining a particular grouping of the time values of the notes, i.e. the metre. Our suspicions about the imprecision of Bartók’s terminology are confirmed by Timothy Rice, an eminent specialist on the subject, who, in a lecture at the Bartók Symposium in Los Angeles in 1995, proposed the term ‚Bulgarian metre’ in place of ‚Bulgarian rhythm’. (Pintér 2010.)

As this paper is not specifically related to a workshop or a book of studies on music, we will briefly describe the phenomenon of musical asymmetry. Musical asymmetry cannot be compared to spatial and geometric asymmetry. In European composed music, the pairing of beats 2 and 4, which is generally prevalent in Viennese classical music, represents symmetry in the musical score, at least in terms of the structure of the beats. As a definition of metrical asymmetry, we can adopt the Grove dictionary definition, from Donna A. Buchanan's account of Bulgarian folk music: „The asymmetrical rhythms of Bulgaria can be understood as the repeated combinations of metrical units of two and three into larger heterometric units.<sup>4</sup> In terms of metric asymmetry, its richness and prevalence is the most striking feature of the *oro*<sup>5</sup> tradition of the Balkan Peninsula. In terms of the music associated with the dance, the typical time signatures are 2/4 (very common), 3/4, 5/4, 7/4 and many other more complex time signatures. In terms of geographic pervalency, the more complex asymmetrical beats seem to be more typical of the Orthodox ethnic regions, most notably the Macedonian and Bulgarian music and dance traditions.<sup>6</sup> The metrics of the Macedonian dance tradition can be very diverse. In addition to the foregoing, a wide variety of asymmetrical beats can be found. The 7/4, (3, 2, 2 and 2, 2, 3), 9/4 (2, 2, 2, 3) and 11/4 (2, 2, 3, 2, 2) time signature is common.<sup>7</sup> The large number of other beat types are the combinations of the ones presented so far<sup>8</sup>. In addition, choreological asymmetry and simultaneity are naturally also present.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> „Bulgaria's asymmetrical rhythms may be thought of as combinations of duple and triple metres strung together to create heterometric patterns.” Petrov – Manolova – Buchanan 2000; Pintér 2010.

<sup>5</sup> I use the Macedonian term ‚oro’ from the diverse Balkan terminology of the chain and round dance tradition throughout this paper.

<sup>6</sup> Младеновић 1973: 162.

<sup>7</sup> Based on Simha Arom's logical suggestion, we use the denominators uniformly as quarters. Arom 2004. Димоски 1996: 285.

<sup>8</sup> The 5/4 (2, 3), 7/4 (3, 2, 2 or 2, 2, 3), 8/4 (3, 2, 3), 9/4 (2, 2, 2, 3 or 2, 3, 2, 2 or 2, 2, 3, 2), 11/4 (2, 2, 3, 2, 2 or 3, 2, 2, 2, 2), 12/4 (3, 2, 2, 2, 3), 13/4 (3, 2, 3, 2, 3), 18/4 (2, 2, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2, 3 or 2, 2, 3, 2, 2, 3, 2, 2) és 22/4 (2, 2, 3, 2, 2, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2) beats are the most common. However, there are longer and more complex beat types. Bólya 2021a: 67. Here is a good example of this: <https://youtu.be/KqO5f6PjgMQ> [retrieved: 15.07.2023.]

<sup>9</sup> Bólya 2015.

## A brief history of research

For folk music collectors in the early 20th century, the „Bulgarian rhythm” was a miracle. Music historian Curt Sachs called these rhythms „super complicated”.<sup>10</sup> The phenomenon thus became known throughout Europe in musical circles.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from the fact that Aristoxenos discusses the „choreios alogos”, the „illogical trocheus”, as early as the 4th century BC, the first references that can be interpreted in ethnomusicology are descriptive collections before Bartók: for example, Franjo Kuhać’s collection of Slavic folk songs, *South Slavic Folk Songs*, published in Zagreb in 1879, and Georghios Pachtikos’ 260 Greek melodies, *Chronos protos*, in 1905. And Ludvík Kuba’s multi-volume collection, published between 1884 and 1929, contains South Slavic, including Macedonian, melodies from 1890. Subsequently, he wrote a theoretical study of Bulgarian folk music in 1897, in which asymmetry and simultaneity were discussed. In his 1922 study on the theory of Turkish music, Raouf Yekta Bey also discussed the Bulgarian rhythm.<sup>12</sup>

From theoretical aspect, the Bulgarian composer Dobri Hristov in 1913 and the Bulgarian folk song collector Vasil Stoin in 1927 drew attention to the asymmetrical rhythm.<sup>13</sup> In Slovenian research, the issue appears in 1935 as „Bulgarian rhythm”. We learn about the latter from the monograph on chain and round dance written by Olivera Mladenović in 1973.<sup>14</sup> It was also discussed in a theoretical framework by Béla Bartók in his 1938 lecture *The so-called Bulgarian rhythm*.<sup>15</sup> Bartók analysed the Balkan folklore partly on the basis of

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<sup>10</sup> Brailoiu 1967: 238. Fracile 2003: 191–204.

<sup>11</sup> Brailoiu 1967: 238. Fracile 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Bólya 2021a: 67.

<sup>13</sup> Fracile 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Marolt 1935.

<sup>15</sup> Romanian material forms the bulk of Bartók’s Balkan collection. His research into southern Slavic folk music began in 1912 with his Bulgarian recordings from Vinga, which also represent the first recordings of Bulgarian folk music research and Serbian collections in the Banat. (Dzhudzhev 1971, Pejkovska 2000, Radinović 2006).

From his 1938 lecture on the so called Bulgarian beat: „It’s amazing how timidly orchestral musicians have embraced such rhythms, even recently. They were so used to the hurdy-gurdy-like symmetrical rhythms that they could not grasp these rhythms, which were so unusual and yet so natural to them (...) When I first saw these unusual rhythms, in which such subtle differences were the decisive factors, I could hardly imagine that they were really alive! But then it seemed



his own collections, which were later made impossible by the new state borders, but mostly on the basis of the collections of Franjo Kuhać (*Južno-Slovenske Narodne Popievke*, Zagreb 1879-1881) and Ludvík Kuba (*Pjesme i napjevi iz Bosne i Hercegovine*, Sarajevo 1893). Finally, it was at Harvard that he got access to systematically collected Balkan material.<sup>16</sup> A summary of his results (Bartók, Béla, and Albert B. Lord: *Serbo-Croatian folk songs*) was published as a posthumous book in 1951.<sup>17</sup>

Research after the Second World War - and Bartók's death - was first continued by Constantin Brailoiu. He discusses the problem of the migration of *aksak* rhythm in Balkan folklore, in which he also provides a theoretical foundation. According to Brailoiu, asymmetrical metrics were first described by Bulgarian musicologists, but the phenomenon is still specific to a wider ethnomusicological region, which includes Turkey, Africa, Europe, the Caucasus and even parts of South America, in addition to the Balkan Peninsula. However, it can be noted that the *aksak* is not really ethnically specific, as it occurs in the music of most peoples.<sup>18</sup> Brailoiu, together with the Turkish composer Adnam Saygun, replaced the term „Bulgarian rhythmitalics”, because of its inadequacy, with the Turkish term *aksak*, which is also widely used in ethnomusicological literature. The word means lame and is also not entirely appropriate, because it refers only to a narrow category of Turkish music. Yet, as the simplest, I use the term „aksakitalics” to describe the phenomenon in my writing.

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as if I had encountered similar phenomena in my own collection of Olaic material, but - so to speak - I had not dared to notice them at the time! (...) I have since revised my old phonogram notes thoroughly: it turns out that perhaps 5% of the Vlach material is also in so-called Bulgarian rhythm, although limited to certain regions (Marostorda, Tordaaranyos, Banat are known, but e.g. (...) The material available for comparison is still too scarce to say whether this rhythm has its origins and spread from Bulgaria, or whether it is or was found elsewhere, in some Turkish land. (...) At present, all we know is that it is best known and most widespread in Bulgarian territory. Therefore, even if it should turn out at some point that Bulgaria is not the country of origin, we can rightly call it Bulgarian rhythm. After all, it is thanks to the Bulgarians that we know it at all.” [http:// www.naputonline.hu/naput-kiadvanyok-arhiv/naput\\_2006/2006\\_02/126.htm](http://www.naputonline.hu/naput-kiadvanyok-arhiv/naput_2006/2006_02/126.htm) [retrieved: 07.15.2023.]

<sup>16</sup> Radinović 2006: 81–83.

<sup>17</sup> Bartók – Herzog – Lord 1951.

<sup>18</sup> Fracile 2003, Braioiu 1984.

In Serbian research, the theoretical analysis of the Janković sisters' collection work, which began in 1934, was first summarized in 1968.<sup>19</sup> The above-mentioned period in the history of research was characterised by descriptive treatises, which in the early days remained in the realm of detection and interpretation as miracles (Béla Bartók, Curt Sachs). The interpretative approach was first developed by Constantin Brailoiu.<sup>20</sup> Its interpretation is primarily structural, grouping the many Balkan *aksak* of the metre according to the number of units of 2 or 3 in the pattern. However, he also makes interpretative statements that are important for us, such as „the aksak actually belongs to a choreographic domain.” Also, the lack of thinking in terms of metre „does not necessarily have to start with musical emphasis, in fact it does not necessarily have to begin with a musical emphasis, in fact the place of the musical emphasis is not important, but the pattern of long and short units is decisive, but the pattern of long and short units that is decisive.”<sup>21</sup> An interpretative analysis is more likely to be found in the work of Simha Arom, an eminent ethnomusicologist who focuses on what to the European ear appears to be the rhythmically „contradictory” phenomena of African music. No wonder that he also undertook an initial interpretation of this peculiarity of the Balkans. The phenomenon is subject to structural and cultural analysis. It emerges from his writing that the aksak is a phenomenon completely alien to Western European musicians, a phenomenon that is completely different from Western European musical interpretations. He states that „The perception of aksak is associated with specific *mental patterns*.”<sup>22</sup>

### **New suggestions for interpretation**

According to Brailoiu, asymmetry is no less strict than the rhythm of Western music. That is why he believes that interpretation in the choreographic domain can lead to results.<sup>23</sup> Researchers conducting a rhythmic analysis of Norwegian

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<sup>19</sup> Rakočević 2014: 219–244.

<sup>20</sup> Brailoiu 1951: 71–108. Brailoiu 1973.

<sup>21</sup> Brailoiu 1951: 71–108.

<sup>22</sup> Arom 2004: 11–48. Arom 1989: 91–99.

<sup>23</sup> Brailoiu 1973. For instance in this music: [https://open.spotify.com/track/1gcmIZiO6MB-C2dfI9XyPtY?si=2\\_wgS3-FTOSCD8GKBMZYCg](https://open.spotify.com/track/1gcmIZiO6MB-C2dfI9XyPtY?si=2_wgS3-FTOSCD8GKBMZYCg) [retrieved: 14.07.2023.]

springer and Swedish polska dances containing asymmetry believe that *the key to interpretation is clearly the dance*.<sup>24</sup> Bartók, in whose music, despite the marginality of research, rhythm played an important role, felt all his music deeply connected to dance, according to several sentences attributed to him.<sup>25</sup> Related to these researchers, and on the basis of the folklore corpus of the Macedonian and Orthodox Balkan folklore areas in general, I clearly believe that

**1. *the aksak should be interpreted in the context of chain and round dance culture.***

However, besides the *aksak*, I also found other interesting phenomena in the Macedonian and Balkan folklore corpus, which were also detected by ethnomusicological research. Taking as examples the basic choreological topos of Balkan chain dance culture, the Pravo oro<sup>26</sup> and the Cigancica dance,<sup>27</sup> we can notice one of the most interesting features of the Balkan chain and round dance culture. In the first case, there are 3, 2, 2 distributed 7/4 meters, and the beats are tetrapodic (4 x 7). However, the step material is divided into 3 parts. In the second example, we have a 7/4 metre with a distribution of 2, 2, 3, where the beats are also tetrapodic (4 x 7). The units of the dance are again quite different, however, and can be divided into 5 units.

The Balkan chain and round dance culture is characterised by the difference between the periods of music and dance, along with the *aksak*. The related studies are much less advanced than that of the *aksak*. No coherent terminology has yet emerged in research on the subject. From the beginning, the Janković sisters' collecting work was also accompanied by what they called arrhythmia. From 1925 onwards, their attention turned to this main feature of the Balkan dance tradition. They devoted a special chapter in their book to the terminology describing this phenomenon. Among the peoples outside the former Yugoslavia, *arrhythmia* was known in Bulgarian, Romanian, Turkish and Albanian dances.<sup>28</sup> Dzhenev and Haralampiev, in their book analysing the movement vocabulary of Bulgarian dances, wrote that in most Bulgarian

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<sup>24</sup> Johansson 2017: 58–89.

<sup>25</sup> Bólya 1996: 111–114. See in more detail: Windhager 2021.

<sup>26</sup> <https://youtu.be/GrXr3OlhoFI> [retrieved: 14.07.2023.]

<sup>27</sup> <https://youtu.be/jl-DhhRCS6o> [retrieved: 14.07.2023.]

<sup>28</sup> Јанковић 1938: 24–29, 4–11.

dances the dance figures begin and end independently of the music, without using a specific term for the phenomenon.<sup>29</sup> The Macedonian dance researcher Mihailo Dimoski describes a complete asynchronicity in the ritual dances of the village of Inyevo (Radovish area), where the metrics, the ending of the periods and the position of the accents of the *oro* and the *oro lead chant* are different.<sup>30</sup> György Martin, Ivan Ivančan and Raina Kacarova refer to the phenomenon as heterometry.<sup>31</sup> According to Ivančan, the emergence of *heterometry* can be linked to the instrumental melodies that were incorporated later.<sup>32</sup> Later, the research group (under the auspices of the IFMC, then ICTM), which tried to develop a unified language of dance analysis, referred to the phenomenon in its dance analysis as the „discongruity of music and dance”.<sup>33</sup> In her article, Maria Koutsuba uses the terms *congruent* and *incongruent*, while at the same time, in her discussion of the relationship between dance and music, she refers to the phenomenon as *polymetry*.<sup>34</sup> I think the phenomenon certainly has a long history. It is interesting to note that William Maurice Emmanuel, on the basis of his analysis of the surviving data and representations, concluded that dance in ancient Hellenic dance was independent of musical rhythm. We shall return to this later.<sup>35</sup>

The third phenomenon that can be observed as an attribute of chain and round dance culture is *choreological asymmetry*. The step material of the dances is generally asymmetrical, with different compositions and lengths of steps to the right and left. Even the second part of a symmetrical structure is not always the same, because it is made up of smaller steps. The final goal is to move in a chain or circle (in the direction of the geographic progression). The basic type of asymmetrical motifs is the *pravo oro*, a six-piece pattern with 4 steps forward and 2 backward. The non-uniform circular movement of the chain dance is most easily achieved with the *pravo oro*. Today, *pravo oro* is the

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<sup>29</sup> ДЖЕНЕВ 1965: 242.

<sup>30</sup> ДИМОСКИ 1974: 24–25.

<sup>31</sup> Ivančan 1964: 17–38. Ivančan 1971: 45–193. Martin 1979: 18.

<sup>32</sup> Ivančan 1964: 17–38. Ivančan 1971: 45–193. Martin 1979: 18.

<sup>33</sup> Felföldi describes the history of the structuralist approach to dance research, in which Hungarian researchers have played a leading role. Felföldi 2007: 155–156, Giurchescu – Kröschlová 2007: 37. Giurchescu 1967: 238–298.

<sup>34</sup> Koutsuba 2007: 253–276.

<sup>35</sup> Emmanuel 1896: 65.

most common step material in Macedonia and certainly in the whole Balkan Slavic area. Its basic type, i.e. the more complex asymmetrical steps, can be traced back to this progression pattern, i.e. it is originated from that.<sup>36</sup>

Based on these findings I believe that

***2. simultaneousness and choreological asymmetry should be interpreted together with the aksak as attributes of Balkan chain and round dance culture. Together, I propose to refer to these as the aksak phenomena.***

In order to study the phenomena described above, it is necessary to start from the fact, emphasized by ethnomusicology, that we are dealing with a more archaic phenomenon than the Western European interpretation of music.

This requires a historical perspective, from which it can be concluded that the chain and round dance culture is a specific phenomenon of dance history. It is a significant fact that the entire chain and round dance culture, including the aksak phenomena described, is not really ethnicity-specific (e.g. it also occurs in German folk music), but rather characteristic in its archaic nature. In this context, we draw attention to the distinct names of chain and round dance culture that can be detected in folklore. For example, reigen, choros, oro, choro, kolo, khorovod, to name but a few examples. On the basis of the Balkan and Hungarian folklore material and explanations of customs, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of chain and round dance culture is completely different in terms of ritual, formal, social embeddedness and function from the later couple dance culture that gained ground in Europe from around the 14th century. We will not discuss it here, but it is worth noting that chain and round dance culture was the fashion dance of medieval Europe, and was immensely popular regardless of social class, ethnicity or occasion. In Europe, the paradigm shift in dance happened around 1200. This is immediately apparent in the emergence of a new term: the predecessor of our current international word „dance” only appeared in the 13th century. Since then, we have used the term for all kinds of dance, including chain dance. At the same time, the spread of the word „dance” has been a parallel process to the spread of the phenomenon of couple dance culture.<sup>37</sup> This clearly shows that

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<sup>36</sup> Martin 1979: 302. Димоски 1996: 285.

<sup>37</sup> see also.: Andrásfalvy 2002: 79–84; Barnhart 1995; Mullaly 2011; Hellsten 2016; Bólya 2021b. Note that chain dance and round dance are not the same phenomena, they differ in

3. *the cultural phenomenon of chain and round dance is absolutely different from later couple dances.*

Single-sex singing chain and round dances, popular throughout Europe and among all social classes, declined with the spread of partner dance culture: by the 14th century in French culture, by the 17th century in German culture, and by the 19th century in much of Europe. They survived to varying extents in Slavic and Balkan cultures in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and in the archaic dance culture of the Hungarians or the Danish-ruled Faroe Islands. Their most significant region today, however, is in the Balkan Peninsula.<sup>38</sup> The two phenomena are generally contrasted by the use of the word choreia - danse. The choreia culture contained the aksak phenomena much more extensively than the couple dance culture. As an example, we can mention the early branle dances. Thus I believe that

4. *the aksak phenomena should be interpreted together in the context of the choreia phenomenon.*

In relation to the above, I will list some hypotheses in the following: the shift in the European dance paradigm is juxtaposing two completely separate phenomena, choreia and danse. The danse culture gradually replaced the choreia culture around the 12th century. Choreia has survived in relics, the most important of which is the Balkan Peninsula in Europe. A comparative study of these two distinct phenomena, now defined by the term 'dance', using philosophical, neurobiological and linguistic anthropological (multidisciplinary) methods, could yield new results in the study of dance. The choreia can be seen on the same levels as the Gregorian chant in dance terms and in a cultural context (archaicism, monophony, ritual aspects, European modern art antecedents.)

The features introduced as aksak phenomena are attributes of the choreia with ancient origins. The aksak phenomena have ritual origins. The aksak phenomena, especially simultaneity, may be a descendant of an art form of music-dance relationship, also with a ritual origin.

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their archaicity in the roles of the dancers, but in the Balkan Peninsula the two are completely mixed. (Ratkó 2001: 263–277.)

<sup>38</sup> Martin 1979: 14. Arbeau 1588.

## **A new research project with a completely new multidisciplinary interpretative framework**

In the first phase of the project, which started in 2022, we approached a possible interpretative framework for the characteristics of the chain dance from the perspective of the latest findings in philosophy and comparative literature. These researches, by examining the phenomenon of ancient choreia, bring to the attention of dance studies many interesting aspects. As the research stands at present, the following ideas can be associated with a possible interpretation of the aksak phenomena described above.

Leslie Kurke, following David Graeber's theory of the constitution of social value, argues that the choreia can be seen as a prominent area of *value creation* in the archaic and classical period of ancient Hellas (c. 750-300 BC). This is in line with Károly Kerényi's statement that anyone studying ancient Hellenic culture will sooner or later encounter choreia as a central cultural phenomenon of society.<sup>39</sup>

Ancient Hellenic dance reflects the ancient Hellenic way of life, thought and attitude; to study its development is in fact to study the ancient Greeks themselves. In line with Brailoiu's thoughts on the interpretation of the aksak, Kurke also points out that we need to look at ancient dance in a way that is free from modern ideas.<sup>40</sup>

Leslie Kurke, drawing on texts of archaic Greek poetry, attributes two roles to choreia: it was a means of producing pure presence, merging both chorus members and audience with the divine in the performance space; it also transformed the chorus into a perfectly ordered and synchronized chorus, an almost moving set of sculptures. In this connection, it should be noted that the chain dance culture itself was certainly the most important element of the Minoan epiphany, i.e. the apparition of god, which was developed and transmitted to the ancient Hellenic culture.<sup>41</sup> In both processes described by Kurke, the choreia and its accompanying chorus represented *the encounter with the miracle (thauma)*. It was thus a means of transforming individuals

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<sup>39</sup> Graeber 2001: 36–46; Kerényi 2009: 36–46.

<sup>40</sup> Lawler 1947: 343–349. see: Brailoiu 1951: 71–108.

<sup>41</sup> Kurke 2011: 218–235; Mandalaki 2013a; Mandalaki 2013b; Lawler 1947: 343–349.

into cohesive social groups.<sup>42</sup> The ancient Greeks considered the choreia, along with singing, to be an activity of high sacred value. According to Kurke, all the effects of the choreia derive from a single source: the choreia is a superlative form of heightened aesthetic value, or beauty. Its effect on the audience was to experience an encounter with the miracle (*thauma*). In the descriptions of ancient poetic texts, we can almost perceive the members of the chorus as ‚dressed in wonder’. The choreia seems to have effectively combined all possible forms of transcendental value within the framework of the cult.<sup>43</sup> The Greeks seem to have perceived the unparalleled aesthetic value of the choreia - the transfigurative or transformative experience of singing, dancing bodies in motion.<sup>44</sup>

According to the thought of Vered Lev Kenaan, the *miracle* was understood in ancient Hellenic thought as revealing to the observer the hidden presence of the arché, at the source and beginning of things. However, the arché was not expressed as a static form, but as a moving form. In particular, in Hesiod’s Theogony, the arch is understood as a driving force, that is, not only a source but also a possibility of development. The arché, beyond its temporal and spatial appearances, is an autonomous concept of beginning and origin.<sup>45</sup>

Sarah Elisabeth Olsen’s research highlights a characteristic feature of the ancient choreia: logocentricity. Lucian sees choreia as ‚to be heard’, like the chorus. This approach to dance is characteristic of the entire Roman Empire-era sources of ancient Hellenic culture, in which dance is understood as a kind of codified process of translation between words and actions: ‚the dancer transcribes words and actions into the code of gesture: everything becomes action. Then the spectators, the audience, transcribe the action and movement into their verbal code: everything becomes speech.’<sup>46</sup>

The most interesting ideas are to be found in the authors’ work on simultaneity. According to Kurke, by creating or combining different choral and dance parts, this fusion transforms the perfectly synchronized chorus into a high

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<sup>42</sup> Kurke 2011: 218–235.

<sup>43</sup> Kurke 2011: 218–235.

<sup>44</sup> Kurke 2011: 218–235. see also about the transformative power of dance: Bólya 2020a; Bólya 2020b: 81–101.

<sup>45</sup> Kenaan 2011: 13–26.

<sup>46</sup> Olsen 2016.



art.<sup>47</sup> In other words, dance does not go hand in hand with music, but there is a sophisticated art of combining the two.

Eliade described three characteristics of sacred time:

1. mythical time;
2. the perception of time in rituals that repeat the event „happening” *in illo tempore*, at the time of origin;
3. finally, and most importantly, sacral time is the time structure of the rhythms of the cosmos, in which humanity will witness hierophanies (manifestations of the Sacred Order). This hierophanic time is different from profane time: it is periodic, repeating and re-enacting the myth and the mythical model. Sacral time is therefore the „eternal present” of *faith et nunc*. Eliade concludes: there is an eternal desire in man to perceive time as a whole, to break down profane time, to transform passing time into a single eternal moment.<sup>48</sup>

Eliade, moreover, considered the problem of time to be one of the most difficult questions for the phenomenology of religion. The root of this is that time, as such, does not always mean the same thing to more archaic thinking, for example, to primitive peoples, as it does to modern man. In reflection of this, Eliade contrasted sacred time and profane duration. Here follows the most interesting thesis: for the archaic, natural man, his own sense of time makes it very easy *to switch from profane time to sacred time*.<sup>49</sup> In van Gennep’s theory, the transition to the mythical time, the *illud tempus*, takes place in stages.<sup>50</sup>

Kurke’s research suggests that there is plenty of evidence for the following phenomenon: in ancient Hellenic culture, choruses were imagined to enable the collapse of time, when singing, dancing choreuts<sup>51</sup> would merge completely, or

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<sup>47</sup> Kurke 2011: 218–235. see also about the transformative power of dance: Bólya 2020a: 21–28. Bólya 2020b: 81–101.

<sup>48</sup> Meslin 2007: 15–22.

<sup>49</sup> Barth 2013: 59–75.

<sup>50</sup> Zenck 1972: 61–78. Boulez 1972.

<sup>51</sup> see also.: χορευτής.

identify with the gods and heroes whose stories they sang.<sup>52</sup> The dancers, as they sing and dance in unison, are transformed, temporarily elevated to the level of the divine, and the spectators, who identify with them perfectly, are drawn into this halo of divinity.<sup>53</sup> Homer, in his description of the „divine shining of the feet”, makes special mention of it. In choral dance, the feet are often emphasised. This suggests that the display of the „divine” and dancing were one and the same activity. It was the ‚activity of the feet’, the dancing, that took the participants into mythical time. The means of ascending to the divine level is dance, the rhythm of the movement of the feet and the chorus and their relationship to each other. The means of this is the presence of temporal differences, that is to say, the co-presence of polymetric and polyrhythmic phenomena, of different sounding and moving structures. We can therefore presumably include the phenomenon of simultaneity, which achieved the transition to divine time through the art of combining temporally different forms.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Kurke 2011: 218–235. see also Burnett 1983: 5–14 ; Kowalzig 2004; 2007; Nagy 1990: 339–381; Chlup 2008: 355–365.

<sup>53</sup> Kurke 2011: 218–235.

<sup>54</sup> see also: Eliade 1987. We must add that units with different rhythms and metrics are also widely found in African music. These musical events, as the fieldwork shows, had an explicitly recreational function. Zenck 1972: 61–78; Boulez 1972; Tones 2007; Arom 1989: 91–99; Bólya 2023.

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## Investigating traditional dance culture

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# The Spatial Structure of the Traditional Dance Culture of Fields

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SÁNDOR VARGA

## Introduction

Over recent decades, ethnology and cultural anthropology, including ethnochoreology and dance anthropology, has been leaning towards more contemporary research, nevertheless historical topics have recently come to the forefront of our interest, as well.<sup>1</sup> By critically combining the approaches, theories and methods of historical anthropology and microhistory with the earlier inquiries of historical ethnography and folklore studies, new perspectives are opening up for ethnochoreology and historical dance folkloristics,<sup>2</sup> which, in my opinion, point towards inter- and even transdisciplinary cooperation. In my study, I raise some questions in connection with the geo-historical investigation of Hungarian folk dance research,<sup>3</sup> which may help us to critically review the theories underlying the earlier approaches, and thus provide us with an opportunity to supplement and further reflect on György Martin's investigations, which remain unfinished.<sup>4</sup>

## Some problems in the research of dance dialects

The topic of the regional fragmentation of folk culture and the spread of cultural elements has been of interest to local and international researchers

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<sup>1</sup> Kavecsánszki 2021; Varga 2020a.

<sup>2</sup> Báth 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Vargyas 2020: 50, footnote 66; Varga 2020b: 86; Szőnyi 2020: 102.

<sup>4</sup> György Martin (1932–1983) was one of the most significant figures in Hungarian and international folk dance research. He was the forerunner of the comparative studies of the data relating to the dance history and dance folklore of the Alpine-Carpathian region and Europe. His more significant studies are also available in English (Fügedi – Quigley – Szőnyi – Varga eds. 2020).

since the end of the 19th century.<sup>5</sup> Among the major anthropological theories, such questions have been addressed within the framework of diffusionism; for long time European historical studies of dance-folklore were dominated by the Finnish historical geo-historical method, which was close to diffusionism and to some extent to evolutionism.<sup>6</sup> The work of Bartók and Kodály, who were among the founders of European folk music research, and the Hungarian dance folklore research that followed in their footsteps, were also based on this approach, supplemented by methods borrowed from linguistic structural analysis.<sup>7</sup> Martin attached great importance to the diffusionist study of dance culture according to its distribution, emphasising that the geographical division of folk culture is related to the social and historical development of a region.<sup>8</sup> He considers that the study of the different genre-based or formal groupings is important from both a cultural and an aesthetic (artistic) point of view.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps one of the most important – and most troubling – questions in the field of dance-dialect studies is what we are actually concerned with. What do we consider to be folk dance culture or traditional dance culture? Do these concepts overlap? It is not the aim of my study to solve this theoretical question? But it is necessary to point out that Martin’s definition of dance dialects as those dances that “lived without institutional dissemination and learning, as an integral part of the slowly changing peasant life and customs”<sup>10</sup> seems to be somewhat outdated and imprecise. Today, it seems that by relying on this definition, we obtain an inflexible and an “unhistorical” system, in which we cannot place many elements of dancing practice (e.g. bourgeois dances, that have been integrated into the dance culture of some villages for several

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<sup>5</sup> Kósa 1998: 11–30.

<sup>6</sup> Szónyi 2020: 107–111. Csilla Könczei has written thorough analyses of the evolutionist foundations of the research model developed by György Martin for the historical research of Hungarian folk dances (Könczei 2009a: 143–144; Könczei 2015: 832–833.)

<sup>7</sup> Fügedi 2020; Könczei 2020. In addition to those mentioned here, several important studies have been published in recent years, which bring us closer to understanding the history of Hungarian dance folkloristics (Hofer 2020; Könczei 2009a; Könczei 2015; Szónyi 2020; Varga 2020a; Varga 2020b”).

<sup>8</sup> Martin 2020d: 217.

<sup>9</sup> Martin 1995: 6–7.

<sup>10</sup> Martin 1995: 6.

generations), nor can we see the dynamics of the cultural processes behind the changes in the phenomena under study.

Martin speaks of dance styles and dance customs from different periods and fashions (primarily spreading from West to East) in European dance history that have been embedded in local cultures – folklorized, if you prefer – despite their intermingling at different rates and to different degrees. This is how the traditional dance culture of certain areas or settlements has developed.<sup>11</sup> The various dance genres and elements of customs were intermingled in European peasant culture in some areas in the middle of the 20th century (and in some places not even until the 21st century). Nevertheless, certain “dominant genres”<sup>12</sup> emerged from these, which can be examined to outline the cultural-historical processes that shaped the peasant dance culture of the area or settlement under study.<sup>13</sup> On the basis of this logic, Martin divided Europe into three large-scale geographic regions and, within this framework, the parts of the Alpine-Carpathian Region inhabited by Hungarians into three major and twenty minor dance dialects.<sup>14</sup>

In his excellent studies, Tamás Hofer points out that starting from the 16th century (that is, the Turkish occupation), Hungary was increasingly left out of the European „dense networks of cultural transmission” and became a peripheral position.<sup>15</sup> As a result, the social distance between the Hungarian elite and the peasant class was greater than in the case of Western Europe, where the social classes could develop together and form a homogeneous cultural language.<sup>16</sup> In Hungary, the Western fashions of the Modern era only partially reached the peasant society,<sup>17</sup> because of this „the peasant traditions in the eastern parts of Europe show a much greater originality.”<sup>18</sup> All of this determined the characteristics of the the „historical system and European

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<sup>11</sup> Martin 1995: 6–7.

<sup>12</sup> Martin 1995: 11.

<sup>13</sup> Martin 1995: 11.

<sup>14</sup> Martin 1995: 10–12; Martin 2020d: 220. For the major European dance dialects and the Hungarian territorial division, see also: Martin 2020a; Martin 2020b.

<sup>15</sup> Hofer 1984: 137.

<sup>16</sup> Hofer 1984: 137.

<sup>17</sup> Hofer 1984: 137.

<sup>18</sup> Hofer 1993: 20.

relationships of Hungarian peasant culture”,<sup>19</sup> and on the other hand, in my opinion, it influenced the focus and questions of Hungarian folklore research in the 20th century.<sup>20</sup> Martin argues that the pattern of uneven social and cultural development has meant that different dance styles reached certain areas at different rates and with different strength.<sup>21</sup> In exploring the possible reasons behind this, Martin finds that certain ethnic groups preserved their cultural traits in a more isolated state during feudal fragmentation, and some others did not, a difference which can be observed even in the present days;<sup>22</sup> this may explain the relative heterogeneity of dance culture in certain areas. The homogeneity of dance culture in other areas, on the other hand, may be due to the unifying effects of modern capitalist development, the development of national culture, the spread of literacy, and the development of infrastructure, which gradually dissolved “the boundaries of feudal territories” in Europe.<sup>23</sup> In Eastern Europe, however, differences, which were rooted in feudalism, did not disappear completely, but were only pushed into the background, due to the delayed development of the bourgeoisie.<sup>24</sup> In my opinion, Martin examines this complexity in the European comparative context, at a kind of historical macro level in his summarizing works.<sup>25</sup> At

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<sup>19</sup> Hofer 2020: 62.

<sup>20</sup> Of course, all this does not mean that the social layers in question showed a completely isolated cultural state. Hofer’s thought was described first in a 1984 (Hofer 1984), later refined under the influence of György Martin’s research results. Hofer writes that the cultural boundaries between different social strata should be observed with „greater suspicion”, as well as those ideas „which in the spirit of certain national ideological expectations, hopes and plans, very respectable previous generations projected onto the image of popular culture” (Hofer 1993: 20).

<sup>21</sup> Martin 1995: 11.

<sup>22</sup> Martin 1995: 217.

<sup>23</sup> Martin 1995: 14.

<sup>24</sup> Martin 1995: 16–17. Kósa goes against this principle in his work, which is considered a fundamental work in the study of Hungarian ethnographic groups. According to Kósa’s hypothesis, feudal conditions maintained cultural homogeneity and the emergence of regional differences in peasant culture was due to the differential impact of the development of civil society that started after the serf emancipation (Kósa 1998: 44–48).

<sup>25</sup> „The approach that investigated traditional culture separated from its larger social context was rooted in a model applied by predecessors in ethnomusicology. This approach most frequently studied cultural transformations at the macro level of European or Hungarian cultural history. Consequently, working in this paradigm, Hungarian dance folkloristics did not pay enough attention to continuous changes in culture. Its focus on material considered to be of Hungarian origin reaffirmed the high aesthetic value placed on so-called archaic phenomena that emerged in the era before the bourgeois transformation of the mid-nineteenth century. Accordingly,

the same time, he also refers to meso-level changes, such as the integrating effect of population migrations under Turkish occupation (1540–1686).<sup>26</sup> In some of his works he also examines micro-level changes linked to certain localities, such as in the case of the village Bag,<sup>27</sup> or to the specific historical and social situation of certain regions and settlements (e.g. the emblematic Hungarian village Szék/Sic in the Mezőség).<sup>28</sup>

Martin speaks of the combined, often simultaneous, influence of separating and unifying factors in the historical development of Hungarian dance dialects.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the unequal development of civil society already mentioned above, the spread of foreign and internally developed dance styles and interaction with other peoples are emphasized.<sup>30</sup> Regarding the latter, Martin notes that “the adoption of these influences was possible during the period of contact.”<sup>31</sup>

Writing about the borders of dance dialects, Martin repeatedly refers to the influence of the problems and methods used in linguistic dialect research on his approach.<sup>32</sup> In this connection, he clearly argues, in my view, for a kind of etic approach to culture, saying that the criterion of linguistic dialect researchers as to whether speakers understand each other has proved useless when applied to dance.<sup>33</sup> As an analogy of the differences between languages and language dialects, he draws attention to fundamental differences in national dance dialects.<sup>34</sup> He notes that the Hungarian dance heritage is vertically structured, as the traditional dance culture of a village bears the imprint of many layers of dance history. In contrast, the Romanian dance heritage is sharply separated

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and in compliance with the classical ethnographic perspective, it strove to classify peasants’ dances into two fairly inflexible historical categories (“old style and new style”), relying on data selected on the basis of these preconceptions” (Varga 2020a: 88).

<sup>26</sup> Martin 1995: 14.

<sup>27</sup> For the changes in the dance life of the northern Hungarian village, Bag, see: Martin 1955: 5–6, 15–17.

<sup>28</sup> Martin 1995: 277.

<sup>29</sup> Martin 1995: 14.

<sup>30</sup> Martin 1995: 17–19.

<sup>31</sup> Martin 1995: 19.

<sup>32</sup> Martin 1995: 20. In a 2020 study, Csilla Könzei investigated how different linguistic paradigms influenced György Martin’s approach (Könzei 2020).

<sup>33</sup> Martin 1995: 20. Indeed, linguistic studies have shown that there can be profound differences between certain dialects, but not always between languages (Kiss 2001: 31–36).

<sup>34</sup> Martin 1995: 20.

horizontally – “the so-called dance zones of the Danube, the Carpathian countryside and Transylvania represent three separate worlds in the Romanian dance heritage”, he writes.<sup>35</sup> The question is whether we can speak of dance as a kind of national characteristic or product – either in an early or a late sense – on the basis of the linguistic analogy.<sup>36</sup> The fact is that there are many more similarities in the dance culture of a Hungarian village in the Mezőség and a Romanian village in the Mezőség than in the dance culture of, say, a Hungarian village in the Mezőség and a Hungarian village in Transdanubia. On the one hand, this shows that we can talk about horizontal differences in terms of the formal characteristics of the Hungarian dances, and on the other hand, that, in the case of traditional dance culture, geographical distance, regional fragmentation and other circumstances that cause differentiation are much more decisive than in the case of language – if we can even speak of former national roots in the case of dance in the Middle Ages or earlier periods. For this reason, the linguistic analogy may (also) be misleading here, as Csilla Könzei points out in one of her studies: „...nonverbal media cannot be categorized according to the boundaries of spoken language. Nonverbal communication communities are not at all similar to language communities. They are much smaller or larger.”<sup>37</sup>

When drawing the boundaries of dialects, György Martin speaks of “essential phenomena” that are considered crucial, which the researcher must select<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Martin 1995: 20.

<sup>36</sup> In a study, Tamás Hofer points out that “there was an early wave of cultural integration and national identity building in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries” and that this process also affected Hungary. György Martin drew attention to this with his historical study of the *hajdútánc* (Hofer 2020: 65–66).

<sup>37</sup> Könzei 2009b: 168. “The dance cultures of larger European regions are similar – regardless the language and ethnicity – despite that since the spread of national consciousness certain people carefully record and emphasize their differentiating marks. For an observer having a bird eye perspective Balkan, respectively East European and West European dances are amalgated. The outsider has little capacity to make a difference between Russian and Ukrainian, between Slovakian and Hungarian or Transylvanian Romanian, between Romanian from Walachia and Serbian, between Macedonian and Bulgarian. Separating German from Czech or Polish is as difficult as separating Swedish from Finnish” (Pesovár 1980: 10).

<sup>38</sup> Martin considers the most important of these to be the study of the dances themselves (Martin 1995: 218). Another important aspect is: the existence or absence of certain dance types; the formal-structural characteristics of the dances, their motifs; the dance name and the related terminology; the use of space in connection with the dance; the use of tools in connection with the dance; the place and function of certain dances in peasant dance life; the



and on the basis of the overall picture obtained from the analysis of these, the “approximate boundaries of the dance dialects” can be defined. In this case, we are talking about a research construct that marginalises the possibilities of an emic approach to culture.

Martin also considers it important to examine the temporal spread of dance phenomena: Given that the aim of defining dance dialects is to reconstruct the situation before the complete disintegration of peasant dance culture around the turn of the 20th century, temporal-historical control is essential to draw the right boundaries.”<sup>39</sup> Here too, we are talking about a criterion, the application of which makes our historical approach inflexible. Not only does the question of the interaction between modernity and traditionalism thus remain outside the focus of research, but the question of the lower boundary of the period under study also becomes questionable. If we accept Martin’s axiom, stated in several places, that the dominant dance forms of the Middle Ages were circle and chain dances and weapon dances, then we should expect a rather homogeneous picture of the dance dialects of this period – which is in complete contrast to Martin’s other statement, quoted above, that the feudal period could be characterised by a heterogeneous dance culture.

In the course of my research on the Mezőség from 1994 to the present, I have conducted fieldwork primarily in two settlements, Szék/Sic and Visa/Vișea, but in addition to these in this paper I use data from my long-standing fieldwork, carried out in nearly fifty villages.<sup>40</sup> My questions have been based on the etic factors identified by György Martin, as the existence or absence of certain dance types, the motifs and structure of dances, the development of dance order, the co-use of certain dances, the use of tools, the terminology related to dance, the role of dances in peasant dance life, the nature of the dances, the way in which the dances were performed, the role of the dance in peasant life, the characteristics of the musical accompaniment, the nature of

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nature of dance calendars, dance arrangements, customs, dance styles; dance order; musical accompaniment, melody, tempo; instruments and the formation of the band (Martin 1995: 218–220).

<sup>39</sup> Martin 1995: 22.

<sup>40</sup> This paper is a more elaborate version of the relevant chapter of my doctoral dissertation written in 2011 (Varga 2011: 52–59). More details about my fieldwork in the Mezőség can be found in: Varga 2007: 123–124. Other relevant information about my research related to my present paper: Varga 2013a; Varga 2023b; Varga 2016.

the dance and the customs of dance arrangement, and the dance style. I also collected emic data from my respondents responses to the villages whose dances resembled their own, the villages to which they went to dance, the villages to which they married, and the striking features of the dance culture of neighbouring villages. I do not consider my research to be closed and I also touch upon several problems of principle that I cannot yet undertake to solve.

### **The Mezőség as an ethnographic landscape**

There is no consensus among ethnographers as to the exact delimitation and internal division of the Mezőség as an area with its own ethnographic culture.<sup>41</sup> The most recent summary of the regions of Hungarian folk culture has treated the Erdélyi Erdőhát/Someş Plateau, the Lápos/Lăpuş Valley, the Nagy Szamos/ Someşul Mare Valley, the Sajó/Şieu Valley, the Felső-Maros/ Upper Mureş Valley, the Mezőség, the Erdőalja/Sub Pădure, the Aranyosszék<sup>42</sup> and the Torockó/Rimetea area as separate regions.<sup>43</sup> It is therefore difficult to determine the exact size of the region: some people include a hundred villages, others two hundred to two hundred and fifty, perhaps three hundred. All the researchers emphasise the cultural distinctiveness of the former market town of Szék/Sic.<sup>44</sup> A precise delimitation is made difficult by the lack of an unifying conceptual framework, the scant attention paid to the study of cultural changes (the impression of timelessness), and the differences in the research carried out in the individual landscapes.<sup>45</sup> In summary, however, the above-mentioned divisions mark a central area, to which the peripheral or border regions are connected.

Kós Károly refers repeatedly to the regional differences in the culture of the Mezőség in his analysis of costume, folk architecture and folklore phenomena.

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<sup>41</sup> Keszeg 2010: 7–8.

<sup>42</sup> For half a thousand years (1400–1876), the administrative areas of the Székelys (hungarian speaking ethnic group in Romania) were called Szék (lat.: sedes) and they played the same role as the counties. Aranyosszék was the last established Szék of the Székely's. Territorially, it was not connected to the other seats, it was located further west, i.e. it was an exclave. It got its name from the Aranyos/Arieş river that flows through it

<sup>43</sup> Magyar 2011: 189–235.

<sup>44</sup> Martin 1982: 74; Keszeg 2010: 8.

<sup>45</sup> Pávai 2005: 22–23.

In doing so, he distinguishes between the North-Western, the Southern and the settlements he calls „the true” villages of the Mezőség.<sup>46</sup> László Barabás holds a similar view, based on the experience of previous ethnographic and folklore research, as well as based on his own research into folk customs. According to these, he distinguishes a central group of villages within the Mezőség (Central region of the Mezőség: Visa/Vișea, Magyarpalatka/Pălatca, Katona/Cătina etc.), and from there, in the next concentric circle the following peripheral areas are located (Western, Northern, Eastern and Southern regions of the Mezőség), then at the very edge of the region the following border areas are located: Nagy-Szamos/Someșul Mare Valley, Lápos/Lăpuș Valley, Sajó/Șieu Valley, the Beszterce/Bistrița region, the Szászrégen/Reghin region, the Felső-Maros/Upper Mureș Valley, the Maros/Mureș Valley, Marosszéki Mezőség/Marosszék region of Mezőség,<sup>47</sup> the Ludas/Luduș region, the Torda/Turda region, the Erdőalja/Sub Pădure, the Borsa/Borșa Valley and the Little Szamos/Someșul Mic Valley.<sup>48</sup> At the heart of the region lies the historically and infrastructurally most isolated Central region of the Mezőség, while the border areas are located in close proximity to cities and related larger regions with sharp cultural differences.<sup>49</sup> The cultural distinctiveness of the former petty noble villages along the Kis Szamos/Someșul Mic and the Erdőhát/Someș Plateau, and the cultural distinctiveness of the market towns along the main roads further colour the overall cultural picture of the area.<sup>50</sup> It is questionable how far these concentric circles can be specified and to what extent the different cultural phenomena show a similar distribution. Quite large cultural differences can be observed between small areas, and sometimes also within them (see for example Szék/ Sic).<sup>51</sup> Comparative research to date (on agriculture, architecture, costume, folk dance, folk music, folk customs)

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<sup>46</sup> Kós 2000/2: 77, 196–239, 257–259, 269, 271, 273.

<sup>47</sup> Marosszék was first mentioned in certificates at the beginning of the century (1408–10). However, its capital, Székelyvásárhely (later Marosvásárhely/Târgu Mureș), appears as early as 1344. Marosszék was created along the Maros/ Mureș and Nyárad /Niraj rivers.

<sup>48</sup> Barabás 2010: 57–58. Similarly, the Romanian ethnographic regional classification includes the area between the Kis és Nagy Szamos/Someșul Mic and Mare and the Maros/Mureș in the Mezőség (Barabás 2010: 59).

<sup>49</sup> Barabás 2010: 59–60.

<sup>50</sup> Barabás 2010: 59–60.

<sup>51</sup> Barabás 2010: 59–60.

shows a strong cultural influence from the surrounding ethnographic regions in the border areas, which gradually weakens as one moves towards the Central region of the Mezőség.<sup>52</sup> According to Barabás, this is also supported by the internal (emic) image of culture that the inhabitants have of the region in terms of their perception of the landscape and their sense of belonging.<sup>53</sup> Looking at dance culture, I am of the same opinion, but I think that a thorough study of regional identity would be needed to better define the external and internal borders of an area.<sup>54</sup> It would be important to examine, for example, how the local understanding and acceptance of the term „Mezőség” has changed over the last decades. As late as 1964, Zoltán Kallós wrote that the inhabitants of Bonchida/Bonțida, Válaszút/Răscruci and Szék/Sic did not accept the term “Mezőség” which they could identify with,<sup>55</sup> and Károly Kós also refers to the fact that the inhabitants of Ördöngösfüzes/Fizeșu Gherlii consider the „backward” Mezőség to begin from the line Kékesvásárhely/Târgușor – Vasasszentiván/Sântioana bordering them on the East.<sup>56</sup> My own research confirms that until the mid-1990s, most villagers in the area considered the term “from the Mezőség” undesirable. However, afterwards, presumably due to the growing interest of folk-tourists and the positive image projected by the media, this opinion slowly began to change.<sup>57</sup>

### **Delimitation and internal division of the folk music and dance dialect of the Mezőség**

Only since the 1950s – following the studies of László Lajtha, Zoltán Kallós, János Jagamas and their colleagues – has Mezőség been included as an independent dialect in the territorial division of Hungarian folk music.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Barabás 2010: 60.

<sup>53</sup> Barabás 2010: 59.

<sup>54</sup> I consider Balázs Balogh’s and Ágnes Fülemile’s research in Kalotaszeg region to be exemplary in this respect (Balogh – Fülemile 2004: 9–15.) Besides, it is worth mentioning Csongor Könczei’s research in the Lozsárd/Lujerdiu Valley (Könczei Csongor 2002).

<sup>55</sup> Kallós 1964: 235.

<sup>56</sup> Kós 2000/2: 212, 225.

<sup>57</sup> According to Keszeg, the first dance folkloristic summaries of the 1970s and 1980s, the táncház movement that flourished at that time, emphasized the archaic, untouched nature of local culture, thus creating a “positive myth of the Mezőség region” (Keszeg 2010: 14).

<sup>58</sup> Pávai 2005: 27.

Lajtha drew attention to the possible internal division of Mezőség as early as the 1950s,<sup>59</sup> but the delimitation and internal division of the area according to folk dance music aspects was carried out extremely late, only in 2005.<sup>60</sup> In this context, István Pávai, in addition to the Mezőség, mentions the Kalotaszeg region – Mezőség transition area (Erdőalja/ Sub Pădure and the petty noble villages of the Erdélyi-Erdőhát/Someș Plateau), Aranyosszék region of Mezőség, the Maros/Mureș and Sajó/Șieu regions, the Marosszék region of Mezőség and the Felső- Szamos/Upper Someș region (including the tributaries of the Nagy és Kis Szamos/Someșul Mare and Mic), and within the region he distinguishes between North, Inner, South and East regions of the Mezőség).<sup>61</sup> Pávai warns on the dialectal differences in dance and dance music, saying that in addition to the uniformity of dance and dance music styles, the same structure of dance order, the presence or absence of the same dance types, the identification of the areas of operation of village bands may also be a factor in determining the dance music sub-regions.<sup>62</sup> I find the results of his study instructive to compare with György Martin's findings on the dance dialect in the Mezőség.

Martin classifies the Mezőség as belonging to the Eastern or Transylvanian dance dialect,<sup>63</sup> distinguishes Mezőség from three other Central Transylvanian provinces, Kalotaszeg region, the Maros-Küküllő/Mureș-Târnave region and

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<sup>59</sup> The material collected so far suggests the existence of a Northern and a Southern Mezőség dialect (Lajtha 1954: 4).

<sup>60</sup> Pávai

<sup>61</sup> Pávai 2005: 38–39.

<sup>62</sup> Pávai 2005: 37.

<sup>63</sup> Martin 1995: 110–113. Romanian dance scholars classify Transylvania as a Western dance dialect, within which several smaller dance dialects are distinguished. According to Andrei Bucșan, the core of the Western dance dialect is the Western part of Transylvania, to which Northern and Central Transylvania, including the Mezőség are organically linked. He considers the area around the lower Maros/Mureș a separate sub-dialect (Bucșan 1977: 327). For the different interpretations of Hungarian and Romanian, see the following sentences of László Kürti: “Romanian scholars utilize a one-sided ethnographic map and Hungarian folklorists yet another. Hungarian ethnographers and folklorists speak of regions that are never uttered by Romanian scholars with such an awe and reverence [...] Clearly what is at the heart of this problem is that both Hungarian and Romanian intellectuals live and work in a dual positivistic tradition separated into majority and minority spheres” (Kürti 2002: 93, cited by Quigley 2008: 120).

Marosszék,<sup>64</sup> and detects five small provinces by delineating the smaller internal units of the region:

1. Some features of the dance culture of the Borsa/Borşa and the valley of the Kis Szamos/Someşul Mic are related to those of the villages of Kalotaszeg region and Szilágyság/Sălaj.
2. He considers the valleys of Nagy-Szamos/Someşul Mare and Sajó/Şieu and the Lápos/Lăpuş valley as a more urbanised region. Few collections of dances from this region were available at the time Martin wrote his summary.
3. The best known area of the mixed population villages in the central part of the Mezőség (Magyarpalatka/Pălatca and its surroundings and the Tóvidék/Lacurile Geaca) is a region with a rich men's solo dance and couple dance culture, where there is a great overlap between the Hungarian and Romanian dance traditions. The old-fashioned, asymmetrically pulsating couple dance is considered to be typical here. He mentions that, in addition to the musicians from Magyarpalatka/Pălatca, who played in a large area, there were several peasant musicians in the area.
4. He defines the South-Western region of the Mezőség as a transitional area bordering the Kalotaszeg region and the Maros-Küküllő/ Mureş-Târnave region, whose dance culture was poorly known at the time of his writings. Some features of its dance culture suggest that it is related to the dialect of the Maros-Küküllő/Mureş-Târnave region.
5. The Eastern Mezőség "dance and music culture is characterized by more modern, Székely<sup>65</sup> influences. The old asymmetrical slow couple dance is absent in the countryside, but the *korcsos* and *Székely verbunk*, typical of the Marosszék, appear."<sup>66</sup> According to Martin, the Hungarians of the county adopted dance types from the Székelys probably at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries), which is why this dance dialect has developed over

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<sup>64</sup> Martin 1995: 108–118.

<sup>65</sup> Hungarian speaking ethnic group in Transylvania, Romania.

<sup>66</sup> Martin 1995: 111.

the last half century through the “fusion” of the Hungarian dance repertoire of the Mezőség region and the dances of the Maros/Mureş region.<sup>67</sup> This is important because it is here that Martin takes the most account of the changes over time in the dance culture of the Mezőség region.

In his last summary, published in 1985, Martin thus spoke of the central part of Mezőség, when he tried to define the cultural unit, as consisting of the villages of e.g. Visa/Vișea, Magyarpalatka/Pălatca, Feketelak/Lacu, Mezőkeszű/Chesău.<sup>68</sup> As a parallel, the findings of Zoltán Kallós and Károly Kós should also be considered. In what Kallós calls, albeit not always consistently, the Northern region of the Mezőség, he distinguishes three smaller units: the valley of the Kis Szamos/Someşul Mic and the area to the West of it, the territory of Erdőhát/Someş Plateau; and the central group of villages (Visa/Vișea, Vajdakamarás/ Vaida Cămăraş, Mezőkeszű/Chesău and Magyarpalatka/Pălatca), which is distinct due to its ancient culture, and to which a few settlements (Köteland/Gădălin, Mezőszava/Sava, Légen/Legii, Gyeke/ Geaca and Katona/Cătina) are added on the basis of the cultural characteristics of the local Hungarian minority.<sup>69</sup> In his division, the third area includes the villages around Cege/Ţaga, Feketelak/Lacu and Vasasszentgothárd/Sucutard, the Lacurile Geaca.<sup>70</sup> Kós Károly, when discussing the differences in singing culture, dance organisation, spinning house customs and games, speaks of villages in the North-Western Mezőség (Girolt/Ghirolt, Kecsed/Aluniş, etc.) and the villages of Belső-/Inner Mezőség. Within the latter, he identifies a narrower circle: Magyarpalatka/Pălatca and its marriage districts (Visa/Vișea, Vajdakamarás/Vaida- Cămăraş, Mezőkeszű/Chesău), where he has found similarities in terms of spinning games and song repertoire. In this respect, he treats villages further East, such as Katona/Cătina and Mezőköbölkút/Fântânița as being different.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Martin 1995: 18. László Kósa, however, writes in his summary that in the Mezőség region of Marosközék the consciousness of belonging to the Székely ethnic group persisted long after the end of the orderly division of the estate-based society (Kósa 1998: 155–159, 319–344).

<sup>68</sup> Martin 1985: 6.

<sup>69</sup> Kallós 1979; Kallós 1993.

<sup>70</sup> Kallós 1979; Kallós 1993.

<sup>71</sup> Kós 2000/2: 257–258, 269, 271, 273.

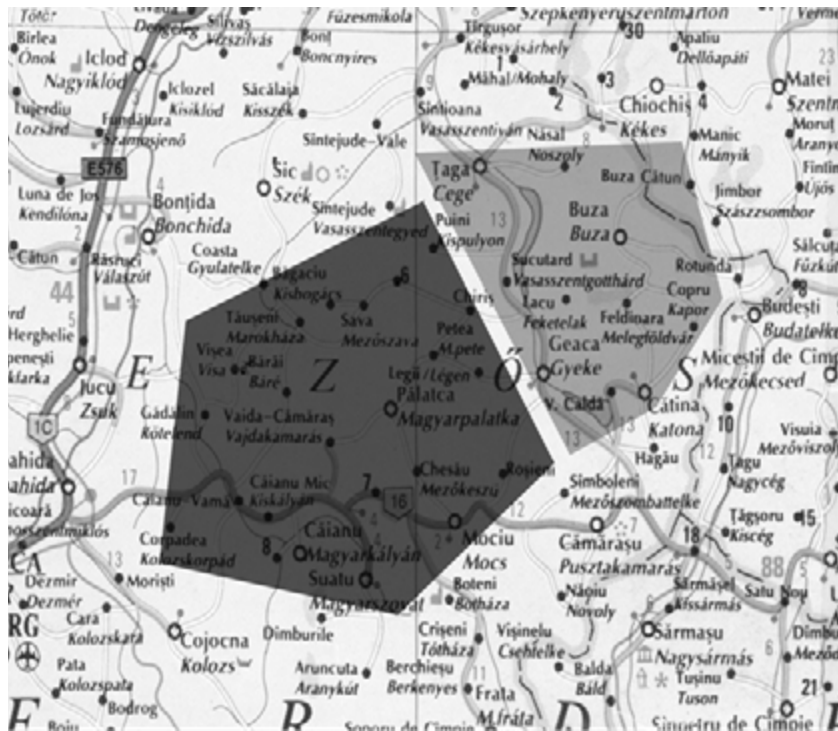
By an etic examination of the features of dance culture that Martin also identified as important, and by including some emic aspects in the research, I believe that György Martin's regional division can be further refined in relation to the Mezőség. In the light of István Pávai's recent studies on dance music, I think that, when examining dances danced by Hungarians, it is worth discussing Mezőség separately from the surrounding small areas (the area along the Kis Szamos/Someșul Mic, the area along the Nagy Szamos/Someșul Mare, the Sajó/Șieu, the Erdőalja/Sub Pădure, the Marosszék region of Mezőség), obviously bearing in mind that the dance and music culture of these areas is linked to the North, East and South Mezőség in many ways.<sup>72</sup> My own research is also in line with István Pávai's data, and, based on this, I treat the Belső-/Inner Mezőség, the villages of the former Tóvidék/Lacurile Geaca (e.g. Cege/Țaga, Buza, Feketelak/Lacu, Melegföldvár/Feldioara, Vasaszentgotthárd/Sucutard, Gyeke/Geaca) and the villages west of this line up to Gyulatelke/Coasta – Visa/Vișea – Köteland/Gădălin as a separate village group. The villages bordering the area to the north (Ördöngösfüzes/Fizeșu Gherlii, Füzesmikola/Nicula, etc.), as well as the former market town of Szék/Sic, are excluded from this unit. In the south, the villages (Magyarszovát/Suatu, Mócs/Mociu) still belonging to this area, form the border along the Kolozsvár/Cluj–Szászrégen/Reghin route. My research shows that the above classification can be further considered and deepened, since in the area of the Belső-/Inner Mezőség, from the point of view of dance and music culture, another small group of villages can be outlined, in which until the 1960s, the Roma musicians from Magyarpalatka/Pălatca played music for the weekend dance events regularly organised by the local youth. Hereafter I will refer to this area as the **Palatka dance district**, which comprises twenty-three villages (and several small groups of farms belonging to them).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Pávai – Abonyi 2020. Csongor Könczei's studies on Aranyosszék region and on the Transylvanian Erdőhát/Someș Plateau also show that research on the Erdélyi Mezőség still needs to be continued, as well as the discussion of theoretical issues related to dance dialects (Könczei Csongor 2002; Könczei Csongor 2005).

<sup>73</sup> These villages and farms are: Bărănyvölgy/Roșieni, Bără/Bărăi, Falka/Falca, Gyulatelke/Coasta, Kisbogács/Băgacu, Kályáni-Vám/Căianu-Vamă, Kolozskorpád/Corpadea, Köteland/Gădălin, Kőristanya/Chiriș, *Kiskályán/Căianu Mic*, *Kispulyon/Puini*, Lárगतanya/Văleni, Légen/Legii, Magyarkályán/Căianu, *Magyarpalatka/Pălatca*, Magyarpete/Petea, **Magyarszovát/Suatu**, Mócs/Mociu, Marokháza/Tăușeni, Mezőgyéres/Ghirișu Român, **Mezőkeszű/Chesău**,





Belső-/Inner Mezőség dance dialect. The Palatka/Pălatca dance district is in dark grey, the Tóvidék/Lacurile Geaca district is in light grey colour. (Map of Transylvania, 1993, Dimap Editions, Budapest.)

Comparing the dance repertoire and the choreological characteristics of the dances of the local settlements with those of the other Tóvidék/Lacurile Geaca, vague differences emerge. The asymmetrical slow couple dance (*lassú cigánytánc/slow gypsy dance*) with asymmetrical pulsation,<sup>74</sup> which was typical of the Palatka district and danced by Hungarians, had already

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Mezőszava/Sava, Omboztelke/Mureșenii de Câmpie, Tormásdűlő/Turmași, **Vajdakamarás/Vaida-Cămăraș**, **Visa/ Vișea**, Zoreni de Vale. In the more remote villages (Apahida/Apahida, Botháza/ Boteni, Gyeke/Geaca, etc.) the Palatka Roma musicians played much less frequently, on the occasion of a calendar festival or a wedding. The villages in **bold** had a Hungarian majority population in the first half of the 20th century (Varga E.) In the villages in *italics*, the proportion of Hungarians and Romanians is roughly 50-50%. In these villages, the nationalities danced separately when they could. In the villages marked with underlining, the proportion of Hungarians is negligible: 10–12 families at most. In the others there are no Hungarians.

<sup>74</sup> See: *lassú cigánytánc* from Vajdakamarás/Vaida-Cămăraș. Knowledge Base of Traditional Dances (RCH Institute for Musicology), Ft. 685.15a.

[https://neptanctudastar.abtk.hu/hu/dances?T2=%5B%22r%C3%A9gi+st%C3%AD-lus%C3%BA+p%C3%A1ros\\_\\_11%22%5D&T1=%5B%22mez%C5%91s%C3%A9gi\\_\\_11%22%5D](https://neptanctudastar.abtk.hu/hu/dances?T2=%5B%22r%C3%A9gi+st%C3%AD-lus%C3%BA+p%C3%A1ros__11%22%5D&T1=%5B%22mez%C5%91s%C3%A9gi__11%22%5D)

disappeared in the late 1800s in the areas around Buza, Melegföldvár/Feldioara and Feketelak/Lacu. The mixed *magyar/négyes* or four person dance (men and women dancing together) also fell out of fashion sometime around the First World War, while in the Palatka dance district it was still danced by Hungarians in the 1960s.<sup>75</sup>

The asymmetrical, rotating couple dance (*vațitură*)<sup>76</sup> of the Romanians of the Tóvidék/Lacurile Geaca has choreological features different from the so-called *joc românesc*<sup>77</sup> danced in the Palatka district. In the Romanian dance of the Tóvidék/Lacurile Geaca, men and women dance almost exclusively holding each other's left hands, in many cases moving almost opposite each other, whereas in the Palatka dance district, couples mostly hold hands with their right hands. In addition, in the symmetrical couple dances in the Tóvidék/Lacurile Geaca there is an under-arm rotation, where the woman turns twice around her own axis in a simple duple meter (2/4) while in the Palatka district the same movement is almost always executed in a simple quadruple meter (4/4). These latter differences may seem very small, but in many cases they can confuse dancing and, in the case of the Romanian slow couple, even make dancing together impossible.<sup>78</sup>

The separation of the two small regions is justified not only by the different musical accompaniment and dance terminology<sup>79</sup> but also by the locals' image of their own dance culture (the dance group they define). At the time of collectivization, many people from the villages around Magyarpalatka/Pălatca moved to the larger, and therefore more labour-intensive, village of Katona/Cătina in the Tóvidék/Lacurile Geaca. A recurring motif in their

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<sup>75</sup> See *magyar négyes* from Magyarpalatka (Pălatca). Knowledge Base of Traditional Dances (RCH Institute for Musicology), Ft. 686.1a-b.

<https://neptanctudastar.abtk.hu/hu/dances?Names=%5B%22magyar+n%C3%A9gyes%22%5D>

<sup>76</sup> Similar to this dance form budatelki *partatã* from Budatelke/Budești. See Folkore Database of the Hungarian Heritage House: HH\_DVD\_SzGJNE\_VHS\_0027\_2\_00-14-46\_00-16-08.mpg.

<sup>77</sup> See: *joc românesc* from Băré/Bărăi. Folkore Database of the Hungarian Heritage House: HH\_DVD\_VaSa\_V8\_016\_1\_01-07-09\_01-12-46.mpg.

<sup>78</sup> I experienced this at several festivals where we tried to get dancers from the Tóvidék/Lacurile Geaca and the Magyarpalatka/Pălatca area to dance with each other.

<sup>79</sup> István Pávai's most recent map also marks the Tóvidék/Lacurile Geaca and the Central region of the Mezőség separately (Pávai – Abonyi 2020).

memories is that they were reluctant to attend the festivities because they could not dance with the locals.

According to my informants, the Hungarians of Visa/Vișea still have close kinship relations with the Hungarians of Köteland/Gădălin, Mezőkeszű/Chesău, Magyarpalatka/Pălatca, Kispulyon/Puini, Vajda-kamarás/Cămăraș, Mezőszava/Sava and Magyarszovát/Suatu,<sup>80</sup> which they claim belong to the same ethnographic unit. The much broader marriage relations of the Visa/Vișea Romanians concerned all the villages around Magyarpalatka/Pălatca except Kisbogács/Băgaciu, Magyarpete/Petea and Légen/Legii, and apart from these, they rarely married with the inhabitants of the Romanian villages along the Kis Szamos/Someșul Mic, but not at all with the inhabitants of the Tóvidék/Lacurile Geaca. Until the 1960s, Hungarian and Romanian men from Visa/Vișea attended weekend dances in the villages belonging to the marriage circle outlined here.

## Conclusions

The above division is mainly based on the analysis of the Hungarian dance material. In terms of the formal and structural characteristics of Romanian couple dances, as well as the motif repertoire, the Mezőség and the surrounding small provinces present a rather homogeneous picture, and only in the case of the men's dances, which make up a much smaller part of the dance stock than the couple dances, do we see regional differences similar to those of the Hungarians.<sup>81</sup> All this warns us that it is worth reviewing and refining the aspects on the basis of which we conduct our dialectological investigations. In my opinion, in the case of the dances, the study of the symmetrical pulsating pair dances known as the *Gypsy dance*, the *csárdás/ceardaș*, the *szökös/bătuta* and the *sűrű/des* is of particular importance, since, unlike the men's dance, the majority of the people of the Mezőség know and still dance them.

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<sup>80</sup> They married less frequently with people from Bonchida/Bonțida, Válaszút/ Răscruți, Mócs/Mociu, Mezőgyéres/Ghirișu and Kályán/Căianu, and occasionally with people from Légen/Legii and Szék/Sic. In addition, some Hungarian families of Köteland/Gădălin and Zsuk/Jucu are of Visa/Vișea origin.

<sup>81</sup> The Romanian dance material is all the more worth examining, as since the 18th century the Romanians have been the most important ethnic group in the Mezőség.

This idea is supported by the fact that in the vast majority of cases, the locals distinguish between these dances when defining dance districts.

All this also shows that when examining dance dialects, we should be careful with our national or ethnic focus, and that in the future it would be worthwhile to examine the dance culture of the Mezőség from a Romanian, Saxon and Roma perspective in addition to the Hungarian one.<sup>82</sup> It is worth quoting Károly Kós: “The Mezőség is the common homeland of the Romanian and Hungarian people, and even of the settled Saxon and the Gypsy ethnic group living in some villages on its northeastern periphery. As such, it is obvious that the „Mezőség” specificity can hardly be understood without taking this into account.”<sup>83</sup> Among Romanian researchers, Anca Giurchescu drew attention to the interethnic relations of the dance culture of the villages in Central Transylvania.<sup>84</sup> Such research, which seeks to explore the interethnic and transnational aspects of dance culture, would require a change in approach and methodology, and would also necessitate the creation of new theoretical frameworks.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> According to our present knowledge, which is superficial from this point of view, considering the formal appearance of the dances, the accompanying music and the related use of space, it seems that in the case of the Roma dances in the areas of Central Transylvania we would get a much more homogeneous picture than both Hungarian and Romanian. It is conceivable that a study focusing on Roma culture from a Roma ethnic perspective would interpret Central Transylvania as a single large dance dialect.

<sup>83</sup> Kós 2000/1: 18.

<sup>84</sup> Giurchescu – Bloland 1995: 275. I agree with Colin Quigley’s next statement: “Dance tradition, I would argue, as practiced among different ethnic communities in central Transylvania is [...] mixed and difficult, if not impossible to disentangle. Ethnic distinctions that can be made and that are used to mark ethnic difference are usually only relevant in local contexts. This is particularly so in the Mezőség/Câmpia Transilvaniei central region” (Quigley 2008: 121).

<sup>85</sup> György Martin already referred to this in a 1984 study: “Today the peoples of East Central Europe remain unaware of the fact that their specific national dance cultures have common roots and how similarly their national dances have evolved. The public opinion considers these dances to be individual and unique, originating in the distant and hazy past of the nation. In reality, the differences in the peasant dance culture of various peoples were created by the different pace and phases of historical development in smaller or larger regions. The differences deriving from belated development were emphasized by national elites; they filled them with ideological meaning and made them serve their own political objectives during the period of national awakening. The ultimate goal of political and cultural efforts during this period was the achievement of national independence and the demonstration of the distinct cultural standing of independent national communities. Stressing distinctness one-sidedly was justified as long as national independence had not yet been achieved. But the objectives of national independence have by and large been accomplished. Today we should

“Research to date on the regional segmentation of folk culture reflects a concept of culture that understands culture as a set of products that can be described and measured,” writes Csongor Könczei in 2002.<sup>86</sup> He rightly points out that, in contrast, little attention has been paid to cultural processes.<sup>87</sup> I believe that the solution to this problem, and the clarification of the notion of „transitional territory”, also questioned by Csongor Könczei, lies in carrying out micro-level studies sensitive to changes over time. Not only would this solve the problem of uneven collections, but it would also fine-tune the now rather rigid framework within which Martin and his colleagues studied dance culture and the spread of related cultural elements. Such studies might show that certain phenomena of dance culture could have been brought to quite distant places, even by jumping through cultural units previously thought to be closed (the school, the church, the dance masters, or perhaps the influence of contemporary literacy, for example). The question of migration also needs to be examined in more detail, as for instance Márta Belényesy did with the Székelys of Bukovina.<sup>88</sup> Finally, the relationship between traditional and contemporary culture needs to be reconsidered. Some of my studies show, for example, that there have been changes in peasant culture in the different phases of acculturation, caused by modernisation in the 20th century (festivals, cinema, etc.), changes which have left their mark on the traditional dance culture of some villages.<sup>89</sup>

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look back upon the enthusiastic youth of the development of national cultures as adults. Instead of cultivating historical myths further, research must bring to light real historical interrelationships in the interest of unprejudiced national self-consciousness” (Martin 2020c: 211).

<sup>86</sup> Könczei Csongor 2002: 7.

<sup>87</sup> Könczei Csongor 2002: 7.

<sup>88</sup> Belényesy 1958. Bukovina (Romanian: Bucovina, German: Bukowina) is a historical region in Eastern Europe, which is divided between present-day Romania and Ukraine. The Bukovina Székelys are a Hungarian ethnic group that settled in Bukovina in the 1770's. During the Second World War, they fled to Hungary with a mass exodus.

<sup>89</sup> Varga 2019: 195.

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# Parallel dissimultaneity in dance culture

## – The organic transformation of the dance repertoire of a rural Moldavian community

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VIVIEN BONDEA

### 1. Introduction

This study deals with the changes in the local dance heritage of the Moldavian Magyarfalu village (Arini, Romania) from the 1940s to the end of the 2010s.<sup>1</sup> The primary hypothesis of the holistic dance anthropology research conducted in the municipality since 2015 is that the dance culture of a community is undergoing a continuous transformation over time, and that this transformation is related to macro- and micro-historical processes or events affecting the community. Change is part of, or even a condition for, the basic functioning of culture,<sup>2</sup> but this change, although permanent, does not happen evenly.<sup>3</sup> Some processes speed up, others slow down, and different events can make or break the course of the transformation. An 'internal' response<sup>4</sup> from communities to influences from the 'outside' is necessary, an adaptation practice to ensure that culture and society continue to function - and, preferably, harmoniously.<sup>5</sup> In the context of the study of dance culture, we can assume that changes in the form, style and content of dances are the result of individual and community practices of adaptation. In the case of Magyarfalu, adaptation may be the result of interrelated ecological, political, economic and socio-cultural processes or events, such as environmental crises, regime change, labour migration or modernisation.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, in

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<sup>2</sup> Shils 1996: 110.

<sup>3</sup> Radcliffe-Brown 1952: 192–193.

<sup>4</sup> Eriksen 2006: 322.

<sup>5</sup> In this sense, Bronislaw Malinowski's notion of cultural response corresponds to Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown's definition of adaptation practice. Malinowski 1939: 943.; Radcliffe-Brown 1952: 8–9.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Lange 1975: 106–108.

addition to presenting the changes in the dance repertoire, the study seeks to answer the question of what macro- and micro-historical processes or events are behind the transformation of the dance repertoire in Magyarfalu village dance repertoire, and what is the community's adaptability in the light of the transformation of the local dances.

## **2. Conceptual, theoretical and methodological framework of the research**

The problems addressed in this paper require the definition of some terms and theoretical approaches. By local dance culture, I mean the complex whole of a constantly changing dance life and dance set, validated locally and communally, in active use at the time of observation. The knowledge associated with the components of dance culture can be acquired outside the geographical boundaries of the community, but its becoming a local practice requires its representation in the public scene of the village community and its collective assessment. Socially controlled community dancing, which the research interprets<sup>7</sup> as a socio-cultural practice, is specific to participatory dance cultures. In Magyarfalu, it is the participation in dancing that deserves recognition,<sup>8</sup> not the execution of the dance moves or the aesthetic value.<sup>9</sup> There are no dance specialists in the village's organic,<sup>10</sup> community-organised dance occasions, and dance has not become a show, which is perhaps why it has been able to remain an integral part of the village's socio-cultural system to this day.

The research interprets dance culture as an adaptive system based on Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown's theory of structural functionalism.<sup>11</sup> The transformation of the dance culture of Magyarfalu shows that adapting

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<sup>7</sup> Dance anthropology often emphasises the social embeddedness of dancing. See Giurchescu-Torp 1991: 1.; Kaeppler 1991: 11.

<sup>8</sup> This requires a basic knowledge of dancing, as in certain situations and occasions (such as weddings), dancing is expected by the community.

<sup>9</sup> When studying the dance aesthetics of rural Romanian communities, Anca Giurchescu came to a similar conclusion. See Giurchescu 2003: 166.

<sup>10</sup> The present study deals only tangentially with guided dance education and occasions dance groups in the village. For an analysis of organic and organized folklore, see Faragó 1979: 49.; Keszeg 2018: 29–30.

<sup>11</sup> Radcliffe-Brown 1952.

to different historical, economic and social changes has a culture-shaping power in the community. If we consider culture as an adaptive system, we have to distinguish between three aspects of the system. Firstly, we can talk about the so-called institutional aspect of social adaptation, which involves the social arrangements that ensure cooperation and the maintenance of social continuity. Then there is cultural adaptation, which enables a person to acquire certain habits and mental abilities, thus enabling him to act in society and to find a place in social life. Finally, there is ecological adaptation, which is the adaptation to the physical environment.<sup>12</sup> The studies so far have shown that the changes in Magyarfalu's dance repertoire can be traced back to these adaptive practices.

The data collection methods of the research were primarily determined by anthropological fieldwork techniques, participant observation, dance learning, interviewing, and photographing and filming dance events in their original settings.<sup>13</sup> The research in the archives and collections of the Folk Music and Folk Dance Research Department of the Institute for Musicology, especially the study of earlier collections,<sup>14</sup> manuscripts and films on the dance traditions of the Moldavian Hungarians, also contributed to this study.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Radcliffe-Brown 1952: 8–9.

<sup>13</sup> About the methodology of functionalist dance research see Szőnyi 2019: 43–44.

<sup>14</sup> Before the change of regime, Hungarian dance research had the opportunity to study Moldavian dances in the settlements of Baranya County (Egyházaskozár, Szárász, Mekényes, Bikal), where Moldavian Hungarians, including people from Magyarfalu, settled during the Second World War. Films and collections of manuscripts on the dances of the emigrants from the 1950s and the 1990s are available at the Institute for Musicology.

<sup>15</sup> The following manuscripts related to the dances of Magyarfalu: ZTI Akt.220. (Gyapjas et al. 1952.), Akt.1210. (Laknerné–Porvay 1986.); and films: ZTI Ft.215., Ft.216. (collected by: György Martin et al., photography: István Szóts, place of recording: Egyházaskozár, 1953.); Ft.953. (collectors: Bertalan Andrásfalvy et al., photography: István Mészáros, place of recording: Pécs, 1977.)



### 3. The examined community

Magyarfalu is a Roman Catholic village of Hungarian ethnicity<sup>16</sup> with a population of nearly 1300.<sup>17</sup> It is located in the north-eastern part of Romania, in the historical region of Moldavia, within the municipality of Găiceana, in the county of Bacău. The history, economic and socio-cultural life of the community, where the Hungarian language has a fairly good status,<sup>18</sup> was influenced by major events from the 1940s onwards, such as the Second World War, the emigration of a large number of Moldavian Hungarians to Hungary (1941-42),<sup>19</sup> the drought and famine that hit Moldavia (1946-47), the emergence of the communist regime, together with the agricultural collectivisation<sup>20</sup> that unfolded in 1962-63, forced industrialisation, regime change in 1990, and Romania's accession to the European Union in 2007, with the associated increase in internal commuting and labour migration abroad. In addition to global or national events, the local typhus epidemic of 1942, the foundation of the parish in 1960 and the arrival of a permanent priestly ministry in the village, the opening of a Hungarian school in the village alongside the Romanian-language state education system and the start of conscious tradition-preserving activities in the early 2000s are important from a micro-historical perspective. These macro- and micro-historical processes have had an impact on the economic, social, religious and cultural life of the community and, directly or indirectly, on its dance culture.

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<sup>16</sup> The study deliberately avoids the sometimes pejorative term *csángó*, which is still widely used in the academic community, and instead I use the term „Moldavian Hungarian” to refer to the ethnic roots of the community in question. See Péntek 2020: 134–135. According to Laura Iancu, a local-born ethnographer, the use of the term *csángó* has only appeared in Magyarfalu since the turn of the millennium through minority advocacy. Iancu 2011: 48.

<sup>17</sup> The final results of the 2022 census in Romania have not been published by the time of writing, so I used the 2011 census as a basis.

<sup>18</sup> According to a survey by Vilmos Tánczos, 93% of the community's Catholic population spoke Hungarian in 2009. The village then had a population of 1344, of which 1332 were Catholic and 12 belonged to other, presumably Orthodox, denominations. Tánczos 2010: 107.

<sup>19</sup> The population of Magyarfalu decreased by more than 400 people at the time (Iancu 2011: 57.). According to the recollections of an informant born in 1919, 60 farmers left the village. This was confirmed by the research of Andrea Laknerné Brückler and József Porvay from Egyházaskozár. Laknerné–Porvay 1986: 2.

<sup>20</sup> Ilyés 2008: 419.

Foreign labour migration, formerly to Hungary, Israel and Africa, and nowadays to northern and western Europe, is considered the most significant lifestyle-changing factor in the settlement. Its consequences include: (a) the permanent separation of family members, the emergence of transnational lifestyles, and the consequent transformation of the social system of the local community<sup>21</sup> and the emergence of group psychology problems;<sup>22</sup> (b) the feminisation of local agriculture,<sup>23</sup> the decline in the importance of farming and livestock farming; c) significant material wealth, resulting in the modernisation of the local way of life, the possibility of investing economic capital in the education of children or the improvement of health care<sup>24</sup> for family members; d) contact with foreign cultures, resulting in a constant comparison and reflexive evaluation of local culture, which is also the source of the slow change in the local world view.<sup>25</sup>

The way of life, society and culture of the people of Magyarfalu are changing, and this transformation has accelerated dramatically over the last ten years. Dance culture, the subject of this study, is understood in a dynamically changing context, where several layers, types, forms, styles, contents and functions of dance coexist simultaneously. Some of the changes in the local dance culture were taking place before the eyes of the researcher at the time of the study, which presented a challenge but also a great opportunity to observe the internal rules of cultural change and the community's practices of adaptation.

#### **4. The dance repertoire of the Moldavian Hungarians**

The traditional dance culture of Moldavia is largely determined by its historical background (mainly the long period of dependence on the Ottoman Empire);

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<sup>21</sup> In 2011, Laura Iancu estimated the number of permanent residents in the village to be only 700-800 out of 1450 (Iancu 2011: 57.). This number has since fallen further.

<sup>22</sup> Mohácsék–Vitos 2003: 101.

<sup>23</sup> Peti 2012: 40.

<sup>24</sup> Research by Mohácsék and Vitos in Hungary in 2003 showed that the financial status serves primarily to meet personal consumption needs and to modernise the family household (Mohácsék–Vitos 2003: 110–111.). The conscious investment and transformation of capital, even into less tangible assets, has since become part of the economic strategies of locals.

<sup>25</sup> Lajos 2006: 180.; Lajos 2009: 123.

the transitional nature of the region (culturally situated on the borders of the Carpathian Basin and the Balkans); the multi-ethnic environment of the folk culture; and the structure of the former farming village communities (a truncated society without an urban bourgeoisie).<sup>26</sup> The traditional dances of Moldavia are based on the *horă*, *sârba* and *brâu* chain dances, which are historically related to the open or closed cotillion dances that flourished in medieval Europe.<sup>27</sup> The long survival of these dances can be traced back to the relative isolation of the region<sup>28</sup> and rural communities and the lack of a cultural intermediary (bourgeois, intellectual) social class.<sup>29</sup> Starting in Western Europe, Renaissance couples' dances slowly displaced chain dances from the Carpathian Basin, but complex historical, economic and social processes combined to ensure that chain dance culture persisted in the periphery of Eastern Europe and the Balkans.<sup>30</sup> Although Western European contra dances with a bound structure also appeared in Moldavia, probably through German and Polish mediation,<sup>31</sup> they never managed to take the place<sup>32</sup> of chain dances in the local repertoires. For this reason, improvisational couple and solo dances are rare in Moldavian dance culture.<sup>33</sup>

György Martin was the first to write a summary of the dance traditions of the Hungarian communities of Moldavia. He classified their dances as belonging to the Eastern dialect of Hungarian dance culture, and among their characteristic features he emphasized the medieval collectivity, the motif-repeating or strophic, sectional and, above all, the

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<sup>26</sup> Halász 2020: 13.

<sup>27</sup> Martin 1978: 9.; Giurchescu 1995: 269–270.

<sup>28</sup> Gyapjas et al. 1952: 14. This factor was further strengthened by the fact that Hungarian were an ethnic pocket in the region. Sándor 1995: 927.

<sup>29</sup> Tánczos 1997: 2.; Halász 2020: 13.

<sup>30</sup> Martin 1967: 123.; Martin 1978: 10.; Giurchescu 1995: 269, 271.

<sup>31</sup> Moldavia borders Bukovina to the north, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy until 1918. The Ukrainian population is significant in the northern part of this mixed-ethnicity area, and the German and Polish population in the southern half. Here is the most important place for village fairs for Moldavian Catholics, Kacsika (Cacica), where even today masses are held in German, Polish, Romanian and Hungarian during the local St. Patron's Day (on 15 August).

<sup>32</sup> Martin 1978: 12.; Martin 1990: 451.

<sup>33</sup> Among the soloistic and improvised men's dances in the context of ritual customs are the *cigányos* dance known in Klézsa (Cleja) and Somoska (Somuşca) (Péterbencze 1994: 193.), and the *wedding deszkatánc* once known in Szabófalva (Săbăoani). Csoma 2016: 536.

bound structure. He divided their dance repertoire into three groups - circle dances, combinations of circle and couples dances, and couples dances - of which dozens, sometimes twenty or thirty, are known in a village.<sup>34</sup> Moldavian music and dance culture is multi-ethnic in origin and use, with Bulgarian, Gypsy, Polish, Hungarian, German, Armenian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Turkish, Ukrainian and Jewish influences.<sup>35</sup> The blurring of the ethnic markers of local cultures may have already begun due to internal migration processes in the Middle Ages, and the population movements of the 20th century and institutionalised ethnic assimilation efforts only intensified the effect of unifying forces. The acculturation<sup>36</sup> and cultural homogenisation<sup>37</sup> caused by modernisation and globalisation are the most significant transformative factors within Moldavian dance culture today.

Almost nothing is known about the changes in the traditional dance repertoire of Moldavia, the emergence (and disappearance) of urban ballroom dances or dances linked to newer forms of entertainment (disco). The 4/4 time disco music of North American origin is nowadays more prevalent in urban nightclubs in Moldavia. Contemporary fieldwork revealed<sup>38</sup> that in the rural areas of the region, *popular* folk dance music<sup>39</sup> and the Balkan-rooted 9/8 time manele music and dance culture have become almost exclusive among young people.<sup>40</sup>

## 5. The dance repertoire of magyarfalu

Magyarfalu is located in the south-eastern part of the county of Bacău, and is thus part of the Eastern Choreographic Dialect,<sup>41</sup> and within it, of the West-Moldavian ethnographic region, according to the dialectological classification

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<sup>34</sup> Martin 1990: 450.

<sup>35</sup> Martin 1996: 127.; Lipták 2014: 41–42.

<sup>36</sup> Tánzos 2010: 65.

<sup>37</sup> Tánzos 1997: 9.

<sup>38</sup> See Peti 2006: 132.

<sup>39</sup> See Sándor 1995: 930, 934.; Chiseliță 2014: 154.; Lipták 2014: 42.

<sup>40</sup> See Garfias 1984: 91–93.; Giurchescu–Rădulescu 2011.; Beissinger–Rădulescu–Giurchescu 2016.

<sup>41</sup> According to Andrei Bucșan, in the northern part of this dialect area, couple dances with a fixed structure are common, while in the southern part of the area open or closed chain dances are more common, while group and solo dances are more common only in ritual contexts

of Romanian dance researchers.<sup>42</sup> It is separated from the block-like unity of the Moldavian Hungarian settlements by the river Szeret, and is also far from the larger towns, which, in my opinion, play a decisive role in the village's dance.<sup>43</sup> We can learn about the dances of the settlement from three types of sources: archival material (films, reports and manuscripts), the narratives of the informants and field participant observation (which is also digital documentation) by the researcher.

In the following, I will try to summarize, with the help of a figure, which dance names can be linked to previous collections, to the memory of my informants, and to the recurrent dance repertoire I have observed. I use the phonetic transcription of the dance names according to the Magyarfalu village pronunciation, and their approximate Romanian spellings are given in a separate list at the end of the paper, where possible. The result of the comparison of the dance names shows that in many cases the names from different source groups overlap, but this does not necessarily mean that they are definitely the same dance in musical and formal terms. Some dances once had several names, of which only one, usually in Romanian, is still in use today (e.g. *kezes* → *hóra*). It should be stressed that for all three groups of sources there are dances which, despite their active practice, are not given a specific dance name.<sup>44</sup>

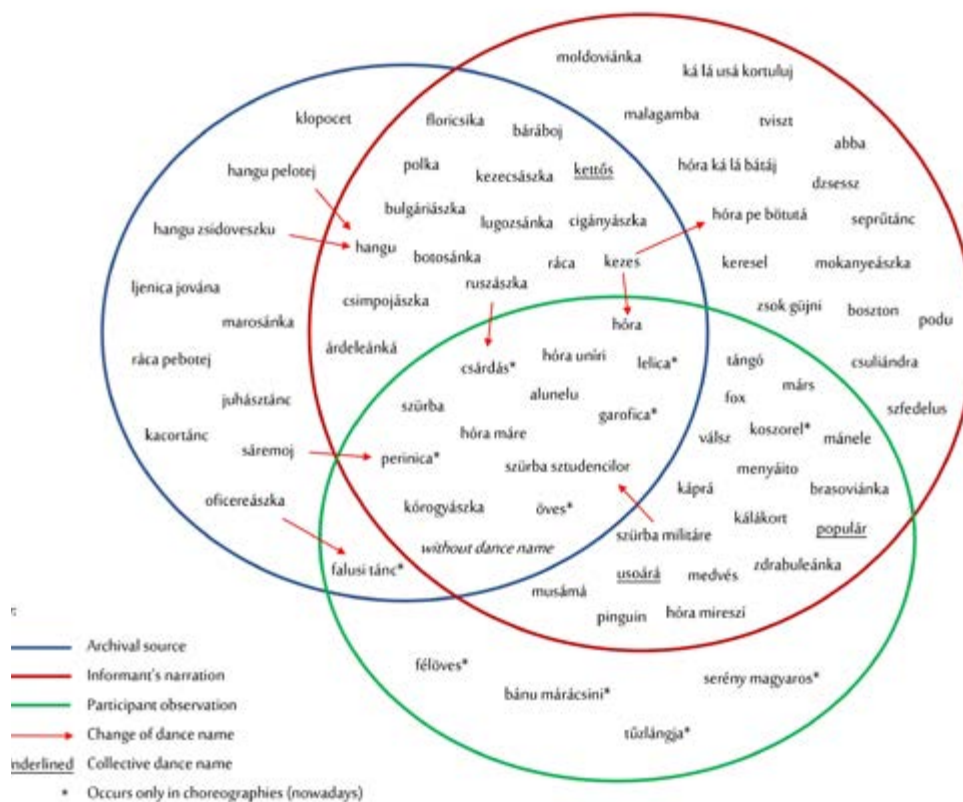
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(e.g. in the case of winter masquerade customs). It highlights in particular the active use of both old and new dance layers in the local dance repertoire. Bucşan 1977: 330–332.

<sup>42</sup> Anca Giurchescu classified the counties of Neamţ, Bacău and Vrancea in Western Moldavia and the counties of Iaşi, Vaslui and Galaţi in Eastern Moldavia, taking into account the boundaries of each ethnographic and administrative zone. He separated the western and eastern parts of Moldavia because of the relevant presence of folk dances and polkas in the latter. Giurchescu 1995: 234, 248.

<sup>43</sup> See Martin 1952: 1.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Gyapjas et al. 1952: 77.



**Figure 1.**

The dance repertoire of Magyarfalu grouped by source types.

With the continuation of the research, the reconstruction of Magyarfalu's dance repertoire will hopefully become more accurate and the list of dance names will be extended even further, but at the same time, some general conclusions can be drawn from the figure presented here. From the dance repertoire of the 1940s, the *horă*, *sârba* and *brâu* dance forms,<sup>45</sup> which were considered the basis of the traditional Moldavian dances, have survived to the present day, despite musical, formal and stylistic modifications. As dance trends changed, new dances were constantly added to these chain dances, which were part of the local dance culture for one or two generations. While the dance names mentioned by the data reporting group belong to a

<sup>45</sup> Giurchescu 1995: 269–270. In Magyarfalu the *horă* corresponds to *kezes* or *hóra* dance, the *sârba* corresponds to *szirbá* or *szürba*, the *brâu* corresponds to the *öves* dance. Giurchescu 1995: 246.

broad time frame (1950-2010), the archival sources represent the dance set of the 1940s and the dances I observed represent the dance set of the 2010s. When comparing the latter two groups, the number of dances does not show much difference in numbers ( about 36 dances are known), so the number of newer dances associated with the "basic" dances is nearly the same. Of course, one cannot ignore the fact that thanks to local local dance groups, several dances have survived that are no longer part of the knowledge of the entire village community.

The dance repertoire of Magyarfalu can also be grouped by dance form. Accordingly, the categories of chain dances, combinations of chain and couples dances, couples dances, solo dances and group dances can be distinguished. Of the dances known in the settlement, the chain dance form is the most dominant (36 dances, 50%), followed by the couple dance form (19 dances, 26%). Compared to these, solo (8 dances, 11%), mixed (6 dances, 8%) and group dance forms (4 dances, 5%) are much less represented in the repertoire.<sup>46</sup> The proportion of dance forms varied from period to period, but their role in the dance order changed less. Just as in the 1940s, today chain dances form the basis of the dance culture of Magyarfalu, with a varying proportion of mixed, couples, solo or group dances, depending on the dance form.

## 6. The dance order in Magyarfalu

In the case of Magyarfalu, only occasional references to the dance order can be found in the archival sources. Sometimes it is mentioned that the dance was started with the *öves* dance by young men,<sup>47</sup> then the *ráca* was followed by the *ráca pebotej*,<sup>48</sup> and after the *kezes* dance came the *kezecsászka*.<sup>49</sup> The narratives also make it difficult to reconstruct the dance order of the past, as the informants rarely identified a recurring order in the dance sequence. On the one hand, this may suggest that the order of dances was not "visible",

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<sup>46</sup> For a more detailed description of the dances, see Szőnyi 2021: 138–155.

<sup>47</sup> Gyapjas et al. 1952: 12, 64.; Laknerné–Porvay 1986: 10.

<sup>48</sup> Gyapjas et al. 1952: 68.

<sup>49</sup> Gyapjas et al. 1952: 64. They combine slow and quick parts of the dance, which is a common feature of European and Balkan chain dances. Martin 1979: 18.

definable or relevant to the contemporary dancers, since, despite the less frequent practices of dance requests, the musicians determined the order of the dances. At the same time, it cannot be ruled out that the frequently changing dance trends constantly updated and shaped the dance order, so that the suites of dance cycles were differentiated according to the age of the dancers.<sup>50</sup>

In my observations the dance order in Magyarfalu was determined by several factors, roughly in the following order of importance: the type of music accompaniment (band/musician or recorded music), the role of the dance occasion (ritual, entertainment), the location of event (public or private scene) and the generational composition of the participants. Community dance events (e.g. balls, weddings) almost always take place with a live band and the dance order is determined by the musicians. Three dance suites can be observed. The first is the basic dance suite, which consists of three dances in most cases, less often two or four, and is structured as follows: *hóra-szürba-kórogyászka* or *hóra-kálákort-szürba*, sometimes *hóra-szürba* or *hóra-kálákort-szürba-kórogyászka*.<sup>51</sup> This shows that Anca Giurchescu's findings on the traditional dance order of the dance dialect of the West Moldavian region are consistent with the basis of the contemporary dance order of Magyarfalu.<sup>52</sup> This suite is repeated several times during the dance.

The second most common type of dance suite is the *tángó* or *usoára-fox-mánele* dance suite. Depending on the length of the dance event, this may be repeated two or three times during the evening. Dances with a single melody are performed only once during the event. The order of this third dance suite is the following: *szürba sztudencilor-zdrabuleánka-brasoviánka-musámá-pinguin-menyáito*. These last two dance suites never follow each other, the basic dance suite is always wedged between them.

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<sup>50</sup> As it was pointed out in Dániel Lipták's study, in Lujzikalagor (Luizi-Călugăra) „the order of the dances was arbitrary and the young men often argued about it.” Lipták 2014: 43.

<sup>51</sup> Some of the dances - mainly the *hóra* and the *szürba* - is played by the musicians through several melodies.

<sup>52</sup> According to the dance researcher, the dance order in West Moldavia opens with the *horă*, followed by the *sârba* and finally, depending on the region, a small circle of chain or couple dances. Slightly differently, the *hora pe bătaie* or *corăghește* can be observed as the third dance of the suite, especially in Neamț and Bacău counties. Giurchescu 1995: 246.



The *menyáito* is currently the only dance<sup>53</sup> that is played from a recording even when a live band is present. The musicians usually take a short break at this time, which is also the reason why the *menyáito* is played multiple times, independently of the dance suite. A similar role in the dance order is played by the *válsz*, which is usually played by one or two musicians while the rest of the band takes a break. The waltz was probably once associated with the *tángó* and the *fox* dances,<sup>54</sup> but nowadays it is becoming less and less common and is often excluded from the dance repertoire.

The dances in the basic suite of open dance events in community venues are usually started by men, and soon afterwards women join in. There may be small breaks between dances, depending on the orchestra, but there is also a frequent succession of dances in a string-like sequence. In such cases, the changeover between dances is led by a dancer with good posture, sometimes accompanied by a whistle or other sound effects (clapping, whoop) to mark the start of the next dance. The suite of dances linked to a single melody is coordinated by the musicians themselves by announcing the names of the dances, indicating to the dancers in advance which dance is to follow. The same cannot be observed in the rest of the dance order.

The repertoire of a dance event may include dances that do not appear elsewhere, simply because they are dysfunctional. These are ritual dances that have meaning only in the context of the particular dance event. Such dances are the *hóra mireszi*, which is the bride's dance, only performed at weddings, and the *medvés* or *káprá*, which function as greeting, or sometimes as an additional dance during the New Year's Eve dance event.

The dance patterns outlined above can no longer be observed in non-live music dance events that are private and/or involve only a small part of the community. In the discos frequented by young people from Magyarfalú, the

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<sup>53</sup> A group dance with a fix structure of chassé steps and clapping motifs, rarely danced in mixed or single-sex couples. The exact history of this dance, which spread throughout Romania in the late 1990s, is not known, but probably dates back to the choreography of a video clip for a cover of the song *El Meneaito*. It is mostly danced by young people or children.

<sup>54</sup> In the past, the suite of tango–waltz–foxtrot dances were also common in other rural communities in Romania. Giurchescu 1995: 143.

music is played from recordings and the order is determined by one or two DJs. In these discos, dancing is mostly *mánele* through a series of consecutive tunes, and to a lesser extent *populár*, by which they mean *hóra* and *szürba*, but also *usoára* and *menyáito*. In house parties organised in the village, which are usually a gathering of family or friends, there is also dancing after a music player. The order of the dances is decided by the dancers, according to the requests of the participants. In the house parties I observed, traditional chain dances (*hóra*, *kálakort*, *szürba*, *kórogyszka*) were predominant, but dances linked to a single melody such as the *alunelu*, *musámá* or *pinguin* were not uncommon. The *mánele* was seldom danced, but it was often played during dance breaks. Magyarfalu's latest dance events, the stage shows of the traditional dance groups do not follow the order of the dance suites outlined earlier, but in accordance with the oral tradition, they usually start the choreographies with the *öves* dances.

## 7. Contexts of the transformation of the dance repertoire in Magyarfalu

It is not easy to reconstruct the changes in the dance repertoire of the settlement on the basis of the interviewees' narratives, as in several cases we find questionable statements: "What they dance now, we danced in the 1960s, too."<sup>55</sup> The figure showing the dance names by source groups illustrates the inaccuracy of this statement, but the data provider's insight cannot be completely dismissed if we consider that the chain dances, which form the basis of the dance set and dance order, are still alive in local dance practice today. In addition to the alternation of different dance styles over the ages and generations, some of the historical, economic and social mechanisms of influence mentioned earlier can be assumed to be behind the transformation of the dance repertoire.

The former dance set, which can be outlined on the basis of archival sources, underwent two major changes after the resettlement of part of the community to Hungary. Some of the formerly male circle dances (*ráca pebotelj*, *hangu pelotej*, *hangu zsidoveszku*) had been forgotten in the community by the 1950s, while others (*ráca*, *botosánka*, *hangu*, *öves*) first became mixed-gender dances and then disappeared from the local repertoire from the 1960s.<sup>56</sup> In Magyarfalu, the male-only chain dance is still not danced.<sup>57</sup> A similar process can be observed in the case of improvisational male solo dances, which are also monogendered, since apart from the introduction of the *hóra pe bötutá* in the 1950s, the earlier solo dances (*juhásztánc*, *szóló öves*, *cigányászka*) have completely disappeared from the dance repertoire. The emigration of large numbers of young and middle-aged men who knew these dances probably played a major role in this, and soon changed the gender composition and age structure of the community, breaking the traditional pattern of passing on the knowledge of the dances.

In the second half of the 1940s, most of the young people who were forced to emigrate because of the severe drought were given jobs

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<sup>55</sup> As told by a man born in Magyarfalu in 1949.

<sup>56</sup> According to György Martin, the changing of single sex circle dances to mixed sex dances is "a tendency related to the developments of the modern era." Martin 1979: 29.

<sup>57</sup> According to Anca Giurchescu, the transformation of male dances into mixed dances has led to a motivic simplification of Romanian folk dances. Giurchescu 1995: 81.

in the ethnic Hungarian settlements of Transylvania and Banat, where they learned many Hungarian folk songs or folk compositions and then „took them home” to their own villages. In addition to the brief period of Hungarian-language state education in the 1950s, this cultural contact gave them the opportunity to learn the songs *Hallod-e te kőrösi lány* and *Az a szép, akinek a szem kék*, which were considered to be the songs of the *csárdás* dance melody. It is worth pointing out that the lyrics of these songs were soon forgotten, and none of my interviewees could sing them, they only remembered the melody.

In Magyarfalu - unlike in other Moldavian Hungarian settlements<sup>58</sup> - there was no known single-sex couple dance for men, which I assume is due to the late foundation of the parish. While in many Moldavian villages in the first half of the 20th century the priest still forbade mixed-gender couples dancing, the religious leader who lived in Văleni did not have the opportunity to exert such a strong influence on the dances of Magyarfalu in this period, as he visited the community one or twice a month, he was not permanently in the village.

After the economic transformation of the 1960s, the people of Magyarfalu had more and more opportunities to interact with the neighbouring Romanian population, which increased cultural interaction. When examining the encounter of communities from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, many emphasise<sup>59</sup> the initiation of cultural homogenisation, which in the case of Magyarfalu may have meant the generalisation of the basic dance suite based on Balkan chain dance culture, but the enriching effects of this contact should not be forgotten. A dominant piece in the village’s dance repertoire today is the *kálákort* mixed chain dance, which very few members of the older generation (born before the 1950s) can dance. This is explained by the fact that the dance has only „recently” been introduced into the local dance

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<sup>58</sup> Dance etiquette used to be strongly influenced by the religious beliefs of the Moldavian Hungarian communities and the moral guidelines of the current church leader. Mihály Kubinszky, the canon of Kalocsa, wrote about his visit to Moldavia in 1868: „*Regarding the dance etiquette, it is absolutely modest and appropriate. Men never touch women during the dance, and if the contact is necessary, it only happens with dancers of the same sex.*” Kubinszky 2004: 84. see also Csűry 2004: 203.

<sup>59</sup> Giurchescu 1995: 80–81.; Iancu 2011: 57.

repertoire, and not many people have been able to learn it. According to the narratives, it may have become part of the local repertoire in the late 1960s and early 1970s, probably through Romanian mediation from Găiceana. In terms of its spread in time, the *kálákort* may not seem so „new”, but in the village it is still considered a „newer” dance, which indicates its foreign origin. The fact that in the dance repertoire of Magyarfalu, the *kálákort* is the only dance that is not known in any other Moldavian Hungarian village supports this argument.<sup>60</sup>

The same period saw the transfer of male labour to the industrial sector, which on the one hand caused a drastic reduction in the number of men participating in dances, and thus the disappearance of the aforementioned single-sex male dances, but on the other hand enabled the men of Magyarfalu to get acquainted with urban culture. This is certainly the reason for the emergence of the dances of the *tángó*, the *válsz* and the *fox* in the 1970s, which, after being learned by the girls from the boys, are still performed as mixed-gender couples dances, unlike the older, often single-gender (female) couples dances.

By the 1970s, the disbanding of the lads’ communities, which was responsible for the organization of the dance events, resulted in the change that the New Year’s Eve tradition of *hejgetés* was performed in groups, but by the late 1980s this tradition was also changing.<sup>61</sup> First of all, there has been a change in the age group, as younger male children have started to take over the role of young lads, and practised the *urálás*,<sup>62</sup> which is nowadays often done by girls too, although in small numbers. In parallel with the decline of the

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<sup>60</sup> „When I went to a wedding in Bákó with many others from the village, the musicians knew how to play the *kálákortot*. So the people from Magyarfalu started to dance but none of them knew the steps. Then I said, why are you not dancing? They tell me, that only those from my village know this dance.” As told by a man from Magyarfalu, born in 1953.

<sup>61</sup> In Magyarfalu, the young people of the village community were responsible for organising and running the festive and regular dance events until the 1970s. Their leader, elected annually, was called the *vatab* or *vatáv* (*vātaf*: chief), whose dance-organising team also included the help, the *kasziér* (*casier*: cashier) and the *szekretár* (*secretar*: secretary). Anca Giurchescu, describing the traditional lad societies of the Romanian-speaking areas, also reported similar titles (*vātaf*: first in leader, *colācar*: collector of gifts, *cepar*: bartender, *casier*: treasurer). Giurchescu 1995: 27–28.

<sup>62</sup> A Moldavian Hungarian vernacular form of the Romanian word *urare* (greeting, best wishes). It is a New Year’s greeting, a New Year’s custom on New Year’s Eve. Iancu 2008: 149.

ritual activities of the boys, new dramatic customs (*káprá*, *medvés*) appeared in the village, which, in addition to the mediation of the teachers and priests, reveal the cultural influence of the surrounding Romanian communities.<sup>63</sup>

From the 1980s, newer music and dance styles „brought home” on cassette tapes by young people from the Hungarian village, courtesy of the young men who worked or studied in the town, spread. During the short period when the local discotheque was in operation, the *usoára* was introduced as a slow couple dance, and group dances (*abba*, *tviszt*) were also introduced. It should be added that although there was a demand for newer dances among the youth of the time, they still preferred the popular dances, i.e. the traditional chain and couple dances.

Since the late 1990s, young people have been learning newer dances with a fixed structure, first the *piguin* and then the *menyáitó*. Their adoption was greatly helped by the spread of television and the learning of dance material from music videos.<sup>64</sup> After the turn of the millennium, *mánele* was introduced in the out-of-town discos, but traditional chain dances remained part of the disco repertoire, alongside the popular music genre. The newer dances (*usoára*, *piguin*, *menyáito*, *mánele*) were first popular among the young, but later, nowadays, they are also performed by the middle-aged and, rarely, the elderly. As a result, they have become part of the local dance order, especially in its more rapidly changing suites.

Over the last 15-20 years, there have been three other major inducing factors in the evolution of the dance repertoire. One is the visiting to the dance balls in the neighbouring Găiceana, which resulted in a homogenisation of the micro-region's<sup>65</sup> basic dance order. The process is further reinforced by the fact that, when working in Hungary or abroad, the people of Magyarfalú often work together with Romanian men from other municipalities, where they spend their days off together, sometimes dancing.

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<sup>63</sup> Németh 2009: 3.

<sup>64</sup> „Even the *menyáito* is new here. But where did they get this dance from? The musicians saw it on TV, and they learned it. Then the children or even adults saw it on TV how it is done, so that is how.” Told by a woman born in 1977 in Magyarfalú.

<sup>65</sup> In micro-region I mean the community of Găiceana, which includes the villages of Magyarfalú, Găiceana, Huțu and Popești.

The second was the start of tradition-preserving activities, which led to 1) the revitalisation of several old dances (*öves, perinica, lelica, garofica, koszorel*) and their reintroduction to the dance repertoire by a section of the community (dance groups), 2) dances from other Moldavian Hungarian communities (*bánu márácsini, tűzlángj, félöves, serény magyaros*) were learnt and incorporated into their own choreographies, and 3) new dances were created from old local dances (*oficerászka* → *falusi tánc*), after considerable musical, formal and stylistic reinterpretations; 4) or possibly choreographed entirely new dances (the *csárdás*).

The third and most significant transformational factor is foreign labour migration, which since the change of regime has increasingly kept men from the local dance scene. Without the presence of men, women take part in most local dances (especially weddings) alone, without a partner, and therefore prefer to join in circle and group dances or to perform the couples' versions of old chain dances (*hóra, szürba, kálákort, kórogyászka*), where it is acceptable to have a single-sex line-up, i.e. women can dance with women. As a result, four trends in the development of the local dance repertoire can be outlined. 1) The traditional basic chain dance suite is becoming more conserved, as it is the easiest for female participants to join in. 2) The newer group dances (*menyáito, mánele*) are being learnt by young and middle-aged married women, giving group dances an increasingly secure place in the local dance order. 3) Modern couple dances are beginning to be pushed into the background, as mixed-gender pairings are more desirable.<sup>66</sup> 4) Paired versions of traditional chain dances are becoming increasingly common, and are becoming more differentiated in form and style. Of course, this change can be explained not only by the absence of men and the necessity of female pairings. Plurality in genre and form is a characteristic of dances that have been in common use for a long time and that can be constantly renewed in terms of form (and even music). The circle dances of the local dance repertoire, with their melodies, provide an opportunity for this innovative intent of individual and community dance creation.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> An excellent example of this is the case of the *válsz*, which has been displaced from the suite of fox dances, and is only performed during the intervals. Cf. Martin 1979: 29.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Giurchescu 1995: 81.

In the case of labour migration, we must not forget the mechanisms of influence of the music and dance fashions that we have learned abroad. This includes the emergence of current hits and, more generally, of 4/4 disco music (house or techno) in the listening habits of local young people, which, although still not as important as the *mánele*, is now appearing at house parties. Today, the dance repertoire in Magyarfalu is made up of three distinct groups. There are the old-style chain dances with rural roots (*hóra, kálakort, szürba, kórogyászka*), to which a number of melodies are linked. These offer structural and motivic possibilities for individual dance creation and thus undergo a continuous change of form and music through organic internal transformation, and are now also danced by couples. There are also loosely structured, couple dances and group dances (*tángó, usoára, válsz, fox, mánele*), which have been taken over from the urban environment and which are linked to several melodies. They are more limited in their variation and are therefore more easily displaced from community practice by dance fashions or other external influences. Finally, there are chain dances, couples and group dances with an older tradition (*szürba sztudencilor, zdrabuleánka, brasoviánka, musámá*) or a more recent, foreign origin (*pinguin, menyáito*), with a fixed structure and form, which are danced to a single melody. They have a very low transformative capacity and, therefore, if they do not spread to all age groups in the community they remain a one-generation fashion dance and quickly disappear from the dance repertoire.

This shows that the contemporary dance repertoire of the village is made up of dances with different roots, uses, structures, forms and musical backgrounds. This is not only due to the increasing external influences on the community, but also to the dancers' practice of adaptation, whereby the adoption of newer dances does not mean abandoning the old ones. The simultaneous presence of different dance styles in the village today is very striking. The simultaneous presence of cultural systems with different origins and structures in Moldavian Hungarian communities has been noticed by many.<sup>68</sup> Vilmos Tánczos writes in his collection of ethnographic essays, „Perhaps it is not so much the archaism of culture as the lack of cultural

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<sup>68</sup> Lajos 2009: 125.



unity that is so glaringly conspicuous in Moldavia.”<sup>69</sup> As one of the defining characteristics of culture is constant change, the coexistence of different cultural phenomena is not new in the case of dance culture. This complexity, however, has received little attention from dance researchers, due to the selective methodology of dance folklore studies (focusing primarily on the traditional dance heritage) and the early and accelerated transformation of the dance traditions in the Carpathian Basin.

## 8. Conclusion

The transformation of the dance repertoire in Magyarfalu, in the context of macro- and micro-historical changes affecting the dancing community, models the processes taking place in the local social system, the loosening of close social relations, the changing gender and generational composition of the community, or the organisation of organic social control and the acquisition of dance skills. All this points to the strong social embeddedness of dance.<sup>70</sup> The changes in Magyarfalu’s dance repertoire show a certain delay in comparison to the spread of European dance trends, as modern couple dances appeared relatively late, only in the 1970s, newer group dances during the regime change, and the latest regional or global fashion dances after the turn of the millennium. These dances quickly became part of the dance scene without supplanting traditional chain dances, thus creating a kind of parallel nonsynchronism in local dance culture. Parallel nonsynchronism refers to the simultaneous presence in a given geographical space of socio-cultural systems with different structural characteristics and mentalities.<sup>71</sup> Veronika Lajos offered a special version of this concept, the notion of „complex nonsynchronism”, for the interpretation of the life of Moldavian Hungarians. In her opinion, the „multi-layered cultural-social interface” in Moldavia can be traced back to the encounter of three scenes (rural/local, Romanian urban and Western European metropolitan).<sup>72</sup> The current state of dance culture - its active function based on participation, the richness

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<sup>69</sup> Tánzos 1996: 58.

<sup>70</sup> Szőnyi 2018: 43.; Szőnyi 2020: 160.

<sup>71</sup> The concept was first used by the philosopher Ernst Bloch to describe social phenomena, and later by Hermann Bausinger in the field of ethnography. Lajos 2009: 125.

<sup>72</sup> Lajos 2009: 124–126.

of its repertoire and its tendency to differentiate - shows that the community is adapting effectively to the cultural innovations of an accelerating global world. While it is too early to speculate on the evolution of this phenomenon, it is clear that the dancers in Magyarfalu, regardless of their age, have a considerable capacity for adaptation, which can be linked to the specific historical and social situation of the community.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> By this I mean, among other things, the assimilation pressure resulting from the minority situation, the development of a pluralistic worldview that can be explained by labour migration, and the use of situation-specific identity concepts as a result of all these. See Lajos 2006: 179, 183.

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## List of dance names

abba – abba  
alunelu – alunelu  
árdeleánká – ardeleanca  
bánu márácsini – banu mărăcine  
báráboj – baraboi  
boszton – boston  
botosánka – botosanca  
brasoviánka – braşoveanca  
bulgáriászka – bulgărească  
cigányászka – țigăneasca  
csárdás – ciardaş  
csimpojászka – cimpoiasca  
csuliándra – ciuleandra  
dzsessz – jazz  
falusi tánc – dansul satului  
félöves – jumătate brâu  
floricsika – florica  
fox – foxtrot  
garofica – garofița,  
hangu – hangu  
hangu pelotej – hangu palatei  
hangu zsidoveszku – hangu jidovesc  
hóra – horă  
hóra ká lá bátáj – horă ca la bățai  
hóra máre – horă mare  
hóra mireszí – hora miresii  
hóra pe bötutá – horă pe bătută  
hóra uníri – hora unirii  
juhásztánc – dansul ciobanului  
ká lá usá kortuluj – ca la ușa cortului

kacortánc – dans 'kacor'  
kálákort – ca la cort  
káprá – capra  
keresel – cărășelu  
kettős – de doi  
kezezsászka – căzăceasca  
kezes – horă de mână  
klopocet – clopoțel  
kórogyászka – corăgheasca or chorăghește  
koszorel – cosorel  
lelica – leliță  
ljenica jována – leliță ioană  
lugozsánka – lugoșanca  
malagamba – malagamba  
mánele – manele  
marosánka – maroșanca  
márs – marș  
medvés – ursul  
menyáito – meneaito  
mokanyeászka – mocănească  
moldoviánka – moldoveanca  
musámá – mușamaua  
oficereászka – ofițereasca  
öves – brâul or brâul pe bățai  
perinica – perinița  
penguin – penguin  
podu – podu  
polka – polca  
populár – popular  
ráca – rața  
ráca pebotej – rața pe bătei  
ruszászka – rusasca

seprútánc – dansul mătură  
serény magyaros – iute ungurește  
szfedelus – fedeleșul or sfredelușu  
szürba – sârba  
szürba militäre – sârba militare  
szürba sztudencilor – sârba studenților  
tángó – tango  
túzlángja – para focului  
tviszt – twist  
usoára – ușoara  
válsz – vals  
zdrabuleánka – zdrăboleanca  
zsok güjni – jocul găinii

# Transgenerational processes of traditional gypsy dance: the example of Nyírvasvári

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HENRIETT SZABÓ

## Introduction

An important distinguishing feature of the Roma communities living in Hungary is their cultural heritage, language use and spatial segregation. The present study deals with the traditional heritage of a local Oláh Roma community located in the north-eastern periphery of the country, with special emphasis on the preservation and transmission of folklore elements through the example of a settlement.<sup>1</sup>

Researches and analyses on the subject show that after Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, Oláh Roma families arrived in Hungary, mainly through Transylvania. As a result of their migratory lifestyle, the peoples and communities that came into contact with them influenced their culture, from which they then adopted and preserved many elements in their traditions. The studies also revealed that acculturation is a fundamental cultural process affecting the Oláh Gypsy communities, in the course of which the cultural conditions of sharp demarcation between Hungarians and the Roma are slowly disappearing. It can be said to be a natural process that the two communities interact with each other in a number of ways as they live together. Social research has examined these processes in various conceptual frameworks, such as adaptation, acculturation, integration, assimilation, dissimilation, in which the community/communities concerned develop their practices for interacting with the „other” community.

This paper uses a case study to show how and why the cultural transformation of different ethnic sub-communities - especially the relationship

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<sup>1</sup> The study was made within the framework of the research programme of the Ethnographic Research Group of ELKH-DE. The research was supported by the K 143711 grant of National Research, Development and Innovation Office of Hungary.

between Hungarians and Roma - in a multi-ethnic settlement is achieved in the course of long-term coexistence.

### **Acculturation vs. adaptation**

In the Oláh Roma communities living in the north, north-east of the country, the preservation of traditions is based on different local patterns. On the basis of field research experience on the subject, it can be said that due to the situational nature of the process, it is not possible to formulate a uniform description or general statements, as different cultural adaptation attempts can be identified for each settlement. Local conditions and local practices determine the coexistence and the development of the relationship to the individual's own cultural heritage. The extent to which a Roma community preserves and cherishes elements of its traditions in everyday life depends on a number of factors.

The first and most important aspect is the relationship between the Roma community and the majority Hungarian society, the proportions within the settlement and the resulting balance of power. The majority-minority relationship in the northeastern Hungarian regions today no longer means that Hungarians automatically constitute the majority in a settlement. Research shows that there are a growing number of social processes that are leading to a steady increase in the proportion of people of Roma origin in the local population, regardless of settlement type.<sup>2</sup> Cohabitation in a local arena can be characterised by the spatial location of sub-communities, the absence of separation - isolation and segregation practices - and the resulting cultural mixing, or, on the contrary, in the case of mixed settlement, by more intensive acculturation and adaptation processes as a result of frequent contact.

On the basis of field research in the Northern Great Plain region, we can say that in the case of coexisting sub-communities, the majority-minority relationship tends to be dominated by a tendency for the cultural stock of the minority community in the local arena to change more significantly. Thus, in Nagyecséd, for example, the acculturation practices of the Oláh Roma

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<sup>2</sup> see Péntzes et al. 2018.

community are partly not the result of external influences, but a conscious strategy of the minority in the hope of adapting to the majority Hungarian society.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, in Nyírvasvári, the long-standing and segregative cohabitation practices do not result in cultural mixing between the two communities. The local Roma community does not preserve or even abandon (by adapting elements of the majority culture) some elements of its traditional cultural heritage with the need to adapt to the Hungarian society.

In the present study, the question of the transgenerational transmission of Roma dance, one of the most prominent traditional elements found in Nyírvasvári, will be interpreted in details. Our approach focuses on the the social conditions that result in the survival of Roma dance and how it is an integral part of local Roma culture in a context where dance education and dance events are not institutionalized.

Our research experience shows that institutionalised tradition-keeping, for example in Nagyecsed, has been effective in preserving culture. The institutionalisation of the Roma dance tradition in Nagyecsed, the organisation of dance ensembles and the resulting dance education may even lead to the preservation of traditions in educational institutions and civil community organisations, as can be observed in this small town in Nyírség. There is a conscious, planned re-education of dance, which has led to the emergence of a revival movement. The rediscovery and teaching of the Oláh Roma dance tradition in Nagyecsed to children and adults is being carried out with the help of professional dance teachers, which is a unique initiative.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast, in Nyírvasvári, dance teaching is not institutionalized, or, as we will see later, due to the stagnation of the initial institutionalization process, we can discover the original practices of dance teaching and keeping traditions within the community. Dance observation, engagement, duel-competitions are the more important forms of dance learning processes that play a role in the transmission practices of non-institutionalized communities.

In the following, I will show how tradition is passed on in the form of a distinguished element of the intangible cultural heritage, such as dance. As briefly outlined above, an important context for this topic is that the Oláh

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<sup>3</sup> for more details see Szabó 2023.

<sup>4</sup> see more details in the documentary film *A hidon túl* (Biczó – Szabó 2019.).

Roma community in Nyírvasvári has been living together with Hungarians for decades, but their strategies for preserving their traditional heritage and Roma identity are not affected by this coexistence. The majority patterns and cultural adaptation are at most reflected in external elements, mainly housing, although the segregated environment in the settlement is strikingly different from the housing environment of the majority. For less visible elements of culture that require frequent and intensive interaction with the majority (e.g. language, identity, spiritual heritage), there is little evidence of majority's influence. The preservation or abandonment of traditions depends only on, or changes as a consequence of the Roma community's own internal relations.

On the basis of interviews and observations with the Rostás family, four members of the former Kék Láng ensemble, and the experience of the ethnographic film on the subject, the practice of transgenerational transmission of Roma culture in Nyírvasvári will be presented in this paper.

### **On the processes of transgenerational transmission of Roma dance**

The Department of Ethnology at the University of Debrecen launched its ethnographic documentary film series entitled *Élő néprajzi hagyományaink (Our Living Ethnographic Traditions)*<sup>5</sup> in 2020, originally with the aim of presenting contemporary practices of traditional annual festive occasions or phenomena of folklore events that can be recorded today. „*It is our intention that the film series will be a suitable tool to record the phenomena and events that represent the living or revived forms of ethnographic heritage and to make them visible to professionals and to the wider audiences.*”<sup>6</sup>

The third part of the film series is titled *Nyírvasvári cigány tánc (Roma Dance from Nyírvasvár)*, and its topic is the origins of the famous local Roma *botoló* dance.<sup>7</sup> This ethnographic film presents the details of the practice of cultural and musical knowledge transfer from generation to generation, through the interpretation of local experts, following the concept of the film series. The

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<sup>5</sup> The basic idea for the film series, its development and the production of the three parts of the series so far are the result of the work of the author of the study.

<sup>6</sup> Szabó 2021b: 128–129.

<sup>7</sup> Szabó 2021a.

situation of the dance culture presented in the episode about Nyírvasvari is closely linked to the Roma folklore movement in Hungary.

Prior to the major Roma music ensemble movement of the 1970s, there were already significant events in the 1930s that were recorded. These are linked to folklore research in the Roma communities in our country. The dance recordings of the ethnographer Sándor Gönyey Ébner are the first films that mark the beginning of ethnographic filming in Hungary and contributed to the discovery of the cultural values of the Roma communities. Gönyey was one of the first to document the Roma botolós dance in Porcsalma in 1934.<sup>8</sup> This is the description of the botoló couple dance in the chapter about dance in the book *A magyarság néprajza*:

*„The most perfect of all the botoló dances is the Satu Mare County botoló dance. It is clear from this that the stick is a substitute for a sword. The ancient, ritualistic aspects of the movements are extremely precious. In terms of the variety of dance figures and stick movements, this is our richest botoló dance. It is danced by two people: a man and a woman.”<sup>9</sup>*

Gönyey and his students and contemporaries later contributed to the survival and preservation of Gypsy dance with further recordings. Of course, the direct impact of the films was limited, and we also know that the public presentation and practice of the elements of Roma culture in general was not easy after the Second World War. It was up to the political decision-makers to support or even prohibit cultural associations, and indeed there were few opportunities for institutionalised preservation of traditions. The various policy measures that restricted the preservation of Roma culture were mainly linked to the implementation of forced assimilationist intentions that intensified from the 1960s onwards.

The Cultural Association of Hungarian Roma, founded in 1957, did a lot for the preservation of Roma traditions even as a politically controlled organisation. In 1959, the first Roma folklore festival was organised in Budapest, in which the renowned ethnographer and folk dance collector

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<sup>8</sup> Sándor Gönyey Ébner's film recordings of dances: <https://gyujtemeny.neprajz.hu/nep-rajz.06.13.php?bm=1&kv=1394720&nks=1> [retrieved: 05.07.2023.]

<sup>9</sup> Felföldi 2001: 110–111.



György Martin played an unforgettable role. In addition to his research on the Roma botoló in Porcsalma, he also studied the forms of Roma dance and the process of folklore transmission in several other settlements in Nyírség. This is how he came to Nyírvasvári, where, thanks to his collection work and his interest, the local Roma people organised formed an ensemble. The Roma ensemble called Kék Láng<sup>10</sup> was formed in the 1950s, and although the band disbanded in the 2000s, its influence and memory is still strong today.



Picture 1. kép: Kék Láng ensemble  
(source: <https://napkeletnepe.hu/2018/01/17/rosta-tibor/>)

*"The Kék Láng ensemble was founded by my grandfather Ferenc Rostás, in 1953, I believe. For a long time, until the ,90s, they toured locally and nationally. But the truth is that they often played for free, for a plate of food. That's not a secret. They built their own little traditions here to spread it in the country."<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup> The exact date of the ensemble's formation is not known, according to some sources it was in 1957, while others put it to 1953. Based on the interviews I conducted, it was in 1953.

<sup>11</sup> The author's interview with a 46 year-old Oláh Roma man, Nyírvasvári, 2019.

*”Ferenc Rostás Sr. and his family are one of the most talented representatives of the Hungarian and Roma dance traditions in the Upper Tisza region. Since the 1950s they have been involved in Hungarian traditional movements. Their performances and teaching activities have greatly contributed to the fact that hundreds of young dancers have learned the botoló in Hungary.”<sup>12</sup>*

This description is found in the list of Népművészet Mesterei (Masters of Folk Art), as Ferenc Rostás was awarded with the title ”Master of Folk Arts” in dance category in 1997.<sup>13</sup>

The picture that emerges from the biographical narratives and thematic interviews with members of the Rostás family reveals the process by which dance research discovered the traditional practices of the Oláh Roma community in Nyírvasvári and the way in which external ethnographic interest strengthened the local people’s desire to cultivate their own culture.

*„When the co-op was founded, at the time, it is true, Dr György Martin came here from Budapest, and discovered us. Then my father and his brother and sister, performed the old traditional botos dance, because if the gypsies, those old gypsies, had a drink they started to dance. And they sang, too. My father learned it from his father. Because for my father, the botoló dance was heaven and earth. No one could do it like him. I was a musician among them, and I had a sister, singer Mária Rostás. The band was formed by me playing the viola and my brother and son-in-law playing two guitars. So we went, we went to Brazil.”<sup>14</sup>*

The international career and the interest in the work of the Kék Láng ensemble gave a further impetus to amateur traditionalists to promote their activities even more widely. The process then led to an internal awareness of the need to pass on the transgenerational heritage. Dance and the cultivation of singing and music, which are inextricably linked to it, became a source of income.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://nepmuveszetmesterei.hu/index.php/dijazottak-neve/224-rostas-ferenc> [retrieved: 06.05.2023.]

<sup>13</sup> There are several video recordings of Ferenc Rostás dancing. See: <https://mtabtk.videotorium.hu/hu/recordings/11379/nyirvasvari-botolo> [retrieved: 06.05.2023.]

<sup>14</sup> The author’s interview with a 76 year-old Oláh Roma man, Nyírvasvári, 2019.

*”And then, when my father and his brothers and sisters had children and we grew up, we got involved in it, in some form. Some were singers, some dancers, some musicians. After the ,90s it started to become apparent that a younger generation was joining the band. We reshaped the band a little bit to change a little bit stylistically, to be more dynamic. And of course the old guys went national, and then *Latcho Drom*, it’s a film directed by Tony Gatlief. That film, I believe, won a prize at the Cannes Film Festival, and from then on that was the first time the old people got to the Opera House in Paris. It was their first performance abroad. It was very well done. From then on we started to travel to Europe and then we went to many countries, even then we young people were part of the band. There were thirteen of us in the band plus we had a sort of interpreter, a French interpreter. In France we had two managers for the *Kék Láng* team, two men who organised trips for us to all the European countries. [...] We got to wonderful places, if it wasn’t for the music, we wouldn’t have got there. And despite the fact that the country didn’t appreciate this band. And to this day, it’s not being paid attention to, it’s not being appreciated, that there’s this group that has gone around the country a lot, done a lot of talent shows and gigs, built this tradition, this culture, and then we’ve taken it abroad a lot.*

*And then when my father and my parents started to get too old for dancing and singing, Aunt Mari became the front singer, Aunt Mari Rostás, and when they got old, I think they were still active in playing music with us until 2005. Then it slowly stopped.”<sup>15</sup>*

Tibor Rostás’s narrative shows that in the case of the *Kék Láng* and in the case of the Nyírvasvár Oláh Roma community in general, the growing interest in folk dance during the period did not play a role in the preservation of traditions. Although the birth of the Hungarian dance house movement in the mid-1970s had a significant impact on the spread of Roma dances in general, this was not the case in Nyírvasvári. Ágnes Daróczi drew attention to the link between the dance-house movement and the spread of Roma dances, saying

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<sup>15</sup> The author’s interview with a 46 year-old Oláh Roma man, Nyírvasvári, 2019.

that „the Roma band movement was very fortunate to meet the dance-house movement from the very beginning.”<sup>16</sup> By the 1980s, there were already more than ten high quality bands in the country, including the Kék Láng ensemble, but the lack of attention and appreciation was still a problem.

The short interview with Tibor Rostás also shows that the dissolution and transformation of the ensemble was largely related to the less open attitude of the majority society. Nevertheless, it is also clear that the official dissolution of the ensemble did not mean the disappearance of the traditional transgenerational practice of preserving traditions and the loss of interest in one’s own cultural values.

*”When I was a child, I remember that there was music almost every day, music was part of our lives every day. I started playing guitar and singing as a child, and then I started dancing. And I think that the occasions were mainly holidays, but in the past, whether on weekends or on weekdays, when people felt like it, they always danced, they always sang.”<sup>17</sup>*

### **Patterns of transmission of dance traditions in the Oláh Roma community of Nyírvasvár**

In the case of multi-ethnic communities, the preservation and maintenance of ethnospecific characteristics of sub-groups depends on a number of factors that determine local coexistence. In Nyírvasvár, the majority Hungarian community makes up nearly 70% of the resident population, while the remaining ~30% is made up of two Roma communities, the Roma-speaking Oláh Roma speaking the Cerhari dialect and the Hungarian-speaking Romungro. Based on the research conducted in the field, it can be said that the coexistence between Hungarians and Roma can be described by parallel segregationist and isolationist attitudes, and several elements of the self-segregationist behaviour of the majority society can be identified in everyday coexistence practices. Efforts to maintain segregation are most evident in the reinforcement of conditions of spatial separation. Most members of the local Roma community

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<sup>16</sup> Daróczy 2001: 123.

<sup>17</sup> Szabó 2021a.

still live in the outskirts of the village, segregated from Hungarian households. Ethnic segregation can also be observed in the educational institutions of the settlement, with the local primary school being an institution subject to spontaneous segregation. The consequence is that despite the coexistence, another area of ethnic interaction between the minority and the majority is eliminated.<sup>18</sup>

Previous research carried out to assess the traditional heritage of the Oláh Roma in Nyírvasvári has shown that the local society is a community of tradition. However, no local association, group or organizations has been created to fill the gap since the end of the Kék Láng ensemble. Despite the fact that, as the brief history of the Kék Láng ensemble shows, there were many prominent personalities and dancers in the local Roma community. This remarkable lack of self-organisation needs to be explained. The interviews show that, after the successes, performances and concerts abroad, the domestic ‚market‘ did not show similar interest. Also importantly, as Tibor Rostás explains, a generational change was inevitable, with the founders ageing out and young people having little ambition to follow in their parents‘ footsteps. Despite this, it is a particularly interesting and remarkable ethnographic fact that the local Oláh Roma community continues to cherish its folklore heritage, a process that is also highlighted in the ethnographic film *Nyírvasvári cigány tánc (Roma Dance of Nyírvasvár)*.<sup>19</sup>

Gusztáv Balázs, ethnographer, researched primarily the tradition of the dance culture of the Oláh Roma communities living in Nyírség. Although his studies were primarily focused on the dance culture of the Nagyecsed community, they provide an important starting point for the study of the traditional dance culture of the Roma people living in the Nyírség region around the former Ecsedi Marsh. Based on his collection, we know that dance learning is different from that of the Hungarians, as with the Roma community it starts with ‚involuntary observation‘.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For a more detailed description of the topic, see Szabó 2021b; 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Szabó 2021a.

<sup>20</sup> Balázs 2001.

The ethnographic collection work in Nyírvasvári came to conclusions similar to those of Gusztáv Balázs. We realized that dance is passed on within the local Oláh roma community in a similar way.

*”So the older one passes on his knowledge to the younger one. Here, whether it is a parent or a relative who passes on this tradition, the steps, if he does it, the child will learn it, or the daughter will learn it from her relatives, her mother or her grandparents. [...] It becomes part of everyday life, when there’s a party, then obviously she says, „Watch this step, I’m doing it this way, I’m doing it that way, try to do it this way.”<sup>21</sup>*

In addition to learning to dance in childhood, it is an important feature that a person with a reputation as a good dancer never shies away from continuous learning and enriching his or her repertoire. Research in the municipality shows that rivalry between men and the prestige of being a good dancer also had a strong motivational effect.

*”Dancing was very popular here. They were always competing with each other. It had much more energy than it has today. They loved dancing so much, wherever there was fun, they danced almost competitively with each other to see who could do better, who could do better. Today, there are dances, but it lacks that verve. The singing was so strong, and the music, too. Each to his or her instrument. They worked very well together. There are talented young people today, but they don’t use their talent.”<sup>22</sup>*

When examining the transmission of dance culture, it is also worth looking at local patterns of dance events, dance types and dance teaching.

## **Dance events**

Among the Roma, two types of dance events are commonly distinguished. The first is spontaneous dance occasions, which are mainly associated with occasional gatherings or celebrations. This is different from the pre-arranged

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<sup>21</sup> The author’s interview with a 46 year-old Oláh Roma man, Nyírvasvári, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> The author’s interview with a 46 year-old Oláh Roma man, Nyírvasvári, 2019.

and planned dance gatherings.<sup>23</sup> In the Oláh Roma community of Nyírvasvár, the respondents also highlighted and distinguished between two major dance events, but the categories are somewhat different: there are family dance parties linked to holidays and spontaneous dance gatherings on weekdays.

*„During holidays, like Christmas or Easter or New Year’s Eve, we came together in the gypsy community. And then, I’ll tell you honestly, we drank, we drank, not in a way that we didn’t know about ourselves, of course, we never did that, but in a normal way. We always got together, the family, my father had a big family, my sister Marika started singing, we joined in. Then we started to have fun again, singing, dancing. Until the morning. Not just for an hour, we had fun until the morning, or the next morning we had fun until 9-10 o’clock, we got so into these dances. We loved these celebrations.”<sup>24</sup>*

In comparison, the dance events associated with commuting were seen as radically different cultural practices. From the 1960s onwards, male members of the Roma community in the settlement typically worked on construction sites in Budapest. During their travels, they often danced their way through the train journey. According to the interviewees, the situation provided an opportunity to learn dance steps and figures from other communities and to compare dance skills.

Another occasion was the spontaneous dance event that took place when men returned home from the commute, which also contributed to the continuous practice of the tradition, and offered the experience of belonging to the community.

*„Even on weekdays, when we came home from Pest (we worked in Pest), we would get together on weekends, especially in the summer, in the evening. Until then, someone would just go there, three or four of us, and the whole thing would come together, with the Roma. Then they started to sing, to do some rhythmic dances, this and that, here and there. Then we started dancing, singing, having fun. That’s how it used to be.”<sup>25</sup>*

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<sup>23</sup> Balázs 2001.

<sup>24</sup> The author’s interview with a 68 year-old Oláh Roma man, Nyírvasvári, 2019.

<sup>25</sup> The author’s interview with a 68 year-old Oláh Roma man, Nyírvasvári, 2019.

Based on the narratives of the respondents and observations, we can say that dance is less present in the life of the community in Nyírvasvár today. Birthdays, christenings, Christmas and Easter are the only occasions left when the community can be organised through the practice of traditions. The only exceptions are families with an active musician.

Despite the process of acculturation of the dance heritage, even if less intensively, there is still a knowledge of the tradition and a limited practice of intergenerational transmission of dance knowledge. Experience shows that the decline in the number of dance events has not been accompanied by the disappearance of any of the local dance styles from the local repertoire.

The respondents specifically referred to the system of categorization of dance types, which also confirms that dance remained an important socio-cultural factor in the life of the Oláh Roma community in the settlement. The description of the couples' dances reflects the social function of the tradition and its role in the development of the relationship between men and women.

*„It was a couple's dance as if they were driving each other in the dance. Who could do it better, that was the interesting thing. Who can dance better. Because it's not enough to stand up to dance and a woman just stands there or doesn't even move. She has to move, she has to show that she dances fiercely and, well, more bouncy. In the couple's dance, you have to get your female partner moving.”<sup>26</sup>*

The town's emblematic dance, the *botoló*, had a completely different function.

*„The botolós dance originated here. Because people are mistaken about where the dance came from. It didn't come from Ecsed. My dad, when they were having fun, drinking, they'd dance by the fire. Then it was always the old man who picked up the stick. It is said that his grandfather and their father, when they drank, always danced with the stick. And the woman before them. They'd spin. It was a feisty dance. My father was awarded the title of Young Master of Folk Arts in '97. He was a two-handed stick man. He spun. And I could learn to do it with just one hand.*

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<sup>26</sup> The author's interview with a 68 year-old Oláh Roma man, Nyírvasvári, 2019.



*He passed it down in the family. It's a very spectacular dance. The idea was, it was a fight that started the stick dance. It's based on two people fighting over a woman, and she tries to stop it by dancing so they don't fight. That's where the botolós dance came from. Later they introduced different techniques and choreographies.”<sup>27</sup>*

In addition to the botoló, the Oláh Roma people of Nyírvasvári also practised male dances, in which the swift and virtuoso movements have particular importance. This technically difficult dance form, which requires a lot of practice, is usually incorporated as part of a couple dance, where the man tries to emphasise his skills and ability.

*„Competitive dances were more typical for men, because we were trying to see who could do better, if I could do better than the other. You know, who can do it better, like in football, who can shoot better in the game. Or the figures. Because when these figures, these motifs, they were interesting, because with them, who could step, or dance, or how was the striking, the hitting. Some hit like this, some hit like that, some hit in a different way.”<sup>28</sup>*

In Nyírvasvári, according to the data providers, women's dancing skills were also given special attention. Sensitivity to the quality of movement culture is an important element in how a woman's dance skills are perceived.

*”Well, the difference is that women's dancing is another matter, because a woman has to be able to learn the steps, because it doesn't matter how she dances. Everybody wants to see how a woman moves in a dance. She has to move. Even when you are a child, you can see that even though they are little, children can dance. Because they see it from their parents that they learn the Roma dances and then they start to move. By the time they grow up, they learn the Roma language.”<sup>29</sup>*

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<sup>27</sup> The author's interview with a 68 year-old Oláh Roma man, Nyírvasvári, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Szabó 2021a.

<sup>29</sup> The author's interview with a 68 year-old Oláh Roma man, Nyírvasvári, 2019.

## Conclusions

In a recent lecture, Miklós Cseri, Director General of the Open Air Ethnographic Museum, spoke about the changing role of open-air museums today. While in the past, the institutions of the skansen functioned as reserves for buildings, i.e. they focused on preservation and documentation, today they have become the reserves of knowledge.<sup>30</sup> The term fits perfectly with the idea, which we can also formulate in the context of the ethnographic film series *Élő néprajzi hagyományaink*, that the information preserved in the films can be understood as a means of promoting retelling and finding new functions for the tradition, thanks to the authentic knowledge of the data providers. Just as museums, contemporary ethnographic films can play a pivotal role in keeping the knowledge of ethnography active in the public consciousness. This role makes it possible to provide a knowledge base that enables the elements of the heritage to be available to people of our time, either in revival or survival form, as integral knowledge in everyday life.

In order to develop ethnographic culture, it is important to understand in more detail the practices of the transmission of traditions that are still evident today, with special attention to the transgenerational processes of Roma communities. Research in Nyírvasvári proves that the heritage of a local people, in this case the dance culture, can provide a good basis for a more accurate understanding of the functions of traditions in a community.

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<sup>30</sup> Szentendre, Open Air Ethnographic Museum, 05.05.2023.

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## Tradition, local heritage

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## The Kálla Feast – Reflections on the partial results of a dance anthropological micro-research

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MELINDA MARINKA

Preserving elements of a heritage, whether a long-term process or a periodic rejuvenation, presupposes the activity of a community that conserves, generates or demands its conservation. However, looking at the process in reverse, the question may arise: where in the local community - foregrounded or marginalised in terms of community activity space - are the heritage elements that ,require' the service of the revitalising or sustaining community? In examining the community context as a whole, it may be interesting to consider who is responsible for the survival of which elements, and what function or role do these people and elements play in the locality? In the context of a locality, we may no longer be talking only about a locality in the making in Appadurai's sense, but about an existing, possibly wider socio-cultural context in which heritage elements live, survive, revive or are transformed, dormant and constructed, or which may go beyond the local community to take on a larger scope.<sup>1</sup>

The wedding is an environment that involves examples of a number of social, communal and individual processes, referring to the functioning of the local community, and not excluding other spatial and temporal dimensions beyond locality. It is perhaps no wonder, then, that the theme has provided the basis for countless scientific and artistic treatments of the subject, or has provided ideas for the heritage-building activities of a local community. An example of this is the Kálla wedding as a local heritage element, which I will

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<sup>1</sup> For Appadurai, locality means contexts and relations, not degrees or spatiality. see Appadurai 2001: 3. In the case of conservation, conscious action, and in some cases heritage education, shows actions in the present, even if they are necessary to create locality. (see also Hartog 2006: 179–180.) The preservation of locality therefore presupposes the activity of the individual and the community. At the same time, individuals and communities form spatial imprints which, in turn, can have a symbolically endowed power of recall in the functioning of locality. In the case of Nagykovács, this could be the creation of the space in the Kállai double dance, which marks the importance of dance within the local community in the centre of the settlement.

discuss in some detail, and through which further questions of the process of staging and community building may be brought to the fore.<sup>2</sup> My related brief micro-research in dance anthropology essentially assumes an interpretation of contemporary social processes derived from recent data collection, but at the same time it relies primarily on the foundations that emerge in cultural history and ethnography as sources for the construction of the wedding scene and the characteristics of the local community.

The selected settlement of the research is Nagykálló<sup>3</sup>, which has a number of municipal assets, but these are also of particular importance not only in the local community but also in the wider region. This may be due to the fact that, as a former county town, it has long been a central economic, social and cultural centre for the population of the surrounding villages. As is well known, the town's reputation is most closely associated with the Kállai double dance.<sup>4</sup> The cultural-historical synthesis of the former was compiled by Lujza Ratkó in the 2020 issue of *Ethnographia*, while the musical aspects were summarized by Katalin Paksa.<sup>5</sup> The numerous scientific and scholarly publications on the Kállai double dance show that the recurring phenomenon of some form of dance revival over the past 130 years has not allowed some elements of the once traditional dance matrix to be forgotten.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This study was written within the framework of HUN-REN-UD Ethnology Research Group. The research was funded by the K 143711 research project of NKFI. I wish to dedicate this study to the memory of Katalin Lókodi Lászlóné Szabolcsi. My special thanks to Aunt Manyika Gézáné Harsányi and Marinka Illés for their help during the data collection.

<sup>3</sup> Kiskálló existed as an administratively separate neighbouring settlement from Nagykálló until 1951 (see: *Magyar Közlöny*, 23.02.1951., 118.). However, in the public consciousness of the population of the settlement, the once separate settlement appears as a part of the settlement of Kiskálló, and in colloquial parlance the inhabitants call themselves „people from Kiskálló”.

<sup>4</sup> About the local values of the settlement see: <http://nagykallo.hu/ertektar/> (Retrieved: 26.04.2023.)

<sup>5</sup> Ratkó 2020: 208–251; Paksa 2010: 299–323.

<sup>6</sup> For the results of the study on the origin and survival of the dance, see Ratkó 2020: 208–251. The dance is thought to have been an integral part of the natural dance calendar in the 19th century, and was often performed at weddings and dance parties. See also: Dr. Ratkó Lujza: A Kállai kettős zenéje és koreográfiája. (Kulturális örökség szakterületi kategória) <http://szszbm-ertektar.hu/ertek.php?azon=180> (retrieved: 28.04.2023.).

The synchronic and diachronic dimensions of my investigation, which focuses on the heritage elements of the settlement,<sup>7</sup> stems from my particular research position, which is based on the observation and experience of the last 30 years of the above-mentioned process, and which, although related to the Kállai dual, focuses mainly on the relationship of the people of Kálló to dance, the biology of traditional dance elements and their habitual environment, and the web of individual and community relations. The past and present of Kállai double dance draws our attention to the other value of the settlement in the study of the communal processes of local society: the „Kállai wedding folk scene” includes a variant of the theatrical construction of the „local relic dance”<sup>8</sup>, but it is not only interpretable in its function of maintaining the dance matrix. In the following, I will attempt to present this settlement value and to raise some related research questions, as follows: *the theatrical/staged representation of the wedding; the historical and ethnographic approach to the theatrical construction of the Kállai wedding; the Kállai double dance performed at weddings; the process of community building: researchers - collectors - actors.*

### **The theatrical/staged representation of the wedding**

*„The wedding itself is a specific form of theatre as a ritual. The customs associated with marriage can be seen as scenes in a play, which follow one after the other under the direction of an invisible director. This director is tradition itself.”*<sup>9</sup> A well-known example from folklore is the children’s dance, an imitation, if you like, a mimicry of the adults’ dance, a spontaneously organised dramaturgical performance construction. The whole of traditional weddings has also been interpreted by researchers as a drama in its own right,

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<sup>7</sup> Applying a fairy-tale biology interpretation derived from folktale research, we must consider here the dance life, the social context of the existence of dance matrices, the arenas of their construction, and the associated customary acts, the performers, their roles, their creation and their power.

<sup>8</sup> Ratkó 2020: 208.

<sup>9</sup> Ujváry 1983a: 329.



while the representation of the wedding was a favourite theme of dramatic games in folklore.<sup>10</sup> The difference between the two can be interpreted in terms of purpose and function, since in the case of the actual wedding, the games, rituals and scenes took place in a network of symbolically endowed acts, while in the case of the plays, they were primarily for fun and entertainment.<sup>11</sup>

The staging of weddings became very popular during the 20th century, and there are still communities today that seek to preserve their local heritage elements through the staged construction of local wedding customs. Many of the former groups of the Gyöngyösbokréta have performed wedding ceremonies, for example, without claiming completeness, in Nagyréde, Somogyudvarhely, Tard, Tápé.<sup>12</sup>

The 1950s saw a major boom in the genre. A highly influential custom-building enterprise at national level was the Ecséri wedding dance, the example of which is an excellent illustration of how the phenomenon can not only provide a significant reputation for a particular locality, but can in many cases also be a source of heritage tourism.<sup>13</sup> It is no wonder that one of the great boosts in the theatrical/stage construction of the Wedding Bells can be attributed to the period that followed. In many cases, however, such a production has only lasted a few performances.

In the region of the Upper Tisza region I have studied, examples of the creation of „wedding rehearsals” can be found already in the 1920s, such as the Benkő bokor wedding, which was presented in Nyíregyháza on 19 September 1924. As part of the wedding, the audience could see so-called

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<sup>10</sup> see also Ujváry 1983a: 329. Among the wedding and carnival customs of Nyírség and Szatmár, Sándor Erdész, in a 1962 publication, highlights an example of a carnival in Szamosszeg, where male masqueraders dressed as groom and bride, accompanied by other characters, visit the spinning houses „where there is ample opportunity for joking.” And he describes the masquerades who attend the wedding with an example from Nyírbogát: „In Nyírbogát, a note is sent to the best man saying that Sándor Rózsa and his band are asking permission to enter. When the band enters, the best man sings a song for them. The ‚outlaws’ dance, they even make the bride dance, they joke. After being offered food and drink, they leave.” Erdész Sándor: Farsangi népszokások. *Kelet-Magyarország*, 25.02.1962., 6.

<sup>11</sup> see Ujváry 1983b: 7.

<sup>12</sup> Pálfi 1970: 156.

<sup>13</sup> see Eitler 2019: 51–80.

wedding dances, a flower dance, a goat dance and a verbunk, and the director of the wedding construction was Péter Kemény, a teacher.<sup>14</sup>

Another example is the folk wedding game of the children of Pócspetri, which was subject of a newspaper report in 1954:

*„the curtains rolled up: bridesmaids sang, danced on the stage around the bride petri songs, typical slow, dignified petri dances, then came groomsmen with strap wine bottles in their hands, bringing the groom, and finally girls with filters, pots, spoons, pots, pots, and bunny rabbits, with house-clothes, came in.”<sup>15</sup>*

In the late 20th and early 21st century, another wave of re-enactment and revival emerged, such as the wedding presentations in Balmazújváros, Ajak and the people with Tirpak background from the region under study, again without claiming completeness. These phenomena of the ‚new wave’ of custom-constructing appear as specific heritage-preserving practices, and in the case of the communities in the examples, the activities for the preservation of the heritage element are carried out by the activity of elderly civil organisations or micro-communities operating as amateur folk dance groups.

The construction of an all-generation dance hall is therefore a community arena that can provide a space for the wider presentation of the intangible cultural values of a settlement. This is presumably where its popularity lies. The question is: assuming the existence of an active community, how long can the genre’s conservation power be sustained - for three generations? This leads to the further hypothetical question: can the survival or re-construction of the feast be directly proportional to the accepted activity of the community, headed by its leader?

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<sup>14</sup> N. N.: A Benkő bokori lakodalom. *Nyírvidék*, 20.09.1924., 3–4.

<sup>15</sup> S. L.: „Békegalamb, csak az a kívánságom...” Nyírbátorban a genfi értekezlet előestéjén. *Kelet-Magyarország /Néplap*, 27.04.1954., 3.

## **A historical-ethnographical approach to the theatrical construction of the Kállai wedding dance**

The story of the origins of the Kálla wedding dance is best remembered through the performances of the theatrical construction, which is recognised as a municipal asset in the 21st century, and only a few records of the first production have survived among those who remember it.<sup>16</sup> The beginning of the staging of the folk scene dates back to the 1950s and can be traced back to the groups that were active at the time. Between 1931 and 1942, the repertoire of the Nagykovács "bokrétás" group of the previous decades did not include any performances of the scene, except for the Kállai double dance and the *Kendertaposás* ("Hemp Treading") event.<sup>17</sup> More information about the theatrical construction of the Kállai wedding dance is available from the period that followed, although some accounts of the scene date back much earlier.<sup>18</sup>

In the communicative memory of the locals, the exact details of the genesis of the construction are not recorded, but the identity of the group leaders, to whom the staging of the construction can be linked, is much more visible. Most of the interviewees provided information on the teaching of the Kállai double dance. According to local informants, thanks to the cantor teacher Károly Nagy, the Kállai double dance was even taught in the courtyard of his house in Kálló, where the Kálló dancers went to rehearse. Károly Nagy took over the leadership of the local group in 1936 from Antal Szabó, who was also a prominent figure in the cultural history of dance.<sup>19</sup> The Second World War forced the members of the group to stop dancing, and a new group was formed from the old members only in 1950. The former dancers, Sándor Szabó and Károly Nagy, managed the groups side by side and handed over the leadership to each other. The „Culture House Group” was headed by Sándor

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<sup>16</sup> See the reconstructed version of the Kállai wedding dance from the 2007 conference of the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Megyei Baráti Társaság. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42hDs\\_1m6WU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42hDs_1m6WU) (retrieved: 08.05.2023.)

<sup>17</sup> Pálfi 1970: 149.

<sup>18</sup> see the description of the Kállai wedding dance, now part of the local directory of villages, on the official homepage of the settlement: <http://nagykallo.hu/ertektar/kallai-lakodalmas-nepi-jelenet/> (retrieved: 13.05.2023.)

<sup>19</sup> Harsányi 2007: 177.

Szabó and József Vas in 1954, and Károly Nagy took over the leadership in the same year until 1956.<sup>20</sup>

In the process of staging the Kálla wedding folk scene, Károly Nagy is referred to as the person who revived it, and Sándor Szabó as the instructor.<sup>21</sup> Further information about the collection of retired teacher Károly Nagy is given in a document dated 26 May 1954. The Ethnographic Archive of the Archives of the Jósa András Museum preserves a 5-page document in which the retired teacher's collection of the "*torchlight wedding procession*" is mentioned. Károlyné Nagy, Lajos Ács, János Imre and József Vass, residents of Nagykálló, wrote the description of the tradition and the stage design for it. According to the description, the last "*wedding with torchlight procession*" dates back to 1912-13, before the First World War. The size of the wedding and the size of the torchlight procession was determined by the number of torches, so having a large number of torches was a source of pride, while having just a few torches was a shame. In the source material, the teacher gives an example: "*Pista Nagy had only 6 torchlights in the processions.*"<sup>22</sup> The description of the wedding ceremony is included, but the author stresses that the texts of the farewell and best man poems are not given, as the main emphasis is on the torchlight procession and masquerades. According to the description, after the wedding, the bridal party, which had dispersed for the afternoon, met again in the evening, separately at the groom's and bride's houses, after which the groom would leave to pick up the bride with his guests. The lighting of the torches follows the bride's farewell, and with that they proceed to the groom's house, where they find all the gates locked, and so ask for admittance.<sup>23</sup> According to the stage plan of the torchlight procession wedding tradition in Nagykálló, the scene begins with the children playing, who are sent away by the cooking women to keep them from being underfoot. They perform 3 or 4 children's games, after which the wedding party arrives, carrying torches.

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<sup>20</sup> About the functioning of the group see Nyárady 1969: 40–41.

<sup>21</sup> <http://nagykallo.hu/ertektar/kallai-lakodalmas-nepi-jelenet/> (retrieved: 13.05.2023.)

<sup>22</sup> Nagy Károly: A nagykállói fáklyás felvonulósos lakodalmi szokás és színpadi rendjének terve. 1954. Jósa András Múzeum Adattára, Néprajzi Archívum, Ltsz: 32–67. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Nagy Károly: A nagykállói fáklyás felvonulósos lakodalmi szokás és színpadi rendjének terve. 1954. Jósa András Múzeum Adattára, Néprajzi Archívum, Ltsz: 32–67. 1–3.

After the introductions<sup>24</sup>, the groomsmen start dancing, then the groomsmen sit down at the table and the toasts begin. At this point, the „masqueraders”<sup>25</sup> arrive, and the host announces himself as they dance:

*„Well danced my boys! But our grandfathers and great-grandfathers used to dance the famous Kállói double dance at every wedding! I'll dance it too, listen to me! /They stand side by side with the audience/ They dance until the woman turns away from the waist hugging and leaves her partner, who also turns away and shouts ‚If you've left me, I won't dance any more! My legs are hurting! But here you are, you young people - who have already lined up - keep going and don't let this beautiful dance be lost!’”<sup>26</sup>*

Not only in the stage design, but also in the description of the custom, the dance of the Kállai double dance appears after the masquerades have passed away: *„Then the guests also dance, and two old men dance the Kállói double dance.”<sup>27</sup>* However, it is here that the purpose of Károly Nagy's theatrical plan becomes clear: to ensure the survival of the dance.

The wedding feast presented a customary setting that brought several generations on stage at once, included the Kállai double dance and allowed the playful instinct to show itself. Traces of the 1954 and 1961 stagings can be found in the press of the time, with one report specifically highlighting the dance in the wedding dance: *„The 60-member artistic ensemble from Nagykálló was invited to perform as a guest at the National Agricultural Exhibition. For this occasion, the members of the group worked on the wedding traditions of their village and included the famous Kállai double*

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<sup>24</sup> In the game of initiation, the bride is awaited by the cook's wives, who, on her arrival, are given a „loaf of sweet bread” by one of the wives, while the other sprinkles wheat on the couple, thus bringing happiness and blessing. Nagy Károly: A nagykállói fáklyás felvonulások lakodalmi szokás és színpadi rendjének terve. 1954. Jóna András Múzeum Adattára, Néprajzi Archívum, Ltsz: 32–67. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Nagy Károly: A nagykállói fáklyás felvonulások lakodalmi szokás és színpadi rendjének terve. 1954. Jóna András Múzeum Adattára, Néprajzi Archívum, Ltsz: 32–67. 2..

<sup>26</sup> Nagy Károly: A nagykállói fáklyás felvonulások lakodalmi szokás és színpadi rendjének terve. 1954. Jóna András Múzeum Adattára, Néprajzi Archívum, Ltsz: 32–67. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Nagy Károly: A nagykállói fáklyás felvonulások lakodalmi szokás és színpadi rendjének terve, 1954. Jóna András Múzeum Adattára, Néprajzi Archívum, Ltsz: 32–67. 3.

*dance.*"<sup>28</sup> The review of the 1954 performance, written by Sári Bars, praises the Kállai wedding dance, with a brief description of the performance and the publication of a photograph of the wedding:

*„The dance begins with the children’s game of little girls and little boys. It’s a singing board game: squatting, pairing, with lovely figures. The little boys with their hats over their eyes - children aged seven to ten - court the little girls with silky smiles and grown-up seriousness, twirling and bacheloring around. Their earnest, big-hearted demeanour is tinged with the joy of play. The girls sing, beg, imitate the salesgirls, with smile-inducing sweetness. And these little villagers have been there at the weddings since they were tiny, learning the adults’ moves, growing with these dance elements. That’s why their dancing is not a learned role but an unconscious, exuberant game, a heart-stopping enchantment. The wedding continues with a candlelight procession. The bridesmaids and the bachelors come in pairs: in the front, the groomsman is a red-legged groom - a peasant of settled age. Proposal at the bride’s house, singing and dancing. The groom’s solo is incredibly light, fresh, cheerful and so elaborate that professional dancers could not dance better in the Opera House, because the solo and the figures of the men and girls in pairs and groups are so original, rolling with a wild rhythm, beautiful, so natural and relaxed that only those who have studied, sung, seen and walked this way for generations can dance like this. These people are not performing, not acting on stage, but living. What we see is not a performance, but a way of life, from the hearty toast at the girls’ house to the end. The exhilarating, exuberant joie de vivre, the gently restrained revelry, the fun-loving virtuosity, the exuberance condensed into dance moves, is the same as at home - after the harvest, after the tobacco bundling, at the real feasts.”*<sup>29</sup>

The candlelight procession in the scene presumably refers to or may have been a substitute for torches. Comparing the description of the performance

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<sup>28</sup> N.N. Hírek. *Szabad Nép*, 25.08.1954., 4.

<sup>29</sup> Bars 1954: 330–331.

with the stage design by Károly Nagy, it can be concluded that the scene presented in 1954 may have been based on a note by the retired cantor teacher. Accordingly, the origin of Kállai's construction of the wedding feast, which has so far been dated to the 1950s but not precisely defined, can be put at 1954.

The great historical events of the 1940s and 1950s influenced Károly Nagy's life and his work with the dancers, and may have affected the existence of his theatrical production of the Wedding. In 1961, the contemporary press reported on a revival: „Thanks to the collaboration of Sándor Szabó, István Cérna and others, there is hope that old and young feet will dance again, the beautiful music of the Kállai duo will be heard again and the lovers of folk art will dance and sing.”<sup>30</sup> Several reports of the momentous event are then published, giving us a further insight into the history of the wedding dance. In addition to the positive echoes of the revival, the writings emphasise the communal and intergenerational outcome of the event: “The Kállai wedding dance is revived”<sup>31</sup>, “Cooperation of a dance performance”<sup>32</sup>; “A dance of three generations”<sup>33</sup>. So in 1961, through the efforts of Sándor Szabó, the folk scene is back on stage. As in the 1954 review, the dancers' performance on stage is characterized by a naturalism that reflects experience drawn from life rather than the role-like performance of the scene:

*„The parents on stage - Uncle Toka Menyus and his wife - play their roles so lifelike as if they were actually marrying their sweet daughter. The performance of the two main actors - played by István Cérna and Uncle János D. Antal, whose age put together is well above 120 years - leaves nothing to be desired. But only time has passed them by, as their feet are nimble and they lead the wedding party in a way that is a joy to watch.*

*Young people and children appear, and the play is bubbling and boiling, captivating spectators and professionals alike. And now you can really see that it really took the whole village coming together to bring the Kállai wedding dance to life. On stage, three generations - from*

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<sup>30</sup> N.N.: Újraéled a Kállai lakodalmás. *Kelet-Magyarország*, 28.06.1961., 4.

<sup>31</sup> N.N.: Újraéled a Kállai lakodalmás. *Kelet-Magyarország*, 28.06.1961., 4.

<sup>32</sup> N.N.: Összefogás egy táncjátékért. Biztató kezdet Nagykállóban. *Kelet-Magyarország*, 20.09.1961., 5.

<sup>33</sup> balasa: Három nemzedék tánca... *Kelet-Magyarország*, 10.11.1961., 5.

*grandfathers to grandchildren - dance, act and bring the traditions of the centenary to life.*

*In these three generations we find the youngest and the oldest, and representatives of all strata of the community. Uncle Pista Cérna is a member of the co-op, the groom is played by Tibor Zsoldos, a representative of the bank and the cultural officer of the district committee of the KPVDSZ, who has been dancing since childhood. The bride, Zsuzsa Szemáncsik, doesn't work anywhere, but there are still shoemakers and tailors, bricklayers from the co-op, waiters from the „fmsz” and students from the teacher training college and the gymnasium who come from Kálló but study in Nyíregyháza.”<sup>34</sup>*

After that, it almost fades into oblivion, and only then do we witness its revival in the 21st century. László Vágó, one of the children's dancers of the 1950s, based on the recollections of Katalin Lókodi Szabolcsi Lászlóné and Karolina Erdőhegyi Klániczáné, recorded and recreated the wedding dance in 2004. Nearly 100 years passed between the version in the tradition and the version that is being staged again in the new construction. The traditional torchlit wedding was thus a local practice in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the last procession in 1912-13, according to Károly Nagy, taking place immediately after the advent of street lighting in 1910, when electricity arrived in the centre of Nagykálló.<sup>35</sup> With regard to the research of the wedding, the synthesis-like exploration of torchlight weddings together with other related folkloristic phenomena in the region under study provides a further line of research, since the construction of street lighting, which played a conditional role in the transformation of the custom in the district of Nagykálló, can be dated only to the middle of the century,<sup>36</sup> while at the same time, we should not forget the function and meanings of the torchlight wedding procession in connection with the role of fire.

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<sup>34</sup> balasa: Három nemzedék tánca... *Kelet-Magyarország*, 10.11.1961., 5.

<sup>35</sup> see Noszály – Sarkadi – Balogh 1970: 252.

<sup>36</sup> see Noszály – Sarkadi – Balogh 1970: 253.



## The Kállai double dance performed at weddings

The peculiarity of the Kállai wedding is that it includes the Kállai double dance, thus providing another space for the dance to survive in some form. The other focus of the research therefore seeks to position the Kállai double performed at the wedding feast, which thus situates the dance in the Kállai wedding feast within the context of the constructed custom. Zoltán Ujváry's definition includes „*play within play*”, when „*dramatic games, masked scenes, ceremonial dances that are not integral to the order of the wedding but are often extremely important as inserts*” are incorporated.<sup>37</sup>

Antal Szabó, one of the dance's revivalists, is quoted by Béla Paulini, the „*old gardener of the pearly posy*”, as describing the Kállai duo:

*„The boy is courting the girl. He does not go out with her some nights. When they meet at the ball, she accuses him of not coming. He apologizes. The girl refutes it:*

*I went there last night hiding  
Saw someone else in your lap...*

*He invites her to dance, but she pouts and slips out of his embracing arms. He suddenly becomes annoyed, she is frightened, afraid he will break up with her for good. He becomes more open to her, lets her embrace him, they make up and dance merrily with outbursts of joy.”<sup>38</sup>*

If we look at the dramaturgical message of the dance, the balladic performance of the love scene already gives the possibility of acting, it can be interpreted as a play in a play that is performed in a dance.<sup>39</sup> In this case, therefore, only the dramaturgy of the dance itself and the theatrical moments in the course of the wedding should be mentioned as part of the staged wedding. As regards the former, it should be noted that in 1934 the *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* referred to the Kállai double dance as a „*dialogue dance drama*”, which was then performed by 25 couples as a „*precious ethnographic monument*”, and in which the boy and the girl express their emotions through verbal exchanges,

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<sup>37</sup> Ujváry 1983b: 8.

<sup>38</sup> P.J. A Gyöngyösbokréta öreg kertésze. Könnyes, lelkes beszélgetés Paulini Bélával. *Az Est*, 11.08.1934., 13.

<sup>39</sup> A 1934 description of the dance included this: „The tale of the dance is an act of jealousy.” Pálmai Jenő: Tíz nemzet tapsolt a Bokréta bemutatkozásának. *Az Est*, 17.08.1934., 12.

song and dance.<sup>40</sup> According to Katalin Paksa, the „lure” of love in the Kállai double dance is reminiscent of the romantic world of folk theatre, such a role-playing „dialogue singing” is not known in Hungarian folk tradition.<sup>41</sup> Basically, in László Szabó’s interpretation, dancing is one of the symbolically significant props that appear at a wedding, and it has other functions in the community besides entertainment.<sup>42</sup> The Kállai double dance in traditional weddings can be interpreted as the climax of the event, a moment of great importance, but some say that it could also have a role in the dance, a test or a connotation of knowledge in the heat of the festivities. It is interesting to note that it was not only present in local traditional weddings as a measure of musical or dancing knowledge, but was also widespread in other areas.<sup>43</sup> In connection with the appearance of dance at weddings, it is also necessary to reflect on a problem raised earlier by Lujza Ratkó, which concerns the naming of dance. In the neighbouring villages of Nagykálló, the Kállai double dance was used for the Hungarian solo and verbung dance, and this ended in a confusion about the dance.<sup>44</sup>

According to the local historian Gézáné Harsányi, the Kállai double dance was mostly known to the local members of the Reformed Calvinist Church,<sup>45</sup> and in the first half of the 20th century they could still be seen dancing at traditional dance festivals in the village.<sup>46</sup> Although there are

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<sup>40</sup> N.N.: Szabó Antal nagykállói igazgatótanító negyven évi munkával feltámasztotta a kállai kettőst. Prágai Magyar Hírlap, 11.01.1934., 6.

<sup>41</sup> Paksa 2010: 307.

<sup>42</sup> see Szabó 1983: 354.

<sup>43</sup> For example, „The great city of paprike, Szeged also has its own figure: in the person of Tamás Csonka Bukocza, who is famous for being the only one in the whole of the Great Plain to have a real goat-headed ”Little Miss’s” bagpipe, with which he used to play the Kálla double dance for the wedding guests.” Horkay Elemér: Hirek. Szárnyakon a városon át. (Botfaragó Botykai András). *Pécsi Figyelő*, 25.06.1899., 3.; „A big feast was held in the village of Bize on the 5th of this month. The wine was flowing, the table was full with chicken, calabash and other tasty dishes, and the young people were dancing the Kállaió double.” N.N.: Hivatlan vendégek. *Somogyi Újság*, 20.02.1907., 3. Further information about the familiarity of dance in Fejér County can be found in József Gelencsér’s own recollections, which refers to the aesthetics of dance: „Erzsébet Pap (1927-1994), born in Sárkeresztes, mentioned that she had heard from her father Ferenc Pap (1900-1961) several times as a child: They danced the Kálla two, that was so beautiful.” Gelencsér 2014: 145.

<sup>44</sup> Ratkó 1996: 251.

<sup>45</sup> Based on the oral narrative of Gézáné Harsányi, Nagykálló, 2023.

<sup>46</sup> The Kállai double may have been danced at weddings in neighbouring villages, and its familiarity also indicates its spread in a wider geographical area. see Ratkó 1996: 266.

several documented revivals in the history of the stage performance, its existence in local practice is also hinted at in another record, which publishes the circumstances of the 1933 filming of the dance. For the filming of the Hungarian film *Ítélt a Balaton*, director Pál Fejős personally selected 12 couples from among 100 inhabitants of Nagykálló to dance in the film.<sup>47</sup>

### **The process of community building: researchers – collectors – actors**

My micro-research revealed the conceptual confusion between the Kállai double dance and the Kállai wedding: the most noticeable confusion in the contemporary press materials was the mention of dance, folk dance ensemble and feast. The dance is currently in the repertoire of one amateur art ensemble, the Kállai Lakodalmas Egyesület, who perform a version of the dance in which three melodies appear: *Felülről fúj az őszi szél*, *Kincsem, komámasszony* and *Nem vagyok én senkinek sem adósa*. This is performed both as part of the Kállai wedding dance and as a separate production.

From the historiography of Kállai double dance, it can be seen that over the past 130 years there have been several different treatments of the music and dance history of the past.<sup>48</sup> The revival within the community is linked to the names of Péter Görömbei, Lajos Farkas, Antal Szabó, Károly Nagy and Sándor Szabó, but at the same time, alongside the teachers, revivalists, lay and professional researchers, there was always the collaboration of the local population and the work of the dancers.<sup>49</sup> And from the second half of the 20th century to the present day, the dance matrix has been presented to a wider audience through numerous stage adaptations. It has also been brought to the attention of researchers and folk dance teachers.

The archiving of Károly Nagy's collection in the Jósza András Museum also presupposes cooperation with researchers, contact with Mihály Nyárády, and it was also reflected from the locals' testimonies that the cantor teacher

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<sup>47</sup> eg. Kállai kettős – hangos filmen. *Ujság*, 15.02.1933., 10.

<sup>48</sup> Lujza Ratkó summarised the writings related to the Kállai duo, see Ratkó 2020: 213–223. However, at the time of my micro-research, it became clear that many more people were working on the subject, and a full exploration of this could also be a future task.

<sup>49</sup> About the first three people see Ratkó 2020: 208–251.

was in contact with renowned collectors and researchers of the period, such as Zoltán Kodály and Elemér Muharay.<sup>50</sup>

Sándor Szabó was also mentioned as the rescuer of the Kállai double dance, who met Zoltán Kodály,<sup>51</sup> and may even have been in contact with István Volly.<sup>52</sup> From 1961 he took on the role of both leader and participant in the group: „The work of the Kállai wedding dance is led by Uncle Sándor Szabó, who is himself one of the participants in the group, performing the duties of the butler. Uncle Szabó is now close to sixty and danced the Kállai double dance in his twenties, but he still moves as youthfully as he did thirty years ago.”<sup>53</sup> He died in 1969 at the age of 66, and before his death he told his children not to let the dance be lost.<sup>54</sup> With the death of Sándor Szabó, the Kállai wedding dance was forgotten, and as early as 1963 it was reported that the number of members was constantly changing, with more members „emigrating” or going to work to other counties.<sup>55</sup>

In the early 1950s, László Vágó started dancing as a child under the tutor Károly Nagy. His attachment to the Kállai double dance and the Kállai wedding dance stems from family tradition, while his performance in the folk scene determined his later position within the local community. He inherited his dancing, cheerful cheerfulness from his father, Lajos Vágó, who danced in front of Zoltán Kodály in the Reformed parish church of Nagykálló in 1926. László Vágó became a best man as an adult influenced by the dance play, and in the 2004 production of the wedding dance, which he initiated, it was clear that he had to take the role of best man.<sup>56</sup>

For years, ethnographer Lujza Ratkó has been following and providing professional advice to the Kállai Feast Association. Through the concerted work of leaders, dancers, actors and researchers, the association and the scene it performs become the medium that sustains local heritage. In 2005,

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<sup>50</sup> About Elemér Muharay and his work in Nagykálló see Nyárády 1969: 40.

<sup>51</sup> Koroda 1970: 90. see also (MTI): Meghalt Szabó Sándor, a Kállai kettős átmentője. *Népszava*, 19.06.1969., 2.

<sup>52</sup> As told by Lászlóné Torma (daughter of Sándor Szabó). Nagykálló, 2018.

<sup>53</sup> N.N.: Fellendült a kulturális élet Nagykállóban. *Kelet-Magyarország*, 13.02.1962., 4.

<sup>54</sup> As told by Lászlóné Torma (daughter of Sándor Szabó). Nagykálló, 2018.

<sup>55</sup> see: Gombos Ágnes: Ahol a kállai kettős született. A mai életrekeltők – 72 éves násznagy. Országos turnéra készülnek. *Kelet-Magyarország*, 24.07.1963., 5.

<sup>56</sup> As told by László Vágó. Nagykálló, 2018.

the Municipality of Nagykálló awarded the Nagykálló Culture Prize to the „creative community that puts the Nagykálló Feast on stage”. The members at that time included members of the Őszi Napfény Pensioners’ Association, the Kállai Kettős Children and Youth Folk Dance Group and the Kállai Kettős Folk Dance Club.<sup>57</sup> Tibor Marinka and Anita Ladányi, folk dance teachers, also helped the association in the first years of its re-launch. The leader of the Kállai Lakodalmas Association was Karolina Klániczán Erdőhegyi until 2015, followed by Anita Plajosné Erdei, who was involved in teaching the dances from the very beginning and is still leading the dancers, who now form a small community. Currently their activities focus on bringing together people of different ages, helping each other not only during performances but also in everyday life.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> As stated on a plaque of László Vágó László and Karolnia Erdőhegyi Klániczáné. Nagykálló, 2018.

<sup>58</sup> Other scenes were staged later, as told by Anita Erde Plajosné. Nagykálló, 2023.

## **Additional perspectives**

The presentation of the partial results of the microsurvey has led to a number of further ideas, which will require a deeper dance anthropological study of the Kálla wedding folk scene. The dance anthropological interpretation of the Kállai double dance stage performance also triggers new ideas within the field of performative ethnography, since it has become clear that the staged performance of dance in some form still plays a significant role in the life of the inhabitants of the settlement. The question of the genre of the Kálla wedding may be a further point of investigation, since the earlier name of the construction, which is now known as a folk meaning, also includes the term 'dance play'. A deeper analysis of other phenomena connected with the Kállai double dance name is also justified, so I see the repertoire of groups and ensembles operating from the first dance revival efforts at the end of the 19th century to the present day, the choreographies they dance, and even their connection to dance as necessary for interpreting the process of their organisation into a community. Among the dancers who revived the wedding tradition, there were several people whose ancestors were also connected to the dance, so the appearance of several generations within a family on stage, the intergenerational connection to the dance and the wedding feast, can be interesting. Furthermore, over a long period of time, individuals who experienced the influence of the local society as non-locals also felt a responsibility to pass on the dance as a heritage, so their activity and role as organisers may also be a further focus of research. The issues raised here clearly indicate the need for further research.

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# The functions of dance in the community processes of a small town of mixed ethnicity in Nyírség

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HENRIETT SZABÓ

## Introduction

For a folklore element to have any role in the functioning of a local society, a number of conditions must be met. The present case study addresses the question of how and under what conditions dance, as a dominant element of cultural heritage in the community processes of a mixed-ethnic settlement, influences the life of the local society and the development of inter-ethnic relations.<sup>1</sup>

The subject of the analysis is Nagyecsed, where in 2019 we made an anthropological documentary on the subject, the context of which and the related research form the basis of this study.<sup>2</sup> The documentary and the fieldwork provided an opportunity to study the local patterns of coexisting sub-communities due to the contemporary social, cultural, economic processes and multi-ethnic population structure of Nagyecsed. In the course of studying the socio-cultural processes of the municipality, the anthropological documentary *Across the Bridge* also offered a space to explore the system of local traditions and the role of the set of traditions in the life of the local sub-communities. As a result of the research, it became clear that dance, in our case the dance culture of the Hungarian and the Oláh Roma communities, is a specific element of tradition that determines the identity constructions of the two local sub-communities. In addition to the visual representation of the role of dance in the film, the incorporation of qualitative information from interviews recorded during anthropological fieldwork contributed to the formulation that dance, as a mediating tool, functions as a kind of „common language” and as a factor influencing the coexistence of local communities. It

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<sup>1</sup> The research was supported by grant number K 143711 of the National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFI).

<sup>2</sup> Biczó – Szabó 2019.

can be said that dance culture is an essential factor in the socio-cultural reality of Nagyecsed, since the community organisations linked to this tradition, i.e. the local dance ensembles, have important concrete tasks and symbolic roles in the development of the coexistence of the local community. The present case study is a good example of why, in understanding contemporary relations in local societies, it can be an important task to clarify the contexts that shed light on the role of local traditions in the life of communities, often peripheral ones.

Clarifying the contemporary functional local value of tradition presupposes an understanding of the process by which it was created and then transmitted, and a study of the small communities of traditionalists, in our case local folk dance groups, whose work establishes that tradition can function as a concrete factor shaping the relations of the present. On this basis, in the first part of the paper, the social contexts of folk dance in Nagyecsed will be presented, and in the second part, the dance education and tradition-transmitting practices in the municipality and the formal and civil institutions that provide space for these will be discussed.

### **The social environment of dance culture in Nagyecsed**

Today Nagyecsed is a socially and culturally disadvantaged micro-regional centre located on the periphery of the Northern Great Plain Region, on the edge of the Nyírség. The society of the small town is made up of three distinct ethnic sub-communities, ~70% of the population are of Hungarian origin, while ~30% identify themselves as Roma. Just as in our country we cannot speak of a homogeneous Roma society, so in Nagyecsed it is heterogeneous. A distinction can be made between the Oláh Roma in Nagyecsed, who speak the Cerhari dialect of the Romani, and the Romungro Roma, whose mother tongue is Hungarian. The two Roma communities settled in Nagyecsed at different times, with radically different cultural backgrounds, customs and values. On this basis, it is important to note that the ethno-cultural network of the local scene can be seen as a complex network between three ethnic communities.

The basic research carried out in the settlement revealed the recurrent traditions of the local ethnic sub-communities. The research, which also informed the concept of the documentary film *Across the Bridge*, was designed to both make visible the heritage of ethnospecific traditional elements and to provide insights into their contemporary functions.<sup>3</sup>

The results of the large sample questionnaire survey and the structured interviews revealed that a number of ethnographically significant traditional elements can be identified in the Hungarian community of Nagyecsed. Among these, the importance of spiritual culture, especially folk dance, is outstanding, but in addition, there are also typical features of the former peasant communities, which in the case of the settlement are typical of the Nyírség.<sup>4</sup> Particularities include clothes, artefacts and folk art, and the specific features of some of the buildings. In addition, it is important to note that the amount of knowledge of local traditions preserved in collective memory exceeds the frequency of the specific forms, objects, knowledge of intangible ethnographic value or actual cultural practices that represent them. The reason for this is that the modernisation influences that determined the change of lifestyle of peasant societies in the Hungarian community of Nagyecsed, as in general, gradually led to a move away from the classical ethnographic heritage.<sup>5</sup> In this case, this means that there are only a few remnants of what was once a very rich tradition.

Until the draining of the Ecsedi marsh, the way of life of the local Hungarian society was determined by marsh farming. Today, however, the memory of this historical heritage has no influence on the cultural identity of the Hungarian society of Nagyecsed. Its relics have been preserved and displayed only as part of the local history collection, where the typical tools of the marsh culture and the defining elements of the way of life are on display. This layer of local traditions is maintained by a local civil society, the Láp Betyárok Cultural Association. The revival of traditions, understood as a revival phenomenon, contributes to the preservation of Lapp culture as a local identity element through the symbolic rediscovery of rural cultural content,

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<sup>3</sup> see Szabó 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Dám 1974.

<sup>5</sup> see also Kovách 2010; 2012; Vajda 2019: 11–29.

but this is a small group activity rather than one that has a major impact on the local community.

The Romungro community, which has had a significant impact on the social life of Nagyecsed, is known to have originally belonged to the Carpathian Roma group, and to have been acculturated and partially assimilated into the local community. According to research, the first groups of them arrived in Hungary in the 15th century and later during the reign of Maria Theresa.<sup>6</sup> Originally, musicians were a typical occupational group within the community, but they also practised a number of other traditional crafts.

We know from the collections of Gusztáv Balázs, an ethnographer born in Nagyecsed, that the Romungro community initially spoke Romani in the Carpathian dialect and was characterised by a complex set of traditions.<sup>7</sup> As a result of long-term coexistence, the Romungro community has not preserved a single element of its traditional heritage. In their case, we are not only faced with a total absence of traditions in everyday life, but the relevant research has also revealed that collective memory does not record any cultural traditions as part of ethnic group identity.

The case of the local Oláh Roma community, which came to Nagyecsed and its surroundings much later, after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, is completely different.<sup>8</sup> The common characteristic of the Oláh Roma groups that have infiltrated from Transylvania in several waves is that they are communities that are extremely rich in traditions and consciously maintain them as a result of their occupational groupings and the use of the Romani mother tongue, which limits contact with the majority environment. The life of their tradition-bound, closed communities was determined by their specific values, way of life and customs, which were different from those of the majority Hungarian and Romani communities and which also influenced their relations with other ethnic sub-communities.

The Oláh Roma community of Nagyecsed still preserves many traditional elements as living practices. The characteristics of home interiors, some of

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<sup>6</sup> the author's interview with Gusztáv Balázs ethnographer, Nagyecsed, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> the author's interview with Gusztáv Balázs ethnographer, Nagyecsed, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> the author's interview with Gusztáv Balázs ethnographer, Nagyecsed, 2018.

the rules concerning gender roles, or the use of the Cerhari dialect - albeit with increasingly weak intensity - in family communication. Nevertheless, the heritage of dance and ethnic music culture is the most dominant traditional element and the one that has decisively shaped local ethnic identity.

After a brief summary of the traditional relations of the three local ethnic sub-communities, it must be seen that when we attempt to briefly outline the social environment of the dance culture of Nagyecsed, the coexistence relations that influenced the coexistence relations of the settlement are also an inevitable aspect. The coexistence of ethnic groups in the local community is characterised by physical segregation as a social-historical continuum. The studies show that the relations between ethnic groups are burdened by segregation and isolation strategies, although the relations between the Oláh Roma people and the Hungarian majority have shifted in recent decades and can be characterised by a certain rapprochement.

As a result of the basic research on the scene, an explanatory model was developed to interpret the coexistence relations of the three ethnic sub-communities of Greater Ecsed. The essence of the model is that, based on the data collected during the fieldwork in the theatre, the intergroup relations of Hungarians, Romungros and Oláh Roma form a correlational system.<sup>9</sup> The practice, which has been dubbed the *dynamic correlational coexistence model* to explain how the system works and to give it a terminological value, refers to the fact that if there is a change in the relationship between any two ethnic communities in a local society, this will affect the relationship with a third ethnic community. From the point of view of describing the social environmental conditions of contemporary dance culture in Nagyecsed, the research suggests that the acculturation of the Oláh Roma community leads to a more effective adaptation to majority norms, which in turn affects the more accepting attitude of the Hungarian community towards them. However, before analysing the community functions of local dance culture, let us briefly review the more important correlations of the correlation system to see why this folklore element can play an important role in influencing coexistence.

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<sup>9</sup> for more details see Szabó 2023.

The relationship between Hungarians and Roma can be described in terms of segregation and isolation. In this case, too, the practice of isolation, as Béla Janky puts it, means that the group concerned, in our case the Roma community, is excluded from local resources, their infrastructural background is limited, and they are unable to break out of the vicious circle of poverty and hopeless future prospects on their own.<sup>10</sup> According to the second correlation of the correlation model, the rapprochement in the relations between the Hungarian and the Oláh Roma community also affects the relations between the Hungarian and the Romungro community, by reinforcing the segregative practices of the majority and stimulating the Romungro community's tendency to isolation.

Based on the results of the research, we can say that the relationship between the two Roma communities can be interpreted within the conceptual framework of dissimilation. This means that the Oláh Roma and Romungro communities do not consider any of the characteristics of the other Roma community as valid. Their self-determining attitude towards each other can be expressed briefly in the sense that they perceive the perception of the other in their local ethnic identity as a kind of counterpoint that determines their attitude. This self-distancing attitude is also reflected in the physical sense of distancing, as it has been mapped that the local Romungro community lives almost exclusively in the segregated area on the western edge of the settlement. By contrast, the Oláh Roma people once lived in the segregation on the eastern edge of the town, but since the 1960s they have been subject to internal migration and can be seen to live in the inner streets of the town, mostly in the neighbourhood of the Hungarians. The more accepting relations between the local Hungarian majority and the Oláh community have increased the dissimilatory attitude of the Oláh community towards the Romungro community.

On the basis of the briefly outlined local ethnic relations, it became clear that the analysis of the relationship between Hungarians and Oláh Roma people in Nagyecsed in particular requires further investigation, especially

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<sup>10</sup> Janky 2014.

because the cultivation of the dance traditions of the two local communities is a representative cultural practice.

A closer look at the relations between the two ethnic groups reveals an interesting process. On the one hand, the acculturation of the Oláh Roma of Nagyecsed, i.e. the partial abandonment of their traditions - language, costume - reduces the cultural distance and thus increases acceptance in terms of relations with Hungarians. On the other hand, the encounter situations, which have an important impact on the development of the relationship between the coexisting sub-communities, have remained rather limited. If we look by age groups, we can say that in Nagyecsed, too, the first important inter-ethnic contact point is related to educational institutions. In Nagyecsed, integrated groups are typical in kindergartens, but different practices were found in schools. The municipality has two institutions for the primary education of children, one of which, as an institution subject to spontaneous segregation, is almost without exception attended only by Roma children. In contrast, the school in the centre of the municipality, run by the Calvinist Reformed Church, is typically attended only by children from the majority community. For adults, the main interaction opportunities are in the world of work. In Nagyecsed, there are several workplaces where people from all three local sub-communities are employed. However, the number of people of Roma origin working in typically low-prestige jobs is limited. In addition, it has been observed that their wages are lower than those of their majority colleagues, which has a negative impact on the relationship between the two communities. However, during the research, we also saw examples of graduates of Roma origin in graduate jobs. This has a symbolic rather than an actual impact on the ethnic proportions in the local labour market.

The short analysis of the local social context of dance culture in Nagyecsed is an important prelude to an interpretation of the functional significance of dance tradition, because it demonstrates that dance is not an isolated element of cultural heritage, but on the contrary, an integral part of socio-cultural reality. Furthermore, in the light of the above, it is reasonable to ask where, when and why do members of the ethnic communities living together interact with each other? How does the cultivation of traditional dance

culture in Nagyecsed provide an opportunity for Hungarians and Roma to meet?

### **Civil communities organised to cultivate traditional dance culture and their impact on ethnic coexistence in Nagyecsed**

Civil community organisations provide an excellent opportunity for members of a multi-ethnic local society to become part of a small community beyond their ethnic group. Participation as a member of a grassroots civil society organisation is based on volunteering and collective action, which creates opportunities for individuals to contribute to the goals and the social cause they are involved in as active members of the organisation.<sup>11</sup>

If we look at the civil society organisations operating in Nagyecsed, we can say that there are examples of very active and rich community organising practices. Taking into account the characteristics of the scene, local community organisations have been classified into two types based on their membership: ethnic and transethnic non governmental organizations. The distinction is thus based on the ethnicity of the membership, i.e. if members come from only one group, they are ethnic, whereas if they join from several sub-communities, they are classified as transethnic organizations.

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| <p><b>1. Ethnic civil organizations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- horse riding club (<i>Hungarians</i>)</li><li>- Rákóczi Kovács Gusztáv Traditionalist Association (<i>Hungarians</i>)</li></ul> <p><b>2. Trans-ethnic civil organizations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Traditionalist and Advocacy Association for the Roma Culture of Nagyecsed (<i>Hungarians and Oláh Romanis</i>)</li><li>- Nyevo Drom – New Way Association of Roma Men (<i>Hungarians and Oláh Romanis</i>)</li><li>- Association for the Underprivileged People of Nagyecsed (<i>Hungarian and Romungros</i>)</li><li>- Pearls of Nagyecsed Roma Dance Association (<i>Oláh Roma and Romungros</i>)</li><li>- Vazdune Chershaja – Rising Stars Association for Roma Women (<i>Hungarians, Oláh Roma and Romungros</i>)</li></ul> |
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Figure 1.: Civil communities in Nagyecsed classified by ethnicity and transethnicity

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<sup>11</sup> Aparovics – Vercseg 2017.



As can be seen from Figure 1, the three local ethnic sub-communities in the municipality are predominantly trans-ethnic communities, which means that within the framework of the respective NGOs, the three local ethnic sub-communities find a forum that presupposes cooperation, regular meetings and mutual acceptance.

If we examine which of the local organizations have an active element of tradition preservation and care in their programmes, we can say that, with the exception of two organisations,<sup>12</sup> the majority of them are committed to tradition. Although the above statement seems rather vague and clichéd, it is all the more significant. It is clear from the work of the communities that maintain an element of local tradition that the society of Greater Neuchâtel is essentially tradition-oriented, regardless of the ethnic composition of its membership. This attitude is an essential element of the open-minded attitude that has begun to shift relations between the two communities, which were once closed and distant, in a positive direction.

The paper will then discuss how the cultivation of the cultural heritage dance tradition influences the social relations identified above and presented in the coexistence pattern.

*”I am convinced that in Nagyecséd, because we have been actively dealing with the issue of Roma integration and inclusion for a very, very long time, almost twenty years. At the beginning, it was only in a self-taught way, but then, obviously, with the opening up and availability of European Union funds, it became possible to make progress in this area on an ever larger scale. I believe that in Nagyecséd, as pioneers or role models, we have implemented and are implementing many programmes which I believe will not pass without a trace in the life of the municipality when we talk about inclusion and integration. One thing I have certainly experienced, I have had the opportunity to experience in this area, is that the Roma tradition, whether it be dance, singing or handicraft programmes, whoever becomes involved in this programme in any way, whether they are young people, children or adults, undergoes a huge change, both in their personality, in their*

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<sup>12</sup> The Nyevo Drom and the Association for the Underprivileged People of Nagyecséd did not carry out activities related to preserving traditions at the time of the study (2019–2020).

*acceptance and in their values. I believe that we must continue along this path and promote the preservation and cultivation of traditions as widely as possible. I am very pleased that this was actually recognised at a national level recently, when, in addition to our Hungarian folk dance, the Roma folk dance was also included in the list of national cultural heritage in Nagyecsed, the first in the country.”<sup>13</sup>*

Lajos Kovács’s 2019 keynote speech is linked to an important local event. The Roma Room was inaugurated as a new exhibition of the Berey József Local History Collection. This unique event contributed to the development of positive Hungarian-Roma relations in several ways. On the one hand, the history of the local Roma society was included as part of the local history collection, thus showing the distinctive, yet positive and valuable cultural characteristics of the Oláh Roma community to the local majority community. Another equally important element of the celebration was - as the text of the speech deliberately emphasized - the parallel inclusion of the Roma dance of Nagyecsed in the list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Nagyecsed in 2017. This is what can be found on the Intellectual Cultural Heritage in Hungary webpage:

*„Nagyecsed is an important „dancing settlement”, where the Hungarian verbunk, the slow and fresh Csárdás, the Gypsy solo, the botoló and the Gypsy Csárdás are still danced together by young and old, Hungarians and Roma people. Nationally renowned masters and scholars of both Hungarian and Roma dances were born, lived and live here. Due to the isolation of the settlement, the characteristic dance repertoire, the rich and unique motifs, the song repertoire and the customs associated with the dances have remained unchanged, so those who wish to learn all this from local informants still visit Nagyecsed and its dancers.”<sup>14</sup>*

These two flagship events give visibility not only locally but also nationally to the coexistence of the two communities, the parallel display of which indicates a relationship characterised by a positive attitude.

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<sup>13</sup> Excerpt from the documentary *Across the Bridge*. Biczó – Szabó 2019.

<sup>14</sup> [http://szellemikulturalisorokseg.hu/index0.php?name=0\\_nagyecsed\\_i\\_ciganytanc](http://szellemikulturalisorokseg.hu/index0.php?name=0_nagyecsed_i_ciganytanc) [retrieved: 04.07.2023.]

In Nagyecsed there are two dance ensembles operating in parallel, the Rákóczi Kovács Gusztáv Traditionalist Association and the Pearls of Nagyecsed Traditional Dance Association. The former was founded to cultivate the local Hungarian dance heritage, while the other specialises in the cultivation of the Oláh Roma dances of Nagyecsed.

From an interview with the leader of the Hungarian dance ensemble of Nagyecsed, we know that the ensemble was founded in 1996, led by Miklós Tóth from the beginning. The local Hungarian dance dialect is an outstanding example of the dance culture of the region. *„In terms of dances, Nagyecsed belongs to the middle or Tisza dance dialect, the Upper Tisza dialect area, which is the richest and most representative of the large dance dialect and has a very significant role in the appreciation of the Hungarian dance heritage as a whole.”*<sup>15</sup> The short summary is available on the official website of the collection of cultural assets in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, and essentially points out the importance of the local dance heritage beyond the borders of the settlement.

According to the leader, the group soon grew to 12 couples and appeared at almost every event in the city and the surrounding area. The importance of their traditional work is demonstrated by the fact that they have become nationally known, having achieved three excellent ratings.

Their activities were summarised by the leader:

*„We went to Nagyecsed with 45 people and got our first excellent rating on national level. [...] This gave the team and myself the encouragement to work on more Ecsed traditions. Which starts with the theft that the boys used to do when they wanted to go out and have fun. They had no money, they stole corn from their parents and grandparents, went to the Jew's, exchanged it for wine and went to the barn to have fun. We put that on stage.”*<sup>16</sup>

The group can be classified as an ethnic local organization, which means that the members are all of Hungarian origin, and although they dance local

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<sup>15</sup> This description of the Hungarian and Roma dance traditions in Nagyecsed is from the collection of cultural assets of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg country. In: <http://szszbm-ertektar.hu/ertek.php?azon=218> [retrieved: 15.04.2023.]

<sup>16</sup> the author's interview with Miklós Tóth, leader of the ensemble, Nagyecsed, 2019.

Roma dances, the group has never had any dancers from the Roma ethnic community.

With the aim of preserving the tradition of Roma dance in Nagyecsed, a separate ensemble was organized in 2005, called Pearls of Nagyecsed Roma Dance Association. The leader of the group is Szilvia Balogh Erőssné, a local Roma of Oláh origin. Originally founded as an informal group, it started as a children's club. As the young people grew, the idea to turn the community into a talent workshop and a real community developed. The leader of the group recalls that their aim from the very beginning was to provide talented Roma youth from Nagyecsed with an organised framework for dance and music-making. They have 20 members of mixed age groups.

In addition to preserving the traditional Oláh Roma dance culture, active music-making, talent development and community organizing are also important. The leader said:

*"I think it's very important for our identity that we know that we are Roma people, that we have a different culture, a different set of customs, and that we keep those that are good. If there is a value, we should not let it be lost, like music, dance and singing."*<sup>17</sup>

Specific situational circumstances played a role in the institutionalisation of the Roma dance tradition in Nagyecsed. On the one hand, the dance culture has a deeply integrated function in the life of the ethnic community, i.e. the majority of its members are active participants in the maintenance of the tradition. Even today, family gatherings and celebrations provide a space for tradition. On the other hand, it is very important, and research has shown that the educational work of several local activists of Oláh Roma origin, carried out in parallel and in different settings, has a continuous and strong influence on the public opinion in Nagyecsed. In addition to the work of the founding ensemble leader mentioned above, Roma dance is taught both in the local kindergarten and in the primary school near the Romungro slum.

Mariann Balogh, a preschool teacher of Oláh Roma origin, has integrated regular dance instruction into her teaching practice, which she considers an important task. In regular sessions with kindergarten children, she strives to teach

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<sup>17</sup> the author's interview with Szilvia Erőssné Balogh, leader of the ensemble, Nagyecsed, 2019.

authentic elements and the basics of the local dialect. Her work is characterised by a high level of awareness, which contributes to the support of the parents of the kindergarten children for her unconventional pedagogical efforts to preserve traditions.

*„Here we have a lot of folk dancers, young masters of folk arts, dance, folk music and storytellers. [...] dancing plays an important role in families, both among the Oláh Roma and the Hungarians. I asked eight children who would like to go, and of course the parents supported me. [...] It's very interesting that those who go to Roma dancing, some of them go to Hungarian folk dancing and religious education. In my group, there are Romungro and Oláh Roma children, and there are mixed groups, some whose mothers are Oláh Roma and whose fathers are Hungarian Roma, some have Romungro mothers and Oláh Roma fathers, and there are some whose fathers are Hungarian and whose mothers are Romungro. There are all kinds of them but are very smart. [...] It's very important that people who are folk dancers or go to football or do some extra activity, their coordination of movement is very important, their patience, their ability to concentrate and their memory. And in dancing, all these things are really necessary.”<sup>18</sup>*

In the primary school dance is taught by Izsák Lakatos, a 19-year-old young man from a prominent local family of Olach Roma musicians, who is studying at evening school. His credo shows exactly how his commitment makes him an authentic person in his teaching. As a regular member of the dance association, he represents the dance culture of his community in performances.

*”I grew up in it. The blood won't let me stop dancing. Even if I hear music sitting down or lying down, I dance. I grew up in it. I'm the only one who can say that I didn't learn from anybody, I learned how to dance everything by myself. I mean, I saw it, but nobody taught me, so I do what I know on my own. Why do I do it by teaching others? Maybe because maybe dancing makes you a different person. Or, if you are in a medium, you shouldn't be a rejecting person, that you don't know, you are standing on the side, but maybe you will become a different*

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<sup>18</sup> Biczó – Szabó 2019.

*person. He will be more accepted in the environment or whatever, or in a group of friends, because he is not a separate person, he is not a person who is not a member of the group, he is one of us, he knows something. And with dance you can talk a lot. You can tell what kind of person is the one who is dancing.”<sup>19</sup>*

The institutionalisation of the Oláh Roma dance has greatly contributed to the majority society in Nagyecsed gaining an understanding of the cultural values of the Roma community living together. In this process, as the above quotations show, young dance teachers of Oláh Roma origin in local educational and public training institutions played a huge role.

Although formally similar institutions, the two dance ensembles of the two ethnic communities of Nagyecsed have important differences in their structure and defining characteristics (Figure 2).

	Rákóczi Kovács Gusztáv Traditionalist Association	Pearls of Nagyecsed Roma Dance Association
Number of members	40-45	20
Ethnicity of members	Hungarians	Romungros and Oláh Roma
Age of members	10-75	8-60
Conditions for membership	love of dancing	minimal dancing skills
Aims of the group	preserving traditions	preserving traditions and identity
Events to interact with the cultural life of the settlement	every event in the settlement	every event in the settlement

Figure 2.: Comparison of the two dance ensembles of Nagyecsed

The number of members in the ensembles is roughly proportional to the ethnic proportions in the municipality. However, the mutual characteristic of the two groups is that they do not yet cross ethnic boundaries. Thus, the Hungarian dance ensemble is reluctant to admit members of Roma origin (although they themselves dance Roma dance), while the Roma dance ensemble is reluctant to admit non-Roma members. However, it is an important phenomenon that members of the two local Roma communities together form the Pearls, a true transethnic community. It is interesting to observe the great enthusiasm

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<sup>19</sup> Biczó – Szabó 2019.

with which young people from the acculturated Romungro segregationist environment learn the Oláh Roma dances.<sup>20</sup>

However, more important than the differences, which can be explained primarily by cultural and social background, is the fact that both dance groups play an important role in the cultural life of the settlement and contribute to the fulfilment of the ethnic identity functions of the community organisations.

### **The functions of dance in the forming of the local community in Nagyecsed**

It is also clear from the above that the two dance companies do not only have an impact on their own ethnic communities. The work of the traditional dance groups is an important representative activity for the settlement as a whole, and the resulting performances, performances and public engagement are an achievement with which almost all citizens of Nagyecsed can identify, regardless of their ethnicity. This statement needs to be explained in more detail.

In the above, the rich civil society life of Nagyecsed, the active organisations have been classified according to the composition of their membership along ethnic and transethnic categories. Analysing their activities in a broader context reveals that their impact, especially on the local society as a whole, goes beyond ethnicity. Although the communities are ethnic organisations and the Hungarian and the two Roma communities do not mix at all, their activities and the forms of representation have a transethnic impact and exert a positive influence on inter-ethnic relations at the settlement level.

Based on the results of the research, we can say that the leaders of the local organizations, and in particular the leaders of the two dance companies, emphasise the presentation and the involvement of their groups in the local society as a general core element of their activities. They use the term 'standing up' to describe what it means to them to demonstrate their values and standards and to take them up in the public sphere of the municipality as a whole during the various performance occasions.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> see Biczó – Szabó 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Szabó 2023.

By „standing up”, on the one hand, they bring to the public the value of their own community’s heritage, which supports the living and strengthening of the community’s sense of belonging. The „exposure”, as the research has shown, also means that the two dance companies almost always participate in the same local and regional events and usually take the stage one after the other. The consecutive dance performance has an impact that is capable of presenting the local community of Nagyecsed as a society capable of crossing ethnic boundaries. It is certain that the demonstration of the work of the local cultural organisations in Nagyecsed conveys to the whole of the community an emerging transethnic ethos, which at the same time is a constant urge to transcend the historically established opposition between ethnic groups.<sup>22</sup> In terms of current practices, the transethnic effect is primarily exerted in the associations and groups themselves, and has an exemplary impact on the relations that determine the whole of the community of the settlement. As a result, a citizen of Nagyecsed, regardless of ethnicity, takes pride in both dance groups, recognising that they represent the whole of the community beyond its borders with equal importance, and thus expressing a sense of local belonging as an important element in the collective identity.

## **Summary**

In the past decade I have studied the issues related to Hungarian-Roma cohabitation in several settlements in Eastern Hungary. In many cases, traditional communities were observed. It was striking that in many cases dance, although an available element of tradition, could not become institutionalized and thus could not become a platform for organizing relations and building bridges between local communities. In order for this to happen in Nagyecsed and for a specific practice to develop around the local dance culture, special circumstances had to exist. On the one hand, as has been shown, the city administration has an open attitude towards the minority local ethnic sub-community, the Oláh Roma people. In addition, an important condition was that the dance tradition was a cultural element of

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<sup>22</sup> For the definition of transethnic ethos see Biczó 2013.



equal value to the two local communities, which in both cases was similar, a value within their own communities, and was suitable for the development of civic organisation. Furthermore, the ensembles that are organised to foster, maintain and preserve the dance heritage represent the whole of the community to the public, and are accepted by the whole local society, regardless of ethnicity. Finally, the members of the Nagyecsed community have knowledge of each other's culture and personal experience, which also promotes mutual acceptance (Figure 3).



Figure 3.: The functions of heritage in the processes of the local community

Through the example of Nagyecsed, it became clear that the „language of dance” is the mediating bridge that can be used to bring about a change in the exclusionary behaviour between groups that have been separated as a result of historical processes. Of course, we know that the issue of Hungarian-Roma ethnic coexistence cannot be solved by dance alone, but dance heritage is a valuable „good practice” whose adaptation, as the example of Nagyecsed shows, can be applied to similar multi-ethnic and disadvantaged settlements as a tool to promote integration.

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# On embodiment of local dance tradition as cultural value. The Nagyecsed example

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LÁSZLÓ FELFÖLDI

## Introduction

### *Theme of the presentation*

Theme of the paper is transmission of the local dance and musical knowledge, maintained as local heritage and contextualised in a locally invented cultural program, in a local community. The central event of the Nagyecsed Verbung és Csárdás Verseny (Verbunk and Csárdás Competition in Nagyecsed) is a „festival-like”, „quasi competition” of the participants in the framework of a „village-ball”<sup>1</sup> organised under the auspices of the local self-government by related social organizations. It takes place biannually, on a spring weekend in the local culture house, since 2010. Distinctive features of each component (festival, competition, ball) has its own significance in the event, and being intertwined they create a new kind of cultural program. In this complex, interactive form it satisfies the interest of a much larger part of the local community, than alone. And what is more, it serves more intensively the goal of the organisers - the construction of the local dance heritage<sup>2</sup>. The central event is backed by the folk dance and folk music departments of the “Elementary Art school” system in Hungary.<sup>3</sup> It is integrated into the regular dance and music life of the settlement, where all kinds of ballroom dances occur including csárdás and other traditional dances.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is a festival in the sense, that it comprises folk dance performances on the stage; it is competition where majority of the competitors are local inhabitants, presenting local dance traditions; and it is a „village ball”, ending the whole event, celebrating the „local creativity”.

<sup>2</sup> Felföldi 2011; 2020; Felföldi – Fügedi 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Since 1990 in Hungary there are about 800 Elementary Schools of Art which develop artistic skills, talents in the spheres of music, dance, puppetry, and fine arts. If required, they prepare students for further studies.

<sup>4</sup> In Nagyecsed besides the Verbunk and Csárdás Verseny, there are several other cultural programs where dance and music may occur: Festival of the Ecsedi Láp Fesztivál (Ecsed Swamp Festival), Lápi disznótoros (Pig killing Feast of the Swamp), Farsangi bál és felvonulás (Carnival ball and parade), Szüreti bál és felvonulás (Grape harvest and parade),

*Short ethnographic description of the topic*

It was in 2008, when the idea of the Verbunk-competition came up in the settlement and the first event was realised in 2010. Since that time the program has changed in some respects, but the main idea remained: „to pay tribute to the local dances in Nagyecsed”.<sup>5</sup> Short detail from the Call for the Verbunk and Csárdás Competition from 2014 provide us with some basic information about the organisation of the event:

„The Rákóczi Kovács Gusztáv Preservation Ensemble, the Free Dance Elementary School of Art and the Báborka Elementary School of Art, the Municipality of Nagyecsed, the Association of Masters of Folk Art Dancers and the Muharay Association<sup>6</sup> organized the competition for the 5th time, paying tribute to the Nagyecsed dance traditions. This year, competition is open not only for solo verbunk dancers, but for single couple dancers with local csárdás material as well. Dancers are evaluated by a jury. Participation fee: 2500 HUF (cca. 7 EURO)” [...] “We welcome all dancers young and old alike who love to dance our Ecsedi verbunk. We consider improvisational, free dancing to be important, taking into account the dances of Lajos Molnár “Lasa”, Gergely “Pokróc” Buják, Gusztáv Rákóczi and Lajos Murguly, with special emphasis on their way of dancing. For this purpose, we recommend the following film recordings from the folk dance archive of the Institute of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences: FT. 246. FT. 403. FT. 640. FT: 781. FT. 809. FT. 921. FT. 996. Dancers have 2 minutes to showcase their skills. Each dancer must dance twice during the competition. They are introduced first in solo and then in small groups. Introductions are by age groups, in alphabetical order of the names of the competitors.”

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Competition of Homemade Vines, Szatmár határok nélkül (Szatmár Region without borders) etc. <https://www.nagyecsed.hu/rendezvenyek/> [last download: 2023. 07. 28.]

<sup>5</sup> Quotation from the Call for participation of the event.

<sup>6</sup>



Figure 1. Poster of the Competition in 2021.<sup>7</sup> Figure 2. Dancing in the brake 2021

The competition takes place in six age groups, which give possibility to each of the generations of the settlement to participate on the event.<sup>8</sup> Age groups: No I: 7-10, No II.: 11-13, No III.: 14-15, No IV. 16-20, No V: 21-40, No V: above 40. The most populous age groups are the II. and the III., who are the pupils of the local elementary school, the secondary school and the art schools. Besides, competitors from the neighbouring arts schools from the region increase the number of the two age groups. In 2021 eighty solo verbunk dancer and forty six csárdás couples participated in the competition. Among the dancers of the two sexes there are several overlaps. (Solo verbunk male dancers dancing Csárdás with their female partners count only ones.) Criteria of the evaluation are: free dancing, faithfulness to the earlier recordings, correct dancing behavior, harmony of dance and music, local traditional costume. The organizers provide lunch for the competitors. Gifts and prizes are

<sup>7</sup> Photos in the paper were made by the organisers. See list of the illustrations at the end of the paper.

<sup>8</sup> The age groups are slightly changes from occasion to occasion.

donated by local entrepreneurs, NGOs, local families, the local government and supporting national organizations.

The competitors are supported by the audience (their family members, friends, acquaintances) and other “agents” (Masters of FolkArt in the settlement, members of the local and regional administration, members of the jury, representatives of the local NGO-s) having active participation on the two-days event. Active support ranges from personal participation, appraisal, critic; to financial support and to the donation of prizes and gifts.

### **Scene of the research: Nagyecsed**

The settlement is located on the north-eastern part of Hungary. Its population counts 6327 inhabitants.<sup>9</sup> Ethnic distribution: 91 % Hungarian, 20 % Roma, 9 % did not answer. About half of the Roma population had dual (Gypsy-Hungarian) identity. Religious deivision: 5 % Roman Catholic, 59 %, Calvinist, 6.5 % Greek Catholic, 2 % other, 14 nondominational, 14 % did not answer. Nagyecsed village came into being on the territory of a large swamp with a water castle in the middle, which was ruined in the 18th century.<sup>10</sup> Drainage of the marsh took place at the end of the 19th century. Till that time Nagyecsed was a closed and almost inaccessible village for the outside world. This situation conserved the local socio-cultural conditions and local culture was getting to outstand from its surroundig by conservatism, diversity and richness of the traditions in the region. These features attracted the attention of experts and made the local dances nationally visible and popular after the World II. Nagyecsed became a kind of „pilgrimige place” for dance researchers, choreographers and dancers. Since 1953 – establishment of the Master of Folk Art State Prize - nine dancers have been awarded with the Prize from the settlement, which is an exeptional case. But nationwide fame did not go hand in hand with the animation of the local dance life. Because of the sovietisation of cultural life in Hungarytraditional, local dance events

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<sup>9</sup> Demographic data refers to 01.01.2015. At early age of its history it had already had the rank of „town”, but after the demolition of the water castle it lost its significance and became a „village”. In 1994, it regained the status of a city. Berey 1988.

<sup>10</sup>

had disappeared, and the talented dancers of the community had slowly become the “stars” of the centralized revival movement. It was the Muharay Elemér Folk Art Association in 2007, who turned the attention of its member-ensembles (among them the Nagyecsed traditionalist group) to the cultural safeguarding program of UNESCO<sup>11</sup>, the European Commission<sup>12</sup> and the so called „National Value Depository” System<sup>13</sup> in the 2010s. The ideologies behind these international and national programs (local community, local identity, collective memory, cultural heritage, creativity) have become embedded in the cultural policy of regional and local communities and have brought about changes in the practice of the stage-centered folklore revival movement countrywide. It resulted in a kind of „organic modernization”<sup>14</sup> of the local cultural life, which is represented by the „Verbunk and csárdás verseny” in Nagyecsed.

#### *Research questions*

Present research has been motivated by the novelty of the topic, the decade-long history of the event, and the keen interest of the local community. The most relevant questions, what we are interested in, generally:

- What are the constituent elements of the local *dance knowledge* (explicit and tacit) available so far for the Nagyecsed community and how its *transmission* is taking place in the framework of Nagyecsed Verbunk és Csárdás verseny (Verbunk- and Csárdás Competition)?

How local knowledge becomes part of the local, regional and national heritage? How *cultural heritage* confirms the local identity and how it reflects the socio-cultural relations of the community? - Who are the „agents”<sup>15</sup> determining the content of the dance heritage and the way of safeguarding?

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<sup>11</sup> <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention> [last download: 2023. 07. 28.]

<sup>12</sup> Faro Convention 2005. Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No. 199) <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treatynum=199> [last download: 2023. 07. 28.]

<sup>13</sup> Act No. XXX in 2012 on the Hungarian National Values and Hungaricums and the 2015 amendment. <https://mkogy.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1500080.TV> [last download: 2023. 07. 28.]

<sup>14</sup> It is a kind of social change when new cultural elements are merging into the traditional ones without pushing them into the background.

<sup>15</sup> In this case „agents” are the participants of the process of heritage creation: politicians, cultural managers, members of the community, researchers, social and cultural organizations etc.



Specially:

- Is *embodiment*<sup>16</sup> of local dances in Nagyecsed a mechanic reproduction of the archived „dance processes” recorded and disseminated by the researchers, or does it support to acquire the free, improvisative form of the dance traditionally practiced locally?
- What are the factors facilitating *personification* of dance knowledge?

Despite the still insufficient research, we try to answer the questions for which we already have some experience. But satisfactory answers can only be given once the research is completed, according to the plan in 2023.

#### *Preliminary sources*

Earlier in the 1950s, expert on dance ethnography concentrated mainly on documentation of the dance repertory of danced by the Hungarian inhabitants of the village by filming the best improvisations of the most talented dancers in the village. As a result of this activity, from 1955 till 1990, dancers from Nagyecsed has been filmed seven times. This resulted in more than twenty dance processes improvised by Molnár, Lajos (1889-1970); Bíró, Lajosné (1897-1987); Bujáki; Gergely (1906-1979); Czine, Rozália (1936-); Rákóczi Kovács Gusztáv (1937-2007 with his wife; Murguly, Lajos (1949). Films (Ft 246, 403, 640, 781, 809, 921, 996), and the additional documentation are preserved in the Folk Dance and folk Music Archive of the Institute of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest. Local intelligence intelligence (teachers, priests) also contributed to the increase of the resource material. The most effective local collector was Dancs, Lajos (1920-1988) music teacher, vice-director of the local elementary school and forunder of the Folk Dance and Music Ensemble in Nagyecsed in 1954.<sup>17</sup> He published some part of his folk music collection in several volumes.<sup>18</sup> His folklore material including dance and folk customs appeared on the stage in the program of the ensemble titled Nagyecsed lakodalmas (Wedding in Nagyecsed).

Publications with formal analysis, interpretation and comparison of the best examples from the local dances from Nagyecsed were published by the

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<sup>16</sup> Ness 2004.

<sup>17</sup> The ensemble survived till the 1980s and presented local dances on the stage. The ensemble was revived in 1996 under the direction of Miklós Tóth with the name “Rákóczi Kovács Gusztáv Hagyományörző Együttes” for the same purpose.

<sup>18</sup> Dancs 1976; 1982; 1993. The rest of his collection is kept at the local primary school.

professional researchers. Among them, the writings of György Martin, Ernő Pesovár and Lányi Ágoston are the most significant in terms of creating basis for heritage creation.<sup>19</sup> (Due to these publications és films, there are hardly a folk dance ensemble in Hungary, which would not have had a choreography based on the dances of Nagyecsed on its repertory.) This material served as a sufficient basis for our new research as well.

### *Methodology, approaches, key concepts*

We participated in 2009 in raising the idea and planning the program of the Verbunk Verseny and witnessed the development of the event from the beginning (2010). Decision to begin a systematic research in connection with it was made in 2018, when we discovered its significance and its potentials for local heritage protection. Since then, the program has been held only in 2021 due to the pandemic, with two years omission. These two occasions in 2018 and 2021, we made detailed video recordings and photo documentation on them with the assistance of the local organisers. Besides we made interviews with 7 participants and consulted with the cultural managers around the event. We collected the written documents as well in connection with the events (opening speeches, posters, evaluation and decision of the jury, newspaper news etc.).

In the context of this research we play the role of an anthropologist, field researcher on the one side and consultant, evaluator (member of the jury) and one of the development managers on the other side. That is why we had to construct methodology and system of approaches, which suits the situation. Because of this aim, we used (and use) the principles of applied anthropology, which is praxis-based way of research including researcher involvement and activism within the researched community. Involvement and activism claims from us an acute awareness of our situation and the effect of our intervention into the event in the progress of the research.<sup>20</sup>

Besides, we apply the key concepts of cognitive anthropology concerning knowledge, transmission (learning-teaching) and personification of the

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<sup>19</sup> Martin 1963; 1970: 70–71; 1980; Martin – Pesovár 1958; Pesovár 1980; 1997; Pesovár – Lányi 1974.

<sup>20</sup> Kedia – Willigen 2005.

knowledge.<sup>21</sup> We supplemented this with the concepts of heritage studies as well: local memory, heritage construction.<sup>22</sup> For the conceptualisation of „actions” as elements of the bodily behavior, or an event, we turned to Desmond Morris’ „Manwatching” and Michael Thompson’ „*Life and Action: Elementary Structures of Practice and Practical Thought*”, which are dealing with different aspects of this topic.<sup>23</sup> Some of their ideas inspired us in the analysis and interpretation of the Verbunk and Csárdás Competition.



Figure 3. Announcement of the results of the competition

### *Structural analysis and interpretation of the event*

To provide an easy overview for the reader, we tabulated the event and tried to present what happened according to the time, location, and attendees of the actions. The purpose of editing this table below<sup>24</sup> is not merely to count the individual “actions” and “series of actions” of the event, but also to systematize their time, duration, scene conditions and the number and role of the participants. This allows the researcher to determine the inventory of the actions that make up the event, to examine their role, and significance

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<sup>21</sup> Felföldi 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Akagawa – Smith 2019; Halbwachs 1992.

<sup>23</sup> Morris 1979; Thompson 2012.

<sup>24</sup> See in the Appendix, at the end of the paper.

in the process of the event. This kind of analysis helps us in understanding the social context and the way of transmission of the local dance knowledge and the process of heritage creation. Besides, it provides us possibility to make comparison between other dance events locally, nationally and internationally.<sup>25</sup>

In our view, the whole event of the Verbunk and Csárdás Competition consists of seven parts, of which the competitive, festival-like presentation itself and the evening ball are the most important from the point of view of the goal of the whole event. These make up most of the duration of the event. (We indicated this Parts by capital letter of the abc: C, D, E). Parts B and F parts, i.e., the introductory and closing ceremonies, create the framework for the central elements of the event. In these two parts, we can witness the verbal appreciation of the local dance and music tradition as value and respectively the strengthening of the collective memory by the speeches. With this in mind, they are also important parts of the program. Part A represents the preparatory phase both from the side of the organisers and the participants. Preparation of the first 3 age-groups takes place in the elementary art school the others prepare themselves alone on the regular local dance events and in the ensemble.

Parts indicated by capital letters generally contain so called “actions” and “series of actions”. For instance, one Verbunk improvisation of a participant is considered to be one “action”, and the Csárdás improvisations together are one “series of actions” as it can be seen in the Line 17 of the table indicated with E.2. index. E.2. 1-25. means that in this series there are 25 csárdás improvisations. If we sum up the indices of the structural elements of the Verbunk and Csárdás competition, we get the following formula:

**A** (A1;A2;A3),+ [**B** (B1;B2) + **C** (C1;C2;C3;C.4;C.5) + **D**] + [**E** (E.1;E.2;E.3;E.4;E.5) + **F**(F.1) +**G**

As it is seen, on the level of the Parts, we can differentiate 7 elements, indicated by bald capital letters: **A+ B+ C+ D+ E+ F+ G** The content of the

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<sup>25</sup> As I know, structural analysis of the dance events is not accepted yet in methodology of ethnochoreology. We included it in the program of Choreomundus, joint international MA cours, where students apply it in their research.

parts (the series of actions) are closed in parenthesis: (A1;A2;A3) + (B1;B2) + (C1;C2;C3;C.4;C.5) + D + (E.1;E.2;E.3;E.4;E.5) + (F.1.) + G

If we go deeper in the event-structure, we may specify the content of the single action series as they are indicated in table:

(A1;A2;A3), the first phase of the event covers the complex of the preparatory actions. This is not easy and not necessary to formalise here.

(B1.1+B.1.2+B.1.3+B.1.4+B1.1.5) These actions mean five different opening speeches given by the representatives of the local politicians. E.g. the first one, B.1.1. was held by the mayor of the settlement.

(B2.1+B2.2+B2.3+B2.4+B2.5+B.2.6+B2.7) The seven actions here represent the wreathing actions at the memorial table of the local Artists of Folk Art.

(C1.1-42 + C2.1-42 + C3.1-42 +C.4; C.5) The 5 series of actions cover the rehearsal + the solo presentation + the small group presentation of the verbunk + the evaluation by the jury + the announcement of the results. For instance, C.2.1-42. means Performance of the verbunk” by 42 dancers one after the other, as it is specified in the table below. C.2.15. index indicate the improvisation of the verbunk dancer, who is 15<sup>th</sup> in the alphabetical order.

D that is the evening ball, a complex part of the event, which could be broken down into actions, but because of its free structure it is not easy and not necessary to do in this analysis.

(E.1.1-25 + E.2.1.25 + E.3.1-8 + E.4 + E.5) These actions (rehearsal, performances, evaluation of csárdás by the jury and announcement of the result can be coded and decoded according to the same logic as the verbunk. Only the number of the competitors is different.

F Part covers the closing ceremony that is 5 closing speeches F1.1-5), which can be treated as the opening speeches at the beginning of the event.

G Part represent the feedback-phase, which can not be totally planned and structured.

## Summary

On the basis of the analysis, we can conclude, that in 2018 the Verbunk and Csárdás verseny in Nagyecsed, as an event, had a rather regulated structure

(the competition) with several free-structured actions consciously incorporated into the process (common dancing, evening ball). This two-faced character and the almost equal time and scene division between the two kinds of actions provided balance for the program. The nature of the strictly regulated actions is given by the competition-rules set by the organizers, which seek to ensure equal opportunities for all age groups, both genders, local participants and those from elsewhere, former competitors and newcomers. The loose, liberated, free character of the program is given by the evening ball and by the joyful common dance after the announcements of results, where the formal perfection of the dance is not the primary expectation. The question arises as to how we define the researched event, as a competition, festival, dance course or entertainment opportunity. In this respect, it is not a real competition, which claims the “perfect” copying of the onetime recorded dance processes. It is rather a kind of “ritualised” dance event for showing and developing their skills in practicing the local dances, to show what level they are at mastering the local tradition. The dancers acquire the basic knowledge and skill (embodiment) in advance at the art school and in the family circle. They are coming to the competition to test themselves and to show off on the stage in festival-like form. They have no dance artist ambitions. For them, it is an attractive and amusing form of participating in an event for shaping the local heritage as it is written in the founding document of the program. It is better to define the “Competition” as a complex, cultural event invented and implemented by the local organisers in order to safeguard local cultural elements as values.

Every occasion, a small group of the young participants appear in the competition (age group I. around seven years) and in a few years, they move up to higher age groups. Of the participants who danced in the first age group in 2010, they are now in the third one. The eldest dancers above seventy, dance on the stage without any obligation to participate in the competition. They show examples for the younger generation, how to create dance and “how to adapt dance movements to the moment” – as the organizers of the program claim. The younger ones, who already have mostly the codified, basic

knowledge of dancing, try to acquire here the way of “dancing behavior.”<sup>26</sup> In my view, dancing behaviour represents the skills, ideas and experiences that are possessed by the experienced dancers, but are not codified and not easy to expressed. These can be named, the “tacit knowledge” (the know-how) as opposed to the explicit knowledge (the know-what), which can be coded and easily mastered. <sup>27</sup>Tacit knowledge is an equally important, inseparable element of the dance knowledge, which can only be acquired by the novices through observation, imitation and long practice. „Personal experimentation” can also be an effective tool for gaining tacit knowledge. Combination or unification of the explicit and tacit knowledge may result in the embodiment of dance knowledge through personalization. Personalization means the harmonization of the two kinds of knowledge with your personal capabilities by means of practical experience in a relevant context. Embodied knowledge generated in this way may serve as a basis for a lifelong “individual dancing carrier” in the circle of a “community”, sharing the collective knowledge.

The 2018 competition was the 5th, indicating that the event is a recurring part of a long-term program.<sup>28</sup> Due to these features, the event serves as an incubator model<sup>29</sup> with the aim at building capacity for improving ones’ knowledge, developing practice and construction cultural heritage in the field of traditional dance and music, locally.

In reviewing, we cannot ignore the issues that can be found in this recently invented form of social entertainment. One of these is the gypsy community and the dance tradition, which has no place in the competition. Yet Gypsies have been part of the local community for centuries. The coexistence probably contributes to the formation of the dance tradition of the Hungarians of Nagyecsed and to the development of their commonalities. The importance of the problem is also proved by the special professional attention paid to the gypsy dance tradition and the published professional writings.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Felföldi 2002.

<sup>27</sup> Differentiation between know-how and know-what was made by Gilbert Ryle, British philosopher in 1940s.

<sup>28</sup> In the meantime, there have been some minor changes (eg. including csárdás into the competition in addition to verbunk, but the basic concept remained the same.

<sup>29</sup> The term is used mainly in the spheres of business and higher education. I have a great deal of scientific literature.

<sup>30</sup> Balázs 1987; 1989; Felföldi 1988; Martin 1980; Martin – Pesovár 1958.

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## Appendix

Table 1. Chronological table of the 2018 Nagyecsedí Verbunk and Csárdás Competition

<u>Number</u>	<u>Index</u>	<u>Content of the action</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Scene</u>	<u>Participants</u>
	<b>A.</b>	<b>Preparatory phase</b>			
	A.1.	Planning, fund raising, creating infra-structural and personal conditions.	1 year before	Localy	Organisers
	A.2.	A.2. Announcement of the program, call for participation and preparation for the event	½ year before	online	Organisers
	A.3.	A.3. Housing of the guests, registration. First meeting of the participants	Evening-a day before	Culture house	Organisers and participants
	<b>B.</b>	<b>Opening ceremony</b>			
	B1. 1-5	Opening speeches	First day 11.00-11.30	Culture house	Representatives of the local, regional self-governments and NGO-s
	B2. 1-7	Ceremonial wreathing of the Memorial Plaque of the Masters of Folk Art	11.30-21.00	Culture house	Everybody

	<b>C.</b>	<b><i>Verbunk competiton in age groups with audience</i></b>			
	C.1. 1-42	Rehearsal with live music	12.00- 14.00	Culture house	Dancers and musiciant, audience
	C.2.1- 42	Presentation in solo	14.00- 15.00	Culture house	Dancers and musiciant, audience
	C.3. 1-14	Presentation in small groups	15.00.- 15.30	Culture house	Dancers and musiciant, audience
	C.4.	Evaluation of the presentations by the jury	15.30- 16.30	Culture house	Members of the jury
	C.5.	Announcement of the result and com- mon dancing in the theatre	16.30- 18.00	Culture house	Members of the jury, participants, audience, organisers
	<b>D.</b>	<b>Evening ball with supper, dance and live music</b>	20.00- 22.00	Restau- rant	Everybody
	<b>E.</b>	<b>Csárdás competi- tion in age groups with audience</b>			
	<b>E.1. 1-25</b>	Rehearsal with live music	8.00- 9.00	Culture house	Dancers and musiciant, audience
	<b>E.2. 1-25</b>	Presentation of csárdás in single couples	9.00- 10.00	Culture house	Dancers and musiciant, audience

	<b>E.3. 1-8.</b>	Presentation of csárdás in groups couples	10.00-10.30	Culture house	Dancers and musician, audience
	<b>E.4.</b>	Evaluation of the presentations by the jury	10.30-11.30	Culture house	Members of the jury
	<b>E.5. 1-2.</b>	Announcement of the result and common dancing in the theatre	11.30-12.30	Culture house	Members of the jury, participants, audience, organisers
	<b>F. 1. 1-5</b>	<b>Closing ceremony, farewell speeches</b>	12.30-13.00	Culture house	Everybody
	<b>G.</b>	<b>Feedback in social media and any other places</b>		online or printed media	organizers and others

### List of illustrations

- Figure 1. Poster of the „Nagyecsedí Verbunk és Csárdás verseny” 2021 <https://www.facebook.com/Nagyecsedí-Verbunk-%C3%A9s-Cs%C3%A1rdás-Verseny944004842351723/photos/4027820660636777> [last download 2023. 07. 28.]
- Figure 2. Dancing in the brake, 2021. <https://www.facebook.com/Nagyecsedí-Verbunk-%C3%A9s-Cs%C3%A1rdás-Verseny-944004842351723/photos/1656255131126687> [last download 2023. 07. 28.]
- Figure 3. Announcement of the results of the competition. <https://www.facebook.com/Nagyecsedí-Verbunk-%C3%A9s-Cs%C3%A1rdás-Verseny-944004842351723/photos/1656255711126629> [last download 2023. 07. 28.]

- Table 1. Chronological table of the 2018 Nagyecsedí Verbunk and Csárdás Competition, compiled by László Felföldi

# An anthropological approach to Catholic ritual dances: The case of the Obando fertility dance, Subli and Kuraldal

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JOSE ANTONIO LORENZO L. TAMAYO

Growing up in a family where Catholicism was at the forefront of life, I was introduced early to the religious rituals that contributed a huge part in my understanding of Christianity. However, it was perhaps the multitude of processions that I attended – aside from the liturgy – that sustained my interest in Catholicism and, perhaps, deepen my understanding of my relationship with God. I share this passion with many Filipinos, given that these processions depict intertwining layers of native values, beliefs, spirituality, and symbolism. When the Spaniards arrived in the Philippines in the sixteenth century, they observed the fascination of the natives for ornate rituals and many of these focused on idol worship. Such statues were called differently depending on the ethnolinguistic group (i.e., *likha*, *larawan*, *taotao*, *tigbas*).<sup>1</sup> These images were crudely made, unproportioned and had exaggerated parts, which were symbolic of the animistic worldview. In contrast to Christianity where God assumed a human form through Jesus Christ, the animistic mindset had no exacting form or basis for the imagination.<sup>2</sup> Equipped with their tools, they fashioned their idols from a variety of materials (e.g., ivory, tooth, bone, wood, metal) and believed that ancestral spirits or nature deities resided in these statues.<sup>3</sup>

Spanish friar, Juan de Plascencia, O.S.F., observed and documented how the natives used the idols during rituals. He noted that a feast was celebrated and the food that they were to partake in during the ritual was offered as sacrifices. These included flayed and decapitated goats, fowls, and swine, which were placed in front of the idols. Plascencia also identified that

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<sup>1</sup> Gatabonton 1979: 12–13.

<sup>2</sup> Gatabonton 1979: 16.

<sup>3</sup> Barrows 2016.

the natives anointed the idols with perfumes, while a *babaylan* or *catalona*, a male priest or female priestess, chanted praises to the idols as the community responded and supplications were recited repeatedly to gain favor from them. The natives also placed a piece of cloth over the idol followed by a chain or a large gold ring. After this, another ritual was conducted where they cooked a pot of rice, breaking the pot after cooking, and leaving the cooked rice in front of the idols. At various intervals, *buyo* (areca nut wrapped in betel leaf added with lime), fried food and fruits were also offered to the idols.<sup>4</sup>

Another important document records a related ritual aligned with the local priestesses. Here, the priestesses (*bailanes*) were described in detail: they were wearing a headdress made of embroidered handkerchiefs, red shirts, necklaces of glass beads, silver medallions adorning their breasts, gold earrings with strings of beads, skirts called *jabol* or *dogmay* with crocodile motifs, and hoops and bells on their feet. The kind of ritual they conducted may be determined by the kind of offering they had. In Mindanao, the ritual was called *pagcayog* if money or *buyo* was offered, *talibong* for a fowl, and *pag-balilig* for a native pig. These *bailanes* organized themselves through the sounds produced by musical instruments called *agun* and *guimbao*. They also held a *balarao* (dagger) which they used to strike the sacrifices. When the sound of the *culintangan* (a row of small gongs) and those from the *agun* and *guimbao* erupted, the *bailanes* started their dance rituals.<sup>5</sup>

From these two surviving accounts, we can deduce the structure and formality of rituals in the precolonial context where certain elements are necessary. The natives saw the idols as higher beings who granted their needs, whereas the *bailanes*, aside from leading the rituals, served as an intermediary between the spiritual and human realms. Repeated chanting of the supplications by the natives and dancing to the beat of local instruments were important components of the rituals. For the idols to grant the supplications of the community, sacrifices were made and food was offered.

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<sup>4</sup> Documentation of Juan de Plascencia, O.S.F. which appeared in Volume 7 of Blair – Robertson 1973a: 190–191.

<sup>5</sup> Documentation of Retana and Pastells, which appeared in Volume 40 of Blair – Robertson 1973b: 135.



Elements of these precolonial rituals were sustained in the Spanish colonial era but concealed in the guise of Christianity. If the idols were revered in the precolonial tradition, Catholicism was armed with a plethora of saints that consequently replaced these local idols. The case of San Nicolas de Tolentino (St. Nicholas of Tolentino) is a good example. In the precolonial period, the crocodile was worshipped by the natives and considered a symbol of death. When some travelers accidentally fell into a river infested with crocodiles, they were heard saying supplications to San Nicolas de Tolentino; as their lives were spared from a terrible death, news quickly spread and the saint was elevated as a protector against crocodiles.<sup>6</sup>

The gradual shift from idol worship to the veneration of the saints in the Spanish colonial period reached its prime when the Spaniards introduced the system of *reduccion*. This system aimed to fuse scattered villages to form a *pueblo* (town). Life during this time was centered in the local parish church where the parish priest served as a spiritual leader and civil administrator.<sup>7</sup> The lack of Spanish officials prompted the colonial government to rely heavily on the prowess of the friars from various religious orders (i.e., Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, Recollects). In other words, the parish priest was superior in all matters of life. However, not everyone agreed to transfer in the *pueblo*, especially those working in farmlands or fishing areas far from the *población* (town center). This was solved by introducing the *visita* system where a chapel was erected in the *barrio* (village). These chapels were governed through the parish church in the *pueblo* and the friars visited these locations from time to time to conduct the liturgy, institute the sacraments, and perform administrative duties.<sup>8</sup> In both the *población* and *barrio* context, the most anticipated event was the annual fiesta of the patron saint. It was also used by the Spaniards not only to indoctrinate the natives, but also to serve as propaganda. Since the natives were fond of ornate rituals, the friars made sure to shame the precolonial ritual traditions of early Filipinos by showing excesses (e.g., fireworks, ornate decorations, lengthy novenas, lavish processions,

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<sup>6</sup> Gatbonton 1979: 15.

<sup>7</sup> Tamayo 2022: 102.

<sup>8</sup> Coseteng 1972.

bullfighting). The Jesuits even reported to the Holy See that their fiestas were celebrated in the most exuberant, diverse, and entertaining manner.<sup>9</sup>

The fusion of the old and new ritual traditions resulted in a medieval mindset, especially in the *barrios* where the friars had less catechetical influence. For the natives, one's faith was enacted through an array of devotions, becoming obedient, and the maintenance of the church or chapel.<sup>10</sup> Like their idols, the natives saw the *santos* (saints) as potent intercessors who possessed supernatural powers similar to their nature deities. This mindset instilled the notion that all rituals related to the *santo* should be lavish. In the natives' understanding, the granting of one's supplications was parallel to the quality of the ritual conducted.<sup>11</sup> The ornateness of the ritual guaranteed favors from the Creator through the *santo*. Aside from the long novenas which last for nine days, the most important is the feast day. The highlight of the fiesta is the elaborate procession featuring the town's patron saint. The processions in the Philippines were patterned from those in Seville, Spain. Almost all these local processions follow a common structure. It is signaled by the coming of the sacristans holding the *ceriales* (a processional cross partnered with candle poles and censer). The congregation follows the *ceriales* then the guests, politicians and dignitaries, the *hermano* or *hermana mayor* (fiesta sponsors), the parish priest and the religious, the *carroza* (processional float with wheels) or *andas* (shoulder-borne platform) where the *santo* is festooned, and the marching brass band. At times, the patron saint is accompanied by a retinue of other *carrozas* featuring the patron saints of the *barrios*, those promoted by the parish or the religious orders, but the last of these will always be the patron saint of the parish.

Another element that is present in many Catholic processions in the Philippines is ritual dancing. It is common to see male and female dancers wearing colorful outfits who lead the processions. They are usually positioned after the *ceriales* or near the patron saint and they dance to the beat of the brass band throughout the procession. At times, they serve as a model for the congregation to follow. There are also processions wherein people automatically dance when they hear the festive rhythm of the brass band combined with the

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<sup>9</sup> Wendt 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Tamayo 2020: 122.

<sup>11</sup> Jocano 1967: 48.

folk song attributed to the patron saint. If one observes the processions today, the song and dance are integral parts of the procession, which was firmly rooted in precolonial tradition as well. The natives before Christianization performed both songs and dances during rituals and in these both genealogy and doings of their gods were narrated.<sup>12</sup> When the natives were Christianized, religious syncretism widely spread and even secular dances contained Christian elements.<sup>13</sup> This then leads us to the concept of *transformative continuity*. The precolonial belief in nature deities that resided in the idols that transformed into the veneration of the saints and the way the elements of the old tradition shaped Christian folk songs and dances are concrete examples of this construct. Transformative continuity happens when the old belief structure coexists with a new belief structure.<sup>14</sup>

### **Anthropological approach to Catholic ritual dances**

This study is inspired by the work of N. Sudhakar Rao who provided an anthropological approach to folk dances by examining folk dances from the Yanadi tribe of South India, the caste groups in Banaras located in North India, and the Ba Mbuti tribe of Africa.<sup>15</sup> Rao developed a general framework after analyzing the *Melam* of the Yanadis and the *Keelugurralu* of the non-Yanadis.<sup>16</sup> After which, he tested it to the folk dances in Banaras through the ethnographic work of Prasad<sup>17</sup> and that of Turnbull<sup>18</sup> who studied the ritual dances of the Ba Mbuti tribe. His findings revealed that the folk dances of the Yanadi and the caste groups in Banaras showed transformations (e.g., transvestism, role reversals, reversals of hierarchy across gender, caste and social positions) during the performances. Syntagmatic associations were also present among the songs, dances, costumes, and conversations used in various performances. Unlike the previous cases, the folk dances of the Ba

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<sup>12</sup> Fernandez 1980: 391.

<sup>13</sup> Reyes-Urtula – Arandez – Tionson 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Macdonald 2004: 83.

<sup>15</sup> Rao 1997: 57.

<sup>16</sup> Rao 1997: 58–60

<sup>17</sup> Prasad cited in Rao 1997: 65.

<sup>18</sup> Turnbull cited in Rao 1997: 68.

Mbuti did not show transformations.<sup>19</sup> Overall, Rao concluded that *liminality* existed in most of the folk dances and *communitas* was evident.<sup>20</sup>

In comparison to Rao's work, my primary intention in this study is to provide an etic analysis regarding ritual dances performed in Catholic processions in the Philippines. The American linguist, Kenneth Pike, stresses that the etic paves the way in the reconstruction of the emic understanding.<sup>21</sup> In cultural anthropology, the etic (researcher's perspective) has been debunked by many scholars and the emic (natives' perspective) has been widely adopted in the study of culture.<sup>22</sup> Through the years, I observed that Catholic ritual dances in the country have been studied one at a time by local ethnographers using the emic approach. On the one hand, I devised my etic analysis using the reciprocal strategy: using results derived from emic studies and formulating an etic understanding out of these extant data. The lack of a general framework to better understand and contextualize these ritual dances prompted me to create a possible framework that may become a basis for future ritual dance research. The aim is to assist Filipino dance anthropologists and dance scholars to obtain a perspective on how traces of indigenous traditions intertwined with Catholic traditions that are still observable today.

The present study selected three Catholic dance rituals that became the basis for the development of a general framework. It included the Obando fertility dance, the *Subli* in Batangas, and the *Kuraldal* in Sasmuan, Pampanga. Correspondingly, I selected the following articles in line with these dances for the depth of their ethnography: the work of Marvin Reyes entitled "*Sayaw sa Obando: Diskurso ng pagpapatibay ng pananampalataya at pagpapanatili ng kultura*" (Dance in Obando: A discourse on strengthening faith and preserving culture) and Digna Saldana-Sese and Thomas Landy's "Obando Feast of the Three Saints and Fertility Dance," Elena Mirano's "Subli: On the Use of Multidisciplinary Methods in Musicology," and Sir Arnil Tiatco's "Imag(in)ing Saint Lucy: The Narrative and Performative Construction of the Kuraldal in Sasmuan, Pampanga."<sup>23</sup> These materials were selected

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<sup>19</sup> Rao 1997: 58–72.

<sup>20</sup> Rao 1997: 72.

<sup>21</sup> Pike 1990; Pike 1954.

<sup>22</sup> Mostowlansky – Rota 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Reyes 2022; Saldana-Sese – Landy n.d.; Mirano 2008; Tiatco 2012.

given the following criteria: it provided a historical description of the dance rituals, documentation of the songs, description of the dance routines, and for the authors' data-gathering approaches. For one, Reyes obtained results through archival research and, as he was a native of Obando, Bulacan, he was considered an insider ethnographer. Saldana-Sese and Landy conducted interviews and observations and provided an in-depth historical background. Mirano, on the other hand, studied the *Subli* for five years as she was inspired to observe the said dance ritual, which is a tradition in the hometown of her husband. Moreover, Tiatco's study on the *Kuraldal*, aside from being an insider ethnographer himself, provided a thick description and generated an understanding based on the participants of the dance ritual in Sasmuan, Pampanga. Information from these sources were used in the succeeding parts of this paper to describe and contextualize the selected ritual dances.

### **The Obando fertility dance**

The town of Obando in the province of Bulacan is easy to reach by commuting as it is near Metro Manila. It borders the cities of Valenzuela, Malabon and Navotas. For many people, it is mostly associated with two things: flooding and the three-day festivities from May 17 to 19 in honor of *San Pascual Bailon* (St. Paschal Baylón), *Santa Clara* (St. Claire), and *Nuestra Señora de Salambao* (Our Lady of Salambao). The former is expected given that the town resides beside the sea while the latter is steeped in tradition. Many people from all walks of life travel to Obando every May to join the three-day festivities, but the most popular is the feast of Santa Clara where the dance procession is held dear by many devotees, especially those couples who are asking for children. Historically, even before the introduction of Christianity in the town, the locals were already practicing a dance ritual called *Kasinolawan*, which was a fertility dance ritual. Back then, the *catalona* led the dance ritual as a form of offering to *Lakapati*, the Tagalog's deity for fertility, and to *Bathala*, the supreme being.<sup>24</sup> The friars noticed this local practice and introduced the devotion to St. Claire to sway the people to change their allegiance from their idols to a venerated saint

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<sup>24</sup> Bautista 2023.

of the Catholic Church. Despite this transition, the ritual dance was sustained in the new tradition.<sup>25</sup> The ritual dance is known today as *Sayaw ng Panalangin* (Dance of Prayers).<sup>26</sup>

The steps of the *Sayaw ng Panalangin* contain symbolisms on fertility. In addition, dancing to the tune of the song *Santa Clara Pinung-pino* (St. Claire Most Refined) identifies this ritual dance. The participants sway their hands upwards and downwards, caressing the womb, and stress their hips as an allegory of their supplications to bear a child. The dance routine has five major steps with corresponding meanings: *engaño* (believing that God will grant a child), *libad* (asking God for healing), *paghingi* (asking God for a child), *balse lateral* (to have faith), and *pasasalamat* (thanksgiving).<sup>27</sup> These steps include waltzing and praying while clasping the hands with the thumb pointing upward directing to the heart. As the participants do it, the female participants use their arms and hands to create a movement as if they are pushing their abdomen upward, whereas the male participants simply hold their arms and hands from behind. After which, the female participants make a clockwise hand movement near the abdomen and the male participants continue to dance with their arms and hands behind them. The couple then join hands as a symbol of unity and love for each other and they continue to waltz as a pair while their arms are swaying from left to right as a symbol of thanksgiving.<sup>28</sup>

During the procession after the eight o'clock morning mass, at least five groups of dancers are present with a marching band accompanying each group. The dancers are usually dressed in traditional native costumes composed of *baro't saya* (blouse and skirt) for women and *barong tagalog* (embroidered formal long-sleeved shirt) for men. However, these dancers are not necessarily asking for children, but they simply pray for those who have the said supplication and they also guide the congregation in dancing.<sup>29</sup> Aside from dancing during the procession, community dancing commences inside the church after the procession as the patron is brought in front of the altar amid the singing and dancing of devotees. The parish priest also presents a relic of St. Claire where

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<sup>25</sup> Reyes 2022: 326.

<sup>26</sup> Bautista 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Reyes 2022: 326–327

<sup>28</sup> Saldana-Sese – Landy n.d.

<sup>29</sup> Saldana-Sese – Landy n.d.

the congregation gets a chance to venerate the saint and kiss the relic. When Saldana-Sese and Landy conducted their study, they observed that the parish priest introduced a couple to the congregation who was able to conceive and they attributed this to the intercession of St. Claire.<sup>30</sup>

Participants in the Obando fertility dance come from different socio-economic classes across the country. This was emphasized by an interview respondent who was a native of Obando. The majority of the interview respondents stressed that St. Claire is the patron of those asking for children; however, some explained that if the couple wanted to have a son, they usually turned to St. Paschal Baylón. These respondents also added that it was through television, social media or their friends that they get to know the tradition in Obando. Aside from getting treatment from medical practitioners, they seek the intercession of the three venerated saints, particularly St. Claire to grant their supplications. One of the interview respondents was a couple from San Francisco in the United States who joined the procession because they were childless for roughly eight years. They said that their peers in the United States told them about the tradition, so they decided to come. Another was a couple from a nearby town. The couple was married for five years and remained childless. As the wife was already thirty-four years old at the time and the husband was working abroad, they were worried about their limited time to have children. Aside from these participants, there were also success stories like one of the respondents who came to Obando for the eighth time as a form of thanksgiving and *panata* (vow), because he and his wife were granted two children.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Subli dance in Batangas**

The month of May in the Philippines is marked not only by the hot and humid weather but also the various religious festivities that happen all over the archipelago. In the province of Batangas located in the south of Metro Manila, the feast of the *Mahal na Poong Santa Krus* (Holy Cross) is an important feast celebrated every third of May. While the ritual dance called *subli* is performed during this time, it can be conducted any time except lent

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<sup>30</sup> Saldana-Sese – Landy n.d.

<sup>31</sup> Saldana-Sese – Landy n.d.

to mark a special occasion (e.g., thanksgiving, passing a board examination, birthday). People conduct the ritual as a form of *panata* as well. The *subli* dance ritual is firmly rooted in the local tradition of the Holy Cross, which was made of *balayong*, a local hard wood, and encased in silver or stainless-steel mounting. The iconography of the Holy Cross includes a sun ornament complete with a face and sun rays that is placed at the center of the cross.<sup>32</sup>

A legend that circulated during the Spanish colonial period prompted the devotion of many people to the Holy Cross. The tale recounted a gambling drunkard from the town of Alitagtag who went home late evening and was furious because he found no food or water. The man instructed his wife to draw water from a nearby well, which the latter did quickly. As the man became skeptical, he instructed his wife to draw water once again and he followed her discreetly. The man discovered that his wife was drawing water not from a well but from a spring where a dark and cross-shaped tree could be seen. Here, the man saw a glaring light that covered the entire place. This event resulted in two things: the man repented and the town where this miracle occurred was coined Alitagtag, which means rays of light. News regarding the miraculous tree eventually circulated and the towns of Taal, Lipa and Bauan competed to possess the miraculous cross. Delegations from each town headed by their corresponding parish priests went to the site to procure the cross. However, the parish priest of Taal and Lipa failed to lift the cross as it was too heavy. It was only the parish priest of Bauan who successfully retrieved the cross. Tradition attributed the dancing of the *subli* that made the wood of the cross lighter. Accordingly, the delegation from Bauan danced the *subli* during the retrieval of the cross, which made the dancing relevant to the devotion to the Holy Cross. Until today, the Holy Cross retrieved in Alitagtag resides at the parish church in Bauan, Batangas.<sup>33</sup>

The *subli* dance ritual has three primary sections: *kambulong* (singing by women), *pinakasubli* (dancing of the *subli*), and the *pandangguhan* (dance-songs). In the section of the *kambulong*, the women performers begin by singing a metaphorical song that recounts the finding of the cross by the *manunubli* (*subli* performers). After which, the song continues as the women

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<sup>32</sup> Mirano 2008: 1.

<sup>33</sup> Mirano 2008: 1–2.



dancers call on each other where they identify themselves using the five essential items during the ritual such as the *kambulong* (whisperer of spells), *kapipino* (the refined ones), *katampok ng singsing* (gemstones), *damoro* (spices), and *kabulaklak* (flowers). This part in the ritual song also recalls of the spiritual pilgrimage to Alitagtag to recover the Holy Cross. The next lines of the ritual song are performed by the *kambulong* and she proclaims a variety of medicinal plants. This signifies that in the past these plants had medicinal properties, but these were transformed and transported to a new cosmos where the Holy Cross stood in the place of power. The last verse of the song talks of the *kasaysayan* from the root word *saysay*, which means to narrate, tell a story or history, and commemorates the transfer of power from mountains and fields as sacred places to the house of worship – the church where novenas are held.<sup>34</sup>

The section of *pinakasubli* is the primary focus of the *subli* dance ritual. This is the part where singing by the *matremayo* (leaders who are usually women), dancing of small and large groups of *manunublis*, and the usage of percussion instruments that glue all the songs and dances are performed. It should be noted that this is also the only section where both dancers and instrumentalists can perform together. Moreover, the *subli* dance has two major formations: the large group formation and the double-pair variations. In the first performance featuring the large group formation, two *matremayos* direct the singing and dancing. Sixteen dancers conduct intricate floor routines and they decide the pattern and sequencing of the dance by adhering to the *matremayos*. On the one hand, the second performance featuring the double-pair variations includes the performance of four sets of double pairs. The double pairs consist of two male and two female dancers who perform a variety of set patterns until the next performance of the large group formation. The movements of male and female dancers show a contrast. As male dancers use bamboo clappers called *kalaste* that complement the beating drums, they showcase masculine movements in the routine while weaving in and out of the formation, which reminds of *arnis de mano* (traditional martial arts). Female dancers, however, show an orderly routine as they mirror each

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<sup>34</sup> Mirano 2008: 4.

other's movements. Their movements are defined by *kiya* (curtsey), *pagtatalik* (flicking of fingers and wrists), and *nakatiyad* (steps on half-toe). These contrasting movements between male and female dancers depict traditional gender roles in Tagalog society.<sup>35</sup>

It is also noteworthy to highlight certain elements in the section of *pinakasubli*. First, there is an opportunity for each dancer to shine as each of them has their own way of performing the steps and this is mostly apparent in small group formations. Second, the *tugtugan* or the drum is equally important, given that it serves as a signal to the community that the *subli* is currently performed. The *tugtugan* is fabricated using the skin of monitor lizards called *bayawak*. Thin bamboo sticks are used to strike the drums and produced rhythmic music. The last element is the eight devotional songs, which are akin to the *kambulong*. These songs are performed by women; although these songs are almost muted due to the sound of the *tugtugan*, they are important components that mimic the music counterparts of the large group formation and provide a scaffold for the entire celebration.<sup>36</sup>

The last section of the performance is the *pandangguhan*, which is secular and informal. This section features singing and dancing of a singer-dancer and an instrumentalist who usually uses a drum, violin or guitar. At the onset of the performance, the topics are religious and solemn, but as the performances progress late in the evening, the topics deviate from the religious aspect and gear towards the romantic and vulgar. Throughout the performances, the community shows an air of festivity: laughter, shouting, stamping of feet, and clapping. The *subli* dance ritual magnifies that the behavior of both dancers and musicians exemplify patterns and attitudes that go beyond the religious and furthers in the context of sociocultural interaction. As such, this tradition gives a perspective regarding the intertwining relationships that occur in the following: dance, music, literature, prayer, gender roles and relationships, and the religious beliefs of the locals.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Mirano 2008: 4–5.

<sup>36</sup> Mirano 2008: 5.

<sup>37</sup> Mirano 2008: 6.

## The Kuraldal in Sasmuan, Pampanga

The province of Pampanga is in Central Luzon. The locals are known for their cooking and piety. The latter can be observed especially during the rituals associated with *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) and when they celebrate the feast days of the saints. In the town of Sasmuan, locals and pilgrims from other places have a strong devotion to *Santa Lucia* (St. Lucy), who they affectionately call *Apung Lucia*. The feast of Apung Lucia is highlighted by the performance of the *kuraldal*, which is an impassioned ritual dance performed by devotees. These devotees are normally childless couples who conduct a *panata*.<sup>38</sup> The *kuraldal* is an “unchoreographed movement of jumping, leaping and marching while shouting ‘*Viva Apung Lucia! Pwera Sakit! Pwera Silab!*’ (Hail Apung Lucia! Away with illness! Away with fire!”<sup>39</sup> In addition, the term *kuraldal* came from the Spanish word “*curar*” or “to heal.” Although the town celebrates the feast of Apung Lucia every January 6, various activities leading to the celebration starts as early as December 13, the inscribed feast day of St. Lucy in the Catholic calendar, and a mass is conducted by the community. After the mass, the congregation dances the *kuraldal* to the tune of the *batalla* provided by Banda 31, a local brass band. The *batalla* is inspired by the *komedya* performance (a traditional theatre form narrating social, political and religious conflicts between Muslims and Christian heroes) and contains localized Hispanic music having a 3/3 beat.<sup>40</sup>

The festivities continue by December 28 where a procession featuring a small image of *Apung Lucia* residing in the chapel near the parish church is paraded throughout the neighborhood. This procession starts at 1:00 am and the people dance as it passes their houses to the beat of the *batalla* provided by the same band. After the procession, a mass signaling the first day of novena commences at exactly 4:00 am. Until January 5, a novena mass is conducted in the afternoon and secular activities are also conducted (e.g., ballroom dancing, beauty pageant, dance competition). This day is also significant as the Tayag family, who is part of the town’s old elite, comes to town to prepare

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<sup>38</sup> Tiatco 2012: 124.

<sup>39</sup> Lifted from Tomen (2008: 33) which was cited in Tiatco 2012: 126.

<sup>40</sup> Tiatco 2012: 127, 147.

the image of Apung Lucia, which the family owns. They dress the image and prepare and decorate the silver *carroza* that is used in the procession. When the image is ready, the members of the *Samahan ng mga Manginginom na Nagpapanata ka Apu Lucia* (Association of Drinkers who are Devotees of Apung Lucia) or simply known as FROLICS arrive at the house of the Tayag family by 4:45 pm. Members of FROLICS are assigned to control the crowd during the processions to protect and avoid damaging the image. The procession commences when the parish priest arrives and the image is brought to the parish hall where the final novena mass is celebrated.<sup>41</sup>

After the mass, it is common to see pilgrims arriving. Banda 31 performs festive and popular music to entertain the crowd until 1:00 am when the first fiesta mass is celebrated in the parish church. From 1:00 am to 9:00 am, hourly masses are offered. The final fiesta mass is presided by the Archbishop of San Fernando. Immediately after the mass, Banda 31 plays the *batalla* and the congregation starts the impassioned dancing of the *kuraldal*. The procession also moves slowly out of the parish church and this ends at the chapel near the church. As the procession weaves the narrow streets, devotees dance and others try to wipe the image or threw handkerchiefs to be wiped on the image, which the FROLICS return afterward. Devotees treat these paraphernalia as sacred and use them to wipe the parts of their bodies that have ailments as they believe that these contained the power of Apung Lucia. Roughly 15,000 devotees attend the fiesta procession and the dancing only stops when the litany to the patron is recited. By 4:00 pm, the *batalla* is played once more and the devotees dance for the last time. Before leaving the church, flowers are removed by a male member of the Tayag family and these are given to devotees. Akin to the handkerchief, devotees believe that these flowers also contained the power and blessing of Apung Lucia. As the image is returned to the ancestral house of the Tayag family, it can be observed that some devotees let their children sit on their shoulders as an act of offering to Apung Lucia. These children are seen as the outcome of the parents' devotion to Apung Lucia.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Tiatco 2012: 127–128.

<sup>42</sup> Tiatco 2012: 128–129.

## Framework for the selected Catholic ritual dances

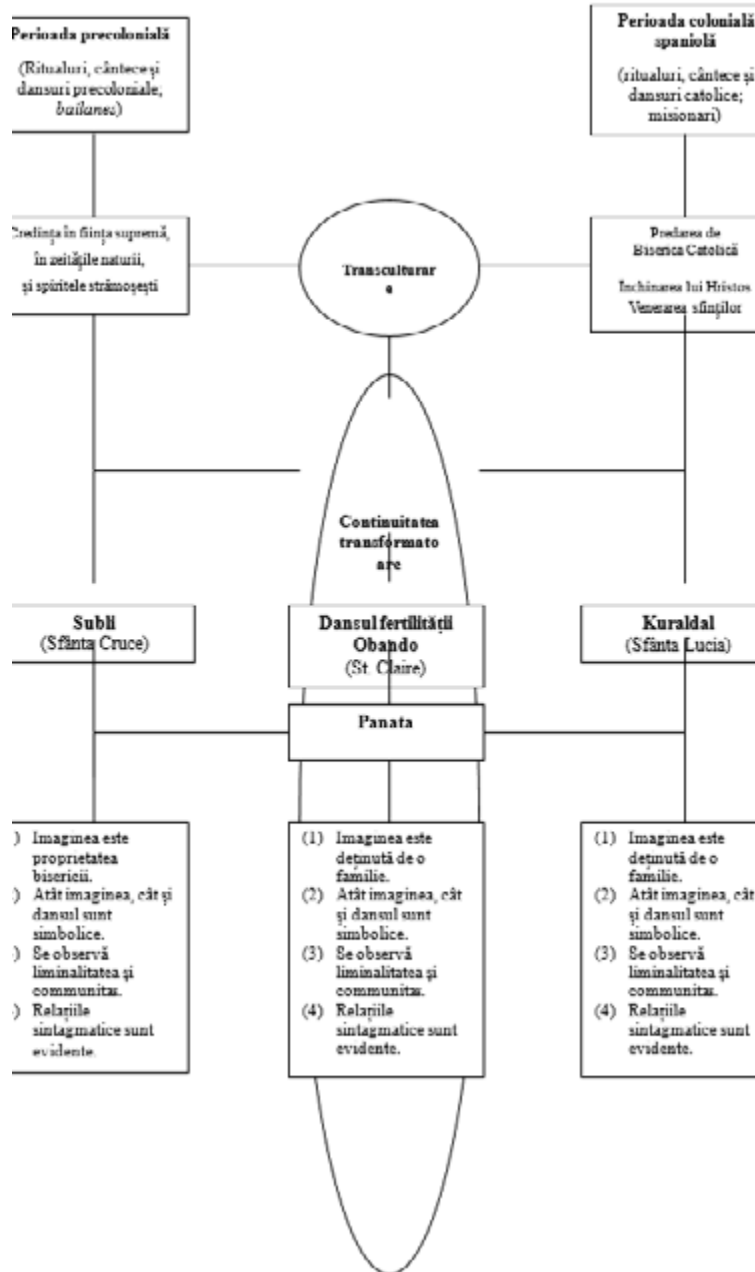


Figure 1. The derived framework for the selected Catholic ritual dances.

Figure 1 illustrates a framework that explains how the elements in the precolonial culture of early Filipinos intersected with Catholicism when the

Philippines was Christianized through the efforts of Spanish missionaries. Rituals in the precolonial days were centered on the worship of *Bathala*, ancestral spirits, and nature deities. Led by the *bailanes*, the natives conducted ornate rituals which included singing, dancing, and offering sacrifices. These rituals were done “on site and on the occasion when they had to reckon with a particular spirit, at home, in the fields, brooding over a mountain or the sea.”<sup>43</sup> As early Filipinos practiced animism, all things dwelling in nature were perceived to be inhabited by spirits and these spirits were believed to bring good or evil deeds. Rituals and sacrifices were performed for healing, good harvest, appease spirits inflicting harm, among others.<sup>44</sup> When the Spaniards arrived and Christianized the archipelago, the Spanish friars saw these rituals as unacceptable and began to indoctrinate the natives using different approaches. The meeting of two different worlds prompted the process of transculturation where “a subordinate culture selects aspects of the dominant culture they wish to be transmitted or altered to become a permanent part of their culture.”<sup>45</sup> Even if the natives embraced Catholicism given certain parallelisms with their precolonial beliefs and even when idol worship turned to the veneration of the saints, there were aspects of indigenous culture that penetrated and hid under the guise of Catholicism.

This then leads us to the concept of transformative continuity. Ethnologist Charles Macdonald argues that the practice of Catholicism in the Philippines is a mixture of pre-Christian and Christian elements. The veneration of saints, he furthers, shows this transformation in that “it could have been a simple and straightforward transposition of the polytheistic structure of native belief systems into the polytheistic structure of folk Christianity.”<sup>46</sup> In simpler terms, the natives saw potency in the saints of the Catholic Church similar to how they view their idols. As in the case of the three ritual dances discussed in this study, this transposition is still evident. The missionaries exterminated the veneration to Lakapati, the deity of fertility, and introduced St. Claire to the locals in Obando, Bulacan as a replacement. This move of the

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<sup>43</sup> Reyes 1985: 204.

<sup>44</sup> Reyes 1985: 204.

<sup>45</sup> Montoya 2018: 15.

<sup>46</sup> Macdonald 2004: 83–84.

missionaries proved successful as many people go to Obando even at present time to ask for supplications from St. Claire. In the *kuraldal*, Tiatco observes that the image of Apung Lucia is viewed by the devotees as sacred: the saint is considered the “Divine authority” when it comes to childbearing and other supplications, or a supernatural figure who is parallel to God.<sup>47</sup>

Based on the materials reviewed in this study, I argue that the Obando fertility dance, *subli* and *kuraldal* are byproducts of the transformations that shaped Catholicism in the Philippines. Without the fusion of pre-Christian and Christian elements in the feast of St. Claire, the Holy Cross and Apung Lucia, the ritual dances will not sustain a sense of permanence in the communities where these dances are performed. The indigenization and Christianization of the three dances made them relatable to the devotees. Another important aspect that glues devotees to the saint and in the ritual dance itself is an individual’s *panata*. In all three ritual dances, participants cited *panata* as a primary motivation why they join the ritual dances in honor of the patron saint. A *panata* takes many forms and it is observed religiously every year. A devotee may be asking for a specific intention like curing an ailment, passing the board examination, conceiving a child, or as a form of gratitude for an answered prayer. At times, it is also generational wherein the *panata* may be inherited from father to son and so on. Severino Cruzat, an 80-year-old *manunubli* in Alitagtag, Batangas, highlighted this generational attribute of the *panata* and said in an interview that he inherited the *subli* tradition from the older generation. Today, his grandchildren sustain the practice in Alitagtag.<sup>48</sup> *Panata* can also be viewed in terms of the Filipino value of *utang na loob* (feeling of indebtedness). In a secular sense, an individual may feel indebted to someone if that person granted a favor. This Filipino value is widely applied by devotees when they conduct their *panata*.<sup>49</sup> They sustain their participation in the ritual dancing and their devotions flourished because the patron saint granted their requests; as such, they felt obliged to conduct specific devotions.

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<sup>47</sup> Tiatco 2012: 140.

<sup>48</sup> Rappler 2020.

<sup>49</sup> Macaranas 2021: 9.

Moreover, both images and dances serve as potent symbolisms. In Mircea Eliade's words, images, symbols, and myths "respond to a need and fulfill a function."<sup>50</sup> Through these images, the devotees sense a "hierophany"<sup>51</sup> – that there is a physical manifestation of the sacred when they join and perform the ritual dances. While churches in the Philippines have their image of the patron saint, the image that joins the *fiesta* processions, especially those in the countryside, are customarily owned by the affluent and landed families. As maintenance and upkeep of these images cost a fortune, these families sponsor the annual preparation of the saints as can be observed in the case of Obando and Sasmuan. Often, the parish also assigns a *camarera* (custodian) who can take care and sponsor the image residing in the church. This custom also reinforces the social status of the family or individual in the community. Sponsorship of images is considered a *panata* and may be passed on from one generation to the next.<sup>52</sup> On the part of the participants, these images serve as a fulfillment of their *panata* if they can touch, wipe their handkerchiefs, get flowers from the *carroza* or *andas*, or dance in front of them, which they continue annually during the feast of the patron saint.

Liminality and *communitas* are evident in the three ritual dances as well. Van Gennep posits that an individual undergoes three stages of transition: segregation (preliminary phase), transition (liminal phase), and incorporation (postliminal phase).<sup>53</sup> For example, devotees in Obando as exemplified by the interviews conducted are seeking medical help to procreate. Their friends usually recommend the dance ritual in Obando as a supplement to the former. This is the moment that they encounter a period of segregation. When they go to Obando to dance and pray, they enter the process of transition. This transition often results in two things: they either continue to participate annually if their supplications await divine intercession or they go back yearly because their prayers are granted. We can say that the practice has become a part of their way of life that manifests the process of incorporation. In the *subli*, dancers also undergo a series of transitions. When they were

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<sup>50</sup> Eliade 1952: 12.

<sup>51</sup> Eliade 1952.

<sup>52</sup> Tamayo 2020.

<sup>53</sup> van Gennep cited in Willett – Deegan: 2001.



young, they simply observe the practice from their parents or grandparents (segregation). Later, they learned the mechanics of the ritual and become a *manunubli* (transition). They then continue this practice and pass it on to their children and grandchildren (incorporation).<sup>54</sup>

Turner's concept of *communitas* is also observed in the three ritual dances. In *communitas*, the solidarity of participants in the ritual is heightened and the structure (existing social roles) are temporarily diminished and returns to its original state after the ritual.<sup>55</sup>

Theologically speaking, the Catholic Church teaches that everyone is equal in the eyes of God. This was emphasized by Pope Francis when he said, "We are all equal in the eyes of God — everyone."<sup>56</sup> In reality, it is the Church that governs and oversees all the religious activities to be conducted during the feast of saints. The Church provides a structure, but this could be diminished temporarily based on the three ritual dances. The parish priests, the *camareras* or families owning the image, the band, the dancers or participants commune as one the moment the music dedicated to the patron saint plays in the background and everyone joins the ritual dancing. As the procession ensues, this solidarity intensifies. The structure returns to its original state by the end of the procession, which signals the end of the annual festivity. Compared with the Obando fertility dance and *kuraldal*, *communitas* in the *subli* is harder to decipher. Given that the *subli* also exists in the context of traditional gender roles and expectations, one may conceive it as a highly structured dance ritual. The role of women is highlighted in the first section of the *kambulong*, while the gender roles are evident in the second section of *pinakasubli*. Based on the narrative provided by Mirano<sup>57</sup>, I argue that we can observe *communitas* in the section of *pinakasubli* as each dancer is given a chance to shine through their movements, which could be their interpretation and most evident in the small group formations. Similarly, *communitas* can be identified in the section of the *pandangguhan* where emotions are intensified by laughter, shouting, stamping, and clapping

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<sup>54</sup> Rappler 2020.

<sup>55</sup> Turner 1969: 96.

<sup>56</sup> Pope Francis cited in Wooden 2013.

<sup>57</sup> Mirano 2008.

of everyone involved because this part in the *subli* is informal and transforms into something secular as the evening progresses.

Lastly, I highlight that the Obando fertility dance, *subli* and *kuraldal* reveal syntagmatic relationships. Despite the transformations that happened among these ritual dances in the passing of time and their continuous traditionalization, the folklore behind them, how they become related to the patron saints and the towns, the ritual dancing, songs and music provided by native instruments or the brass band are syntagmatic. This could be exemplified when someone inquires about a certain place like Obando. People would usually associate the town with the fertility dance, the devotion to St. Claire, and the song “*Santa Clara Pinung-pino.*” This syntagmatic relationship becomes almost like a brand for which the town is known. More so, one element in the tradition cannot exist without the other elements.

## **Conclusion**

Pre-Christian society in the Philippines observed monotheism and animism. When the Spaniards arrived, the natives selected cultural and religious practices in the dominant culture (colonizer) that they applied in their context through transculturation. In the process of transformative continuity, traces of indigenous practices were carried even in the devotions and pious acts that the natives conducted when they were Christianized. This study proved that transformative continuity is present in the Obando fertility dance, *subli* of Batangas, and *kuraldal* of Sasmuan, Pampanga and this is sustained even in the contemporary period. Despite the differences in terms of their folklore, movements, songs and musicality, which are syntagmatic, the *panata* of devotees served as the bridge between the saints and the ritual dances. While the saints and ritual dances function as potent symbolisms for devotees, this study revealed that liminality and *communitas* are present in the *Sayaw ng Panalangin*, *subli* and *kuraldal*. The present study, in the end, provided an anthropological framework derived from an etic approach in which Catholic ritual dances in the Philippines can be analyzed.

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# Turumba sa Birhen: Exploring the devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows through street dancing in Pakil, Laguna, the Philippines

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JOSE ANTONIO LORENZO L. TAMAYO

Dancing is part of the cultural fabric of Filipinos. Even before the colonization of the archipelago, various ethnic groups had their own set of dances. Dancing for the natives was important because they used it as a tool to celebrate life, commemorate death, conduct rituals to appease or gain favor from gods and nature spirits, yield bountiful produce, mimic animals, tell their stories, among others.<sup>1</sup> These dances were mostly derived from their songs and poems and made more meaningful by the application of music.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, the highest form of these was the ritual dances, which were treated with special preparation and utmost attention. Formal behavior characterizes a ritual as it has allusions to supernatural beings and it is also a glue that brings people together.<sup>3</sup> As such, applying ritual to precolonial dances in the Philippines meant that a local priestess (called in the vernacular as *babaylan*, *catalona*, *mumbaki*) led the supplicants to a higher being.<sup>4</sup> When the Philippines was colonized by Spain in the sixteenth century, many facets of the precolonial tradition evolved, especially when Catholicism penetrated the way of life of the natives. Many religious practices including the ritual dances eventually transformed and centered on the veneration of the saints.

Transculturation, however, impacted how Spanish influences and Christianity were absorbed in native society. In the process of transculturation, Filipinos selected what cultural items should be adapted from the Spaniards and these would become a lasting figment in the former's culture.<sup>5</sup> The result was a nativized Christianity that fitted the Filipinos' religious and collective

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<sup>1</sup> Tamayo 2023: 179.

<sup>2</sup> Reyes-Urtula – Arandez – Tiongson 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Turner 1970; Jones 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Obusan 1994.

<sup>5</sup> Montoya 2018: 14.

expression.<sup>6</sup> If Catholicism in Europe led to greater secularism, Catholicism in the Philippines preserved “a living experience of the inarticulate and mysterious” that still survives to this day.<sup>7</sup> The arrival of Christianity in the Philippines also introduced certain alternatives to animism, which the natives practiced before the arrival of the Spaniards. For one, the Virgin Mary replaced the *babaylan* as an intermediary between men and the divine. More so, a Catholic sacramental (e.g., rosary, brown scapular) for a Filipino believer is no different from the potency of a talisman called locally as *anting-anting*.<sup>8</sup> This brand of Catholicism is simply known as folk Catholicism among Filipino anthropologists, whereas the Catholic Church deemed it as popular religiosity. Folk Catholicism or popular religiosity provides an avenue for Filipino believers to give life and meaning to the religious expressions practiced by their ancestors, which were discarded. It also offers them a chance to connect with the sacred through a conduit that is indigenous or native.<sup>9</sup> The Catholic Church, on the one hand, never denies the existence of popular religiosity and she supports the practice for as long as it leads the believers to the liturgy and does not contradict the teachings of the Church.<sup>10</sup>

In the context of ritual dances, popular religiosity may also be distinguished and this could be observed during the fiesta of a town’s patron saint. Filipinos have a natural flair for drama and pageantry, so the fiesta is always the perfect occasion to showcase these native traits. Traditionally, the fiesta lasts for ten days with the first nine days dedicated to the novena in honor of the patron saint.<sup>11</sup> Those who attend the church services do it religiously as there is a belief that one’s prayer will be answered if the novena days are completed. Aside from the recitation of the novena and daily masses, the first nine days are packed with various religious activities conducted inside the church such as a *serenata* (serenading the patron saint) or *besa manto* (venerating the saint by kissing its cape or a reliquary), as well as secular ones usually sponsored by a government agency, an *hermano mayor*

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<sup>6</sup> Villaruz 1994: 20.

<sup>7</sup> Reyes 2015: 42.

<sup>8</sup> Reyes 2015: 41.

<sup>9</sup> Macaranas 2021: 11.

<sup>10</sup> Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Tamayo 2022: 103.



(fiesta sponsor) or the private sector, which include concerts, stage plays, vendors selling street food, and even a traveling carnival. The highlight of the town fiesta happens on the tenth day, the feast of the patron saint. During the fiesta proper, the most anticipated event is the procession that features the image of the patron saint. It is in these processions that one may observe the existence of invented or Christianized ritual dances that contain traces of popular religiosity.

In Obando, Bulacan, for example, people dance during the three-day procession in honor of *San Pascual Bailon* (St. Paschal Baylón), *Santa Clara* (St. Claire) and *Nuestra Señora de Salambao* (Our Lady of Salambao) to ask for different intentions: San Pascual for those seeking a potential partner, Santa Clara for fertility and couples asking for children, and Nuestra Señora de Salambao for religious vocations. Out of the three, the Obando fiesta is most famous for its fertility dance, which had its roots from a precolonial fertility dance ritual called *kasinolawan*. Here, the *babaylan* danced to invoke the aid of nature spirits to induce fertility. When the Spanish missionaries arrived, they Christianized the practice by substituting the saints, especially St. Claire, instead of nature deities. The dance was slightly halted after World War II given its association to animistic origins, but it was revived in 1972 when Rev. Fr. Rome Fernandez pushed for the abolition of the ban. In modern times, the Obando fertility dance is performed to the tune and tempo of *Santa Clarang Pinung-Pino* (St. Claire So Pure). The dance steps were formalized in 1993 and heavily inspired by these European dances: fandango, waltz, Charleston, foxtrot, rumba, and tango. The choreographers also added movement of the hands, feet and hip as an allegory to the spirit entering the womb.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, the province of Cavite is famous for its fiesta ritual dance – the *Karakol*. At least every town conducts a Karakol during the fiesta of the patron saint. There were several etymologies of the word Karakol, but extant literature point that it was either derived from the Spanish word *caracol* (snail and its shell) or *caracoa*, a precolonial sea vessel used by early Filipinos in times of battle.<sup>13</sup> Given that Karakol is a slow ritual dance characterized by

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<sup>12</sup> Saldana-Sese – Landy n.d.

<sup>13</sup> Itugot 2009: 3–4.

circumambulatory steps, it will take many hours before the procession ends.<sup>14</sup> For the people in Bacoor, Cavite, a fishing town, the Karakol is imperative to the celebration of the feast of San Miguel (St. Michael). Men and women collectively dance the Karakol to ask the intercession of their patron saint for a bountiful catch.<sup>15</sup>

Based on the two ritual dances, one may note a significant function of ritual dances in Philippine Catholic fiestas: it is a form of prayer for devotees. These ritual dances are somehow easy to recognize as the dancers or participants are usually leading the procession after the *ceriales* (processional cross and candles) or in front of the *carroza* (processional chariot) or *andas* (shoulder-borne platform) of the patron saint. They dance to the beat of the brass band called in the Tagalog region as *musiko* or, in exemplary cases, a recorded music being streamed through a loudspeaker.

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<sup>14</sup> Raas 1992.

<sup>15</sup> Jocano 1967: 48.

## Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba of Pakil, Laguna

The province of Laguna is in the south of Metro Manila. It is part of the Calabarzon Region (Region IV-A) and currently has twenty-four municipalities and six cities.<sup>16</sup> One of the municipalities in Laguna is the quaint town of Pakil, which has a total population of 23,495 based on the 2020 Census.<sup>17</sup> Despite its size and relatively small number of inhabitants, the town is rich in centuries-old traditions, which already surpassed the tests of time. Like other towns established during the Spanish rule, its focal point is the parish church; in the case of Pakil, it is the San Pedro de Alcantara Parish founded in 1676 by Rev. Fr. Pedro Bautista, a Franciscan missionary who was declared a saint by the Catholic Church in 1862 after being martyred in Nagasaki, Japan.<sup>18</sup> The parish church also houses an important Marian relic that became the basis of the *Turumba* dance in Pakil.



Figure 1. The original icon of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba found by fishermen in 1788. (Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fritzrinaldimd/20302548370>)

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<sup>16</sup> PhilAtlas 2023a.

<sup>17</sup> PhilAtlas 2023b.

<sup>18</sup> Malabanan 2017.

On one Friday in September of 1788, an icon of a weeping Virgin Mary with a dagger pierced directly at her heart, which measured nine by eleven inches, was captured by local fishermen (Figure 1). The icon is popularly known today as the *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba* (Our Lady of Sorrows of Turumba). It was believed that the icon came from the collection of religious missionaries whose boat was capsized while crossing Laguna de Bay. The fishermen thought of bringing the image to the parish church; however, although the icon was small enough to be carried by a single person, its weight then needed the strength of some men to ferry it out of the sea. Arriving at the shore near the church, the fishermen decided to leave the icon atop a rock and continued their usual fishing routine. By the morning of September 15, 1788, a group of women found the icon and, despite the heavy downpour the previous night, the icon remained miraculously dry. These women tried to get the icon, but similar to the experience of the fishermen, it was heavy that even a woman named Mariangga, the strongest woman in the group, failed to lift it. They decided to call the attention of the parish priest who eventually went to the site together with sacristans, a choir, and some parishioners. As the congregation began to lift the icon, the others started singing and dancing. The people were surprised as the icon gave way for it to be finally fetched. This event became the basis for the Turumba dance tradition.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Turumba dance, song and *lupi***

Dancing is not only applicable to secular contexts. It is also present in many of the world's religions. In the Catholic Church, dancing is firmly rooted in the Scriptures. Psalm 149:3 says "Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre."<sup>20</sup> In 1 Chronicles 15:29, it states "And as the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord came to the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David dancing and celebrating and she despised him in her heart."<sup>21</sup> The Scripture is clear about its position on dancing: it may be used as a form of praise, prayer

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<sup>19</sup> Malabanan 2017.

<sup>20</sup> OpenBible 2001.

<sup>21</sup> OpenBible 2001.

and thanksgiving. As such, the author identifies the Turumba as a performed prayer. Historically, the Turumba dance in Pakil, Laguna correlates to the reaction of those people who were present and witnessed the miraculous event of 1788. The people danced and sang as the icon of the Our Lady of Sorrows was moved and processed towards the church where it would finally find refuge for more than two centuries.



Figure 2. Female dancers performed the Turumba in one of the *lupi* processions in Pakil, Laguna. (Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1228913/turumba-fest-in-pakil-laguna-canceled-due-to-covid-19-scare>)

There are various interpretations regarding the etymology of the word Turumba. Some believe that it was taken from the word *tarumba*, which means *natumba sa laki ng tuwa* (it fell or trembled because of great joy).<sup>22</sup> Other scholars posit that it may have been derived from the words *turo* (to point) and *umbay* (a dirge sung by the sick).<sup>23</sup> Compared to other Catholic ritual dances in the Philippines, the Turumba is something novel because it is not a formalized ritual dance (Figure 2). There are no definite steps to follow and the participants are free to conduct whatever dance routine they want to do. The French traveler, Paul P. de la Gironiere, described the Turumba performance that he observed between 1830 and 1840. He noted that some participants, especially the sick, fall to the ground and contort their bodies in the belief that they would be cured of their illness.<sup>24</sup> For a long time, the author observed that the participants perform various steps: (1) jumping and clapping; (2) jumping and hopping at the same time while waving; (3) hopping forward with corresponding upper body movement and clapping; and (4) stepping forward with upper body movement while waving a white handkerchief. These usual routines can be best observed in the *lupi* processions in Pakil.

The *Pistang Lupi* is also known as the Turumba Festival. In fact, it is the longest Marian festival in the Philippines. The word *lupi* means to fold. In the context of the Turumba, it relates to the novena in honor of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba. The prayer booklet is folded to signal the start of another novena in preparation for the next *lupi*. After each *lupi*, a dance procession – the Turumba – is conducted and, when the procession ends as the image enters the church, the congregation continues to dance in honor of the Virgin Mary. Traditionally, seven *lupis* are conducted: *Viernes Dolores* (Friday before Palm Sunday), *Pistang Martes* (Tuesday after Easter Sunday), *Pistang Biyatiko* (second Wednesday after Easter Sunday), *Pistang Biyernes* (third Friday after Easter Sunday), *Pistang Linggo* (fourth Sunday after Easter Sunday), *Pista ng Pag-Akyat* (Ascension Sunday), and *Pista ng Pentekostes* (Pentecost Sunday), which usually falls at the end of May or early

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<sup>22</sup> Malabanan 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Deguma – Case – Tandag 2019: 8.

<sup>24</sup> de la Gironiere 1954.

June.<sup>25</sup> Recently, the parish added a monthly *lupi* procession after the seventh *lupi*. This included a *lupi* in time for the feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Help by the end of June, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and as patroness of Laguna de Bay in July, and the one on the fifth of August where the parish commemorates its affiliation to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, whereas the final *lupi* is conducted on *Domingo de Dolores* (Sunday before the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows on September 15).



Figure 3. The wooden image of *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba* commissioned in the 18th century served as the object of devotion among devotees during the *lupi* processions. (Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=702277053572343&set=pcb.702279593572089>)

In all the *lupi* processions, the highlight is a wooden image of *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores* festooned on an elaborately decorated *andas* ferried by strong men along the processional route (Figure 3). The original icon found by fishermen is permanently housed and venerated in a chapel inside

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<sup>25</sup> Malabanan 2017.

the parish church. Meanwhile, the image being used in the processions, which is approximately two feet in height, looking upwards with a visage laden in grief and hands clasped, was commissioned in the late 1700s. The image was made in Spain and said to be inspired by the image of *Nuestra Señora de las Angustias* (Our Lady of Anguish).<sup>26</sup> The image also joins the annual Intramuros Grand Marian Procession in Manila every first Sunday of December. This Marian procession is sponsored by the *Cofradia de la Inmaculada Concepcion* (Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception) and features at least one hundred venerated Marian images across the Philippines. During the said Marian procession, the image is accompanied by a huge number of devotees. Either in Pakil or Manila, those men carrying the image as well as the devotees dance to the beat of the *Awit ng Turumba* (Song of Turumba), which is an important component of the Turumba dance tradition. Below is the actual lyrics of the Awit ng Turumba:

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<sup>26</sup> Malabanan 2017.



Tagalog	English
<p>Turumba, turumba Mariangga            Matuwa tayo't magsaya            Sumayaw ng tuturumba            Puri sa Birheng Maria.            (Sa Birhen!)</p>	<p>Turumba, Turumba Mariangga            Rejoice and be glad            Dance to the beat of Turumba            Venerate the Virgin Mary            (To the Virgin Mary!)</p>
<p>Turumba, turumba sa Birhen            Matuwa tayo't mag-aliw            Turumba'y ating sayawin            Puri sa Mahal na Birhen.            (Sa Birhen!)</p>	<p>Turumba, Turumba to the Virgin            Mary            Show gladness and be glad            Let's dance the Turumba            Venerate the Virgin Mary            (To the Virgin Mary!)</p>
<p>Biyernes nang makita ka            Linggo nang i-ahon ka            Sumayaw ng tuturumba            Puri sa Birheng Maria.            (Sa Birhen!)</p>	<p>It was Friday when you were found            It was Sunday when you were raised            Dance the Turumba            Venerate the Virgin Mary            (To the Virgin Mary!)</p>
<p>Turumba, turumba sa Birhen            Turumba, turumba sa Birhen            Turumba'y ating sayawin            Puri sa Mahal na Birhen.            (Sa Birhen!)<sup>27</sup></p>	<p>Turumba, Turumba to the Virgin            Mary            Turumba, Turumba to the Virgin            Mary            Let's dance the Turumba            Venerate the Virgin Mary            (To the Virgin Mary!)</p>

<sup>27</sup> Lifted from the Facebook page of the Dambana ng Mahal na Birhen ng Turumba (See <https://fb.watch/jTLcVKdWtr/>)

The present song has semblances with the 1911 composition of Marcelo Adonay, a native of Pakil and a distinguished liturgical music composer of the nineteenth century, entitled *La Procesion de Tarumba en Paquil* (The Procession of Turumba in Pakil). However, the music and lyrics of the first two stanzas of the Awit ng Turumba was composed by Professor Julian C. Balita in 1969 and were primarily based on the lines sung by devotees back in the days. In the 1980s, the last two stanzas were added by Iñigo G. Vito which recalled the finding of the icon of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba in Laguna de Bay.<sup>28</sup> The Awit ng Turumba is essential as it motivates the people to sing and dance during the *lupi* processions and when the image joins the annual Intramuros Grand Marian Procession (iGMP) sponsored by the Cofradia de la Inmaculada Concepcion every first Sunday of December. With its festive beat and rhythm added with musical accompaniment from the brass bands, any spectator would never hesitate to dance together with the stream of devotees.

### **The present study on Turumba**

Most of the written articles about the Turumba focus on the following narratives: the historical description of the devotion to Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, as an encompassing subtheme of Philippine folk dances that is part of the Tagalog dance traditions, its connection to popular religiosity, and the development of the Turumba music. A number of these articles are published as blog posts or mentioned in a wider article on folk dances. For one, James Benedict Malabanan, content creator and a constant nominee at the Catholic Mass Media Awards for his blog Pintakasi 1521, wrote an extensive article that describes the historical component of the devotion to Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba, which also touches on the foundation of the Turumba dance and the *lupi* processions.<sup>29</sup> The Turumba dance has also been mentioned in some articles written for the Encyclopedia of Philippine Art produced by the Cultural Center of the Philippines. These articles primarily focus on the audience, the spatial aspect, the socio-cultural

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<sup>28</sup> Rivera 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Malabanan 2017.

context of Philippine folk dances, and the transformation of these dances during the Spanish colonization of the Philippines. The Turumba dance and its historical manifestations are used in these narratives to further contextualize the topics and their subthemes.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, the study “Popular Religiosity: Experiencing Quiapo and Turumba” dwells on the issue of popular religiosity by collecting available literature on the procession of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo, Manila and the Turumba procession in Pakil, Laguna. The collected literature was used to interpret popular religiosity attached to these local practices.<sup>31</sup>

In contrast, this current article on Turumba differs from the reviewed materials. The primary goal of this study is to direct its attention to the actual participants of the Turumba, which are ethnographically and anthropologically significant. More so, the author aims to give light on the Turumba tradition by touching these important facets: (1) the participants’ narrative of their devotion to Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba, (2) their perspective on the Turumba dance, (3) the plausible differences when the Turumba is performed in Pakil where the tradition originated and in Manila during the Intramuros Grand Marian Procession, and (4) their reflections on the Turumba tradition. As part of this study’s research design, the author conducted a semi-structured interview with three active participants of the Turumba processions: David John Angeles, John Paul Delfino, and Istop Crackett Atienza. These respondents were selected through convenience and snowball sampling. They also allowed the author to name them in this study. The recorded interviews were conducted via Zoom and lasted for forty minutes per respondent. Given that the author resided in Hungary at the time of the study, the online interview format was chosen for efficiency.

### **Perspective of the Turumba participants**

#### *David John Angeles*

David John Angeles is a twenty-seven-year-old devotee and pilgrimage organizer, who hails from barrio Santo Rosario in Malolos,

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<sup>30</sup> Reyes-Urtula – Arandez – Tiongson 1994. (with notes from Mijares 2018); Villaruz 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Deguma – Case – Tandag 2019.

Bulacan. It was in 2008 that he first discovered the Turumba tradition when he was browsing on Flickr, a microblogging website, used by *camareros* (custodians of Catholic religious images called *santos*) to connect with each other.<sup>32</sup> Eventually, when the majority of people transferred to Facebook, he continued to have a glimpse of the Turumba processions. He emphasized that he started to have a devotion to Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba in 2012 when he visited Pakil together with other parishioners from the Malolos Cathedral. “*May ibang pakiramdam nung nakita ko ang Birhen*” (I felt something different when I saw the icon of Our Lady), he said. After that visit, he decided to commission a replica of the original icon, which was painted by Bulacan artist, Noli Principe Manalang, an awardee of the 5<sup>th</sup> Leonardo Da Vinci International Prize.

When he returned to visit the shrine in Pakil for the second time, he had a deeper purpose aside from the fact that he wanted his replica of the icon to be blessed in the shrine. His aunt requested him to pray for her as there was a cyst found on her breast. Aside from praying, David brought home bottled water, which was taken from the spring adjacent to the church. He instructed his aunt to take a bath using the water, which locals in Pakil believed to have been blessed through the intercession of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba. He expressed, “*Sabi ko sa tiyahin ko wala naman mawawala kung susubukan nya*” (I told my aunt that nothing will be lost if she tries it). When her aunt went to the doctor for a routine check-up after a week, the doctor said that the cyst was completely gone. It was this incident that pushed him to join his first *lupi* procession on April 18, 2016, where he danced the Turumba.

David emphasizes that the Turumba dance does not adhere to any formalized routine. People may dance to whatever they want. During the processions, he would simply jump and wave his hands in the air. He observes, however, that it is only the dancers in front of the procession that would usually have certain steps. On the one hand, he reiterates that even the locals dance arbitrarily. This, he said, was based on historical accounts because, when the icon was found and finally lifted, people were overjoyed that it led them to sing and dance. “*Nung nakita ng mga sacadores ang Birhen, nagsayawan*

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<sup>32</sup> Refer to the study of Tamayo 2020: 125.

*nalang sila. Nagpupupukpok ng bakya. Yung mga nakikitang sayaw ngayon sa social media ay pauso nalang. Wala talagang pormalidad yung sayaw”* (When the locals saw the icon, they just danced. They started striking their wooden slippers. The dance you see on social media these days is simply a recent creation. In truth, the dance has no formal steps). When he dances, he does not dwell on the reaction of other people, given that everybody is dancing as well. People also do not mind if one participates or not in dancing.

According to David, while he joins the *lupi* processions annually since 2016, he only comes in two *lupi* processions: Pistang Martes and the one in August. His primary reason is rather practical. He said that there are fewer people during these two *lupi* processions compared with the other *lupis* like the Pistang Biyatiko where at least half of the crowd during the procession in Quiapo could be seen in Pakil. These are mostly sick people who go on pilgrimage. David adds that it is common during these big processions that many would faint on the ground due to heat and exhaustion. On the contrary, he does not join the procession in Intramuros every first Sunday of December as he avoids huge crowds. He also notes that the crowd in the iGMP is a mix of various people. Many are tourists and spectators, whereas the ones in Pakil are mostly locals and devotees who come from far-flung locations. When he dances in the two *lupi* processions, David stresses that he either keeps on thinking of his prayer to the Virgin Mary or his thanksgiving for all the blessings he received. By chance, he recounted a film by Kidlat Tahimik, a Filipino National Artist for Cinema, which narrates the reason why people dance the Turumba. The dance intends to make the grieving Virgin Mary feel happy. There is also a local belief that one’s prayer would be granted if one sees the image of the Virgin Mary smiling back at the devotee during the procession.

David reflects that the Turumba dance, its corresponding song, and the image of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba are intertwined. If one thinks of the image, it is automatic for the dance and song to pass through one’s mind. He also notes that the number of devotees is increasing every year since the first time he joined the *lupi* back in 2016. More so, the presence of the younger generation is rising. He attributes this phenomenon to the efficiency of social media. He is uncertain, however, if all the people attending the *lupi*

processions these days are devotees of the Virgin Mary or simply spectators. This is in comparison to his experience in the past when plenty of old people and the indisposed were present. Although the Turumba tradition is known for street dancing, David emphasizes that dancing in the procession is not a requirement to be called a devotee of the Virgin Mary. “*Makapagdasal o makita mo sya isang beses sa isang taon, yoon ay sapat na para maging deboto. Hindi requirement ang pagsasayaw. Nakikita sa puso*” (Just being able to pray or visit the Virgin Mary once a year is enough to be a devotee. Dancing is not a requirement. One’s devotion should be coming from the heart). Through his devotion, David was able to share this among his friends and colleagues in church. This inspired them to have a similar devotion and go on a pilgrimage to Pakil with him.

*John Paul Delfino*

John Paul Delfino is a thirty-seven-year-old devotee from San Pablo, Laguna. He currently works as part of the corporate management team handling quality management in a private company in Manila. The starting point of John Paul’s devotion to the Virgin Mary in Pakil is unique as it developed through the influence of his grandmother. He recounts that his devotion did not start in Pakil, but in Dolores, Quezon where the patron of the parish church is Nuestra Señora de los Dolores (Our Lady of Sorrows). His grandmother would bring her to church to attend mass every first Friday of the month. It was in 2014 that he first visited the shrine in Pakil wherein he realized that the lyrics of the hymn being sung in Dolores and Pakil were practically the same. The only difference was the tempo. The one in Pakil is performed in a fast manner, whereas the one in Dolores in a much slower pace. He also notes that the feast in Pakil is longer than Dolores where the feast only runs twice a year: Viernes de Dolores and during the feast day of Our Lady of Sorrows on the fifteenth of September.

Just like David, he attends two *lupi* processions every year. This includes the *lupi* during Viernes de Dolores and Domingo de Dolores. His reason is motivated by his workdays and notes that he could only participate when he has no work. According to John Paul, the *lupi* processions are usually conducted during weekdays, so it is impossible to participate during these days. When he joins the *lupi* processions, he positions himself together with

the crowd at the back of the *andas* of the image. Given his location and the throng of devotees around him, it is impossible to dance. He would usually clap to the beat of the Awit ng Turumba just like the rest of the participants. John Paul adds that the local dancers and those who would like to dance are ahead of the *andas*. He is also not conscious of what other people think of him during the procession. “*Form of prayer ang pagsasayaw sa Turumba. Kahit magsayaw ka ng exaggerated okay lang. Napakainit sa prusisyon kaya mahirap din makasayaw*” (The Turumba dance is a form of prayer. Even if you do it exaggeratedly, it is fine. Also, the heat is intense during the procession, so this would limit you to dance), he expressed.

At the personal level, he is very much aware of the significance of the dance in relation to the devotion. He furthers that the Turumba dance was a result of the people’s reaction. They danced as if they were in a state of hysteria or insanity. The dance steps of the Turumba are neither specified nor formulaic. John Paul also observes that there is an increasing population of devotees as the years pass by. This, according to him, maybe a result of two things: the activities of the shrine throughout the year and the incoming Pontifical Coronation this September, which was granted by the Vatican. This could also be observed through the many devotees who clamor and patiently line up for at least two years to sponsor a vestment for the image or through those who would climb the *andas* of the image to get flowers after the procession. When he participates in the dance procession, John Paul only remembers his prayers and gratitude. He remembered a time when he prayed for his father’s health. While his father already passed away, he believed that his father’s life was extended through the intercession of the Virgin Mary. As such, he continues to join the *lupi* processions as a form of thanksgiving.

John Paul shares that the Turumba performance in the iGMP tends to be quite theatrical. “*Sa iGMP malinis masyado. Very organized. Bilang ang mga galaw except sa mga tao sa likod o kasama ng Birhen. Pero sa Pakil scattered ang tao*” (In the iGMP, the manner is neat. It is very organized. The steps are somehow precise except for the people at the back or those near the image of the Virgin Mary. In Pakil, the people are scattered though). For him, dancing in the procession is not necessary to become a devotee of the Virgin Mary. He stresses that dancing and singing during the procession do not

influence his devotion to the Virgin Mary. If he sings and dances, it is mostly because of the influence of the people around him. John Paul also believes that devotees dance to console the weeping image of the Virgin Mary. In this regard, he points that the Awit ng Turumba has more connection to the image than the actual dance. The performance of the band during the processions is also significant. It does not only make the ambiance festive, but it is the driving force that pushes people to dance. Without the song, he believes that dancing in the procession is somehow pointless.

John Paul acknowledges that he shares his devotion to other people. At a very young age, he already had a profound devotion to the Mater Dolorosa (Our Lady of Sorrows) and this consistently inspires him to encourage others to have a personal devotion. Given his experiences in Pakil and Intramuros, he believes that the majority of the people attending the processions are devotees of the Virgin Mary. He expresses, “*Pag-iGMP buong Pakil nandun. Even mga boss ko sa office nakikita ko doon. Kahit hindi mga taga Pakil nandun at nakikisayaw. Sa Pakil naman kung saan-saan galing ang mga tao. May roll call pa. May taga Malabon, Bulacan, Cavite at iba pa*” (During iGMP, the entire town of Pakil is present. I could even see my bosses there. Even those not from Pakil are there and they dance as well. In Pakil, people come from various places. There is even a roll call. People come from Malabon, Bulacan, Cavite, among others).

#### *Istop Crackett Atienza*

If David and John Paul came from different places, Istop Crackett Atienza is a native of Pakil, Laguna. While he does not want to divulge his age, he works as a registered physical therapist. His awareness of the Turumba tradition started at a very young age. He admits that both his grandfather and grandmother were very active in the parish church and he also served as sacristan for a long time. In addition, he stresses that he never missed attending the *lupi* processions; even if he has a work on that day, he files for a leave of absence just to participate. Istop could relate his deep devotion to Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba to his professional life. He says, “*Sa pagdedebosyon ko, naipagdadasal ko ang aking mga pasyente. Pag-okay ang pasyente sa akin din ang credit*” (Because of this devotion, I could pray



for my patients. If they were healed because of my prayers, it is also to my credit). When he joined the processions in the past, Istop would dance to the beat of the Awit ng Turumba. More so, he was not conscious of other people's reactions and cited the Law of Attraction to exemplify his point – because the entire crowd was dancing, he was influenced to mimic what they were doing. These days, however, he would usually stay in one place and wait for the procession to pass by because of the immense number of people during the *lupi* processions. He furthers that the parish is nearby and he could visit anytime. For him, he would rather allow other people, especially those coming from other towns and provinces, to be able to participate in the Turumba and get closer to the Virgin Mary.

Given that he was raised in Pakil, he has a strong notion of the historical significance of the dance and its association with the people's devotion. "*Kaya ka sumasayaw kasi overjoyed ka. Tururu – nawawala sa sarili*" (You dance because of so much joy. In the local parlance, it is the state of Tururu – you are out of yourself). As a local, he emphasizes that there are no concrete steps when it comes to dancing the Turumba. The routine that one could observe these days is a recent development. "*Ngayon nalang ang parang party-party. Yung steps ngayon ay para maging organized nalang tulad sa Obando. Kahit ano pwede mo sayawin. Sway-sway then lakad sa matatanda kasi hindi na nila kaya magbardagulan*" (It's just now that you would see people as if they are partying. Besides, the steps invented these days are meant to be organized just like the ones in Obando. In fact, you could dance whatever steps. For the older generation, they just sway their hands because they could not imitate what the youngsters do), he points. When the image participates in the annual iGMP in Intramuros, he is always present. He was one of those people who helped in decorating the *andas* of the Virgin Mary last December. Istop expresses that the Turumba conducted between Pakil and Intramuros are the same. The only difference is when other people, usually tourists and spectators, are startled when they observe the tradition for the first time. On the contrary, he reflects that he would feel guilty at times for coming to Intramuros when the original icon remains in Pakil.

When he danced in the Turumba back then and even if he remains stationary during the processions at present, he only has thanksgiving in

mind, because he is not asking for more. He also believes that the song, the dancing, and the image of the Virgin Mary are syntagmatic. Istop clarifies, “*Pag narinig mo ang Turumba kasama ang sayaw. Magkakasama ang Birhen, banda, at sayaw. Para syang kanta. Kung walang sayaw, walang impact. Ang milagro ay pag narinig mo ang Turumba napapasayaw na ang mga tao o alam ng tao na sa Pakil yun*” (When you hear the word Turumba, the dance is part of it. The Virgin Mary, the band, and the dance are binding. It’s like a song. If there is no dancing, there will be no impact. The real miracle is when people automatically dance just because they hear the word Turumba or if people immediately assume that the Turumba is performed in Pakil). While he invites friends to come in Pakil during the Turumba, he does not encourage them to have a devotion. He would rather let his friends return every year of their own accord because the Virgin Mary made a difference in their lives. As for other people who attend the *lupi* processions, he observes the immensity of their supplications. He finds it inspiring to see many people from all walks of life and from distant places who go on pilgrimage in Pakil. “*Hindi ka pupunta sa isang lugar kung hindi mo nararamdaman ang presensya ni Mama Mary*” (You will not go to a place wherein you do not feel the presence of the Virgin Mary), he stresses.

Even if the devotion to Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba is widely known for its dance procession, Istop emphasizes that dancing is not a requisite to be called a devotee. He exemplifies the old and the sick. They could not dance anymore, so the simple act of clapping is more than enough. He adds that it is more of how one would execute or show his delight. Just like other religious events, Istop believes that various people infiltrate Pakil during the dance procession and they are not all devotees or pilgrims. He cites, “*May curious, may gusto pumunta, may namumulitika. Hindi naman lahat masasabing deboto. Kung bumalik sila, may ginawang milagro ang Birhen sa buhay nila*” (There are people who are curious, who just want to visit, and those who are politicizing the event. Not everyone is a devotee. But if they return, it means that the Virgin Mary made a miracle in their lives).

## Conclusion

The narratives shared by the respondents of this study contributed to the understanding of the Turumba dancing tradition in the town of Pakil, Laguna. Returning to the four facets that this study aims to cover, the cases show that there are multiple ways to develop familiarity with a local dance tradition. It is undeniable that social media is a driving force that attracts participants in the *lupi* processions where the Turumba is held. If not social media, the varied experiences of the respondents point to the influence of their grandparents to develop a devotion to the Virgin Mary and be exposed to church-related activities. As the respondents age, their motivation to attend the dance processions progressed. They primarily attend because it is a manifestation of their thanksgiving for all the blessings and answered prayers. These motivational changes and gradual exposure to the practice show a sense of liminality. The stages that the respondents encountered to transition from being mere spectators to participants are aligned with van Gennep's concept of liminality.<sup>33</sup> Based on the experiences of the respondents, they also undergo a period of *segregation* (preliminary phase) that was exemplified by their exposure to the practice either through social media, influential people in their lives or personal observation, *transition* (liminal phase) when they experienced something significant upon visiting the shrine or when their prayers were granted, and *incorporation* (postliminal phase) as they started to attend the annual tradition every year.<sup>34</sup>

Through this study, an important issue is also clarified: the Turumba has no specific steps. People may freely and arbitrarily dance in the procession. The kind of dance that they conduct along the processional route symbolizes their expression of extreme happiness that is firmly rooted in the historical context of the Turumba icon and how the people reacted in the event of 1788. Meanwhile, the synchronized dance routine that youngsters perform these days is a recent invention. The diversity of people attending these *lupi* processions, the way all social classes break the barrier and eventually commune as one during the Turumba reach the moment of *communitas*.

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<sup>33</sup> Gennep 1909.

<sup>34</sup> Gennep cited in Willett – Deegan: 2001.

According to anthropologist Victor Turner, it pertains to how people become equal in the ritual process by halting an existing structure.<sup>35</sup> When the Turumba is performed, the existing structure (e.g., social norms, social class) is temporarily ceded and returns to its usual structure once the ritual dancing is over.

The choice of dancing in the *lupi* processions, as exemplified by the respondents, can also be affected by several factors. This includes the number of people present in the procession, the availability of space, temperature and humidity during each *lupi* procession, and the impact of the crowd when dancing the Turumba. When the Turumba is brought in Intramuros every December, the respondents focus on two dimensions: the participants and the flow of the procession. While the dancing procession is like the one in Pakil, there is a tendency for the Turumba to be a form of tourist attraction. When the Turumba is performed in Intramuros, it is hard to decipher whether the participant is a devotee or simply a spectator who puts himself into the crowd because of the festive atmosphere, whereas, as the respondents highlighted, most people who go to Pakil during the *lupi* processions are devotees and pilgrims coming from various locations. It is also cited that the Turumba in Intramuros is somehow organized. The participants in Pakil, however, are scattered and much rowdier.

Finally, the respondents reflect that the devotion to the Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba exists in a tripartite context: the image, the Awit ng Turumba, and the street dancing. The three are intertwined. On the contrary, all respondents agree that dancing during the procession is not a requirement when it comes to having a devotion to the Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba. This tripartite context in the Turumba tradition, which exists in the beliefs of the respondents, aligns itself with what Nóra Ábrahám, a dance anthropologist, says about the dancing body. The dancing body is nurtured by the soul (one's faith), consciousness (understanding of the historical and religious context), and desire (thanksgiving or prayer intentions).<sup>36</sup> Mircea Eliade, a religious historian, emphasizes that "images express the nostalgia for a mythicized past transformed into an archetype, and that this 'past' signifies

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<sup>35</sup> Turner 1969: 96.

<sup>36</sup> Ábrahám 2021: 125.

not only regrets for a vanished time but countless other meanings.”<sup>37</sup> In this regard, if the three elements of the Turumba tradition are fused, the image, the Awit ng Turumba and the street dancing also serve as potent symbolisms for the participants – a reenactment, a living narrative of the past, and a performed prayer or thanksgiving.

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<sup>37</sup> Eliade 1952: 17.

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## Folk dance movement

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László Felföldi  
Anna Székely

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

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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).

## 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.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> As French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu claims, cultural capital acts as a social relation with- in a system of exchange that includes accumulated cultural knowledge, confer- ring status and power for the owners.<sup>3</sup> Canadian ethnographer and sociologist Sarah Thornton, refers to Bourdieu's "cultural capital"<sup>4</sup> 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 be- ginning of the twentieth century until 1962. In this work they strive to take in- to 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 kul turális politikák célja, módszerei és eredményei az egyes országok társadalmi fejlődésének tükrében* (The goals, methods and achievements of cultural poli- cies as reflected in the social development of some countries)<sup>5</sup> and *Egyharmadoszág. Tanulmányok (One third country. studies)*<sup>6</sup> and László Maác's articles from the 1980s and 1990s:

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<sup>2</sup> Bennett 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Bourdieu 1984.

<sup>4</sup> Thornton 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Vitányi 1983.

<sup>6</sup> Vitányi 1985.

*A magyar néptáncmozgalom a hetvenes években* (The Hungarian folk dance movement in the 1970s)<sup>7</sup> and *Rendszerváltások a magyar táncművészetben* (Regime changes in Hungarian dance culture)<sup>8</sup>. Similar ideas can be read in László Siklós's book *Táncház* (Dance house)<sup>9</sup> and Csaba Könczöl's article *Táncház és szubkultúra* (Dance house and Subculture).<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>

### **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

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<sup>7</sup> Maácz 1981.

<sup>8</sup> Maácz 1992.

<sup>9</sup> Siklós 1977.

<sup>10</sup> Könczöl 1977.

<sup>11</sup> Eitler 2017.

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 modernization 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>12</sup>

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:

Zeneszerzőink nagy része kezdi megérteni – ha nem is tudja még művészileg 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,

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<sup>12</sup> Révai 1952: 5. Translation of the quotations was made by the author of this article.

in the language of music, the new emotions of our people who build socialism).<sup>13</sup>

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>14</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 működésem 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 megoldását nem az osztályharc kiélesítésében

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<sup>13</sup> Révai 1952: 20.

<sup>14</sup> Narodnikism (or peasantism, 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.



láttam, így az osztályellentét döntő hatását a kultúrában nem ismertem föl. Ebből magától értetődő en olyan alkotások születtek, amelyeket igen könnyen felhasználhatott 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 eredményei met [...].

(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 cul ture 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...<sup>15</sup>

### **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 tánctáncmozgalmat, hogy a szocializmusban a művészetek, köztük a táncművészet 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...<sup>16</sup>

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 szta hanovistáknak. [...] *A formájukban nemzeti és tartalmukban szocialista kultúrák* közt nincs és nem lehet harc, hanem csak

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<sup>15</sup> Molnár 1950: 7.

<sup>16</sup> Molnár 1950: 8.

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 Stah- novists. [...] 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).<sup>17</sup>

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! Értesültünk 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 emléketeket. 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 községünk sok évszázados hagyományait, ősrégi szokásait táncban, dalban őrizzük meg az utókor számára. Így születtek meg az azóta

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<sup>17</sup> Révai 1952: 34.

nagy sikert aratott „Sodró-fonó” és a „Gyékényes” népi játékok, amelyekben a tápéiak apáról-fiúra szálló mesteriségét, 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 neverending 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.<sup>18</sup>

I presume that the visits of the soviet folk music and dance ensembles (Moiseyev, 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.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Délmagyarország, 2 March 1954: 3.

<sup>19</sup> Felföldi – 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.



*Figure 1*  
*Performance of the village ensemble of Bába in their village,*  
1950 <http://www.sarkoz.extra.hu/elodeink.html> (Accessed 31 August 2018).

**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 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).<sup>20</sup>

One of the most exciting events in connection with the theoretical and methodological question of the “folklore revival”<sup>21</sup> was the so called “jellegvita” (discussion on features), which took place in the journal *Táncművészet* (Dance Art) in 1952 with the participation of choreographers, cultural

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<sup>20</sup> Révai 1952: 27.

<sup>21</sup> Revival as a part of the professional terminology became known in Hungary in the 1970s.

activists, dance theoreticians and journalists.<sup>224</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

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:



*Figure 2*

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

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<sup>22</sup> Selection from the participants' writings: Körtevényes 1952; Molnár 1952; Pesovár 1952; Sebestyén 1952; Széll 1952.

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 marxilenini-sztálini elmélet kövezte ki, s a szocialista szovjet tánc művészet fénye világítja be. Nagyon vigyáznunk kell, hogy le ne térjünk 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).<sup>23</sup>

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 néptánc csoportok érthetően maradandó művészi értékeket akartak, vagy véltek létrehozni, s ezt mindig csak a színpadi kultúra, a színházi produkció, az individuális alkotások keretében képzeletük 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

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<sup>23</sup> László-Bencsik 1952: 378.



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).<sup>24</sup>

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 illett 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.

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<sup>24</sup> Martin 1980.



*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).*

(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 session 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).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> 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>26</sup>), the jubilees of the 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>27</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>28</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 megtetézte

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<sup>26</sup> 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.

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

<sup>28</sup> The 1956's revolution in Hungary was a rebellion against the abuses and brutality of the communist party.

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).<sup>29</sup>

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>30</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>31</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.

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<sup>29</sup> Martin 1980.

<sup>30</sup> Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt 1973, 1974, 1978, 1979; Herczeg – Villangó 1976.

<sup>31</sup> 3 T-s: Tiltás, tolerálás and támogatás. In English “the Three P-s” principle – Prohibit, Permit, Promote.

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>32</sup>

...mindenkilátja-láthatja:hogyanóvjaéskeltiújéletreaszocialistapolitika,amunkásosztálypolitikájánépünk mindenértékét,kulturális kincseit, s benne a paraszti kultúra értékeit, köztük a népdalt, népzeneét. A szocializmus népünk eddigi fejlődésének szerves részeként, az egész nép megbecsült hagyományaként, az egyetemes kultúra, az össznépi 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, fáradságosabb, de igazabb, népünk értékeit hasonlíthatatlanul jobban szolgáló munka, mint a paraszti világ romantikájának elmúlásán kesergő fel-felbukkanó honfibú.

(... everybody 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

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<sup>32</sup> See the quotation from Révai above (socialist culture is national in form and socialist in content). Révai 1952: 34.

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).<sup>33</sup>

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>34</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 lack of acquiring authentic folk music, we should say good-bye to all the beauty for ever).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Herczeg – Villangó 1976: 12.

<sup>34</sup> 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.

<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</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.<sup>37</sup>

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.<sup>38</sup> Participants maintained

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<sup>36</sup> 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. Fuchs 1980; Maász 1980.

<sup>37</sup> Zórándi 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Siklós 1977; Sándor 2006.

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



*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).*

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 rendelkezésére 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 zenekom pozíció 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).<sup>39</sup>

### **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).

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<sup>39</sup> Martin 1980.

## **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”, foun- dation for na- tional culture, “clean source”	as artistic expression, source of in- spiration for ART (profes- sional and am- ateur) interna- tionally	as component of pop-ular culture and cul- tural heritage, basis for sustainable cultur- al devel- opment
<b>Ideological back- ground</b>	nationalism, chauvin- ism, clericalism ho- mogenized one- cul- ture	“internation- alism” inna- tional frame- work, an- ti-clericalism, Marxism- Leninism	trans-nation- alism, multi- culturalism, re-gionalism, localism, glo- balization cultural diversity
<b>Target beneficia- ries</b>	middle class and peas-antry	working class	local communi- ties both in rural and ur- ban arias, mainly mid- dleclass
<b>Temporal aspect</b>	main focus on roman- ticised Past, respect to Future, negative feel- ings to Present	main focus on Fu- ture, neg- ative feelings to Past, and idealised Present	focus on pres- ent, neg- ligen- ce 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.<sup>40</sup>

– 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.<sup>41</sup>

– 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

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<sup>40</sup> Gergely 1997: 3.

<sup>41</sup> Slobin 1996.

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.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Lewellen 2003.

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# The Hungarian folk dance community and revival folk dance

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ANNA SZÉKELY

Social interest in Hungarian folk dances goes back a long way.<sup>1</sup> The dance house also known as *táncház* movement that started in the 1970s and the cultural and artistic folk dance movement<sup>2</sup> that went hand in hand with it continues to attract crowds today.<sup>3</sup> The Hungarian folk dance community can be defined as a specific social group based on its organisation, functioning, ideology and dance culture.<sup>4</sup> Its members are people interested in traditional folk dance, folk music and folk culture in general, who like to spend their free time learning and deepening their knowledge in folk dancing. In addition to amateur dancers and musicians, professional folk dancers, folk musicians and teachers are also part of the group. Revival dancers usually learn the dances of a particular village, region or dance dialect in a folk dance workshop, vocational school, dance group or dance house,<sup>5</sup> with the help of an instructor and in an institutional setting.<sup>6</sup> In addition, they can deepen their knowledge in various summer folk dance camps or courses. Besides the urban *táncház*-es, the young dancers's entertainment scene is the city folk pubs where (as opposed to the dance houses with dance teaching and learning) the participants can revel in folk dance and sing to live traditional music, where the consumption of alcohol is also an essential part of the social gathering. Folk pubs provide an opportunity for informal discussions and meetings between group members. Other social activities include summer camps and festivals.<sup>7</sup> Community

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<sup>1</sup> Körtvélyes 1980; Kővágó – Kővágó 2015: 9.; Buji – Ratkó 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Kővágó – Kővágó 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Fábíán 2016.

<sup>4</sup> The dance house movement was defined as a layer in culture by other researchers. see also: Szabó Z. 1998: 174.; Könczei 2002: 162.; Balogh – Fülemlile 2008; Barta 2014; Fábíán 2016.

<sup>5</sup> In the fifty years that have passed since the seventies, institutionalized forms of the dance-house movement have been created (Taylor 2021: 131), and folk dance education is present in public education from kindergarten to university education (Fülemlile 2018).

<sup>6</sup> The research of Hungarian folk dance differentiates several dance dialects. For more details see Martin 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Székely 2021: 2.

occasions provide regular opportunities for folk dancers to meet – and for the researcher to observe – the revival folk dancers.

In my study, I describe the characteristics of the Hungarian folk dance community and the concept *revival folk dance*.<sup>8</sup> In what follows, I will first briefly address the question of the definition of community, using theoretical approaches from subcultural research.<sup>9</sup> Since 2010, ethnographic and anthropological research has focused on the rural and metropolitan folk dance community, amateur folk dance ensembles<sup>10</sup>, revival dancers and urban dance houses.<sup>11</sup> In the second half of my paper, I will present the characteristics of the examined group not only on the basis of the available literature, but also on the basis of my own empirical research and observations in person and online.<sup>12</sup> Finally, I will describe the general characteristics of revival folk dance and dance houses.

### **A neo-tribe instead of a subculture?**

The modern and urban youth are no longer organised in social class but by their interests focusing on different phenomena, with diverse values emphasized on certain occasions.<sup>13</sup> The examination of group cultures aims to understand the attitudes, norms, values and tastes of a given community.

One definition of a subculture is that it is a socio-cultural formation with a particular ideology, "*which exists within the framework of the culture as a whole and whose members share a broadly similar style, goals and value*

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<sup>8</sup> The research was carried out in the framework of the OTKA (SNN\_21) project "In New Disguise: Changes in the Traditional Music and Dance Culture in Hungary and Around".

<sup>9</sup> The concept of subculture can be found in recent literature dealing with the folk dance movement, as well as in internet articles and interviews with personalities of the dance-house movement. (Barta 2014; Takács 2016; Szabó Sz. 2017a, 2017b; Wereniki 2018). In addition, one of the leaders of the community also mentions the group with the same term (YouTube 2022). Some of the members also recognize the social and cultural separateness of the folk dance and dance-house movements.

<sup>10</sup> Simon Krisztián conducted sociological surveys and research among the folk dance ensembles of Debrecen and Cluj (Romania). (Simon 2013; 2014; 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Mónika Fábíán examines the dance house movement as a cultural representation, as well as its unbroken popularity (Fábíán 2016).

<sup>12</sup> For more information on the method, challenges and lessons learned from online fieldwork, see: Székely 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Mészáros 2012: 95–96.

system."<sup>14</sup> Research in the 1970s drew attention to the problem of the use of the term.<sup>15</sup> The concept is still questioned in many aspects of social science. Analyses have used the term in a variety of interpretations (subordinate, partial, special group culture) and for different groupings of different composition.<sup>16</sup> According to sociologist Andy Bennett, subculture has become a "*completely useless, all-or-nothing*" term.<sup>17</sup> Instead, sociological and social science research suggests the use of synonyms such as "*scene, neo-tribe, lifestyle, milieu, hobby,*" group, youth, fan culture, etc.<sup>18</sup> I will now present the characteristics of the neo-tribe.

The concept of neo-tribe comes from Michel Maffesoli's term *tribus*, or tribes, but the term itself was introduced into sociological discourse by Rob Shields.<sup>19</sup> In pre-modern societies, individuals experienced the permanence of social bonding, physical community, kinship and class, whereas in late modernity, community is experienced as a fleeting and brief connection.<sup>20</sup> Maffesoli defines neo-tribes as emotional communities,<sup>21</sup> so neo-tribal grouping "*refers to a mood, a state of mind, and tends to be expressed through lifestyles that favour appearance and form.*"<sup>22</sup> Ephemeral groupings can be made up of people from different countries, people of different ages, sometimes united by a mutual passion for a cause or object. In our daily lives, at work, in our leisure time, in the personal or virtual world, we are in fact all part of a neo-tribe.<sup>23</sup> The changed social and communal network has led to a "multiplicity of selves".<sup>24</sup> According to the neo-tribe definition,

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<sup>14</sup> Szigeti 2015: 89.

<sup>15</sup> For the history of subculture research, see: Rácz 1990; Kacsuk 2005, 2007; Keszeg 2007; Williams 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Kacsuk 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Kacsuk 2005: 103. For critical writings about the concept of subculture, see: Bennett 2005; Kacsuk 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Kacsuk 2005: 103–109; 2007: 46.

<sup>19</sup> Hardy et al. 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Hardy et al. 2018: 3.

<sup>21</sup> Grand 2018: 18–19.

<sup>22</sup> Maffesoli 1996: 98, quoted by Bennett 2005: 133. Maffesoli's book was published in French in 1988 with the title *Les temps des tribus* and in English in 1996 with the title *The Time of Tribes*. In Maffesoli's original idea, these are transient and unstable forms of relationship (Hardy et al. 2018: 4.).

<sup>23</sup> Hardy et al. 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Hardy et al. 2018: 19.

communities previously described as subcultures can in fact be understood as a series of temporary groupings, characterised by blurred boundaries and freely changing membership.

Zsuzsanna Szabó Szandra (cultural anthropologist) defines folk dancers as a "neo-tribal" community, a specific group of today's Hungarian youth.<sup>25</sup> She points out that joining and leaving the group is free and voluntary, its boundaries are not rigid and it is loosely organised. The individual identifies with the "tribal identity" when meeting other members during communal occasions.<sup>26</sup> In addition to traditional folk dance practices, the community is defined by a particular attitude, which is reflected in its lifestyle and appearance. The people I interviewed see themselves as members of a larger community within the *tánc ház* movement and do not use the terms group, sub-, stratum culture, or neo-tribal. Instead, members use the phrases "*folk dancer*" and "*dancer*" to define themselves, the group and its members.<sup>27</sup> They distinguish between a *tánc ház*-goer as a person who attends dance houses to learn dances, and a "*folk dance performer*" as a professional dancer.<sup>28</sup> The latter can also be seen by the community as outstanding individuals, defined as representatives of the so-called "folk dance profession". This category also includes folk dance teachers and choreographers that is the "*professionals*". According to Gábor Klaniczay, the dance house movement is "*a cosmopolitan youth community culture*" that has adopted the archaic Central European and Balkan form of entertainment in urban settings.<sup>29</sup> In my research, I refer to folk dancers as a group and as a community. Because of their activity, functioning and approach, I consider them as an "alternative" cultural form of contemporary society, in which traditional (folk dance, revitalization of folk

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<sup>25</sup> Szabó Sz. 2017: 5.

<sup>26</sup> Szabó Sz. 2017: 10–12.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with a folk dancer (female, 1999, Cluj).

<sup>28</sup> During my interviews, professional and semi-professional dancers mentioned that they rarely go to dance houses, if they do, it is because of the company and the music, and few of usually joins to dance.

<sup>29</sup> Székely 2021. as Interview with a professional folk dancer (male, 1990, Băile Tuşnad). Zsuzsanna Szandra Szabó differentiates between amateur and professional dancers in her study on the dance houses and folk dancers of Budapest (Szabó Sz. 2017a: 102. emphasis in original).

<sup>30</sup> Klaniczay 1993: 117–118.

culture, archaizing approach) and modern elements (21st century lifestyle, internet use, etc.) are present.<sup>30</sup>

The Hungarian folk dance community can be defined as a specific group culture. Tamara Livingston points out that the networks of individuals that make up social movements differ from other groups commonly studied by anthropologists because of the variability of membership, their transience and ideological focus, which in this case is centred on a particular dance style. Revival movements are characterised by the fact that they are not territorially bound, and their membership can cross local and national boundaries. They are often made up of people whose paths might never have crossed outside of revival activities. Although revivals usually start in a particular place, they spread rapidly, crossing state and national boundaries. Many revival movements distance themselves from their actual geographical and temporal location by constantly referring to the idealised "homeland".<sup>31</sup>

The folk dance community is not a single, coherent, well-defined group of people, its composition is diverse, the number and participation of its members varies, and the community is not bound to a single place.<sup>32</sup> The term group culture also refers to the social embeddedness of the investigated community, since not all members of the population share the principles and ideologies with which the group identifies itself. A characteristic feature of the dance house movement is that it has created a wide network of small circles in which members are active from time to time.<sup>33</sup> Revival movements create a sense of community for people dispersed in space through various media, magazines, journals, radio or more recently podcasts, meme site posts, social media use, all of which highlight the group's interests. The socialisation of folk dancers takes place at festivals, competitions, camps, dance house meetings, and rehearsals of dance ensembles, where members are brought closer together

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<sup>31</sup> cf. Klaniczay 1993: 119.

<sup>32</sup> Livingston 1999: 72.

<sup>32</sup> We do not have exact data regarding the number of participants of the dance house movement and its changes. According to a study from 1998, the number of folk dance groups at that time was around 1,200, half of it were probably children's groups. The number of active dancers was around twenty thousand people. (Szabó Z. 1998.)

<sup>33</sup> Balogh – Fülemlé 2008: 49.



and have the opportunity to learn and experience the worldview and aesthetic values of the community of *tánc ház* and Hungarian folk dancers.<sup>34</sup>

### **The (sub)cultural capital of folk dancers**

In the postmodern trend of subculture research, groups were defined by looking at their external and internal characteristics. The sociologist Sarah Thornton is credited with introducing the concept of *subcultural capital*, based on Bourdieu's theory. This includes the appropriate use of words, lexical knowledge, hairstyle, dress, movement, dance forms, consumption according to the same norms, tastes, behaviour and the same appreciation of different things.<sup>35</sup> Through subcultural activities, the individual acquires rules of dress, behaviour, values and vocabulary within the group, and can accumulate objects of prestige in the community in material form.<sup>36</sup>

The cultural capital of folk dancers includes the vocabulary, dress style,<sup>37</sup> lexical knowledge, and behaviours that define the community, its characters, and phenomena.<sup>38</sup> There are several typical terms used by revival dancers. For example, the term *adatközlő* (informant in English) is used differently in the examined group as in social sciences. The group language may also include specific idioms that are commonly known in the folk dance movement or that a particular folk dance group develops during shared time and experiences together. For example, slang terms such as "*kaló*", which refers to the dance dialect of *Kalotaszeg* (Țara Călatei) as the ethnographic region in Transylvania. Another peculiarity of folk dancers is that they associate nicknames with key figures and well-known personalities of the movement, which can be interpreted as a manifestation of an emotional or trusting relationship with the person, as a

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<sup>34</sup> Taylor 2021: 175.

<sup>35</sup> Kacsuk 2007: 35–36.

<sup>36</sup> Vályi 2007: 53. As defined by Bourdieu, the subcultural capital can turn into social (companies of friends), economical (companies) and cultural (media products) capital (Patakfalvi-Czirják 2007: 84). The dance anthropological approach to the study of dance as cultural capital can be read in Vivien Szőnyi's doctoral dissertation (Szőnyi 2021).

<sup>37</sup> For literature dealing with the fashion of folk dancers, see: Juhász 1993; 2006; Szabó Sz. 2017a; 2017b.

<sup>38</sup> Folk dance as a "behavior" is also often mentioned in the discourses of the visitors of the dance-houses (see B. M. 2018; Fonó Budai Zeneház 2020).

distinction, or even as a brand name.<sup>39</sup> The members of the folk dance movement also refer to individuals of peasant origin as dancers, musicians or singers (as the aforementioned informants) by their common names, like János Fekete Jr. (1927-2001), a dancer from Bogártelke (Băgara, Romania), whose *legényes* (solo male) dances are included in the collections of Hungarian ethnochoreologist, György Martin. His local nickname "Poncsa" is known in the folk dance movement.<sup>40</sup> In the case of revival folk dancers, the nicknames are mainly associated with choreographers, dance teachers or artists (e.g. Ferenc Novák "Tata", Zoltán Farkas "Batyú" or Zoltán Zsuráfszky Jr. "Kis Zsura").<sup>41</sup> The group's lexical knowledge includes nicknames, which are widely used and, for the most part, assumed to be known by community members. The specific knowledge of the revival dancers is based on ethnographic, ethnomusicological and folk dance research. However, there may also be misconceptions and misinterpretations of the dances. For example, the Hungarian ethnologist, Sándor Varga's research shows that The Transylvanian male dance is known among *táncház*-goers as *korcsos* but it is also recognised as *tîrnăvăeană* in Romanian at the *Mezőség* (Câmpia Transilvaniei) region.<sup>42</sup> The dance may have been incorporated into the region in the 1940s from the south, which is also indicated by its meaning, Târnăva means the Küküllő River. In Maros (Mureş) and the Maros-Küküllő region, the name was given to a couples' dance to similar music, which could have reached the eastern and then the central areas of the *Mezőség* through Romanian mediation.<sup>43</sup> The lexical knowledge also includes the naming of dance styles, musical units, costumes, rituals, outstanding dance personalities, and local or regional dialects of different regions.

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<sup>39</sup> Tárkány Szücs 1981.

<sup>40</sup> János Fekete Jr. "Poncsa" is a dancer who received the award for Young Masters of Folk Art (A Népművészet Mesterei 2023).

<sup>41</sup> Similar references were made to dance researchers, eg. György Martin is often mentioned with his nickname "Tinka". Giving nicknames for each other was also widespread in the local scenes of the folk dance community.

<sup>42</sup> Varga 2020.

<sup>43</sup> Varga 2009; 2010; 2015. In his writings, Varga points out the differences in the use of space in traditional and modern dance houses, the changes in the function of dances and their "canonisation", which are often based on misinterpretations of scientific findings. (Varga 2010: 30-31).

## The revival folk dance

In the Hungarian revival movement, *folk dance*, *traditional dance*, *original folk dance* and *the folk dance tradition* of the Carpathian Basin became the centre of the dance life of the urban community.<sup>44</sup> In his study and its title, Csongor Könzei asks the question "*When the people dance, do they folk dance?*"<sup>45</sup> In my own research, I would formulate the question as follows: when "*the folk*" *do folk dance, what do they dance?*" From an anthropological approach to dance, I consider it important to examine two further aspects. On the one hand, how is the revival folk dance and repertoire formed, and on the other how does it function as part of a symbolic representation of the community's life?

In his theory, German ethnomusicologist Felix Hoerburger distinguishes between "first existence and second existence" of folk dances. The latter category includes the conscious revival, cultivation and revitalization of folk dances.<sup>46</sup> There is also a difference between the two categories in the way of transmission.<sup>47</sup> This is also referred to in Károly Marót's 1945 definition of revival as the process of making certain phenomena learnable again in an artificial way.<sup>48</sup> In the first group, the dance repertoire consists of the movement material of the period and the dance style of the region, acquired from an older generation, the second group consists of urban-born individuals who learn their chosen dance form for pleasure, mediated by a teacher.<sup>49</sup> Our contemporary folk dance culture can also be divided along a fault line. Csongor Könzei distinguishes between two dance cultures: "*a traditional dance culture that is no longer alive, historically mature, preserved in archives or consciously cultivated*" and a constantly evolving dance culture that is foreign to it.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> The research did not examine the work, functioning, composition and repertoire of folk dance ensembles.

<sup>45</sup> Könzei 2004.

<sup>46</sup> Hoerburger 1968: 31.; Nahachewsky 1995: 2; 2001: 18.

<sup>47</sup> Shay 1999.

<sup>48</sup> Marót 1945.

<sup>49</sup> Shay 1999. International research in the anthropology of dance distinguishes between dances in organic settings, observed in the "field", and urban, stage dances, which are studied from different approaches.

<sup>50</sup> According to Könzei, it would be an important task "for dance research to reassess the concept of folk dance and, in some cases, to separate it from traditional dance culture"

The Hungarian folk dance and dance house movement was started and operated with the help of ethnographic experts, folk music and folk dance researchers.<sup>51</sup> The dance repertoire of the movement - thanks to the results of folk dance research and collections - included dance material from various ethnographic regions.<sup>52</sup> From the very beginning, we can talk about dance dialect fashions, in which the dances of certain regions and settlements were included, such as (considered as the "origin myth" of dance house) Szék, Méhkerék, Szatmár, Dunántúl, Mezőség, Gyimes, Moldva, etc.<sup>53</sup> The development and adaptation of the dance repertoire depended on the interests of the lead dance teachers and the work of the dance ensembles. With the improvement of the folk dance movement, new, spectacular dances requiring higher technical skills have become popular.<sup>54</sup> Nowadays, due to the continuous online publication of collected fieldwork material in the Traditional Dance Archives of the Research Centre for the Humanities Institute for Musicology, more virtuosic, even previously unknown dances of regions, individuals, and groups are also emerging. These sources are used as a reference by dance teachers, competition organisers, choreographers, and the community for learning and mastering specific dances.

The Hungarian *táncház*-es can be divided into two categories, the so-called *string dance house and the Moldavian, Csángó dance house*, which refer to the nature of the dance and the music.<sup>55</sup> Most of the string dance houses consists on the dances of the Transylvanian regions and settlements (e.g. the Mezőség and Kalotaszeg).<sup>56</sup> To a lesser extent, dances from the

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(Könczei 2004: 86).

<sup>51</sup> Balogh – Fülemile 2008; Könczei 2010.

<sup>52</sup> In some regions, local dances were reintroduced, a phenomenon about which Csongor Könczei writes in detail on the basis of his Transylvanian research. See Könczei 2014.

<sup>53</sup> Szabó Z. 1998: 127. In a future study, it would also be worth investigating how the musical material collected by Ferenc Sebő and Béla Halmos from village musicians in the 1970s was incorporated into the dance house movement.

<sup>54</sup> Szabó Z. 1998: 176.

<sup>55</sup> The distinction also refers to the fact that Moldavian dance music has a different musical sound from string bands. This is often referred to as Moldovanist by visitors of the dance houses. (Lipták 2018: 41). However, neither of these categories includes the Roma or ethnic folklore dance houses, which, together with the Csángó dance houses, are considered "peripheric", non-preferred dances of the movement.

<sup>56</sup> In my observations of the dance house scene in Budapest and Szeged, the most popular dances were the Transylvanian couples and men's dances. The evening was usually closed

territory of present-day Hungary, such as the most popular one Szatmár (Satu Mare), Upper Tisza region dances are also included in the urban dance house repertoire. These dances are called "*kismagyarországi*" (from Little Hungary) folk dances.<sup>57</sup> The choice of the repertoire depends on the location, the organisers and the participants. In the Csángó *táncház*-es mainly dances from the Hungarian villages from Moldavian Bákó (Bacău) and Gyimes (Ghimeş) county are performed.<sup>58</sup> In the city dance houses, the original forms of village dance, i.e. the sequence of dances, the structure of the dance cycle, the practice of dancing to live music (in most cases) were adapted to the new socio-cultural context according to the ideological interpretation of the revival movement. In her work, Mary Taylor refers to what Raymond Williams calls the "selective tradition" approach, according to which a revival community preserves from the tradition those phenomena that correspond to the values of the time, and in the process of selection rejects certain forms that were part of the living culture.<sup>59</sup> Also in Sándor Varga's study we find a reference to this selection and canonizing activity in connection with Szék's dances. The *porka* (*polka*) and *hétlépés* (seven-step) dances of civilian origin in the local dance order were folklorised after the Second World War and thus became part of the local dance tradition. According to Martin and Novák's research, the music of the dance, which is called *the szapora lassú* (brisk slow dance) and which links the *csárdás*, is influenced by art music and new-style folk songs.<sup>60</sup> According to Varga's experience, this interpretation influenced the

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with dances from the Mezőség.

<sup>57</sup> On the movement's online platforms, the dance events of a given year or season are available at national and international level (for the year 2023 see Folkrádió 2023; Táncház Egyesület 2023). On Facebook, venues (e.g. community centres, clubs), bands, dance groups usually publish their dance house programmes in the form of Facebook events. The repertoires and teaching offers of the different dance houses have not been analysed, but an aggregation could illustrate the dance interest of the movement.

<sup>58</sup> It is worth noting that the dance repertoire of the Gyimes Csángó includes, in addition to chain and circle dances, also male and couple dances, but they are nevertheless included in this dance event, which can be explained by the use of instruments and melodies similar to those of Moldavian region. In addition to traditional (or rather dance house) Moldavian instrumental music, Csángó dance houses also include brass bands (see: marczi.hu 2023). In the year 2023, the Hungarian Heritage House organised a conference on this issue entitled "*Moldavian Folk Dance in Budapest and Moldova*"., For online access see: YouTube 2023.

<sup>59</sup> Taylor 2021: 159.

<sup>60</sup> About the dance traditions of Szék see: Martin 1980, 1982; Felföldi – Virágvölgyi 2000; Sümeghy 2004; Molnár 2005; Novák 2016.

revival movement's perception of dance as a way of bringing it to the stage, and judges at folk dance competitions referred to it as *Hungarian folk art dance*, and therefore not as a dance that belonged there. Research has shown, however, that the former entered the local dance repertoire later, and the latter was known in the village as early as the late 1800s, if not earlier.<sup>61</sup>

Revival folk dance can be based on a variety of patterns. On the one hand, it starts with a filmed version of the chosen dance material to be learnt and its interpretation by the dancer or the teacher.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, the teacher's or performer's personality, individual stylistic traits and knowledge of other dance styles can also influence the revival dancers' movements and performance style.<sup>63</sup> As a folk dance teacher "*we teach people who don't know one dance, but a wide variety of dances. Many of the dances they have in their heads can interfere with the teaching process itself.*"<sup>64</sup>

The revival's interest in the past can be seen as a characteristic of the community. However, not every dance event is concerned with expressing a connection to the past.<sup>65</sup> Because of the live, improvisational dancing in a *tánc ház*, the possibility of individual, spontaneous expression, the dances performed there are considered by revival dancers as their own, which the participants have acquired during their dance socialization.<sup>66</sup> According to Csongor Könczei, the dance house is "*a place of folklore creation in a non-traditional environment*", therefore the folklorisation of dance houses is a natural process,<sup>67</sup> they have traditions that are created rather than preserved.<sup>68</sup> As a result of operating within an institutional framework, the dance house movement has also formulated its own traditions, legends, and created various "heroes", these are views and ideologies passed on to the next generation.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Varga 2010: 30–31.

<sup>62</sup> As one of the people in my interviews said: "*despite the archive, these are to some extent the interpretations of a dance teacher, too.*" Interview with a folk dance teacher (female, 1977, Gherla).

<sup>63</sup> Ratkó 1999: 59–62.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with a folk dance teacher (female, 1977, Gherla).

<sup>65</sup> Nahachewsky 2011.

<sup>66</sup> Pál-Kovács 2021.

<sup>67</sup> Könczei 2002: 164. emphasis by the author.

<sup>68</sup> Varga 2010.

<sup>69</sup> Tasnádi 1999, Székely 2017.

According to the answers to the questionnaire used in my research, folk dance has several meanings for this group. In one respect, it is "*recreation, social, communal fun*", in addition, it is "*tradition-keeping*", "*self-expression*", "*a source of pleasure, acquaintance*", "*a style of life*", "*a hobby*", and, because of the regular weekly rehearsals in dance ensembles, it is also "*movement*" and "*exercise*". According to Lujza Ratkó, maintaining traditions in this way is an illusion, since in this sense, tradition-keeping is merely a formal transposition of elements of culture, taking them out of their organic, original context.<sup>70</sup>

To sum up, revival folk dance in the Hungarian context is a selected, reproductive form of movement based on peasant traditions and film collections, learned, chosen, specific to a group, in which the form, the dance material is primarily learned and performed.<sup>71</sup>

## **Conclusions and outlook**

The Hungarian folk dance community can be understood as a specific cultural group, whose members see folk dance as a way of life, artistic expression, community activity and entertainment. In the above, I have tried to describe the group in general, its characteristics, the composition of today's *táncház*-es and the meaning of revival folk dance. The study did not include an examination of the children and youth age groups, their associated parent communities, pedagogical issues of folk dance transmission, or the characteristics of traditional and national folk dance groups and the composition of dance houses in the Hungarian countryside. Further research would also be needed, for example, to examine the different generations of the folk dance movement, or to explore the question of local and family traditions and "inheritance" linked to the group and to folk dance activities. An assessment of the state of dance culture in Hungary

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<sup>70</sup> Ratkó 1999: 60.

<sup>71</sup> Ratkó 1999; Buji – Ratkó 2017. However, efforts aimed at the development of improvisation and independent dance creation are also known. In János Fügedi's study, we can read about his experiment with four students of the Hungarian Dance University, in which the dancers had to create new dance elements and content taking structural and creative aspects into account (Fügedi 2020). In addition to the ongoing work in institutional folk dance education, a similar trend can be seen in the movement, but the topic would require further research.

today, including the dance habits of the folk dance community, would, I believe, require further and much more detailed research.

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## Education, dance education

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## Dance and the curriculum (dance literacy in 21st century public education)

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ÉVA BIHARI NAGY

The role of schools in shaping national identity has been relevant since the 19th century, but research is only now beginning to shed light on the processes at work.<sup>1</sup> Is it correct to assume that national trends and changes in schooling have reciprocally motivated each other? International literature refers to this process as national enculturation.<sup>2</sup> In our information society, national culture can reach the young generation (students) through many other channels than school, so the use of the term enculturation<sup>3</sup> is justified in the case of cultural education.<sup>4</sup> Becoming socially aware requires not only the acquisition of up-to-date knowledge and the development of expected skills, but also the acquisition of a level of literacy that helps individuals to manage their everyday lives and contributes to improving their quality of life. Part of this literacy is learning about the culture of the community. If it is accepted that education aims to transmit the knowledge accumulated throughout human history - the values created by science, the arts and other forms of activity - and that, in so doing, it also "encourages the creation of new values"<sup>5</sup>, then, in the process of preserving the heritage, public education must "be both an ethical duty and a natural expression of each generation".<sup>6</sup> Schools today are expected to impart knowledge that will enable the new generation to work successfully in the information society. In a changing technological environment, coping in everyday life requires a

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<sup>1</sup> The author is a fellow at the Department of Ethnology, University of Debrecen. The study was supported by the Heritage Mediation Research Group of the Department of Ethnology, University of Debrecen.

<sup>2</sup> Barrett (ed.). 2006. doi: 10.4324/9780203493618

<sup>3</sup> Enculturation refers to the process by which an individual acquires the common body of knowledge of his or her society, embracing its culture and traditions. <https://mek.oszk.hu/10200/10291/10291.pdf>

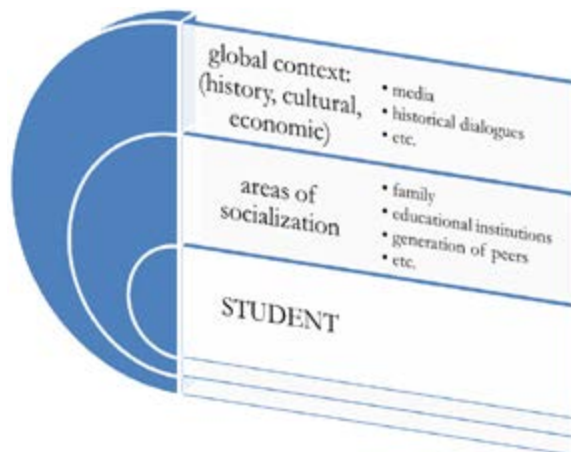
<sup>4</sup> Dancs 2016. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315326304> [retrieved: 2022.08.17]

<sup>5</sup> Tóthpál 1998: 29.

<sup>6</sup> See the same in Tóthpál 1998: 29.

knowledge mix that includes thinking skills, language skills, ICT literacy, effective interpersonal behaviour and conflict management.

In addition to economic considerations, the school's mission is to transmit national culture and develop a sense of identity.<sup>7</sup> School-age children are exposed to different enculturation influences, during which they develop a unique set of knowledge, taking into account, of course, cultural differences, which also influence the ef-



*The levels of enculturation (based on Barrett 2006 and Dancs 2016)*

fects mediated by enculturation factors. It is the sum of these that creates a kind of specific national pattern.<sup>8</sup> The most prominent of the structures of enculturation, of the social level variables, is the media, one of the most frequently mentioned informal factors (What values and images are transmitted to the online generation? What reciprocal effect mechanism is triggered?) The effects of community-level variables are mediated by family, peers and school.<sup>9</sup>

How can contemporary phenomena and the traditions of the past be experientially linked and valorised within an institutional framework? A system that enables heritage transmission<sup>10</sup> achieves its goal in an environment that does not merely show, but creates a self-recognition milieu in which the individual (person) undergoes a meaningful identification. Representation of the past - memories from the past are only truly alive if they educate us, stimulate our senses, awaken our thoughts and add to our

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<sup>7</sup> Dancs 2016: 405.

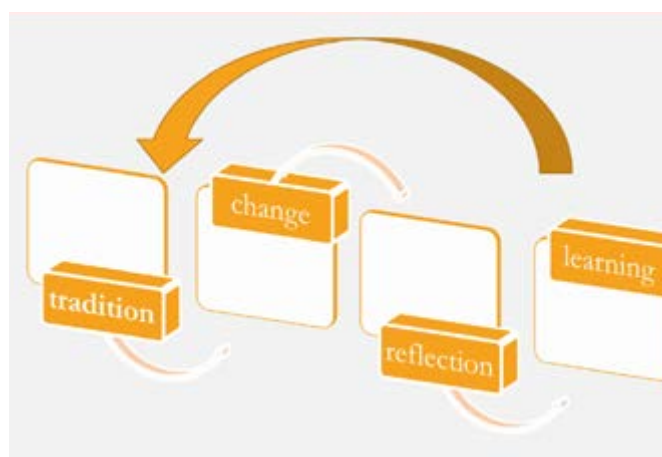
<sup>8</sup> Dancs 2016: 412.

<sup>9</sup> Dancs 2016: 416.

<sup>10</sup> Further works on the heritage transmission: Marinka 2019: 306–313.

knowledge. The methodology of heritage and adaptivity are similar.<sup>11</sup> That is to say, the development of the heritage approach, as Vilmos Keszeg put it, parallels the interaction system of tradition.<sup>12</sup>

interaction scheme for heritage approach || and tradition



Reflecting on contemporary culture, digital (virtual) databases should be used to present elements of tradition, taking into account the evolving visual language of the younger generation.

The reasons for this theoretical and methodological innovation are:

- 1) the awareness of the importance of interactions between the social present and the cultural institution;
- 2) highlighting everyday life and individual stories and experiences;
- 3) different interpretations of the relationship between objects and humans.

In the case of dance, it is particularly important to show (to see the dance) → to know (applicability in the chain of events) → to learn (to adapt the interpreted dance seen or heard) and to apply it to one's own environment.

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<sup>11</sup> For a similar definition of the concept of adaptivity, see: Rapos–Gaskó–Kálmán–Mészáros 2011. <http://mek.oszk.hu/13000/13021/13021.pdf> [retrieved: 17.07.2019.]

<sup>12</sup> Bihari Nagy 2015: 5–26.



*Dancers in the virtual space.*  
 (Source: <https://hitek.unideb.hu/tancosok-virtualis-terben> 05.04.2023.)



*Ethnographical collecting.* On the left with a hat is Gergely Bulyáki, master of folk art, on the right is Sándor Timár Sándor choreographer, dance teacher. Nagyecsed, 1977.

(Source: Fortepán 199092)

The effectiveness of learning in the heritage process depends on various environmental factors. Of course, these can be influenced and shaped to different degrees. It is essential that the heritage element being visualised is not just static.

A wedding dance, for example, can be constructed using a method appropriate to several educational levels (nursery, primary, secondary and artistic on stage).



*Nuptial.*  
 Debrecen, Lehel utcai óvoda, Csiga csoport bemutatója 2012.



*Folk dancers perform on stage in a Matyó feast.* 2014.  
 (Source: <http://www.mezokovesd.hu/index.php?action=showart&id=2392>)

The environment in which today's students live, grow up and play is now a world of mobile phones, computers and the internet. The National Curriculum and EU education policy set out a number of expectations for the role of schools, including digital literacy.<sup>13</sup> The devices are not panaceas in themselves, but they can stimulate student interest and bring the content closer to the learners.<sup>14</sup>



*VR and a possibility for learning dance.*

(Source: <https://create.vista.com/hu/unlimited/stock-photos/184918786/stock-photo-side-view-surprised-woman-using/> 17.05.2023.)

The students of the 21st century consider the technical world as their own, they do not protest or rebel against it, they have grown up with technical tools and information technologies and have adapted to them with the ability to perform tasks in parallel ways. In the case of today's students (as evidenced by the results of several pedagogical studies), even the non-participants in dance and play, in non-conscious learning, have acquired the elements shown in a surprising way. Thus, they are able to incorporate and adapt the heritage approach to their own technical world, simply by being present in the interaction system of the tradition in his environment. Members of the school-age generation tend to use the Internet rather than a computer, their knowledge is limited to basic user skills (Facebook, surfing the net, email) and they make less use of the Internet for learning or problem-solving.<sup>15</sup>

For anthropology, ethnology and the arts (dance), the Internet is much more than a simple medium for communicating values. The Internet can be both a means and an end for the representation of cultural heritage elements, of heritage construction (in this case, forms of dance in public education).

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<sup>13</sup> OM Kerettanternv. Informatika AT 243/2003. (XII. 17.); *Nemzeti alaptanternv 2007*. Oktatási és Kulturális Minisztérium. Budapest. 10. URL: [www.jos.hu/down/0106/OMkerettanternv.doc](http://www.jos.hu/down/0106/OMkerettanternv.doc)

<sup>14</sup> Singer no date. <http://ofi.hu/tudastar/tanari-kulcskompetenciak/human-targyak> [retrieved: 18.03.2019.]

<sup>15</sup> Polonyi–Abari–Horkai–Tisza 2017 [http://inyelv.unideb.hu/docs/digitalis\\_tanulas\\_es\\_tanitas\\_az\\_iskolaban.pdf](http://inyelv.unideb.hu/docs/digitalis_tanulas_es_tanitas_az_iskolaban.pdf) [retrieved: 18.03.2019.]

## **Dance and institutional education**

In relation to dance, the main aim of institutional dance education in public education is to educate people in the arts. The situation in Hungary is not bad. According to experts, the system of operation is unique in almost Europe. Creative pedagogy, agile methods (which mainly reflects the approach), and the development of thinking are all reflected in the dance literacy content in the dimensions of public education.

Before moving on to the educational content, it is necessary to sketch a brief mosaic of the system itself. By mentioning only the major milestones, I will try to describe the well-organised network of institutions that has developed in Hungary over almost 30 years, capable of transmitting both „entertainment and high art”, and which is the basis for strengthening the process of enculturation.

In this paper, I touch upon the heterogeneous system of pre-school, primary and secondary art schools, which provide the basis for dance education. From the perspective of school progression, I want to highlight the changes in the system of requirements and the challenges of the basic conditions of public education for dance literacy content.

More than 30 years ago, the first institutional emergence of dance education was alternative kindergartens (Waldorf or private), followed by primary art schools (ECEC - Values and Skills Development Programme, and schools based on the Framework Curriculum for Skills and Values, and Waldorf schools). The time period presented is an era of changes in mentality and quality. The specificities of the age group and local traditions have been brought to the fore, and the complex educational impact of dance has been formulated in all educational settings. This can be confirmed by examining 5 main educational documents:

- 1) National Curriculum (1995, 2003, 2007, 2012, 2020)
- 2) framework curriculum (fit for the National Curriculum),
- 3) pedagogy programmes,
- 4) local curricula
- 5) teachers' curricula (also teachers' lesson plans, which may contain relevant data).

The first major achievement is the first folk dance curriculum (in 1998), based on the 1995 Nat and the framework curriculum. It allows for the regulation of the teaching of the different arts (in addition to music, the teaching of dance, visual arts, applied arts, drama and puppetry are introduced in primary art schools). Within the dance branch, the teaching of folk dance has become part of public education.

The curriculum amendment of 2004, which is enshrined in law [Decree 27/1998 (VI.10.) of the Ministry of Education and Science], contains the requirements for basic art education. It contains the requirements for the basic and final examinations. Successful completion of the basic examination in art is a prerequisite for progression to the advanced courses (from 2005/2006).

The 2012 competency-based curriculum is a significant achievement. The curriculum for folk dance did not specify the compulsory dance material per year group, the choice of the curriculum was left to the schools themselves to determine in their local curricula. In the case of arts education, the overlapping of different types of schools means that the objectives and tasks are defined.

The latest, Nat 2020, will integrate dance literacy into several subjects through optional subjects and integrated education. At the same time, it also provides for a strengthening of general studies subjects in art schools due to admission procedures. The integration of national identity/cultural knowledge is also strongly present in all general studies subjects.

As József Tóthpál wrote in 1998 for the first National Curriculum: "Of the various fields of education, the Arts are perhaps the most complex, the most open and therefore the most controversial. On the one hand, because it offers an extremely wide range of possibilities in terms of epistemology, and the world of artistic values is extremely diverse and multifaceted. On the other hand, precisely because of the above - and because of the close links between the sub-disciplines of the arts - it requires a very wide-ranging and thorough education of the subjects who mediate it. Dance, while to some extent linked to drama, especially children's drama, is closest to the world of music. Thus, the current system of literacy areas in the core curriculum may



raise a number of questions in its implementation.”<sup>16</sup> Some content still raises questions for practising teachers today. However, there are of course wider, functional and conceptual aspects to these issues, first and foremost the implications of interpretations exploring the role of the culture of movement, and within this the culture of dance, in the life of man and human society, in terms of behaviour, conduct, character development and, not least, mental health and health promotion.<sup>17</sup>

Dance, while at a certain point in its development it is removed from everyday culture, it is elevated from it (it is put on stage, it is part of performances, etc.) - in a certain sense and in a certain way it remains present in everyday life. This is particularly true of the culture of movement - and dance culture within it - which is referred to in the literature as dance and dance art, or dance in common use and dance on stage.

In the culture of movement and dance, it is important to distinguish between the two definitions mentioned above (everyday and stage dance), since the concept of dance pedagogy includes, in the most general sense, both the pedagogy of everyday and stage dance. „From the point of view of the pedagogy of public education, of course, only dance in the public domain; from the point of view of the pedagogy of higher education, however, dance on stage, or in other words, the art of dance, is an integral part of this discipline: primary and secondary art education and higher art education, respectively, are represented as sub-disciplines.” – says József Tóthpál.<sup>18</sup>

The main aim of public education is to provide the basics of art education. In the teaching of visual arts, music, drama, theatre and dance (subject lessons), leisure and experiential education and interdisciplinary links are based on project-based pedagogical methods. There is a demand and expectation for practice-oriented teaching in art schools. And in higher education, a kind of closed internal methodological structure (specific subject pedagogy, continuing professional development) is observed.

Educational institutions are adapting to the challenges of the times by developing increasingly complex areas of knowledge. The averages of

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<sup>16</sup> Tóthpál 1998: 29.

<sup>17</sup> see a similar definition in Tóthpál 1998: 30.

<sup>18</sup> Tóthpál 1998.

general knowledge subjects and personal ability and skills are required in the system of progression in admission. A selected example from among the many programmes of primary art schools illustrates the structure of dance education.

Structure of the pedagogical programme for basic dance education												
Compulsory subjects per grade												
subject	pre-training		basic training						advanced training			
	I.	II.	I.	II.	III.	IV.	V.	VI.	I.	II.	III.	IV.
	EK1	EK2	AK1	AK2	AK3	AK4	AK5	AK6	TK1	TK2	TK3	TK4
age (recommended) year	6-8	8-10	10-12	11-13	12-14	13-15	14-16	15-17	18-20	19-21	20-22	22+

The curricula of most institutions plan to teach dance from the age of 6 up to the age of 22. The classes are divided into 3 major phases (preparatory, basic and advanced), based on age specificities. This system justifies the priority given to talent management in the structure of dance education. In this complex networked system, the family, the teacher (school), peers, society and individual creativity and motivation play a major role. Hungary has a significant and well-established system. The fields of activity of the Qualified Talent Workshops (MTM) are:

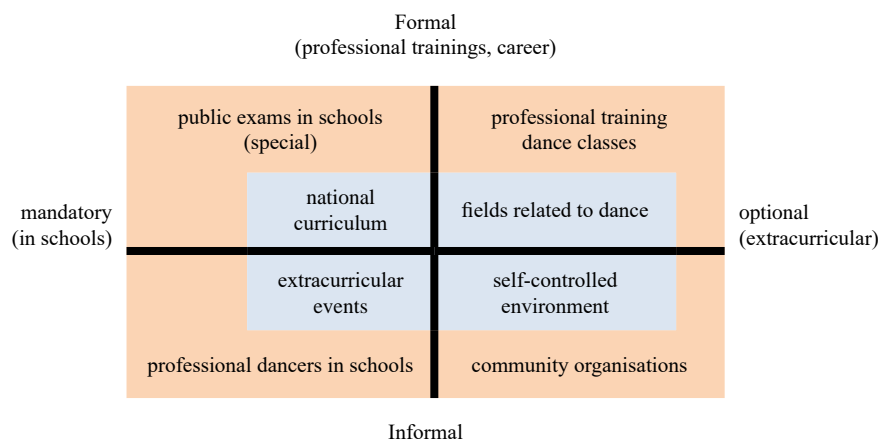
- institutional level
- level of student's practice
- level of partner institutions
- level of talent workshops at universities
- level of external relations

There is also a well-structured system of talent screening and mentoring: talent centres, specialist services, talent workshops. The network concept of the MTM is to coordinate the functions and tasks of the different talent workshops in a regulated way that is sustainable in the long term. It is therefore a set of networks that complement and reinforce each other. To understand the complexity of the knowledge field in the case of dance, it is of paramount importance and necessary to address the role of the teacher. In several professional forums, the question has been raised: do teachers, dance

teachers and dance educators leave higher education with the right knowledge to be able to identify talent with an understanding eye and with the right knowledge to be able to deal with the experience of failure resulting from competition and performance? It is essential and necessary to increase the knowledge of these skills among future public educators.

### Levels of education

In order to present the dance knowledge content in a structured way, it is important to briefly describe the characteristics of the different levels of training. The figure below gives a general overview of the dance training options.



*possibilities for learning to dance.*<sup>19</sup>

Today, the artistic, pedagogical and theoretical approach to dance is of a high standard. Art pedagogy is now an indispensable part of the science of education. Dance is a fundamentally non-verbal art and its teaching is of great importance from the point of view of both pedagogy and methodology. Its importance has changed with the creation of the primary art schools, where approximately 100,000 students are enrolled in various dance disciplines. Modern pedagogical principles are also reflected in the practice of dance

<sup>19</sup> For a similar definition for the education of music see the figure in Dragony 2022. <https://dea.lib.unideb.hu/server/api/core/bitstreams/2f9c8abc-bd6f-4db2-9c0d-4aea1cd44698/content>

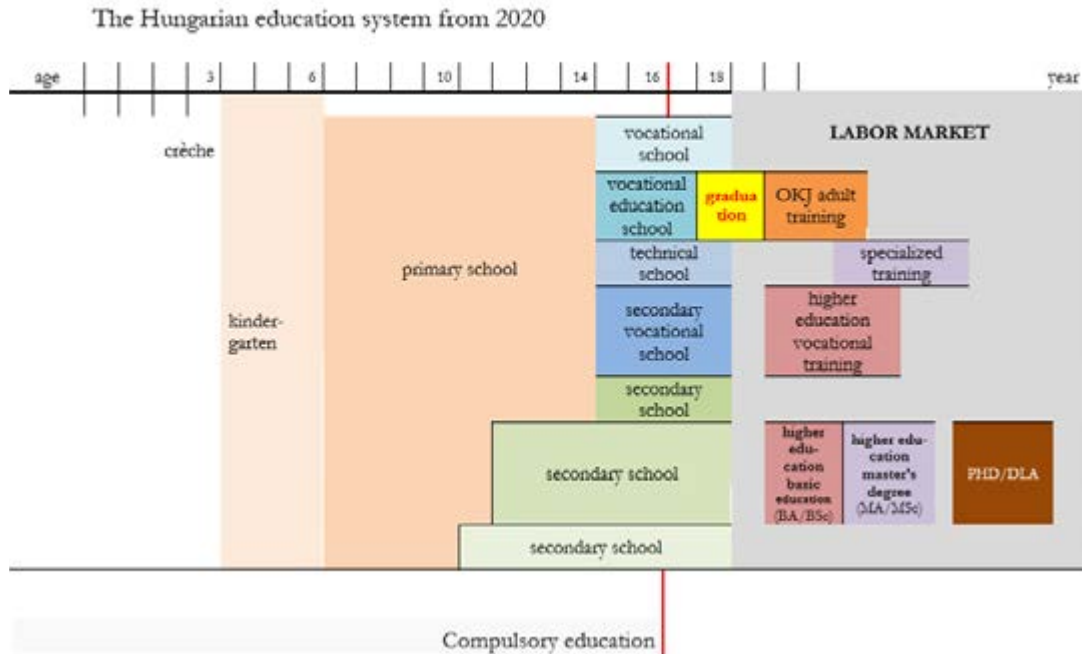
education, and a change of approach has been initiated, which is of course in line with the requirements for teachers in higher education legislation (qualifications, academic degrees, etc.). What does the education system in Hungary look like today?

- I. The first of the educational levels to be mentioned is kindergarten. In the case of the pre-school age group (3-6/7 years), there is no folk dance teaching! [In this educational establishment, the teaching and playing of rhythmic, singing folk games, the development of rhythmic skills and a sense of balance predominate (teaching of elements of dance preparation motifs).
- II. The primary schools' aims are to ensure a high level of theoretical knowledge transfer and further learning. In primary art schools, in addition to general subjects, the aim is to provide practical knowledge and complex thinking in the form of art.<sup>20</sup>
- III. In secondary schools, art secondary schools, vocational schools, subjects of general knowledge are also strengthened, but talent and ability differentiated education (personality development methodology) becomes predominant with the application of creative pedagogy.

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<sup>20</sup> see also Mizerák 2014: 156.

## The Hungarian education system from 2020



(source: <https://palyavalasztas.fpsz.hu/iskolarendszer-2020/> retrieved: 17.05.2023.)

#### IV. The aim of dance teacher training at higher education level

is to train dance teachers with a high level of technical and pedagogical competence in the teaching of classical ballet, folk dance, ballroom dance, modern dance and children's dance. They have a wide range of dance, music, psychology and pedagogical qualifications, enabling them to teach dance in dance schools, both individually and in groups, in the field of their qualifications.<sup>21</sup> For higher education, physical work, language confidence, cognitive skills, general mental state are the key. A change in perception (dancer/artist - vocation) in the last third of the 20th century. The challenges of training dance

<sup>21</sup> Táncművészeti Főiskola akkreditációja 1997.

teachers, dance instructors and trainers in the higher education system. In dance teacher training, a more differentiated and specialised methodology has emerged in recent years. A cornerstone problem of teacher training is practice. The need for appropriate practice places (in 2013, 36 primary and secondary art schools offered dance teacher training) remains a priority for teacher training and in-service training.<sup>22</sup>

A career in the arts and a career as a dance teacher are developed. This fact implies the interoperability between the two. Who is a good teacher? The one who can dance or the one who teaches in a good way but is not an artist (the human resources problem in schools will finally be clarified in legislation by 2023, although the concept of artist in school education still needs to be refined). The interoperability of the artistic career and the dance teacher career raises new labour market and employment issues.



*The embedding of folk dance education and training in arts education.*  
(the author's diagram)

Without a teaching qualification, they cannot be classified<sup>23</sup> in the categories of teacher I, teacher II, master teacher and research teacher.

The working basis of Hungarian dance culture is, of course, the domestic dance education system. In the field of stage folk dance, the success of professional ensembles abroad is well known, although the continuation of traditions and new approaches to folklorism have led to significant discourse and contextualisation.

Dance education in Hungary is currently mainly provided through art education, which can be divided into three levels: basic, intermediate and higher education. This well-established structure is complemented by a network of public cultural institutions and various postgraduate courses and

<sup>22</sup> Mizerák 2014: 157-158.

<sup>23</sup> The amendment of teachers' qualifications in the CXX law of 2011., app. 3.

further training courses offered by other organisations. It can be seen from the above that dance teacher training and further training ensure the viability of the national dance culture and dance arts.

Legislative provisions over the last 15 years have led to a number of issues of concern to dance teachers, which have been reflected upon by many researchers/educators. The most fundamental one is: are dance teachers sufficiently prepared for the different educational settings? I will list a few more here in mosaic form.

- 1) The challenges of teacher training: number of candidates, qualifications, experience, availability of teaching posts in a context of limited teaching hours.
- 2) Closely related to the previous one is the issue of further training. The primary aim of teacher training is to renew the methodological culture and content of dance education in public education.
- 3) Application of new methods and challenges:
  - a. School pedagogical programme;
  - b. Integration of the „subject” in the curriculum;
  - c. Integration into the teacher’s curriculum.
- 4) 4) Difficulties faced by dance teachers:
  - a. Different educational settings need to be adapted:
    - school workshops
    - in culture houses
    - only in PE classes
    - separate subject
    - local expectations
    - other conditions (number of classes)

### **A sbrief description of the content of dance education**

In the kindergarten, the pedagogical programme includes dance movement, which is NOT teaching, but playful activity. The most important elements of the dance preparatory motifs are:

- 1) dance house for children
- 2) folk dance classes in the kindergarten (sencond and third grades)

- 3) seasonal folklore, music + rhymes + folk dance motif [e.g.: September - circle walk with a steady walk, drum beat, clapping; steady walk in a circle with a handshake, knee bend, - stretching (quarter beat), etc.]

A very varied programme of folklore (local education programmes: Folklore in the Nursery, Tulip programme, T.É.T. programmes [Dance-based Aesthetic Training]), where the focus is not on the genre but on the child, is emerging.

In primary and secondary education, the following subjects will include dance as a literacy content, based on the content standards aligned to the national curriculum of 2020.

framework curriculum for primary schools grades 1-4.	framework curriculum for primary schools grades 5-8.	framework curriculum for secondary grammar schools grades 9-12.	framework curriculum for secondary grammar schools grades 7-12.	framework curriculum for vocational training	
				general framework curriculum for vocational schools	framework curriculum for vocational secondary grammar schools grades 9–12.
music and singing	music and singing	music and singing	music and singing	PE	dancer
PE	homeland culture and communities	drama and theatre	homeland culture and communities		folk musician
	drama and theatre	+PE	drama and theatre		actor
	PE		+ PE		

Dance is prominently featured in 3 subjects in the frameworks alligned to the national curriculum: music and singing, physical education and drama and theatre with expectations presented by grade.

In singing and music classes, Hungarian children’s songs and dances are emphasized in grades 1-8, as well as rhythmic development (active



participation in dances is expected). In grades 9-10, complex skill development is specified.

In *Physical Education and Health Promotion*, grades 1-12, folk games are presented. In grades 5-8 - folk dance (1 class per week, 36 classes per year). Also here, based on the content regulation developed for the 2020 National Curriculum, list ethnographic location, costume, ethnographic content in 2 classes. For grade 6, 5 classes of feast days, festive customs; for grade 7, 2 classes of dance cultures, dance house; for grade 8, 5 classes of festive customs with dance. It sets as an examination requirement (as an outcome knowledge) the ability to associate folk music with landscapes and dance styles. The 5 physical education lessons per week in ascending order from 2012 from grade 1 5 9 is introduced as a new opportunity to develop dance skills for young people attending educational institutions. Folk dance - optional in 2 lessons per week. However, dance and dance movement studied in other dance/dance associations for 2 classes per week is also accepted. In this form, dance elements are actually taught to the students. In physical education lessons, dance teaching provides for the use and development of several forms of dance movement (folk dance, aerobics, hip-hop, etc.).<sup>24</sup>

Within the drama and theatre subject, the dance education content in grades 5-8 includes folk play in 7 classes; dramatic games with dance in 4 classes; theatre dance in 2 classes. Grades 9-12 Dramatic games with dance 3 classes; folk dance optional: dance games with dancing.

The framework curriculum also sets out the expectations for folk dance as an optional subject in the school programme.

The structure of arts education and dance education has recently responded to the current challenges. Since 1998, the implementation of the Dance (and Drama) in the National Curriculum has been the test case for public education. It remains true that the only people who can really teach dance are those who themselves love the music and dance movement forms they are teaching.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> for more details see: [http://kerettanerv.ofi.hu/01\\_melleklet\\_1-4/index\\_alt\\_isk\\_also.html](http://kerettanerv.ofi.hu/01_melleklet_1-4/index_alt_isk_also.html); [http://kerettanerv.ofi.hu/02\\_melleklet\\_5-8/index\\_alt\\_isk\\_felso.html](http://kerettanerv.ofi.hu/02_melleklet_5-8/index_alt_isk_felso.html); [http://kerettanerv.ofi.hu/03\\_melleklet\\_9-12/index\\_4\\_gimn.html](http://kerettanerv.ofi.hu/03_melleklet_9-12/index_4_gimn.html) [retrieved: 22.06.2023.]

<sup>25</sup> Láng 2019: 73; see also Láng – Bognár 2021: 255–266.

Experts have identified a number of research challenges related to the introduction of dance in public education:

1. The importance of dance in childhood and its impact on personal development today.
2. The role of folk dance education for mildly disabled and hyperactive children.
3. Role of the dance teacher (motivation, talent identification, mentoring).
4. Comparative studies on the impact of folk dance in educational institutions.
5. 5. A country-wide assessment should be carried out to determine whether the staffing requirements of the basic curriculum for dance teaching are met, and then the system of dance teacher training (further training) should be adapted accordingly.
6. The availability of support materials (for integrated education).<sup>26</sup>

In educational institutions, it is both a goal and a task to develop the revitalisation of dance in cooperation with singing, music and other arts, and to construct a kind of interdisciplinary knowledge model. The teaching and learning of dance must meet new challenges.<sup>27</sup> Changing times also shape and mould people's aspirations to education. In the information society of the 21st century, one's circumstances will be less and less conducive to dance or folk dance. The "folk" values that have been passed on to the arts can live on and will have an educating effect on the tastes of the next generation.<sup>28</sup> It is true that the values of dance culture are not just the values of one generation, and it is not one dancer, one group of dancers, one ensemble that makes up the dance culture of a country, but the whole nation.

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<sup>26</sup> Jakabné Zórándi 2009.

<sup>27</sup> For the different approaches toward tradition and new perspectives see Kavecsánszki 2022: 9-33. with more literature.

<sup>28</sup> see Molnár 1982: 25.

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# BalletWhere – lessons from a dance history educational innovation

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ANNA MÁRIA BÓLYA

## **Virtual reality in higher education**

The environment for university education - which in many countries has an artistic dimension, including dance - has changed fundamentally. Higher education has become a new global arena for the creation and use of knowledge, where a continuous reinterpretation of fundamental individual and social values is necessary.<sup>1</sup>

It is necessary to filter the knowledge and teaching methods to be taught so that students have the opportunity to practice and develop the skills needed in the 21st century. This requires a move away from the information delivery model towards greater student engagement, more learner-centred teaching and new assessment methods that measure skills and content mastery.<sup>2</sup>

The primary advantage of the potential of VR and AR technologies is that they create an educational environment that is primarily learner-centred. Implementing their use requires more preparation and development of digital competences on the part of educators. A good understanding of the characteristics of the implementation environment and a careful consideration of the benefits and pace of implementation are desirable.<sup>3</sup>

Disruptive technologies in higher education are affecting teaching methods and environments. Virtual Reality is a typical such technology that can fundamentally change the methodological structure of higher education, to the advantage of implementing universities. It is difficult to assess at this stage whether new technologies will transform the current model of higher education and replace current teaching methods and scenarios,

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<sup>1</sup> Ramsden 2003; Bólya 2021; Boros 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Bates 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Horváth 2018.



and when VR technology will bring a breakthrough in a higher education sector.<sup>4</sup> The benefits of introducing VR in the higher education sector seem undoubted. Experiments have proven that 2D content placed in the 3D space of MaxWhere is better remembered than content on a 2D surface. Content placed in a 3D virtual space simply lead to better memory performance.<sup>5</sup> Results from representative testing show that 3D environments provide higher levels of understanding and greater efficiency in digital workflows. In a test using MaxWhere as a VR-learning interface, users were able to complete the required workflow at least 50% faster in the MaxWhere 3D environment than using email for knowledge sharing or traditional e-learning interfaces.<sup>6</sup> The digital transformation of higher education is not only a necessity, it is also an opportunity: laying the foundations for a new, modern higher education.<sup>7</sup> That's why we launched our *BalletWhere* pilot project, in which we created and tested a 3D dance education curriculum. The year-and-a-half project is part of a multi-year programme to harness the 3D potential of music, music education, dance and dance education. The full programme is entitled *Benefits of Virtual Reality in Art*. The European Union's Digital Agenda for Action identifies the better use of digital technology for teaching and learning as a top priority. In-depth digital expertise is not only important for those working in ICT.<sup>8</sup> The use of 3D spaces is mainly focused in teaching natural sciences.<sup>9</sup> Exploiting the potential of 3D is almost a blank spot in higher education in the arts in Europe, especially in dance. Two pilots of the *Benefits of Virtual Reality in Art* project are underway, the first of which is in the final publication phase:

1. Testing on a Dance History Teaching Case (*BalletWhere*) 2021–2023
2. Testing on a Dance Teaching Case 2023–2024

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<sup>4</sup> Horváth 2016; Bujdosó 2017.; Flavin 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Berki 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Lampert – Pongracz – Sipos – Vehrér – Horvath 2018.

<sup>7</sup> New models of learning and teaching in higher education; High Level Group of Modernization of Higher Education. 2014.

<sup>8</sup> On the Digital Education Action Plan. EC. 2018; Lanszki – Bólya 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Bologna Digital 2020 - White Paper on Digitization in the European Higher Education Area 2019.

## **Background to the BalletWhere pilot project – The *aranyVáRy* research**

The Auróra 1 and 2 projects focused on important milestones in the development of Hungarian ballet life: the opening of the Pesti Magyar Színház (Hungarian Theatre in Pest) (later the National Theatre) in 1837, the work of ballet master Frigyes Campilli and the fate of Emília Aranyváry, the first internationally renowned prima ballerina and the first female choreographer. The virtual content focuses specifically on Aranyváry and her work at the National Theatre. The project also involved researchers from the Hungarian Dance Academy and the Institute of Art Theory and Methodology of the Hungarian Academy of Arts. The initial project was supported by the Institute of Art Theory and Methodology of the Hungarian Academy of Arts.

The second part of the project series, *Auróra*, which explores the beginnings of Hungarian ballet history, shed light on the mysterious aspects of Emília Aranyváry's life, dealt with the data of Aranyváry research, revealed new lithographs of the elderly Aranyváry, and tried to give a comprehensive picture of her artistic activity in the light of contemporary press reviews and criticism. The project also involved the creation of a virtual space, with the National Theatre building, the figure of Aranyváry and the “fetishes” of the Romantic ballet as its main points of interest.

3D technologies have been familiar in everyday life for a long time. Systems related to 3D imaging (3D photography, 3D television, 3D, 4D, 5D, etc. cinema, 3D computer games, 3D simulation) and 3D printing are very popular. However, the concept of virtual reality (VR) is not well defined and it actually refers to several types of technological possibilities. The main added value lies in active participation in space and multisensory effects. The basic characteristics of virtual reality are: it is a system created using computer technology; the user can be present in the virtual space; the user can interact with objects in the space; interactivity takes place in ‘real time’ with events in the space; and the user can affect sensory elements other than vision. Virtual content can be presented in two-dimensional form, in computer-generated images, or projected by a projector; with the help of an appropriate device

(head-set, “glasses”), or even in special spaces (“caves”) designed for this purpose.<sup>10</sup>

The virtual content of the Aurora project was created in collaboration with the virtual spatialisation software of the Faculty of Informatics of the University of Debrecen, under the name of the *aranyVáRy* project. Some units of the Faculty already have experience in creating art-related virtual spaces. The virtual space was created using 3ds MAX and UNITY software. 3ds MAX is a three-dimensional modelling and rendering software for creating lifelike 3D animations, visual design and virtual reality experiences. It is compatible with other Autodesk software. The benefits of UNITY include: high quality graphics; an excellent development environment; flexible 3D modelling spaces and relatively simple post-editing. Both fixed and movable objects can be placed in the virtual space. Several projects using UNITY are known in the medical, aerospace and military fields.

The model created a theatre space that can be walked around and experienced as a zoomable “virtual reality”. In the first phase of the project, the building of Aranyváry’s theatre in Pest, the Hungarian Theatre of Pest (National Theatre), completed in 1837, later enlarged and demolished in 1913, was reconstructed in the virtual space. The difficulty here was that the building no longer exists and no detailed plans for it could be found in archival documents. To create the colourful interior with geometric precision, the plans of Mátyás Zitterbarth from 1835 were needed, which have not been found so far and are not mentioned in the literature. The neoclassical building, built in 1837, was modelled on the Odeon in Paris, like all Hungarian theatres of the time, which helped to create the VR content.

For the interior design of the theatre, two auditorium plans, textual dimension descriptions and digital images of the auditorium, box and stage were available from the libraries’ digital image archive. A relatively large number of depictions of the building are available (around 40 in total).

In the virtual space, the outside of the building leads directly to the auditorium. In this authentic space, you can look around the auditorium of the National Theatre circa 1850. Clicking in the space will scroll down to a modern-style

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<sup>10</sup> Hodgson 2019: 161–173.

virtual exhibition. Its content: the most famous portrait of Aranyvály by Canzi is embedded in the background. On the stage, 10 virtual projection screens (3, 4, 3) are arranged in a circle, which use the text of the future publication of the Aurora research project and links embedded in the Internet to convey the content in a form suitable for scientific illustration and education.

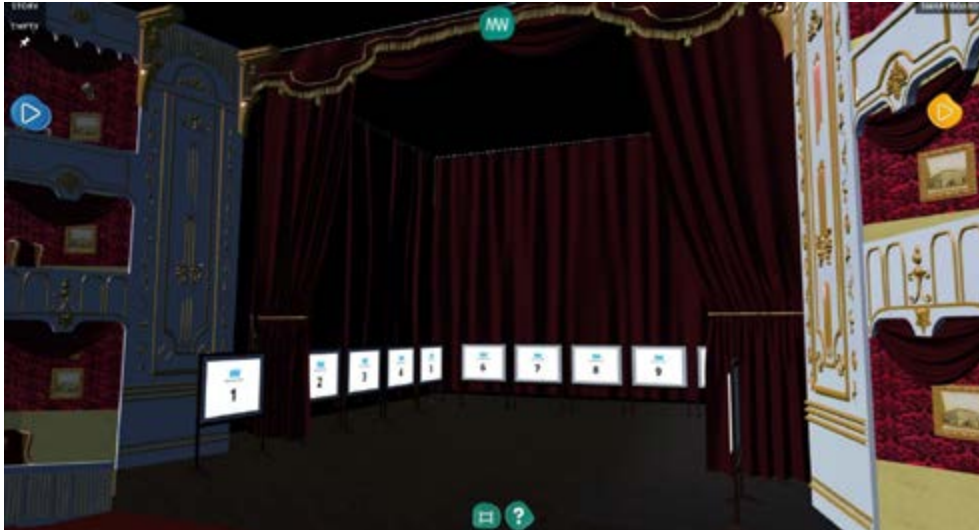
The virtual exhibition also includes the “fetishes” of romantic ballet. The main accessory is the pointe shoe of the romantic ballerina. The pointe shoes on the glass table are based on depictions of pointe shoes from the 19th century Romantic period. Another important accessory is the romantic tutu. This is the most difficult point to create a 3D romantic ballet: the main purpose of the romantic tutu is to emphasize the ballerina’s fairy-like quality. The material is as light as possible, tulle-like, layered and floaty. To draw a material with such properties is a very difficult task for the creator of the virtual space.

The virtual space was then drawn in MaxWhere as an online classroom. The MaxWhere system is a desktop virtual reality system developed by Hungarian researchers, in which educational material (web content, files) can be placed on projection screens in different 3D spaces. The creation of the spaces in Unity and MaxWhere was supported by the Hungarian Academy of Arts’ Institute for Art Theory and Methodology, Arts and Research Bt., the Virtual Reality Laboratory of the University of Debrecen, the EFOP-3.6.3-VEKOP-16-2017-00002 and OTKA K-111651 grants and the Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Rác – Gilányi – Bólya – Chmielewska 2019.

## The BalletWhere pilot project



Picture 1: A 3D classroom in MaxWhere, placed in an interior theatre space.

In our project, we introduced the use of the MaxWhere 3D classroom as a special case of digitalisation in education; we tested the ballet history curriculum developed for higher and secondary dance education in a 3D classroom in an educational environment. The results were analysed using statistical methods, based on a questionnaire survey. Our main question was the impact of using 3D classrooms on memory performance. The results are presented later in this paper.

In the pilot project, we conducted the first research on dance history, where we opened a new comparative research field: we examined the beginnings of ballet history in the V4 region from the perspective of institutional history, ballet history and art theory, compared to the specificities of the Balkan region. As a separate aesthetic and historical category, we examined the staging and artistic interpretation of folk dance material. The historical development of ballet in the V4 region is relatively homogeneous. The earliest high level development of ballet is a characteristic of Poland, Hungarian ballet starts at a slightly later stage and the history of Slovak ballet runs parallel to that of Hungarian ballet. However, the beginnings of ballet in the whole region are mainly rooted in the Romantic period and style. This is fundamentally differ-

ent from the culture of the Balkan Peninsula, where the history of Macedonian ballet has been studied.

The Macedonian territory is lagging behind the V4 region in terms of cultural development. Until 1912, the territory was part of the Ottoman Empire and its folklore is very conservative. In terms of dance, the Balkan Peninsula has preserved a more archaic chain and round form than the later couple dance culture. In this area, the historical development of ballet starts much later than in the V4 region. In summary, the most conserved form of folk dance is a characteristic of Macedonia, while the earliest and highest degree of stylization is a characteristic of Polish stage dance.

The following learning materials are available in English and national languages:

- Beginnings of Polish Ballet. National dances on the scene. EN, PL
- Beginnings of Slovak Ballet. National dances on the scene. EN, SK
- Beginnings of Hungarian Ballet. National dances on the scene. EN, HU
- Beginnings of Macedonian Ballet. National dances on the scene. EN, MK

The learning materials have been integrated into a 3D curriculum. The material developed directly and indirectly develops the digital skills of many trainers, teachers, professors and students: participants in the programme, participants in the workshops and future users of the curriculum. With this project, dance universities and schools can become flagships for the integration of 3D spaces in arts education: providing intelligent, research-based curricula, implementing an innovative 3D tool, developing the digital skills of teachers and students.

The smart curriculum can be navigated in MaxWhere 3D space to ensure better memory performance; provides specific, user-friendly, easy-to-use curricula and teaching aids; curricula based on high quality research; and imple-

mented under educational supervision. The output is material that can be used by all university and secondary school teachers of dance and theatre.<sup>12</sup>

### **BalletWhere – testing**

The 3D curriculum was tested in some of the consortium's member institutions. The dance history material was presented by the instructors to students in two groups - a pilot group and a control group. The experimental group learned the material presented using a MaxWhere desktop 3D presentation, while the control group learned the material using standard 2D presentation techniques. After the lesson, they completed a knowledge test. The aim of the experiment was to prove the thesis: the use of the MaxWhere 3D classroom has a positive impact on the learning process. Knowledge was measured at three levels:

1. 1. Surface knowledge: easy to remember and understand, it contains general knowledge. The level can be illustrated by the following questions: name 3 important facts from the history of dance in your country. Identify a photograph of the National Theatre building. Who was the most famous dancer in your country? Who was the most famous choreographer?
2. 2. Detailed knowledge, which includes some specific facts, names, locations, etc. Sample questions could include the following: List as many titles as possible! Where was the dancer born? What famous theatres did the dancer perform in?

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<sup>12</sup> A description of the user-friendly teaching material and method can be found on the 4you.dance website. (<http://4you.dance/>). Watch a video of the finished spaces here: <https://youtu.be/FD2F2rNa13Y>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8SdAmBaa7UE>. The driving force behind the implementation of the innovative 3D curriculum is the consortium leader Arts and Research Ltd. The following institutions are members of the consortium: University of Debrecen, Faculty of Informatics; Faculty of Humanities; Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, Faculty of Mathematics; University of Trnava, Department of Mathematics and Informatics; Masaryk University, Faculty of Pedagogy; Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice, Department of Dance Studies; Dolnohronské Development Partnership (Želiezovce); Pure Source (Želiezovce); Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Faculty of Music.

3. 3. In-depth, detailed knowledge of facts, conclusions, briefly mentioned elements not so much emphasised in the lesson. Examples:  
How was the theatre built? What is white ballet?

Here we demonstrate the test results for the groups at the University of Skopje. The groups consisted of mainly female (92%) undergraduate ballet students in years 1-4. The students in both groups were taught by the same experienced teacher, well versed in the use of MaxWhere. During the 60-70 minute testing lesson, 14 MaxWhere smartboards were used. The teacher presented the material on the MaxWhere screens using jpeg, png or other graphic files. The internet was also used on some screens. The teacher was the only user of MaxWhere.

Students in the experimental group scored significantly higher than students in the control group at the detailed and deep levels. The same holds true for the overall test results, with the experimental group having a significantly higher mean overall score ( $p=0.05$ ). A new finding is that the use of MaxWhere evens out the cognitive potential of the learners and leads to fairly consistent results across the group.

Further lessons from the whole pilot project can be summarised. The use of the 3D classroom has had a positive impact on collaboration. Preparation and available support from both teachers and students is needed to develop digital competences. The use of desktop VR simplifies its use as it does not require any use of any device other than a computer. At the same time, the 3D imaging processes of the brain from watching a 2D screen help memory performance.<sup>13</sup> Taking this further, we will also promote desktop formats in our future projects. In general, we have found that web-based materials are more popular than download-based systems, and that we need methods that are easier to use and require fewer applications and clicks. There is also a need for systems and spaces that are of the highest quality and easy to access and move around.

We also explored the possibilities of movement analysis at an international workshop and conference organised as part of the BalletWhere project. We are continuing our project in this direction: to develop the potential of vir-

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<sup>13</sup> Baranyi – Csapo – Sallai 2015.



tual spaces, 3D and motion capture to improve the didactics of dance education. The transfer of dance analysis and movement into 3D, the creation of 3D dance curricula offers multiple didactic innovation opportunities compared to traditional teaching materials. Therefore, our next project, already in pilot form, will carry out research and 3D curricula creation in the field of dance pedagogy and movement analysis.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Berki 2019.

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# The use of virtual reality in the presentation and teaching of dance history<sup>1</sup>

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ATTILA GILÁNYI

Today, virtual reality is playing an increasingly important role in many areas of science and everyday life. Recent research has shown that its proper use has a positive impact on human memory, helping the human brain to learn faster, discover parallels and understand complex tasks and data more easily.<sup>1</sup> Virtual reality technologies also have many applications in dance education and the presentation of dance history. In this paper we attempt to present some of these applications.

## **The cradle of Hungarian ballet: the first Hungarian National Theatre**

The construction of the first Hungarian National Theatre started in 1835 on a plot of land on Kerepesi Street (now 1 Rákóczi Street) in Pest (now Budapest), according to the plans of György Telepi under the supervision of Mátyás Zitterbarth. The institution opened its doors on 22 August 1837. It was initially known as the Hungarian Theatre of Pest, and in 1940, by decision of the National Assembly, it was renamed the National Theatre. Naturally, it played a fundamental role in Hungarian cultural life at the time and had a significant impact on Hungarian public life. It was also the venue for ballet and opera performances until the opening of the Royal Hungarian Opera House in 1884.

Figure 1 (available in electronic form - among others - in the Hungarian Digital Image Library of the National Széchényi Library: <https://www.oszk.hu/mdk>) shows a contemporary (mid-19th century) image of the building.

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<sup>1</sup> see.: Baranyi – Csapo – Sallai 2015; Katona – Kovari 2018a; Katona – Kovari 2018b; Kovari 2018, Kövecses – Gósi 2018; Lampert – Pongrácz – Sipos – Vehrer – Horváth 2018.



Fig.1.: The building of the National Theatre. Litographpy by Lajos Landerer

The *Vasárnapi Újság*, a newspaper published in Pest on 24 June 1855, published a lengthy article about the Theatre. Figure 2 shows a picture of the interior of the Theatre published in this paper.<sup>2</sup>

The building was completely rebuilt in 1874 and was destroyed in 1913, so it does not exist today. (Note that a detailed description of the Theatre building can be found in István Báthory's book<sup>3</sup>.)

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<sup>2</sup> The article is available in digital form in the Electronic Periodicals Database of the National Széchényi Library.

<sup>3</sup> Báthory 1914.

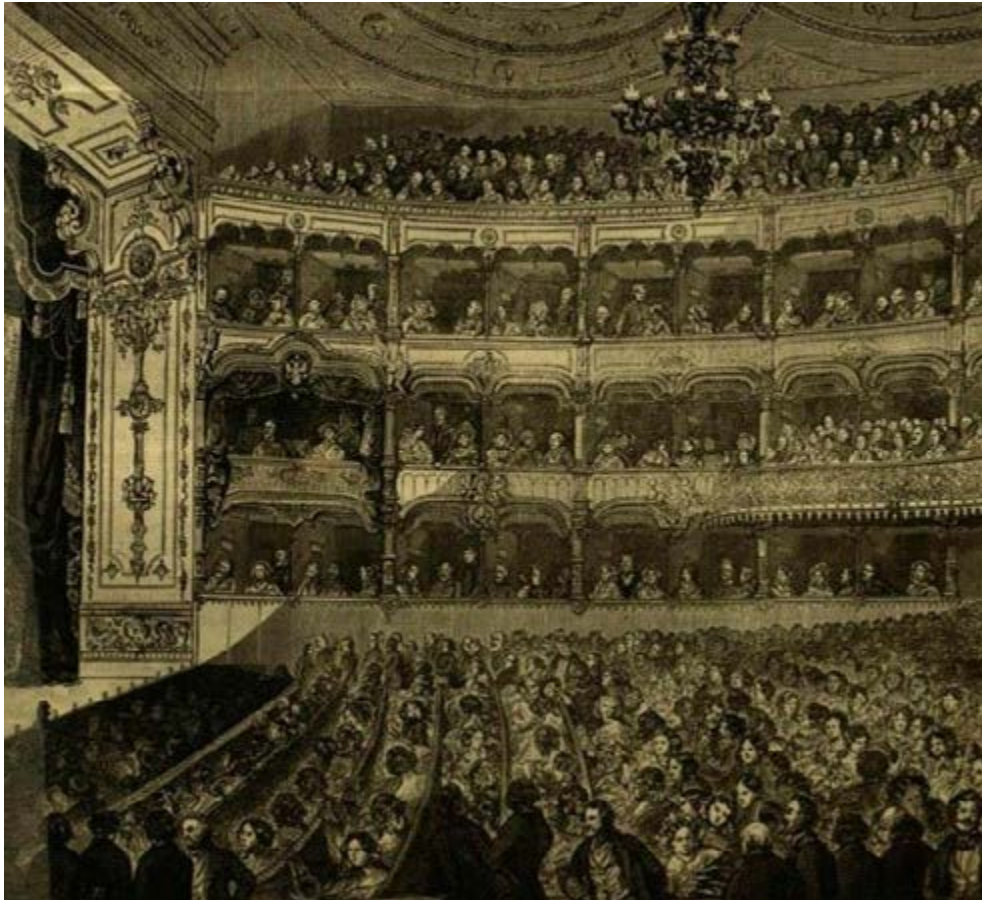


Figure 2.: The interior of the National Theatre

The building can also be considered the cradle of Hungarian ballet. As Anna Mária Bólya says in one of her studies,<sup>4</sup> „In Hungary, ballet was already present in the palace theatres (Eszterházy, Grassalkovich, etc.) through guest artists, but we can only speak of real ballet life after the construction of the Hungarian Theatre in Pest (later the National Theatre) in 1837.” Emília Aranyváry (1838-1871), the first Hungarian prima ballerina and choreographer of international significance, and Frigyes Campilli (1820-1889), also described in the above essay as „the ballet master and choreographer who laid the foundations for ballet in Hungary”.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bólya 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Bólya 2020.

## Virtual reconstruction of the Theatre building

The visualization of the building of the first Hungarian National Theatre is part of a project connected to the Virtual Reality Laboratory of the University of Debrecen, in the framework of which we have created a three-dimensional visualization of buildings and parts of buildings that do not exist in their original form or that cannot be visited for some reason.<sup>6</sup> An important characteristic of these virtual reconstructions is authenticity: the buildings, parts of buildings and important objects in the spaces have exactly the same physical and other characteristics as the original buildings and objects (or, if we do not have completely accurate information, the characteristics they most likely had). This objective is fully in line with the recommendations of the document formally adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the International Commission on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) on the conservation and restoration of monuments and sites, known as the Venice Charter, drawn up at the Second Congress of Architects and Experts on Historic Buildings in Venice in 1964.<sup>7</sup> This is the principle we followed during our work with the National Theatre. As the building does not exist today and, unfortunately, there are no blueprints or accurate descriptions available, we have relied on the sources mentioned in the previous chapter, contemporary information, pictures and, in some cases, analogies.<sup>8</sup>

The three-dimensional visualisation of the building was done in two different systems. One of the models is implemented in the so-called „engine” of Unity<sup>9</sup>, the other one is used in MaxWhere.<sup>10</sup> In both cases, the objects

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<sup>6</sup> see for example: Gilányi – Bálint – Hajdu – Tarsoly – Erdős 2015a; Gilányi – Bálint – Hajdu – Tarsoly – Erdős 2015b; Gilányi – Bujdosó – Bálint 2017a; Gilányi – Bujdosó – Bálint 2017b; Gilányi – Rácz – Bálint – Chmielewska 2018a; Gilányi – Rácz – Bálint – Chmielewska 2018b; Gilányi – Virágos 2013; Gilányi – Virágos – Bence – Erdős – Fejes 2013.

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.icomos.hu/datas/velencei-karta/velencei\\_charta\\_1964.pdf](https://www.icomos.hu/datas/velencei-karta/velencei_charta_1964.pdf)  
[retrieveds: 10.07.2023.]

<sup>8</sup> see: Báthory 1914; Rédey 1937.

<sup>9</sup> <https://unity.com/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.maxwhere.com/>



in the virtual spaces were created using Autodesk 3ds Max 3D<sup>11</sup> modelling software.

A model created in Unity can be used with a virtual reality headset or on a (two-dimensional) computer screen. Due to the nature of this space, it requires a more substantial hardware background to display it. A model in MaxWhere (following the capabilities of the base system) can be used primarily on a computer screen (or projected). In designing the space, we have placed great emphasis on making this version much less hardware-intensive and on ensuring that it „works” well on less powerful computers. (Further details on the construction of the variants and their hardware requirements can be found in earlier<sup>12</sup> studies.)

### **Applications of virtual models of the Theatre**

The models of the theatre building outlined in the previous chapter can be used „on their own” for presentations on dance history, dance education and, of course, any other kind of presentation. Below we briefly describe some of their specific applications in dance history.

In the framework of the research projects Auróra The Birth of Hungarian Ballet 1 and 2,<sup>13</sup> supported by the Hungarian Academy of Arts Research Institute of Art Theory and Methodology, we have created a virtual exhibition in the Theatre Unity model, presenting facts, objects, documents and persons related to the birth of Hungarian ballet, especially Emília Aranyváry, presented in chapter 1. This exhibition can be viewed in the following ways. Entering the space, the user can see the empty stage with the famous depiction of Emília Aranyváry in the background (Figure 3).

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.autodesk.eu/products/3ds-max/>

<sup>12</sup> Bólya – Gilányi – Rác 2020; Gilányi – Rác – Bólya – Chmielewska 2019; Gilányi – Rác – Bólya – Décei – Chmielewska 2020; Rác – Gilányi – Bólya – Chmielewska 2019; Rác – Gilányi – Bólya – Décei – Chmielewska 2020.

<sup>13</sup> see: Bólya (ed.) 2020.



Figure 3. bra: The stage of the virtual model of the Theatre with a representation of Emlia Aranyvry.

A presentation linked to the exhibition (which, depending on the setting, starts automatically or on the user's command) is accompanied by projection screens (displaying two-dimensional content) descending above the stage, on which information about Emlia Aranyvry's age (in its original version) is displayed (Figure 4). During the presentation, music from Adolphe Adam's ballet *Giselle* is played.

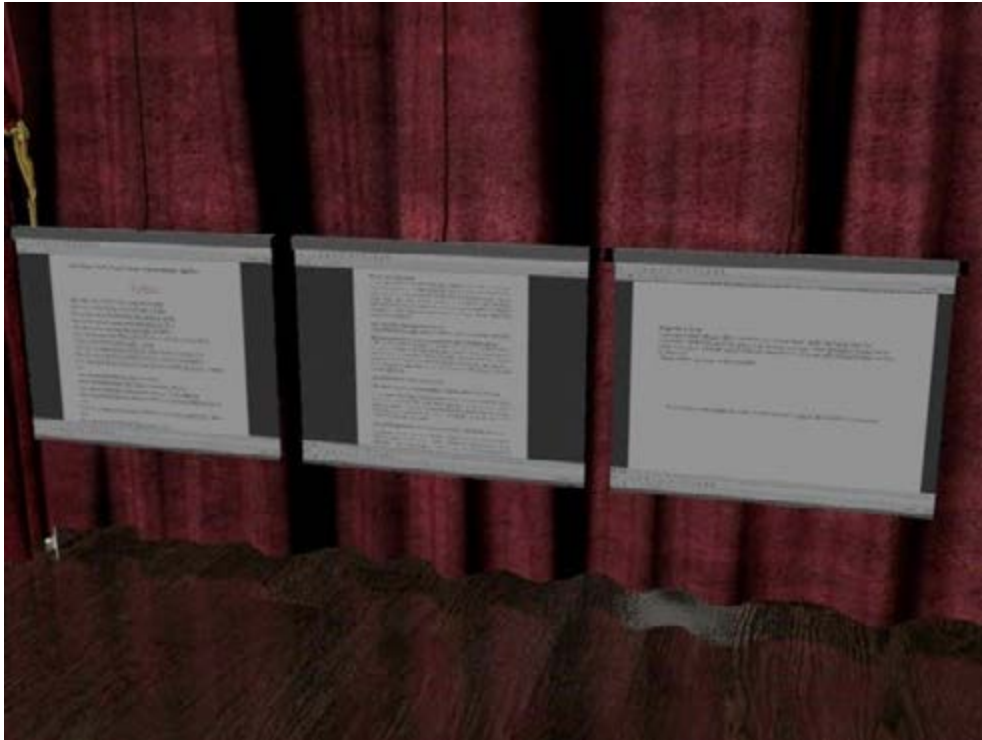


Figure 4.: Projection screens in the virtual theatre.

As part of the exhibition in the space, important objects typical of romantic ballet are also on display. These include pointe ballet shoes worn by ballerinas of the period. A pair of these shoes is on display on a glass table that rises from the stage. Another pair is shown in spike format, fitted to the feet of an imaginary ballerina. From this object, the (virtual) foot part can be removed (or more precisely made transparent) by the user, so that the inner part of the shoes' shape can be examined. Another important accessory of the period that can be viewed in space is the romantic tutu (Figure 5). Its ,function' and ,purpose' is to emphasise the ,fairy' nature of the ballerina, who is seemingly unaffected by gravity during her airy and spectacular dance movements (representing such a multi-layered, light, tulle-like object in virtual spaces proved to be a difficult task).



Figure 5.: Tutu from the Romantic period.

The dancer wearing the tutu in this model can also be made transparent by the user, so that the garment can be seen from the inside in space. Of course, these objects are fully circumnavigable and can be viewed from a distance, given the constraints of the space.

As can be seen from the above, the objects in the virtual model (richly decorated walls, stage, curtains, chairs, period objects on display, etc.) are displayed in a period-like way. Great care has been taken to ensure that the „modern” objects used for the show (projection screen, glass table rising from the stage, etc.) are significantly different.

In addition to the visualisation above, we also created a visualisation of the National Theatre for use in MaxWhere. The most significant difference between the two spaces, apart from what was mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, is that the MaxWhere version makes it easy for people without significant computer skills to create presentations.

In this space, there are also so-called smart boards on the stage (Figure 6). These objects are usually typical and very important components of Maxhere spaces.



Figure 6.: The stage of the Theatre with smart boards.

The tables can display two-dimensional content (text, images and videos) and the user can easily modify the information they contain. Presentations can be easily presented on simple computers. Research in recent years has shown (as described at the beginning of this thesis) that because the presentation is actually in a three-dimensional space, the information presented is much more memorable and the students are able to learn any material presented in this way more easily and effectively.<sup>14</sup>

In the field of dance education and the presentation of dance history, due to the nature of the institutional structure and some of the specificities of the educational content and theory, these possibilities are particularly exploitable.<sup>15</sup> In the framework of the project Testing a Ballet Historical 3D Classroom as an Educational, Collaborative and Promotional Space, funded by the International Visegrad Fund 22120280, the Hungarian Academy of

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<sup>14</sup> see also eg.: Budai – Kuczmann 2018; Bujdosó 2016; Bujdosó 2017; Bujdosó – Novac – Szimkovics 2017; Csapó 2017; Horváth 2016; Horváth – Sudár 2018; Kovari 2018; Lampert – Pongrácz – Sipos – Vehrer – Horváth 2018.

<sup>15</sup> see: Bólya – Windhager (ed.) 2021.

Arts Research Institute of Art Theory and Methodology, the University of Debrecen, Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, Széchenyi István University, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, and the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice have confirmed these statements. (Detailed results are currently being published in international journals and conference proceedings.)

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# Folk dance and character dance education in the training structure of the State Ballet Institute – sources for an unfolding semantic research idea

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ÁDÁM MIKULICS

## Introduction

The starting point of my research, which focuses on the investigation of the institutional frameworks that ensured the search for the path and the supply of professional Hungarian folk dance in the 1970s and 1980s, and which explores the sources and formulates assumptions along these lines in later periods, is the analysis of the artistic and pedagogical careers of two emblematic artists, Katalin Györgyfalvai<sup>1</sup> and Sándor Timár<sup>2</sup>, and the social and cultural environment that influenced them. Using an interdisciplinary approach, I intend to interpret the relationship of the artistic aspirations of the so-called second generation of choreographers to the peasant dance culture of the period in question, along the lines of the two most striking and apparently most divergent *ars poetica*s of the period. In the anthropological analysis of the period in question, I will focus on the influence of the folk dance course of the State Ballet Institute, which started on 1 September 1971, on the art of folk dance on stage, since the two creative and teaching geniuses mentioned above were together, between 1971 and 1975, the leading teachers of the legendary first year of professional folk dance training. The focus of the current phase of my research - placing the research in the context of institutional history - is the methodology and educational environment of the first class of the folk

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<sup>1</sup> Katalin Györgyfalvai (1937–2012). Until the end of August 1970, she held the position of Deputy Director of the State Ballet Institute as a member of the Character Dance Department. In September 1971, she was the head of the Folk Dance Class, alongside Sándor Timár. After the first class of 1975, she was no longer involved in the work of the section as a teacher.

<sup>2</sup> Sándor Timár Sándor (1930–) In 1971, he became a teacher at the folk dance department of the State Ballet Institute, and later headed the department until 1990. He was the leading master of three classes, and such emblematic performers and creative personalities who later determined the art of folk dance on stage studied under him as Zoltán Zsuráfszky, Zoltán Farkas, Sándor Román, Gyöngyvér Hortobágyi, Sándor Román, Péter Lévai, Miklós Végső.

dance training at the State Ballet Institute. In my work, which is based on primary source accounts, examination registers, working group reports and other archival data, institutional documents and their analysis, I would like to reflect on the history and characteristics of the training by briefly cross-sectioning the training of folk dance and character dance within the Institute's training system. The precise curricular content of these practical subjects, and thus the interpretation of the term folk dance for a given period, should be the subject of further complex analysis, which could lead to a line of research into the semantics of folk dance.

There are substantial differences between the academic use of the term folk dance and its use in wider society, which is based on a kind of common agreement, and thus there are many difficulties in defining it precisely.<sup>3</sup> During the past two decades, several prominent representatives of the dynamically developing Hungarian dance science, integrating new interpretative horizons and opening up to different approaches, have dealt with this question in depth - Máté Kavecsánszki, in defining ballroom dances, highlighting the relationship between the two dance languages, interpreted from several perspectives, refers to the difficulty of defining the concept of folk dance.<sup>4</sup> Focusing on the function of folk dance, Ildikó Sándor calls the form of movement that appeared in the revival movement's dance houses a ballroom dance in her study *Zene és tánc úgy, mint Széken - A tánc ház mint folklorizmus és művelődési jelenség*<sup>5</sup>, and in my interview with her in 2022, she traces back the problem to the difficulties of defining the exact concept of „people”, referring to the thoughts of her former master, Vilmos Voigt: *“The problem with the concept of people is that it is very difficult to define, with too many possible interpretations. When we use the term folk dance, many people explain it in terms of many different folk concepts in an academic discourse. Voigt mentions folkloric arts”*.<sup>6</sup> Ernő Pesovár provides a broader interpretative framework for the definition of folk dance, as he states that

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<sup>3</sup> Kovács 2021: 36.

<sup>4</sup> Kavecsánszki 2015: 68–72.

<sup>5</sup> Sándor 2006: 25.

<sup>6</sup> Interview – Sándor 2022.

*„folk dance is nothing other than the totality of dance types and styles rooted in different historical periods, but living side by side in tradition.”<sup>7</sup>*

### **Teaching Folk Dance and Character Dance in the Hungarian State Ballet Institute (1950–1971)**

I would like to contribute to the interpretative framework of folk dance by presenting the partial results of a study of the State Ballet Institute’s operation between 1950 and 1975, which I hope will help researchers to define the concepts of folk dance and character dance and to interpret the process of change that led to the interpretation of folk dance today. I extend my current research as a consequence of the study of the first year of the Folk Dance programme to the ballet training and to the period before the 1971/72 academic year. Drawing on the sources already mentioned above, I would like to emphasise the factors relevant to my topic, from the prehistory of the training of folk dancers to 22 June 1975, in a historical thread of the institution, with reference to the role of folk dance and character dance as important segments of training and the process that led to the start of the folk dance department in September 1971.

When examining the training of folk dance at the State Ballet Institute, the horizon of the analytical activity expands to show that the early institutionalised forms of its education were not exclusively provided by the Institute and later by its Folk Dance Department, Olga Szentpál, as the head of the professional workshop at the Dance Department of the Academy of Theatre Arts, published her study entitled *Methodological Issues of Folk Dance Teaching* in the form of two publications in the journal *Táncművészet* as early as 1951, in which she explains that folk dance teaching must be based on a deep and thorough knowledge of the dance material. *„We had to develop an analytical method that would illuminate our folk dances in a comprehensive way, as far as possible, in such a way that their content would emerge, so that the inseparable unity of content and form would become apparent.”<sup>8</sup>* And

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<sup>7</sup> Pesovár 2003: 3.

<sup>8</sup> Szentpál 1951: 26.

this is the approach she considers appropriate for stage dance with a national character, based on folk dance traditions.

Gábor Bolvári-Takács, in his documentary study entitled *Two Ideas for Ensuring the Supply of Professional Folk Dance Ensembles - Proposals of György Lőrinc and Miklós Rábai (1959, 1962)*, indicates that the State Ballet Institute had a three-year training course for leaders of folk dance groups within its training structure as early as 1950-1953. The evening course was intended to raise the operational standard of the movement, which was expanding significantly due to cultural policy efforts, including those under Soviet influence, and which in 1949 had approximately 2,000 amateur folk dance companies.<sup>9</sup> The submissions of György Lőrinc<sup>10</sup> and Miklós Rábai<sup>11</sup>, published by Bolvári-Takács, show that the idea of training professional folk dancers and the intention to create a framework for it had already appeared in 1959 and 1962.<sup>12</sup> From the point of view of the State Ballet Institute, the main aim of broadening the profile of education was to ensure the recruitment and employment of graduates, and thus the legitimacy of the training system developed by the institution. Lőrinc's proposal, dated 14 February 1959, was submitted to the Ministry of Education as a result of a consensus with the character dance working group<sup>13</sup> of the Institute, in which he raised the possibility of a structural reorganisation of the education of folk

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<sup>9</sup> Bolvári-Takács 2020: 191.

<sup>10</sup> György Lőrinc (1917-1996) dance artist, ballet master, choreographer and ballet director. He was a pupil of Olga Szentpál and Máriusz Rabinovszky, who established the State Ballet Institute in 1950 and created the Hungarian higher professional dance education. He held the position of Director of the Institute from 1950 to 1961, and remained one of its leading ballet masters until 1982. For his biography see Bolvári-Takács et al. 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Miklós Rábai (1921-1974) dance artist, choreographer, member of the first generation of choreographers, Kossuth Prize winner (1952), Merited Artist (1967). He graduated from the József Attila University of Szeged, and was a secondary school teacher of chemistry and nature drawing at the Békéscsaba secondary school between 1945-48. In 1946, he formed his first amateur group, the Batsányi Ensemble, from his students at the high school, and was its artistic director until 1948. It was with his ensemble that he made his first folk dance research trips and developed his first choreographies. From the 1950-51 season, he was the leader and choreographer of the dance troupe of the State Folk Ensemble, from 1965 until his death he was the artistic director of the entire ensemble, and from 1971 he was its director. For his biography see Pesovár 1997.

<sup>12</sup> For the complete forms of the two proposals see Bolvári-Takács 2020: 192–197.

<sup>13</sup> The leader of the character dance workshop in 1959 was Ágnes Roboz. The other members of the professional group were Károly Aszalós, Emma Lugossy and Magda Mák, and Mária Ligeti was an external member. See Bolvári 2020: 193.

dance character dance that would be adequate for the objectives, describing in detail the structure of the „folk dance education” at the Ballet Institute and the possible ways of its reorganisation.<sup>14</sup> On the basis of the document, the Institute’s director and professional council formulated its own proposals after Károly Aszalós, who is indicated in the proposal as the teacher of folk dance in the character dance working group, had consultations with the leaders of professional folk dance companies and other professionals.<sup>15</sup> In his proposal, Lőrinc notes that

*”many of the expelled students of the Institute have, after four to five or six years of study, found employment with the Operetta Theatre, in the countryside, with folk ensembles, and are known to be useful members of the dance company. It is obvious that the graduates will be even better suited to the requirements and will raise the professional level of the dance companies.”*<sup>16</sup>

According to Bolvári-Takács, we know of cases in which many students, after interrupting their ballet studies, found employment with professional (folk dance) ensembles, and at the same time, continuing their studies in general studies, they passed their school-leaving exams.<sup>17</sup> As a sort of partial summary, the Ballet Institute has, since its inception in 1950, emphasised the training of students in folk dance through the pedagogical work of the members of the character dance working group.<sup>18</sup> This certainly provided a solid basis for the proposal of a plan for training folk dancers, the precise, elaborated methodology of which could have been realised in the light of practical experience, as the management of the institution intended. Further

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<sup>14</sup> Bolvári-Takács 2020: 193.

<sup>15</sup> Károly Aszalós (1929-1989) physical education teacher, choreographer. In 1958-1968 he was a teacher of folk dance at the character dance workshop of the State Ballet Institute, and in 1961-1968 he was deputy director of the Institute. He was one of the authors of the chapter *Karaktertánc és Vívás* in the 1961 book *A balettművészet felé*. From 1970 he was a teacher at the State Acrobat Training Institute from 1970 until his death in 1986.

<sup>16</sup> Bolvári-Takács 2020: 192–193.

<sup>17</sup> Bolvári-Takács 2020: 192.

<sup>18</sup> „*The pupils learn folk children’s games in one lesson a week for two years (in grades I and II), Hungarian folk dance for one lesson a week in grade III, two lessons a week in grade IV; 3 lessons a week for half a year in grades V and VI and 2 lessons a week in grade VII; foreign folk dance for half a year in grades V and VI for 3 lessons a week in grade VII. In total, our students study Hungarian and foreign folk dance 13 lessons per week.*” György Lőrinc’s proposal is quoted by Bolvári-Takács 2020: 193.



research could provide grounds for assuming that the concepts of folk dance and character dance might be mixed, an important pillar of which would be an examination of the content of the curricula and the curricula based on documentary analysis. Using this approach, the exploration of the content and teaching methodology of the teaching unit presented in Lőrinc's proposal as "foreign folk dance" could also yield promising results as part of a semantic study.

Miklós Rábai also saw great potential in the development of the conditions and framework for training professional folk dancers, when he was confronted with the problem of highly qualified professional folk dance ensembles, such as the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble. In the early 1960s, the Ensemble, which, like the State Ballet Institute, had begun its activities in 1950, was faced with the urgent task of rejuvenating its dance company, which Rábai reflects on in his proposal as follows:

*„the Ensemble drew its most indispensable supplies almost exclusively from the voluntary movement. However, in the case of the Dance Ensemble, this alone is no longer sufficient. On the one hand, the voluntary movement does not produce sufficient numbers of dancers, and on the other hand, the dancers who come out of the voluntary movement again lack the necessary professional preparation and technical skills. It is therefore imperative that, in addition to the strengths gained from the voluntary groups, the company's dance corps should in future also receive training from the State Ballet Institute.”<sup>19</sup>*

In his proposal in October 1962, Rábai informed about the intention to hire several students of the graduating classes of 1963 and 1964, although according to the training system of the Institute at that time, the teaching of folk dance was not continued after the VIIth class.<sup>20</sup>

The content of both documents referred to clearly outlines and reconciles the determination and motivation along which they have been drafted. The two institutions could see in each other an important condition for the optimal functioning of the two institutions, and the intention to meet each other's needs could also be realised in the light of the consultations. Because

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<sup>19</sup> The proposal by Miklós Rábai is quoted by Bolvári-Takács 2020: 197.

<sup>20</sup> Bolvári-Takács 2020: 193, 197.

of the many factors<sup>21</sup> in the social environment in which the proposals were made, the Institute's Folk Dance Department only began to operate effectively in September 1971, with Katalin Györgyfalvai and Sándor Timár as course leaders.<sup>22</sup>

### **The background and institutional context of the launch of the Folk Dance Department**

In this discussion we must not forget to mention Ágnes Roboz<sup>23</sup>, Emma Lugossy<sup>24</sup>, Katalin Györgyfalvai and Ágnes Vadady<sup>25</sup>, who were responsible for the teaching of folk dance as a subject. Before the folk dance department started, they were responsible for teaching a subject called „folk dance”, according to the following schedule:<sup>26</sup>

1. year – Ágnes Roboz;
2. year – Ágnes Roboz;

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<sup>21</sup> For more details about György Lőrinc's proposal at the meeting on 21 March 1959, and about the background of the two proposals see Bolvári-Takács 2020: 198–200.

<sup>22</sup> According to the minutes of the opening faculty meeting in 1970, an attempt was made to start a folk dance department in the school year 1970/71, but according to the recollections of Hedvig Hidas *“it was postponed for a year. This way the selection would be greater, because due to the late announcement of the application, few people applied, there was not enough time to organise it.”*

<sup>23</sup> Ágnes Roboz (1926-2021), professor emeritus, distinguished artist, choreographer, who is now internationally renowned as a teacher of folk and character dance at the Royal Ballet School and the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague, among others. Jan Trojanoff, a ballet master of Polish origin, began his dance studies in a private school, and after the World War he was greatly influenced by Olga Szentpál, who, as he puts it, was a revolutionary inspiration for him. Alongside this, the stylized world of the Moiseyev Ensemble was a major inspiration in her artistic career. She encountered traditional folk dance on his collecting trips with Miklós Rábai.

<sup>24</sup> Dr. Emma Lugossy, folk dance researcher, was the head of the Methodological Cabinet of the State Ballet Institute during the period under review, and in this capacity she participated in all the tasks of the working groups. According to Hedvig Hidas, the head of the Institute had *„all problems be brought together by her in the Methodological Cabinet, so that all issues that could help to advance the professional work could be gathered there.”* Furthermore, in addition to the above-mentioned tasks, the teaching of dance notation was also under her direction.

<sup>25</sup> Ágnes Vadady started her dance studies at the dance school of Rezső Brada, the ballet master of the Opera House, where she studied movement arts, and then she was introduced to folk dance by Miklós Rábai at the College of Physical Education. In 1964, he became a teaching assistant at the State Ballet Institute as a member of the character dance team.

<sup>26</sup> Lugossy 1970. typewritten document, 8 pages, with the signature of Emma Lugossy recording secretary.

- 3. year – Katalin Györgyfalvai;
- 4. year – Katalin Györgyfalvai;
- 5. year – Ágnes Roboz;
- 6. year – Ágnes Vadady;
- 7. year – Ágnes Roboz.

In one of my interviews with Katalin Lőrinc<sup>27</sup>, she points out the separation of folk dance and character dance as different segments of training in the educational process:

*”In the final year of our artist training, we included character dance in our teaching. This points to the purpose of teaching character dance, which was specifically to equip the trainee dancers to perform those stage works - predominantly Petipa pieces - where there were character inserts. This became a focal point in training to serve the Opera House. There was a very distinct difference between folk dance and character dance. The teaching staff at the time included very serious professionals, including my mother, Zsuzsa Merényi, who were on collecting trips. So they knew exactly what folk dance was and what it was not. There was no confusion. Character dance was a separate subject.”*<sup>28</sup>

Despite this, György Lőrinc also referred to the need to introduce a training structure that reflects the needs of folk dance ensembles.<sup>29</sup> Finally, in 1971, a four-year, full-time folk dance training was successfully launched, offering a secondary vocational qualification, aimed at (also) training professional folk dance ensembles.

According to the minutes of the meeting of the Arts Council of 9 September 1971, Hedvig Hidas, as director of the State Ballet Institute, stressed that *„the work of the two classes already seems to be successful, they are still studying according to an experimental curriculum and the teachers will submit the curriculum afterwards.”*<sup>30</sup> Of course, the framework for the number of hours

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<sup>27</sup> Katalin Lőrinc, dance artist, choreographer, university professor. Between 1968 and 1977 she was a student at the State Ballet Institute, where she graduated as a ballet dancer.

<sup>28</sup> Interview – Lőrinc 2023.

<sup>29</sup> The proposal of György Lőrinc is quoted by Bolvári-Takács 2020: 193–194.

<sup>30</sup> Lugossy 1971 a. typewritten document, 2 pages, with the signature of Emma Lugossy recording secret.

has already been established, with ballet one hour per day, folk dance 1.5 hours per day, singing and rhythmic 2 hours per week, and acrobatics 1 hour per week forming the structure of the practical training. This training structure has been established in agreement with the leaders of the folk ensembles and in line with the Institute's experience, to which Hedvig Hidas refers on several occasions.<sup>31</sup>

László Eke, chief rapporteur for the Ministry of Education, welcomed the Institute's Folk Dance Department in a speech at a faculty meeting:

*"This institute has always been characterised by boldness and entrepreneurship. This academic year, the institute has also embarked on something new with the launch of a folk dance class. With hard work, a well-selected group of 40 children were admitted. Two cohorts will start work this academic year and we hope that when they graduate, the Institute will have well-trained young dance artists to hand over to the ensembles."*<sup>32</sup>

Katalin Györgyfalvai, according to the minutes of 25 September, said: "[...] based on the experience of the month of September, I am of the opinion that the fear was much greater than it should have been. The work has begun..."

As regards the method of professional work, Hedvig Hidas had already commented in September:

*"I attended both ballet and folk dance classes. Although I think my comment is outdated, I'll say it anyway. I noticed that Katalin Györgyfalvai was already teaching very strong classes in the first weeks. The dances were complicated both rhythmically and dynamically. Maybe the pain in the legs was related to that. The principle of gradualness should not have been ignored"*<sup>33</sup>

### **Teaching methodology in the reflections of former teachers and students**

The first year of the folk dance class at the State Ballet Institute was by all accounts an „experiment”. We cannot yet speak of a crystallized thematic,

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<sup>31</sup> Lugossy 1971 a. typewritten document, 2 pages, with the signature of Emma Lugossy recording secretary.

<sup>32</sup> Lugossy 1971b. typewritten document, 3 pages, without signature.

<sup>33</sup> Kovács Györgyné 1971. typewritten document, 2 pages, with the signature of Györgyné Kovács.

since the collections were still being scientifically processed and published, and thus the teaching and staging processes cannot be measured against the broader dance folkloristic interpretations of our time. There was no concept that could yet be formulated in an exact way, and the rehearsal room work was determined by fresh experiences of collecting. In the words of Zoltán Farkas<sup>34</sup>: *“What was collected at the weekend was taught on Monday. [...] We didn’t learn ready-made dances, but malleable, evolving dances [...] and it was always different, always varied [...] Timár had a huge role to play in that.”*<sup>35</sup> This resonates with Miklós Végső’s<sup>36</sup> statement that *„as he collected, he always improved it.”*<sup>37</sup> Hédi Sztanó<sup>38</sup> felt that this was obvious in the teaching of the dances from Gyimes. As for the different characters of the two class leaders, she wrote:

*“We have been doubly educated. Györgyfalvay educated us for professional life, [...] Mesti artificially induced the process of learning peasant dance.” In the words of Zoltán Farkas: „He was the original teacher of dances. [...] Perhaps there has never been and never will be a pair like this.”*<sup>39</sup>

In addition to Miklós Rábai, artistic director of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble, their first semester exam was also attended by the directors of other professional ensembles of the era - Antal Simon, the Budapest Dance Ensemble, and László Náfrádi, director of the Danube Art Ensemble of the Ministry of the Interior. They praised the work of the two class leaders, but expressed concern about the huge amount of material that had to be covered in a short time and the possible overload of students. Hedvig Hidas asked

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<sup>34</sup> Zoltán Farkas was a first year student of the Folk Dance Department at the State Ballet Institute. He received the Harangozó Award, and he is a decorated artist.

<sup>35</sup> Interview – Farkas 2022.

<sup>36</sup> Miklós Végső was a first year student of the Folk Dance Department at the State Ballet Institute. He received the Harangozó Award, and he is a decorated artist, and a life member of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble, associate professor of the Hungarian Dance University.

<sup>37</sup> Interview – Végső 2022.

<sup>38</sup> Hédi Sztanó was a student in the first year of the Folk Dance Department at the State Ballet Institute. She is a former solo dancer of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble, a retired associate of the György Martin Media Library of Heritage House.

<sup>39</sup> Interview – Farkas 2022.

*”How to go on? Is there material of a certain difficulty for this development for four years?”<sup>40</sup>*

It is clear from the material of the examination that the folk dance teaching was structured according to the methodology of ballet training, and in many points the methods of teaching character dances were echoed: pole exercises, rotation exercises, line exercises are included in the examination material highlighting the elements of the folk dance motif treasure. Ágnes Roboz, reflecting on the mid-term exam, notes:

*”[...]I would approve of drawing on the dances of other peoples, because the similarity and diversity of dances develops a sense of style. I feel the pole exercise incorporates our past work. The 22 years of experience of our work and the parallel of the work of two young teachers would be fortunate.”<sup>41</sup>*

And according to Ágnes Vadady, *„the material could be made more coherent. You have to decide what you would pole and what you would centre.”<sup>42</sup>*

However, the source, which can also be identified as a source document of the era, also shows that their masters tried to ensure a high level of technical dance preparation for their students from the very first stage of their training, and demanded that it was manifested. The arrangement of certain elements of the peasant dance repertoire into structured etudes seems stylized in the context of our present-day analysis of folk dance, but in addition to all these exercises, the 1971-72 school year already saw the appearance of dance exercises typical of Timár, which favoured the representation of the traditional structure of folk dance, including the scoring.<sup>43</sup> Timár’s attitude as a teacher at the Ballet Institute, according to the recollections of Hédi Sztanó Sztanó, was characterised by *„strong determination, funny irony and amazing suggestiveness”*, who *„danced a lot in front, everyone tried to follow her.”* [...] *you could bathe in the dance, enjoy it. [...] He taught in such a way that we*

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<sup>40</sup> Mihályné Szilágyi 1971. typewritten document, 5 pages, with the signature of Mihályné Szilágyi recording secretary.

<sup>41</sup> Mihályné Szilágyi 1971. typewritten document, 5 pages, with the signature of Mihályné Szilágyi recording secretary.

<sup>42</sup> Mihályné Szilágyi 1971. typewritten document, 5 pages, with the signature of Mihályné Szilágyi recording secretary.

<sup>43</sup> Mihályné Szilágyi 1971. typewritten document, 5 pages, with the signature of Mihályné Szilágyi recording secretary.

didn't even notice he was teaching. [...] The lessons were a source of joy. We couldn't wait to have lessons with Mesti."<sup>44</sup> Miklós Végső also described this atmosphere: "It was like a dream... I was drifting there. I didn't know what would come of it..."<sup>45</sup> In his methodology, he did not interpret and teach folk dance as a rigid structure, but as a living and constantly changing form that can be flexibly shaped, with the main emphasis on the improvisational nature of Hungarian folk dance. He taught small, short units, one or two motifs, and let them practice them independently. Zoltán Farkas describes this method as follows: "There was the Széki Csárdás, which went on for twenty minutes and there you could really get to the end of your tether. [...] He could also give us an experience and a fantastic freedom. [...] We could immerse ourselves in the original material."<sup>46</sup> Hédi Sztanó noted that he „would put more emphasis on the characteristics of the dance.”<sup>47</sup> In any case, it is important to highlight the fact that Katalin Györgyfalvai and Sándor Timár did not work with the first year group at the same time, with the single exception of teaching the Marossian rotation material. In the Mesti lessons, Timár taught the female motifs of the individual matrices to the female students, who also had to learn the male material, which was important for their dance technique training. Hédi Sztanó reports that the „Mesti” taught the female rotation technique of the mezzőségi couple dances. But of course Györgyfalvai also taught a lot of turning exercises in the girls' classes. Also according to Hédi Sztanó's recollections, Timár regularly „emphasised and stressed the female roles in the tradition in his everyday pedagogical work. The girl pupils were made to feel equal.”<sup>48</sup> Timár taught them the "karikázó" dances and designed separate exercises for girls to consciously implement the role of women dancers' arm positions. Folk dance-based skill and ability development was an integral part of the lessons, along with the anecdotes from the collections that he always used to emphasize the correct execution.

In the training of the ballet students, the teaching of folk dance was mainly the task of Ágnes Vadady, who was already working as a leader within the

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<sup>44</sup> Interview – Sztanó 2022.

<sup>45</sup> Interview – Végső 2022.

<sup>46</sup> Interview – Farkas 2022.

<sup>47</sup> Interview – Sztanó 2022.

<sup>48</sup> Interview – Sztanó 2022.

character dance group. Emma Lugossy wrote in 1973 about the place and role of this subject in the training system:

*”It is a large curriculum, teaching not only rhythm but also agility. In addition to the Hungarian material, the most basic foreign folk dance material must be taught in this short time. Folk dancing is also very useful for the development of dancing skills. And nowadays there is a modern demand for folklore material on stages everywhere.”*<sup>49</sup>

### **Experience of the first year of training**

At a meeting in February 1975, summarizing the experiences of the first year of the folk dance course, Györgyfalvay proposed dividing the structure of the folk dance subject into two main segments *„because of the possibility of shifting the proportions: original material, folk dance technique.”*<sup>50</sup> Timár, in formulating the lessons of the training, considers it necessary to develop in ensembles and to acquire professional practice as soon as possible, as experience has shown that a difference in level can lead to demoralisation. *„Technically, the graduate students are ahead. They have no stage experience.”*<sup>51</sup>

The last meeting of the examination concert of the folk dance section, which is also recorded in the minutes, took place on 14 May 1975, and was attended by László Náfrádi, Katalin Györgyfalvay, Lajos Molnár, Antal Simon, Erzsébet Németh, Zoltán Mátyus, the leaders of the professional folk dance ensembles of the period. The programme of the stage exam was composed of pieces selected from the repertoire of folk dance ensembles.<sup>52</sup> Thus, on Sunday morning, 22 June 1975, the Madách Színház staged, among others, Rábai’s *Ecseri’s Wedding Dances* and the *Háromugrós*, István Molnár’s *Dobozi Csárdás*, László Náfrádi’s *Summer Evening in the Village*, and István Simon’s *Csárdás - Csapás*, together with the legendary Györgyfalvay works and Timár’s composition of dances from Mezőség.

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<sup>49</sup> Lugossy 1973. typewritten document, 8 pages, with the signature of Emma Lugossy recording secretary.

<sup>50</sup> Mihályné Szilágyi 1975. typewritten document, 4 pages, without signature.

<sup>51</sup> Mihályné Szilágyi 1975. typewritten document, 4 pages, without signature.

<sup>52</sup> Mihályné Szilágyi 1975b. typewritten document, 3 pages, without signature.



Miklós Rábai could not see the qualifying exams of the 23 girls and 19 boys of the first year.<sup>53</sup> His merits, however, are unforgettable on the path that led to the significant renewal of the dance troupes of our professional folk dance societies and the Hungarian folk dance art on stage, since many members of the Institute's folk dance group, as representatives of the following generations of choreographers, later developed their careers as creative artists.

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Stage, theatre

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Nóra Ábrahám  
Emese Lengyel  
Ádám Mikulics  
Ákos Windhager

# The Theoretical Approach to Dramatic Dance and its Stage Forms in Hungary in the 1930s

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NÓRA ÁBRAHÁM

In my study, I present the forms and content of movement art works and performances from the 1930s in Hungary (including Budapest and Szeged).<sup>1</sup> This paper complements my previous study on the urban manifestations of folkloric phenomena, which focused on the theatrical presentation of folk tales and folk ballads.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I deal with the content- and spatial-specific variations of dance as an artistic creation, which can be referred to as a symbolic representation of the body. I intend to use a historical-cultural anthropological approach as an interpretative framework.<sup>3</sup> The definitions of content and form of theoretical interpretation are essential for the research of Olga Szentpál's work, the symbolic representation of the body's culture of movement in cultural phenomena. In my study, I apply Voigt's conceptualisation of folkloric aesthetics to dance. By content I mean the representation of theme and bodily behaviour through movement, and by form I mean the formal equivalent of the figure of movement as a stage performance.<sup>4</sup>

The aim of my research is to present theatrical productions in the popular culture of the social classes of Budapest in the 1930s. In my prior studies I have demonstrated the details of this first in the settlement of the assimilating upper middle classes in Budapest, in the creation of ideological-cultural values, in the representational role of the female body, and in the specificities of dance fashion and artistic performances that were in line with the forms of behaviour in public social spaces.<sup>5</sup> I have tried to break down into thematic layers and to present and organise in chronological order all the

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<sup>1</sup> I am currently a PhD student in the Cultural Anthropology programme of the Doctoral School of History and Ethnology, University of Debrecen.

<sup>2</sup> Ábrahám 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Klaniczay 1984: 23–25.

<sup>4</sup> Voigt 2014: 110, 443.

<sup>5</sup> Ábrahám 2020; 2021.

data that I have uncovered in the course of my research work. In my research into the body's culture of behaviour and movement, I have interpreted the body and its symbolic representations in public spaces: the body's specific habitus, its social behaviour and the forms of its theatrical presentation. In my previous work, I have explored the symbolic representation of the body in the separate spaces of the ballroom and the theatre. I interpreted the ballroom dance fashions and the dance techniques and styles (character dances, national and abstract-stylized contemporary dance types and styles) that could be found in stage dance as a content of physical movement. I associated the works born in the current popular culture with each other, focusing on the folklore phenomena that are manifested in the stage works in the urban space. In the current phase of my research, I attempt to interpret the monumental outdoor representation of the body, which includes the theatrical use of folk drama and the exploration of its historical roots. This partly complements my previous work and partly provides a starting point for a contextualised interpretation of the staged works. My research has shown that this applies both to the choreographic style of the 1930s and to the dance theatre works that returned to the stage in the 1960s.

The subject of my hypothesis in this paper is also the symbolic representation of the body. Using the system of relations between body and bodies, I attempt to decipher the extreme size of spatial representations.<sup>6</sup> In addition to this, I analyse the manifestations of the mythological role of man and woman in the reinterpretation of mystery and morality plays in the early 20th century. The stories of the biblical tradition preserved by faith, themes that have been at the basis of human life since the Middle Ages and social conflicts are given a symbolic role in these stage plays. The myths are about imperfect people seeking justice in the tragic story of their lives. It is through them that we can understand the current set of rules of society, the rituals associated with the turning points of human life and its moral code. The

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<sup>6</sup> My basic theoretical theses are based on those of Peter Burke in the field of popular culture, Victor Turner in the field of socio-cultural medium and symbolic representation, Joseph Campbell in the field of male-female mythological roles, and Béla Balázs and Máriusz Rabinovszky in the field of dramaturgy and epic theatre. See Burke 1991; Turner 1974; Campbell 1972; 2019; Balázs 1918; Rabinovszky 1935; 1936 a.

message of the symbolic representation of humanity and the human body conveys the mystery of its character and moral message through personal drama. Through their identities, the characters show what fulfilment of the pathway and the duty means, and all this is embodied in purification through love, perfection and knowledge as complementary roles.<sup>7</sup> In 20th century popular culture, this takes the form of a type of play and epic theatre form that contains both sacred and profane elements, where bodily signify is the focus. The questions examined in my thesis are the following: What are the symbolic representational possibilities of the question of body and mass in theatrical creation? Do the role-types represented in the content of theatrical performance have any significance in popular culture? What can we understand by the concept of epic theatre in Hungary in this period? My study seeks to answer these questions.

### **The cultural policy of the 1930s, the principles of Klebelsberg's cultural supremacy and the reflections of the artists**

The objectives of the government's programme for the preservation of the Hungarian nation were launched after the awakening from the vision of the nation's demise after the tragedy of the Treaty of Trianon. Youth education movements and the education of young people people's high schools played an important role; it can be seen that this activity aimed at the rehabilitation of the countryside, although it was centered around Budapest. The aim was not only to love, collect and preserve folklore, but also to create new artistic works in the spirit of folklorism. This is why the ballroom dancing was regulated: the learning of the dance of the Csárdás was made compulsory in urban dance classes and works based on folk songs and ballads were introduced on smaller stages. However, Kunó Klebelsberg did not only see the creation of the cultural phenomenon of Gyöngyösbokréta as a way to develop tourism. In his 1929 proclamation before the birth of the Gyöngyösbokréta, he set the goal of advancing the Hungarian economy in his „nation saving” programme entitled „Work, Knowledge, Capital”.<sup>8</sup> It also aimed to reach the European horizon, the

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<sup>7</sup> Campbell 2019: 23–74.

<sup>8</sup> Pesti napló 1929: 1.



international scene, by creating cultural programmes for all, first in Budapest and then in rural centres. Klebelsberg set the prominent practice of the German artistic past as an example for the revitalisation and development of the contemporary situation of Hungarian cultural life. He was convinced that our culture was capable of producing European-level works beyond the presentation of nativity plays, but that the use of folkloristic elements was still in its infancy. Klebelsberg created summer theatre spaces such as the open-air stage on Margaret Island, the Convent Church in Szeged and the open-air stage on Dóm Square. He placed great emphasis on inspiring the spirit of school education and on defining its quality and content. In line with the actual ideology and the ever more widespread National Socialist aspirations, religion was given a prominent role, and Klebelsberg therefore asked artists to create folk and artistic Passion Plays.<sup>9</sup> He held up the performances of the Salzburg „Fest-spiels” in the spirit of Richard Wagner as an example to follow. One of Klebelsberg’s main aspirations was cultural supremacy: this cultural programme, reborn through the interaction of culture, morality and intelligence, was also meant to boost the Hungarian economy.

Why was the German example necessary and what did it represent? The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy existed from the Compromise of 1867 until 1918. Even at the beginning of the 20th century, young people who wanted to learn were still choosing Germany as a place to study for their degree, because of the quality of higher education. This was where the basic elements of a culture that was also governed by the authorities, including the theatre, originated from. These theatrical genres preserved their typical characteristics and entertained the different social classes in successive historical periods since the Middle Ages.

Because of the way popular culture works, contemporary innovations have an impact on styles from the past. With regard to the performing arts, the early 20th century brought a new fusion of the visual arts, music and dance: opera and dance categories, which were present in the artistic trends of the big stages, were reformed along the same lines as the podium stage. Thus, in the opera productions of the 1930s, ballet was replaced by artistic movement

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<sup>9</sup> Pesti napló 1929: 1–2.

compositions.<sup>10</sup> I should mention the success of innovative experiments starting from the podium stage, as well as the monumental, reformist compositions of open-air stage performances. The German example was Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, a work on a mythological theme from Scandinavian-Germanic folklore. The Festspielhaus sought to realise Wagner's plans for a gigantic (35-metre) stage with a thoughtful use of spatial tonality and structure. This was the space that Wagner envisioned as the appropriate setting for the Gesamtkunstwerk. However, in the course of its application, the flaws of this use of stage space were discovered. Adolphe Appia eliminated the flaws and transformed the original idea into a space suitable for contemporary works.<sup>11</sup> Taking his cue from Wagnerian ideas, Appia applies the consistent principle of abstraction alongside symbolism. Appia's stage focuses on the body, whose gestures and movements are inspired, prescribed and determined by the music.<sup>12</sup> A basic component of director's theatre is the unity of the human body as a moving form and the still image.<sup>13</sup> This, in my opinion, induces the theatrical manifestations of movement generated from music: the presentation of movement compositions evolving from the Dalcroze technique presented on the Appia stage. The fusion of Appia's work with Dalcroze's already implies the realisation of a dynamic stage image based on rhythm. In this way, a new style began to emerge in stage culture, namely the unique and highly attractive, constantly experimental style of Max Reinhardt. It is characterised by the dual structure of a repertory theatre and a touring theatre, the result of a long rehearsal process, which aims to realise the director's intention.<sup>14</sup> An ever-changing and spatial-specific improvisational theatre genre was created, which characterised both outdoor and indoor performances. Thus, the focus of the stage space is clearly the human body, which, in a cultural anthropological approach, is conceived as a body that embodies the individual, communicates emotions and becomes a medium of expression that mediates culture.<sup>15</sup> In this complex artistic composition, both the space and the director

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<sup>10</sup> see Lábán, Dalcroze and Mejerhold. See Fuchs 2007: 17, 91; Barba 2020: 287–288.

<sup>11</sup> Kotte 2013: 359–361

<sup>12</sup> Kotte refers to Magdolna Jákfalvi's translation of Appia. Kotte 2013: 362.

<sup>13</sup> Kotte 2013: 363.

<sup>14</sup> Kotte 2013: 371.

<sup>15</sup> Csordas 1990: 6.

use the gestures of the body as a means of expression. In this way, we should not only understand the works of movement art as personal performances, but also as choruses of movement that forms a mass, which can even function as a stage set. The whole drama merges and interweaves smaller epic scenes that stand on their own within the rules of movement dramaturgy. This is the basic principle of the Brechtian epic theatre, which is seen as a reform of dramatic expression.<sup>16</sup> As consciously acting beings, people formulate their own world view, their opinion of the society that embraces them as its own medium.<sup>17</sup> As a „Gesamtkunstwerk“, music, text, movement are in themselves a unified whole, and stimulate and complement each other in the theatrical work of art.

### **An art-theoretical approach to body and dance and the question of dramatic movement in 20th century popular culture - the dramaturgy of movement**

The culture of the communities of social classes is also linked to timelines, celebrations and the communication of contents appropriate to representational roles in the urban spaces of the 20th century. Body culture can be understood as a cultural phenomenon of a planned and controlled educational process that, in addition to the physical training of the body, develops its own personality through the application of intellectual and theoretical content, and is integrated into the culture of movement of the social stratum.<sup>18</sup> It can be a social action or an artistically oriented form of self-expression.<sup>19</sup> In this sense, sports, games, trips and self-educational endeavours that develop artistic body techniques can all be considered part of physical culture. It includes the rediscovery of the body and its intellectual and empirical development and training. Artistic body culture becomes a means of symbolic representation in dance fashion and in stories of artistic expression that also represent myths, in

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<sup>16</sup> Brecht 1962: 9.

<sup>17</sup> Rüllicke 1964: 39-40.

<sup>18</sup> Kun 2000: 576.

<sup>19</sup> Here I must highlight the active social dance life of Budapest in the 1920s and 1930s, which played a prominent role in the social life of the city's communities, and also included a culture of movement linked to public social space. See Ábrahám 2022.

terms of bodily techniques, role models, characters and forms of movement linked to public social spaces.

I also need to look at the culture of movement (as knowledge about the body) from an art-theoretical perspective. The basic concepts of artistic expression of the body in this period are content and form. This, in turn, cannot in any way be separated from the notion of culture and worldview, because if it loses its connection to the historical subject, artistic diction deprives itself of its own essence.<sup>20</sup> Interpreted in terms of the body's creation of movement, the theme as a movement that becomes dance is not only expressed in technique, but also in the combined mediation of the bodily form of behaviour and the expressive gesture system, which presents its own essence, its message. From the perspective of the creator, this is how dance as choreography is born on the stage. The genres and motifs preserved by tradition are an inseparable part of it, through which bodily expression acquires its own character and form. The content of the stage space in the city should not be understood as a work of art alone, since it also reveals other mythological content behind its value-preserving qualities as a cultural phenomenon. In public social spaces, as in stage spaces, profane and sacred content is expressed in the space of cultural memory.

In terms of movement, there are two types of bodily representation of the urban space. In the social dance culture of Budapest, the representation of the body is linked to the carnival period as a rite of passage into social life and young adulthood. This requires the acquisition of social behaviour and attitudes, as well as dance habits and the actual dance fashion(s).

Another form of representation of the body in urban culture is related to theatrical performances. The dramatising function of the body in the 20th century also includes the role types and attitudes that represent basic social morals and the community's system of values and rules, which represent permanent categories embedded in the space of cultural memory.

Bearing in mind the dialectic of culture, I must mention here, in addition to the cultural attitude that performs the crossing of moving out the boundaries, the question of cultural morality, which constitutes the religious

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<sup>20</sup> Fülep 1976: 263.

values of society. These are forms of plays linked to festivals, which use their values and contents to preserve their meaning through bodily representation. The presence of the body on stage is a way of shaping the character, a way of introducing its quality as a performer. This in turn requires an interpretation of the concept of dramaturgy. Dramaturgy is a toolbox of thought, a form and a technique of representation by which the plot of a dramatic story is presented.<sup>21</sup> The dramaturgy of movement is therefore the genre definition of stage movement, which uses the means of characterisation, emphasis and condensation to represent the plot. In plays performed in the theatre, dance plays a role alongside prose, whether in individual or group performance. If we look at plays from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, we can include character dances and show dances from national ballet companies, as well as revived European ballet productions. The role of the body in the symmetrical arrangement of the peek stage is only emphasised in solo roles, not in group dances.<sup>22</sup> But the art of movement formulates the basic situation of the body's appearance in a different path. In this form, the body can also appear both as an individual and as a mass, but not in a symmetrical, but in an asymmetrical stage set or group composition. Through its movement, the body can be a sentient expressive and also a narrative outsider. This is reflected in the body's movement, its character of movement and its representation of the use of motifs. While the formal language of ballet and ballroom dance is constant and is based on a historical heritage of movement that is only subject to minor changes, in movement art the body is capable of dramatising life situations and action beyond the expression of itself, by the fact that movement is not always motivic, the movement process can be intersect by other - undanced-like - movements, and daily body-technique can be incorporated. The articulated movement of the body in dance is complemented by gestures and mimicry (i.e. arm movements and mime facial play). It is this system of bodily gestures that gives the trained body its theatrical tools. Its key is rooted in a new understanding of the use of space, which can create more room for the body to move even when it is part of a larger group. The body is not only able to express itself, but can also be used

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<sup>21</sup> Sebestyén 1919: 303.

<sup>22</sup> Szentpál – Rabinovszky 1937: 37.

by the group to shape objects, situations and natural phenomena as a set. It is therefore not only able to show its own skills and abilities, but also to adapt to others, which means playing two different roles. The body can thus be an individual and part of a community, representing both an inclusive and an outsider behaviour in the stage space. The action in the space of the stage as a dramaturgical tool of movement - through movement texture, plasticity, rhythm and dynamics - gives the genre its character.<sup>23</sup> The body is thus given a wider range of means of expression, limited only by the subject matter on stage and the creativity of the creator-director. The visualization of music - the transformation of sounds into spatial space - is the starting point, from which the body, as an artist of movement, becomes an individual capable of transforming inner feelings into dance through gestures.<sup>24</sup> Thus, principle, theory and practice together create a new toolbox of dramatic movement in the conceptual system of conscious acting expression. In this sense, not only the play, but also the dance on stage preserves formulaic plot fragments. This also means the transformation of once real figures in popular knowledge into fairy-tale and ballad characters, and the definition of the role types that appear in mystery plays.

### **The renewal of role types and play forms and their symbolic meaning in popular culture - mystery play and morality in the cultural history of artistic movement in the 20th century**

In his notes on the history of culture, Máriusz Rabinovszky compares the worldview and the creative characteristics of ancient Greece and the Middle Ages.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Szentpál – Rabinovszky 1937: 38; Barba 2020: 59.

<sup>24</sup> Appia 1968: 56.

<sup>25</sup> Adam and Eve are symbolic figures with mythological roles preserved in Genesis. In folklore, there are also festivals and games associated with them. Adam and Eve are the first human couple to appear in the Old Testament: in the Christian religion, they renew their now human covenant with God through the blood of the lamb as atonement for their imperfections. The moral teaching in the Old and New Testaments remains part of popular culture through the intertwined and changed role models. Mystery plays and morality plays are written

The religious fervour of the medieval understanding of the body despised the body. A collectivist view of out-of-bodiness accepts only salvation by faith.<sup>26</sup> Rabinovszky, on the other hand, argues that in the case of the ancient Greek understanding of the body, the harmony of reality, body and soul, as experienced in earthly life, creates an individualistic view, with man at its centre.<sup>27</sup> In terms of religious history, Rabinovszky compares the Catholic Church's understanding with the teachings of the Reformation.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, Adam, the first man, is condemned to sin and all his descendants are condemned. In light of this, the figure of Adam and Eve becomes „human”, a figure who, in his mythological role, is capable of moral communication. The Reformation, according to Rabinovszky, represents a revolution of free criticism and individual independence, based on the Holy Scriptures and the letters of Paul the Apostle. In his view, in salvation by faith, tradition and doctrine can be united. Rabinovszky also writes about the theatrical application of epic works: he believes that the mystery play and the theatrical forms of morality play live on in written poetry, visual art, festive plays and processions.<sup>29</sup> According

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versions of the types of plays preserved by popular tradition and performed in the church. The presentation and ‚consuming’ of the life story of Christ is the basis of religious folk drama, or the Passion Play. By integrating religion into itself, it seeks to tame the teachings of all the previous popular community arts (such as drama and dance), which have been adopted and interpolated by the people, in order to gain acceptance. It creates a theatrical form within the genre of the mystery play by alternating the entertainment category of dance with the stories of the birth, passion and death of Christ, using its complementary function. It has been a popular category in folk traditions for centuries, including sacred rituals such as nativity plays and the Passion Play. With the advent of the Reformation, however, the genre category of morality is also introduced, which places allegorical qualities in human form in the focus of the play's plot, such as carnival and fasting, water and wine, or the symbolic relationship between body and soul. See: Genesis, Károli's translation of The Bible 2002: 5–7.; Színészeti lexikon (ed.: Németh) 1930: 561.

<sup>26</sup> In his notes, Rabinovszky divides the historical timeline of Western Christian culture, defined as the Middle Ages, into three periods: period I: 500-900; period II: 900-1200; period III: 1200-1500. Rabinovszky refers to the third period's understanding of the interpretation of the body. See Rabinovszky 1936 a:3. Szentpál Iskola Kultúrtörténeti jegyzete. Source: Szentpál Hagyaték OSZMI fond 32.

<sup>27</sup> Rabinovszky 1936 a:5–7. Szentpál Iskola Kultúrtörténeti jegyzete. Forrás: Szentpál Hagyaték OSZMI fond 32.

<sup>28</sup> In terms of periodization, Rabinovszky formulates the problems of religious conceptions after the transition period between the Middle Ages and the modern era, in the 1600s. See Rabinovszky 1936 a. Szentpál Iskola Kultúrtörténeti jegyzete. Forrás: Szentpál Hagyaték OSZMI fond 32.

<sup>29</sup> Rabinovszky 1936 a:23. The same question is explored in Tekla Dömötör's excellent comparative work on the 1936 Passion Play. Dömötör 1936.

to him, the new form of epic creates a link with folk motifs.<sup>30</sup> According to Rabinovszky's cultural-historical summary, European body culture at the beginning of the 20th century created two types of plays through the symbolic representation of the body: one is the type of ancient Greek mystery drama, the other is the genre equivalent of contemporary dramatic morality in epic works of bodily expression. Ancient Greek mystery drama brings the world of fauns, muses and nymphs to the stage, alongside the heroes of ancient Greece, in the form of pastoral plays. Contemporary dramatic morality, on the other hand, presents moral truths (as human qualities) and present-day stories that teach through innocent love; it tells a personal story through the character of the protagonist and the character who directs the action alongside him, the *arlequin-pierrot-clown*.

A peculiarity of 20th century stage art is that after naturalism, it turns to modernism in the expression of impression and symbolic abstraction of expression. Impression, however, can be understood not only as an effect, but also as a re-created form of expression of individual form-making that is mindful of the hierarchy of space.<sup>31</sup> That is, if my personal artwork presents mythological role-types and tradition as a natural element/theme, as a unique presentation, it will take its own contemporary artistic form, which is also characteristic of the current society, by drawing from it and thereby renewing itself. This gives rise to a form of expression based on abstracted symbolic association. The most appropriate example for this is the work of Max Reinhardt.<sup>32</sup> The plays he staged and directed combined classical and modern dramatic styles to create a revolving stage of forests, built landscapes, churches and bells and whistles in the style of historical realism of his own.<sup>33</sup> The multi-layered simultaneous stage is capable of representing several parallel timelines as layers of the plot, or even the separate spaces of hell and paradise. As a result, not only space but also the appearance and representation of the body must be renewed to fit into this novel genre. A specific feature of popular culture is that it does not discard all its existing elements when it innovates;

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<sup>30</sup> Rabinovszky 1936 a:25.

<sup>31</sup> Fülep 1976: 295.

<sup>32</sup> See also Rabinovszky 1936 b.

<sup>33</sup> Színházi lexikon (ed.: Németh) 1930: 715–716.



the mythological male and female roles that are given a role in the stage play are the cornerstones of the culture. Thus, within the framework of the mystery play and morality, the figure of the man who fears God and the woman made of flesh, who, having tested the fruit of the tree of knowledge, have forgotten their divine quality and are condemned and cast out of Paradise, are preserved.<sup>34</sup> In the symbolic figure of the lamb, the person of Christ and the Mother as Mary, the immaculate virgin, are also represented in these plays. The masculine and feminine categories of the roles are inseparable: the human character is constantly renewed by the conflicts of individuality and community, by the struggle of reason, intellect and temptation; this renewal and search for happiness becomes the personal mission of the characters. In the purgatory of heaven and earth, in the discovery of human character, they gain their ultimate reward through the disappointments and joys they experience. The revival of stage plays at the beginning of the 20th century presented the tragic conflicts of the role types of Greek mystery dramas (e.g. Electra, Antigone, Prometheus) and the tragic conflicts of contemporary dramatic morality figures (e.g. Faust and Mephisto, Adam and Eve and Lucifer, or Csongor and Tünde-Glandlike witch) in the movement arts performances of the 1930s.<sup>35</sup> During this period, the written elements of popular culture and the elements preserved by folk knowledge became the basic elements of epic theatre in the form of the folk theatre on the Hungarian dance stage.

### **The Hungarian example**

At the invitation of Klebelsberg, Ferenc Hont, György Buday and Gyula Ortutay raised the idea of creating a Hungarian folk outdoor theatrical programme. They wanted to create a work of art similar to European theatre culture, in which the idea of a contemporary Hungarian folk mystery play was conceived. One of the starting ideas for this endeavour was the issue of dramatic dance on stage. Máriusz Rabinovszky puts it in a comparison of German expressionist theatre and Russian modern ballet. In his writing he spoke out against the kitsch culture of ballet art; he was convinced that tradition (as

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<sup>34</sup> Színészeti lexikon (ed.: Németh) 1930: 597.

<sup>35</sup> Színészeti lexikon (ed.: Németh) 1930: 561. See Benedek 1984: 540.

the use of folkloristic elements) and individualistic mass productions of movement art could be used together in large-scale theatre works.<sup>36</sup> He thought this because the style of movement art was still flourishing on the podium during this period, and because of its success was a viable substitute for ballet, not only because of the German example, but also because of its application in Budapest.<sup>37</sup> Although Rabinovszky mentioned Isadora Duncan in this article, he did not think that Hungarian movement art should have considered her as a leading figure. Duncan's role, according to Rabinovszky, was to break the monopoly of ballet, but she had no influence on European stage dance.<sup>38</sup> Here the reformist ideas that served as the basic principle of Fokin's expressive dance and Laban's movement choir's in this period are revealed. In this theoretical fusion of Russian modern ballet and German expressionist movement, Rabinovsky is preoccupied with a strong folkloristic attachment, as well as a desire to achieve a personal and modernised artistic expression in this 1935 work. In the 1930s, the question of the relationship between expressive dance and folklore considered the body as a guiding principle, which relied on naturalness and tradition, and which was capable of consciously expressing its own world of feeling. He stressed that culture, as the soil or breeding ground of society, requires a new culture of movement, which would also give way to stage dance.<sup>39</sup> Linked to this is the idea of Hont, Buday and Ortutay, in which dance can become a theatrical work by redefining tradition rather than reproducing folklore; it was embodied in the emerging folklorism and used the tradition of folk poetry, folk music and dance folklore as its fundamental source.<sup>40</sup> The basic motifs and forms of the new genre of the Hungarian epic-dramatic play were thus the material of the epic folklore tradition, in which the hero's life and actions are formulated. This was not conceived as an unchanging application of traditional folkloric motifs, but as a collective and symbolic means of expression, using the stylized and abstracted motifs and expressions of mass-dances and choruses, which create, support and help to

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<sup>36</sup> Rabinovszky 1935: 40–41.

<sup>37</sup> At the beginning of the 1930s, Rudolf Lábán also joined the Berlin Opera as a dance director. See Fuchs 2007: 91–92.

<sup>38</sup> Rabinovszky 1935: 40.

<sup>39</sup> Rabinovszky 1935: 43.

<sup>40</sup> Ortutay 1935: 50.

express the dramatic plot while narrating it. In this new theatrical construction, Hungarian folklore took the leading role, not in its national expressive content, but in the creation of a contemporary language.<sup>41</sup> This induces two kinds of realizations in the contemporary stage performances of the 1930s: on the one hand, the theatrical performances of morality as mystery, which also dealt with a mythological theme and included dance as a spatial-specific-hybrid genre, and on the other hand, the ballad performances that appeared on the podium stages in Budapest. In the next part of this paper I will describe the extensive spatial-specific open-air performances .

### **The Background in Budapest**

According to Döme Lugosi, the forerunners of the large-scale performances of the Szeged open-air games were born in Budapest. The essence of the open-air play is that the stage and props are partly or entirely provided by nature, and the environment makes the performance much more vivid.<sup>42</sup> In Budapest, we should mention *Antigone*, produced by the National Theatre in 1924, and Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, staged in 1928, as plays of this kind. Both performances were staged on Margaret Island. The first programme of this type in the category of artistic movement performances took place in the garden of Count Jenő Karátsonyi's palace in Buda in 1929. Here, the dance fairy tales of Countess Margit Bethlen were presented: the *Entwined Souls* (Olga Szentpál), the *Two Angels* (Alice Madzsar) and the *White Princess* (Valéria Dienes).<sup>43</sup> This was followed in the same year by Vörösmarty's *Csongor and Tünde*, performed on Margaret Island. Olga Szentpál staged the performances of *Entwined Souls* and *Csongor and Tünde*.

The *Entwined Souls* was a shorter etude, while *Csongor and Tünde* was a more serious stage production, based on the descriptions available. The performance notes found in Olga Szentpál's estate prove this. At

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<sup>41</sup> Ortutay 1935: 52–53.

<sup>42</sup> Lugosi 1938: 3; Színészeti lexikon (ed.: Németh) 1930: 802.

<sup>43</sup> Lugosi 1938: 6. This palace was demolished in 1938. It was situated next to the building that today hosts the National Museum and Institute of Theatre History. It had a 300-seat theatre auditorium. This was the time when the Hungarian Association of Movement Culture was founded. See. <https://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02139/html/sz02/477.html> [retrieved: 26.07.2023.]

the same time, the description seems to indicate that these plays were a forerunner of the Adam and Eve role model. The mystery-play characteristic is shown by the fact that the story was told before the dance, narrated by the artistic movement performance. In the story of the *Entwined Souls*, written by Countess Margit Bethlen, the man and the woman could not be together because of social differences. They were inseparable death when the angels found them on the third day.<sup>44</sup> The two souls then appeared before the Lord. At first the angels tried to separate them, without success. The second time, they were taken to the purgatory of hell, where the devils' tortures were unsuccessful. Returning to the judgment seat of the Lord, they were sentenced to exile in space, because neither heaven nor hell would accept them. In their love for one another, they defied God, man, angel and devil, and their reward, according to the story, was a lonely exile: forever orbiting in space, as one. All the characters in the dance play are the two persons (the woman and the man), who perform a half-minute sequence of movements at the top of the stairs, representing desire and unattainability, after which they descend into the abyss. The two souls then approach each other very slowly, starting from the right and left of the two sets of stairs. In the dance play, the voice of the Lord is heard saying, „Separate them.” Two angels try unsuccessfully to separate the two souls. Then the Lord speaks again, „Take them to hell!” and devils appear and tempt first the Man and then the Woman, unsuccessfully. After the demonic dance of the devils, the Lord says again, „Go into outer space!” The spirits then depart together southward into the grove (Vérmező).<sup>45</sup>

The use of male-female mythological figures and allegorical qualities in morality is also evident in the stage adaptation of *Csongor and Tünde*. Olga Szentpál's adaptation of the dance play, performed on Margaret Island, begins in the garden, where Csongor first admires the golden apple tree and then frees the Glandlike witch. In the next image, the 'spell' is cast, whereby Csongor meets Tünde and as they fall in love they retire to the canopy accompanied by the female choir. In the next picture the fairies

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<sup>44</sup> Bethlen 1916: 63–66.

<sup>45</sup> Based on the description by Olga Szentpál: Szentpál Hagyaték OSZMI Táncarchívum fond 32.

take the lead, dancing. Meanwhile, Mirigy sneaks in with a vengeance and cuts Tünde's hair with a huge pair of scissors. In the next shot, they are sitting in Witch Land, Mirigy happily waving Tünde's cropped hair. But the elves steal the hair from Mirigy's head and the witches give chase. In the next image, Tünde buries her face in her hands, sorrowful: her hair, cut off, and therefore her lost value, has forced the lovers to part. A host of fairies accompany the lovers as they part and begin a mournful farewell dance. Then, in the next scene, Csongor sets out on a journey to save his beloved from the endless grief of losing his precious possessions. Csongor descends to hell, meets the elves, from whom he struggles to recover Tünde's hair, and chases away the devil-folk. Then the exhausted Csongor falls asleep. Although he is haunted by the nightmare of the Witch and the Elves, he dreams of Tünde, who appears in a rose-lit glow. Meanwhile, the fairies return to the scene and take back Tünde's hair. The final scene culminates in the happy reunion of the lovers and the fairies dancing in joy. Tünde regains her hair and the story comes to a happy conclusion with the realisation of Csongor's dream.<sup>46</sup>

In these two performances in Budapest, the symbolic role of the male-female figure is represented by desire, unattainability and pure love. The lack of fulfilment is present in these plays because of the intervention of evil, the deprivation of the values of positive heroes. Simultaneous changes of stage levels, the infernal journey and the fulfilment of the life task undertaken are all described as being present in these movement productions created in 1928-29. In addition to the stage built in nature, the use of written works for the stage and the fact that they were staged with music by a contemporary composer are also noteworthy.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Based on the description by Olga Szentpál. Source: Szentpál Hagyaték OSZMI Táncarchívum fond 32.

<sup>47</sup> The music of *Csongor and Tünde* was composed by Leó Weiner, the music of *The Tragedy of Man* was composed by Ákos Buttykay. Both were dance performances.

## The Szeged Open Air Festival

The creation and the basic idea of the Szeged Open Air Festival were intended to fulfil Kunó Klebelsberg's goal of preserving the Hungarian nation. Szeged was the first rural town in this process. According to Döme Lugosi, the initiator, it was Ferenc Hont, who coined the idea to stage mystery plays in the open-air, yet enclosed, square of the Szeged Cathedral, in the spirit of Reinhardt. This not only represented national education, but also served as a tourist attraction linked to the feast of the Assumption of Mary (15 August). The building of the Dóm and the square in front of it could accommodate a huge stage and thousands of spectators. The first performance, in 1931, was the *Hungarian Passion* performed by the National Theatre. In 1932, due to the unexpected death of Kunó Klebelsberg, the plays were cancelled, but in 1933, Ferenc Hont directed Madách's *The Tragedy of Man*, a truly cultic and symbolic work defined as a mystery play.

On Hungarian stages, this work and its performances have a history of their own, as does the history of how and how movement came to be incorporated. According to Zsuzsa Merényi, Olga Szentpál and her group performed in the 1927 production at the National Theatre, and because of its success, Sándor Hevesi outdirected the opera house's dancers from the piece.<sup>48</sup> Criticism in the press did not agree with the director's innovation, although the artistic movement inevitably played a significant role in the Budapest theatre scene during this period. In Imre Madách's drama, the figure of Adam and Eve is redeemed by the ideal, strength and faith in goodness in a creation story that spans the historical planes. In the calculating figure of Lucifer, constant doubt and deception are embodied, and in the shadow of these, sin and virtue, reason and emotion, idea and grace become the indirect rewards of Adam and Eve. For the staging of *The Tragedy of Man*, Olga Szentpál composed a nymph's dance for Act III (the scene outside Paradise) (Máriusz Rabinovszky also appeared as Faun), a dance of slave women for Act IV (Egypt), a bacchanalia for Act VI (Rome) and a court dance (polka-mazurka) for Act VIII (Prague).<sup>49</sup> In Olga Szentpál's choreographic notes, allegorical notions of grief, suffocation,

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<sup>48</sup> Merényi 1979: 304. see Lenkei 2004; Kocsis 1973: 427–432.

<sup>49</sup> Merényi 1979: 304.

impersonality, forced community, monotony and despair are linked to the theme of captivity. In the 1933 production, time constraints prevented the realisation of the Carmagnole dance conceived for the Paris stage, but this was replaced in the 1937 production. *The Tragedy of Man* was staged at the Szeged Open Air Festival in 1934 and 1937, which proves the success of the play and its innovative solutions. The 1937 work, according to the notes of Olga Szentpál and Máriusz Rabinovszky, aimed at a complete synthesis of drama and dance; and dance was no longer treated as a mere insert, but as an integral part of the play and a connecting element.<sup>50</sup> In this adaptation of *The Tragedy of Man*, the name of Aurél Milloss also appears, who composed a death dance for the London scene and was a featured performer in the 1937 performance.<sup>51</sup> The success and „tradition” of the tragedy’s performance, and the thousands of spectators, may have been helped by the launch of the cheap trains, which was an effort by the government to support these nation preserving and national educational programmes.

The première of the play *Fekete Mária (Black Mary)* in Szeged in 1937 can be considered as Hungarian epic theatre. This was based on the same theme as Olga Szentpál’s choreography entitled *Mária-lányok (The Daughters of Mary)* from 1938. The myth of the creation story appeared in Olga Szentpál’s choreographies presented on various podiums and in the applied dance settings of theatre performances on the big stage, and, in addition to the use of folklore, it accompanied her choreographic oeuvre almost throughout her life.

## Summary

I hope that my study can assist the understanding of the actions inspired by historical events in which the art of movement has played a prominent role. The theatrical works of the 1930s were particularly marked by the need for innovation and a form of performance that was at the forefront of European standards. The question of content and form, both in terms of the subject matter used and the form of expression, plays a very important role here. The

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<sup>50</sup> Szentpál – Rabinovszky 1937: 39.

<sup>51</sup> Téri 1988: 41.

focus of interest is on the abstract expression of the body as a central element of the impression. Movement based on musicality was given a new meaning through the use of space, in which the body can realise its own feelings and expression. It is the dramaturgy of movement that has given the tools and the genre of dance applied to the stage. This is how the art of movement and movement chorus were incorporated into the renewed genre of opera. In popular culture, the same phenomenon has also involved the incorporation of the genres of written works of art, understood as mysteries, and epic folklore. In the style of the morality play, the personal struggle, life and soul of man is presented to the audience in the form of stage etudes, choreography and short scenes incorporated into theatrical works. In the written works of art, mythological role-types in morality played a prominent role.

What was most interesting to me in my research was the way I found the small details of Olga Szentpál's and Máriusz Rabinovszky's work almost merging, complementing and building on each other. Perhaps the most important message of my paper is that the style and artistic creation of movement art is based on music, complemented by philosophy and tradition, as well as by the genres of visual arts and stage plays. The contemporary style of artistic movement can be defined not only as a technique of movement alone, but also as a highly relevant, innovative approach, which has as its task the expression of moral problems of role models rooted in tradition. It is here that the role of the theatre as an educator of the people in its time should be highlighted, as it played a primary role in the education of society. Epic movement theatre, by showing the protagonist's prominent role and his moral problems, and by engaging them through action and a change of perspective, makes the audience who are receptive to visual culture think. These can be stories representing figures from Greek mythology, but they can also represent the conflict between man and woman, the moral problem of the pathway of temptation. By understanding the task undertaken and its fatefulness, it can lead the spectator, who is receptive to the theme and form of the story, to an insight, to a recognition of identity, by which he can recognise himself in the stoic serenity of the hero. It has its roots in European popular culture and has been constantly renewed through the ages, creating new formal manifestations. This is evidenced by the theoretical approach to art: content and form



lead to a conceptual fusion that is closely linked and inseparable in the artistic works of the early 20th century. Artistic creation, represented by the dramaturgy of movement, thus characterises 20th century culture, which cannot be separated from society; it serves as a constituent element of society and its cultural content.

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# Snippets from the era of socialist operetta performance: Ágnes Roboz on the Problem of Operetta Dance

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EMESE LENGYEL

## Introduction

The present study is based on research that focused on the professional discourse on operetta dance in Hungary from the 1950s until the regime change.<sup>1</sup> The starting point for my research is from the 1950s – although the genre had a history of almost a century in Hungary – because it was during the socialist period that operetta dance came into the spotlight in Hungary, and a dialogue could begin within the profession. However, we must not forget the fact that all this was achieved in a way that was already in line with the expectations of the party state. A closer focus on the writings of choreographer Ágnes Roboz (1926–2021)<sup>2</sup> is justified by the fact that Roboz was the first professional to initiate a discourse on the problem of operetta dance in the pages of the journal *Táncművészet*, which in a broader sense is merely the range of issues concerning (musical) stage dances. I will briefly discuss the changes affecting operetta and the Budapest Operetta Theatre after 1949. I will then review the content of the very first discussion paper published in 1952, and then the criticism and self-criticism that the theatre exercised on operetta dance after the first five-year plan (1950–1954).

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<sup>1</sup> The research was carried out during the 2020/2021 academic year, with the scholarship of Új Nemzeti Kiválóság Program. Parts of the research have been published, see: Lengyel 2020; Lengyel 2023.

<sup>2</sup> For a summery of her works see Székely (ed.) 1994: 652.

## Rethinking the bourgeois genre

For operetta, 1945 and then 1949 marked the dividing line<sup>3</sup> – as in so many other areas, since the origins and history of operetta had been clarified before then – and a new era began with the abolition of private theatre organisations. The cultural anthropologist Gyöngyi Heltai’s collection of studies on operetta, is also helpful in providing an overview of this period. As she put it:

*„After 1945, the cultural context changed in Hungary, first the cultural context, then the theatrical context with the nationalisation of 1949, when the pressure on the cosmopolitan operetta tradition was not only due to the new power situation and the Soviet occupation. The aforementioned left-wing reformist tendency to modernise the musical genres, which had previously been marginalised in Pest, also had a belated effect from the 1930s onwards. What is more, after the nationalisation of the theatres, this utopian ambition gained a dominant position in the centrally controlled press, in the ‘Sovietised’ professional discourse and in the state and party forums that decided on repertoires. As a consequence, the local operetta tradition was first to be erased from collective memory, and later radically reshaped.”<sup>4</sup>*

The emphasis was therefore on transformation, which is evident in all elements of the operetta genre.

In 1949, nationalisation also caught up with the main theatre of operetta playing in Budapest, the Budapest Metropolitan Operetta Theatre on Nagymező Street. The institution was headed by Margit Gáspár (1905-1994) from 1949 to 1957, who, among other things, “recreated” the myth of operetta.<sup>5</sup> Gáspár had to make a bourgeois, despised genre “presentable”. In keeping with the socialist realist aesthetics, composers in this period were churning out operettas for the theatre, miners’ operettas, not to mention film and radio operettas. Margit Gáspár – who was even awarded the Kossuth Prize by the regime in 1951 – published her fifteen-page yet all the more important work *The Operetta* in 1949, followed by *The Unnamed Child of the Muses* in

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<sup>3</sup> Bozó 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Heltai 2012: 45.

<sup>5</sup> Székely (ed.) 1994: 249.

1963 and later *The Light Music Stage for Two Thousand Years*, which also addressed the new role of operetta – that of ideological service. The first five-year plan already involved the Budapest Operetta Theatre. Margit Gáspár wrote about this in her paper entitled *The Road of the Budapest Operetta Theatre since Liberation*, which is preserved in a typewritten original form by the National Museum and Institute of Theatre History.<sup>6</sup> The note says “1948” in pencil, but the contents make it clear that it was written after 1949, after the first five-year plan (perhaps in 1954) – and more than likely these are documents for the Ministry of National Education - in which the director also confirmed the above facts. She also criticised the quality of the pre-liberation operetta, based on criticisms in various press organs, saying that “*it was considered to be a self-indulgent, progressive genre which had lost its artistic credibility. Unable to innovate and constantly repeating itself, living on its routine, to put it in technical terms, the public’s interest in operetta has dwindled considerably.*”<sup>7</sup> And, as expected, she also mentioned the place of the new type of operetta and its position in the Soviet Union:

*“When we think back on the history of its (operetta’s) revival, we remember that a humorous “dictionary of foreign words” published in the Soviet Union in 1930 explained the meaning of the word “operetta” as “The last unclaimed castle.” Since 1930, however, the art of the text has been on the rampage against this “last castle” and has “taken it”, conquered it. In the Soviet Union, the new socialist-realist operettas were born, particularly in the works of Milyutin and Dunayevsky, which combined the best international traditions of classical operetta with the valuable elements of folk art, folk song, folk dance and folk humour applied to the stage.”*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Typewritten note from the archives of OSZMI (National Museum and Institute of Theatre History).

<sup>7</sup> Gáspár 1954(?).

<sup>8</sup> Gáspár 1954(?).



## The issue of operetta dance in the spotlight

As a preliminary remark, there are several interpretations of the function of dances in operetta: they can be used as a spectacle element or to advance the operetta's plot. The interpretation and the problem of operetta dance and operetta choreography became increasingly urgent in socialism. And the journal *Táncművészet (Dance)*, launched in the autumn of 1951, was an excellent forum for bringing these thematic problems to the target group in a wide variety of genres, since, as dance and theatre historian Márk Gara writes:

*„Launched in the autumn of 1951, the magazine was written by theoretical and practicing experts and embodied the Dance Federation's aspiration for universality. On the one hand, this was reflected in the full coverage of the dance disciplines (ballet, folk dance, ballroom dancing), and on the other hand, the journal aimed to address both professional and amateur dancers. The colourful content covered a wide range of topics: arts policy discourse (analyses, debates, commentaries), reviews of new shows, performances in repertoire, old and new faces on stage, competition results, guest appearances, dance history, folklore, reports from other journals, excerpts from Soviet artists, postal mail, etc. All these topics were classified under headings like general discussion, criticism, letter from readers, and chronicle.”<sup>9</sup>*

The main source of information about Ágnes Roboz's relationship to operetta dance and the Operetta Theatre was the journal *Táncművészet*, while the general folder of the OSZMI Dance Archive and Ágnes Roboz's legacy received by the Institute – including her own collections, press publications, articles/writings, and a collection of articles in albums – helped to present the problem of operetta dance. All this without the intent to underestimate or overestimate the ideological framing of the manifestations of individual choreographers and dancers - in this case Ágnes Roboz – on the subject of

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<sup>9</sup> Gara (without date of publication)

operetta dance. The aim is merely to outline how operetta dance was also understood in the discourses on operetta in the first years of nationalisation.

1952 was the year when it was even considered that operetta dance could be an important issue for the genre. Ágnes Roboz was the director and choreographer of the dance company of the Budapest Operetta Theatre between 1949 and 1956, and in 1950 she worked as the choreographer of the Soviet operetta *Szabad szél (Free Wind)*<sup>10</sup> as her thesis study.<sup>11</sup> But she also choreographed a series of operettas staged in the Soviet Union and in friendly countries, such as *Havasi Kürt (Alpine Horn, 1951)*, or the artistic creations of the fraternal people's democratic countries, including the Romanian grand operetta *Hegyen-völgyön lakodalom (The Wedding in the Mountain Valley)*.<sup>12</sup>

It is also worth noting the data concerning the operetta chorus: despite all the earlier difficulties, the situation of the operetta chorus improved in 1949. There were three pillars to this: 1. the organisation of a permanent dance company; 2. the annual contracts - not just performance contracts; 3.

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<sup>10</sup> In the following minutes of the meeting of the Operetta and Dance Music Section of the Hungarian Musicians' Association, the Roboz choreography is also discussed. As the focus of this paper is on the text written by Roboz, I will not include the following document in the discussion, but it is valuable material for the ideological evaluation of both *Free Wind* and the choreographer's work: Hámos György – Székely Endre *Aranycsillag* című operettjének és az Operettszínház előadásának megvitatása a Magyar Zeneművészek Szövetsége Operett és Táncczenei Szakosztályának ülésén – 27 January 1951. (MNL OL P 2146-62. lot – 1950.) <https://theatron.hu/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Hamos-Gyorgy---Szekely-Endre-Aranycsillag-cimu-operettjenek-es-az-Operettszinhaz-eloadasanak-megvitatasa-a-Magyar-Zenemuveszek-Szovetsege-Operett-es-Tanczenei-Szakosztalyanak-ulesen---1951.-januar-27..pdf>

(retrieved: 11.05.2023.)

<sup>11</sup> Kékesi Kun 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Sándor László gave a detailed discussion of the repertoire after nationalisation in his article *A Fővárosi Operett Színház tánckarának munkájáról* (Sándor 1953: 196–200); „The choreographies in Budapest Operetta Theatre between 1949 and 1956 were: *Bécsi diákok*, 1949; *Masenyka álma*, 1949; *Szabad szél* 1950 (thesis work at the College of Theatre); *Aranycsillag*, 1950; *Palotaszálló*, 1951; *Trembita*, 1951; *Szelistyei asszonyok*, 1951; *Hegyen-völgyön lakodalom*, 1952; *Álruhás kisasszony*, 1954; *Két szerelem*, 1954; *Párizsi vendég*, 1954; *Szabadság, szerelem*, 1955; *Valahol délen* (with Viola. Rimóczi) 1956.” see Lelkes. Although only partially related to the professional discussion of operetta dance, it is a good indication of the state and possibilities of operetta theatre in 1949 to note that *The Dream of Masenka* was staged on the same night as *The Violet of Montmartre*. „According to Roboz's recollection, the dance play was inserted after the operetta because Margaret Gáspár did not find *The Violet of Montmartre* to be of full evening length.” - But Mark Gara adds that, according to an article in the *Kis Újság*, it was the success of the premiere of the dance play that led to the two works being put together in one evening. See: Gara 2020: 88.

a fair allowance for the dancers. (The first performance of the company after the new tasks had been assigned was a rewritten version of Johann Strauss's grand opera *The Students of Vienna*, which premiered on 16 September 1949.<sup>13)</sup>

### **Ágnes Roboz: On Operetta Dances (1952)**

Ágnes Roboz's almost four-page keynote, entitled "The operetta dance", can be read in volume II. no. 2. issue of *Táncművészet*.<sup>14</sup> In terms of content, the paper can be divided into six main sections: 1. Origin and tradition; 2. The task of operetta dance; 3. Difficulties in implementing the plan; 4. Methods and options; 5. Response to critics; 6. Assignment. By taking a closer look and reviewing these, we can get a clearer picture of the situation of dance in operetta.

1. The question of origins and traditions: Ágnes Roboz pointed out that there are two opposing views - this is essentially the root of the tension around operetta origins after 1945. She expressed ideas that were also noted by Margit Gáspár - which is in fact the Soviet position, i.e. that the genre is a descendant of musical folk comedy. She did so by quoting from Margit Gáspár, the Soviet theoretician Yeregin and the composer Dunayevsky. Then, after about a page and a half, she turned to the subject of operetta dance:

*„In the development of Hungarian operetta, the period before and immediately after the liberation faithfully reflected the decay of capitalism and the goals that capitalist „art” wishes to achieve, the means it uses to achieve its goals. In the course of social development, Hungarian operetta dancing, too, reached a stage of depravity and debauchery, where the ‚boys’ and ‚görlök’, without the most elementary dance skills but with as little clothing as possible, performed their tawdry, decadent and formalistic dances, imitating American revue films. These dances, with their cosmopolitanism, artlessness and lack of*

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<sup>13</sup> Ágnes Roboz choreographed the play with Karola Szalay.; For more details about the 1949 staging of *A Bécsi diákok* see Kékesi Kun 2020: 73–83.

<sup>14</sup> Roboz 1952: 50–54.

*substance, fitted in with the cheap, often roadside fairytale of the operetta.”<sup>15</sup>*

At this point, the issue of education and training, which had been on the agenda for a long time, was also brought to the fore. In the field of post-education, it is worth highlighting Margit Gáspár, who headed the operetta department at the College of Theatre from 1948 to 1954, where dance soon became an issue, since, according to the thinkers of the new party-state system, dance served the empty - as Roboz puts it - often roadside tale.

2. The aim of operetta dance: Ágnes Roboz noted that after 1949, the tasks of the cultural revolution of enormous significance were also correctly defined for operetta dance. Accordingly, she stressed that *„dance is an integral part of operetta in the service of the people, and must therefore be highly demanding in terms of both content and form. Its aim is to educate and entertain the new socialist man within the framework of the operetta, bearing in mind its ideological content, by its own means.”<sup>16</sup>* Thus the entertainment-educational function was back in the foreground, and dance had to be reinterpreted in the way and within the framework of the operetta genre.

3. Difficulties in the implementation of the plan: when recording the difficulties, the choreographer noted that the ones he listed are still largely present since nationalisation. The difficulties described by Ágnes Roboz can be divided into two categories: theoretical and practical. These are mostly precise and fact-based statements of the difficulties encountered in day-to-day operations and work. The fact that the dance company is made up of people with different artistic approaches is one of the difficulties in principle. But it also included the fact that, in his view, the underestimation of the operetta genre, and thus of dance both inside and outside the theatre, was the source of many of the difficulties. Among the practical difficulties, he mentioned the small size of the dance troupe (twelve!) at the beginning and the lack of a practice method and practice facilities for a while. However, by 1952, in just two or three seasons, he felt that the problem had been partially solved. On the question of the working method, for example, she wrote as follows:

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<sup>15</sup> Roboz 1952: 51.

<sup>16</sup> Roboz 1952: 51.

*„Today, we work with an established method of work, based on practical ballet exercises based on the Vaganova ballet system, the Lopukhov-Bocharov-Sirjaev character dance training and the learning of Stanislavsky’s system. In this way, we aim to train our dancers to become socialist-realist artists capable of a wide variety of tasks.”<sup>17</sup>*

4. Methods and possibilities: in this problem, the choreographer recorded the sub-optimal or inefficient relationships and methods identified in the theatrical operation and creative process. She wrote in detail about the relationship between a) the writer, dramaturgy and dance. She stressed the difficulty of having different relations and possibilities from performance to performance. Some plays are given in a finished form, with a precise place for dance. But she also highlighted the working method of new operetta composers: *„The librettists in this case very often created their pieces in isolation from their fellow composers and choreographers, being very reticent about creating dance possibilities (Aranycsillag, Gold Star).”<sup>18</sup>* But she also spoke about a less fortunate creative process: the dance scenes are inserted by the authors after the play has been completed. b) She also returned to the recurring question of the operetta genre and dances: what is the role of dance in the dramatic plot? Roboz believed that dance should always advance the plot. But she also stressed the specificity of the genre: *„In operetta, there can be dance whose role is merely to deepen the mood of the piece. One of the peculiarities of the operetta genre is that it can be used as a dance interlude, linked to the inner plot, but also as a stand-alone dance interlude.”<sup>19</sup>* c) Everything will only be fulfilled if the writers and dramaturgs collaborate with the choreographer: make dance a necessity and not just an option in operetta<sup>20</sup> – she insisted. d) But there was a problem not only with the collaboration between the writer and the dramaturg, but also with the composers, which is why she believes that the relationship of composers to dance needs to be addressed. She gave examples of the problem. Some composers work alone and do not involve the

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<sup>17</sup> Roboz 1952: 51.

<sup>18</sup> Roboz 1952: 51.

<sup>19</sup> Roboz 1952: 51

<sup>20</sup> Roboz 1952: 51.

choreographer in the creative process. There is also a problem if the music slows down the momentum of the dance as a result (for example in the operetta *Gold Star* – Endre Székely did not change the music even at the request of the composer). As a refreshing example, she spoke of a set-up where operetta dance numbers are created with the involvement of the choreographer(s) (for example in *Palotaszálló* – a successful collaboration with Tamás Bródy and János Kerekes). She again drew a parallel with the ideological content of the piece, how it is possible to create good dance to good music:

*„Good dancing can only be created to the music that suits the dance. An example of this is the dance music of Free Wind and Alpine Horn, which shows that the Soviet composers not only knew and loved dance, but were aware that only the perfect coordination of the two arts, music and dance, could express the ideological content of the piece.”<sup>21</sup>*

e) The collaboration of the professionals who played a key role in the creation of the performance was also raised in the writing. The relationship between director and choreographer was also discussed. She says that directors often fail to help because they claim not to understand the language of dance. As she wrote, the choreographer and the director should understand each other's profession, because in operetta theatre they cannot (and cannot work) without each other:

*„In fact, in operetta theatre, the director cannot exist without the choreographer and vice versa, the choreographer cannot exist without the director. In addition to constant collaboration, our directors need to have some understanding of dance, and our choreographers and future choreographers need to have a thorough understanding of staging and stagecraft. We need to create the conditions for healthy cooperation that will lead to the achievement of the goal. That goal is the good performance.”<sup>22</sup>*

Se also stressed the importance of joint thinking with the set and costume designer and the conductor. f) An ideological conflict lay behind the next criticism of the presence of „actor dances” on the operetta stage. This is revealed in the lines written by Ágnes Roboz, in which she explained that

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<sup>21</sup> Roboz 1952: 52.

<sup>22</sup> Roboz 1952: 52.

the ‚theatre dances’ are strongly influenced by English and American jazz movements. In 1952, however, no alternative had been found for the new ‚theatre dances’. *„Our big shortcoming is that we have not yet found the right new types of dances to replace this type of dance” solution suggestion: „We can rely on the traditions of ballet, ballroom dancing, folk dance. But the actors themselves have a big role to play in developing new dances.”* As a solution, she mentioned that help could also be sought from star actors – such as Hannah Honthy and Kamil Feleki – to contribute to the creation of new „actor dances”. The relegation of the ‚actor dances’ to the background of the operetta stage began at the same time – although they played a major role in characterisation – but in a way that detracted from the visual elements of the operetta – this was later followed by criticism and then self-criticism (in 1955).

5. Response to the critics: the dance numbers of the operettas were the subject of several critiques at the time – from 1949 until the writing of this article – but Ágnes Roboz asked the critics – and here she was thinking primarily of professionals and journalists – to take into account not only the current state of the art, but also the development of the operetta.<sup>23</sup>

6. Assignment of tasks: the ideological framing of the assignment of tasks was not neglected. Once again, Roboz set out in detail the shortcomings she perceives as a choreographer in operetta dance: the need to catch up with practice in the field of theoretical work (the question of the progressive tradition of operetta dance needs to be clarified), the importance of scientific work, the need to increase the technical and theoretical preparation of dancers.<sup>24</sup>

After the Roboz article of 1952, a discourse started: Ágnes Roboz wrote several reviews about rural performances in the columns of *Táncművészet* (e.g. about Kecskemét), but Karola Szalay, László Sándor (choreographer of the Vígszínház – Comedy Theatre in Budapest), Zsuzsa Kun, Zsuzsa L. Merényi, Géza Körtvélyes, Géza L. Rózsi Dési, Mihály Gera, Hédi Bán, László Boldog, György Csizmadia, László Danielisz, István Szenthegyi also

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<sup>23</sup> Roboz 1952: 53.

<sup>24</sup> Roboz 1952: 53.

contributed to the issue – each writing a review, but mostly pointing out the same strengths or even disadvantages as Roboz listed in her article.<sup>25</sup>

### **Criticism and self-criticism after the first five year plan**

It's worth looking at whether the problems listed in 1952 were solved for operetta dance after the first five-year plan, and what and how the theatre management assessed them. The theatre sent a document to the Ministry of National Education (*Report on the Five-Year Plan of the Budapest Operetta Theatre*) in 1954:

*„Based on an analysis of the theatre's programming policy so far, we can say that the effort has indeed been purposefully working towards the creation of a new Hungarian operetta / even if it has not always been justified in practice. / In this endeavour, of course, it was only able to work within the given constraints and possibilities. The popular democratic, Soviet and classical programming can also be described as proportionate and effective.”<sup>26</sup>*

The board also touched on training, including dance, which Ágnes Roboz had also called for earlier:

*„In the future, the Operetta Theatre intends to place more emphasis on the singing and dancing character of each production. To do this, of course, it needs a steady supply of new talent. The College of Dramatic Arts can only partially provide this. The theatre proposes to set up an operetta studio, which would help to solve the problem of supply by providing professional training for fresh material, including through the permanent search for new talent.”<sup>27</sup>*

The direction was clear and, albeit less effectively and spectacularly, the professional discourse seemed to have started. Workshops were held on operetta, where, following the article, the issue of dance was discussed more specifically, so the role of choreographer Ágnes Roboz in starting the discourse can be traced even more clearly. A good example of this is the 1955 two-day symposium organised to mark the five-year anniversary of the nationalisation

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<sup>25</sup> In details see Lengyel 2020.

<sup>26</sup> Gáspár 1954.

<sup>27</sup> Gáspár 1954.



of the Budapest Operetta Theatre, at which three main issues were discussed: 1. clarification of the operetta genre and the objectives of the theatre; 2. the significance of operetta; 3. the issue of stage dance, and operetta dance within it. In the latter case, István Albert, a member of the dance company of the Budapest Operetta Theatre, Viola Rimóczi, the theatre's ballet master, and Ágnes Roboz spoke.<sup>28</sup>

István Albert came up with the problem that Ágnes Roboz had also put on paper in 1952:

*„I would like to make a request to the writers, said István Albert: „When dramaturgically shaping the piece - keeping in mind the triple unity - do not forget the „third-order” aspect that operetta is to a certain extent a dance genre. Indeed, the situation is very difficult in this respect, and the dance number is often omitted because it ,does not fit in’.”<sup>29</sup>*

Viola Rimóczi said that it is important to be faithful to the age and style of the dances, but this is not the case because the actors do not have the necessary dance background.

*„The College's teaching system is also to blame in this respect, when it allows operetta actors to perform without elementary dance knowledge. This naturally brings the actor into conflict with the choreographer. Yet the collaboration between the two is essential for success. The choreographer imagines the number and the actor dances it, so it is very important that the actor feels what he is doing.”<sup>30</sup>*

And Ágnes Roboz said that the dancers of the operetta stage were often in danger of naturalism. *„We turned our backs on the old operetta-dance traditions with such force that we failed to notice either what could be developed from them, or that we often took the wrong path.”<sup>31</sup>* She also considered it a mistake to allow the dance troupe to dance only as a „cultural group”, thus creating a stage on the stage. This could have been a problem because it marginalised the very need for dance to be an integral part of the

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<sup>28</sup> Tabi 1955: 87.

<sup>29</sup> Tabi 1955: 87.

<sup>30</sup> Tabi 1955: 87.

<sup>31</sup> Tabi 1955: 87.

operetta performance. The "stage dances", once a problem inherited from the pre-nationalisation era, were displaced, but this did not solve the problem either, as it made operettas poorer in dance. She did, however, mention the presence of folk dance on the operetta stage as a new achievement: „*But as a result of this period, we must mention the arrival of folk dance on the stage (Golden Star, Palace Inn, Alpine Horn, Free Wind, Women of Szelistye).*”<sup>32</sup> But this „success” also received a lot of criticism from professionals, or so Ágnes Roboz suspected:

*„There were, and certainly still are, people who feared folk dance from the operetta stage as much as they feared the innocence of the village from the bustle of the city. Others wanted folk dancing to be brought to the operetta stage with the credibility of ethnographic collection, and some found even stylized folk dancing on stage vulgar. I am convinced that folk dance must have a place in operettas that depict our lives. And the form of the staging is always determined by the message and the dramaturgical structure of the piece, and by the task that the director entrusts to the dance.”*<sup>33</sup>

And so, partly by incorporating folk dance into the operetta stage, he said, by 1955 dance was being used on the operetta stage with more results (not just as a mood-setter). Moreover, she did not shy away from setting new tasks: a new ballroom dance should conquer the operetta stage. By this she meant that every major operetta era had so far „created and conquered its own ballroom dance: the waltz, the polka, the foxtrot, the tango.”<sup>34</sup> Socialist operetta performance tried to (re)interpret the role of dances in operetta in the shadow of these operetta-dance traditions.

## Summary

The present article, based on the choreographer Ágnes Roboz’s article in the journal *Táncművészet* (Dance) on the issue of operetta dance, reviews the problems of the operetta genre, which has been given a new function in the

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<sup>32</sup> Tabi 1955: 87.

<sup>33</sup> Tabi 1955: 87.

<sup>34</sup> Tabi 1955: 87.

period of nationalisation, and which affect dance and need to be solved. Without over- and underestimating Roboz's role, I have briefly reviewed the ideological, functional, practical and theoretical issues related to operetta dance, focusing on the content of the writings and their background. Many shortcomings (such as the lack of training) and missteps (such as the marginalisation of 'theatre dances'), but also many achievements (such as the use of folk dance in operetta) were reported by choreographers, especially Roboz, due to her status, but without exception all their oral or written contributions were also ideologically framed. The professional discourse on operetta dance continued, but after 1956 without Ágnes Roboz and after 1957 without Margit Gáspár, both of whom left the Budapest Operetta Theatre.

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# On the Margins of a Phenomenon – A Contemplative Example of the Representation of Traditional Dance Culture on Stage in the Art of Zoltán Zsuráfszky

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ÁDÁM MIKULICS

## Introduction

The possibilities of revitalising and artistically conceptualising traditional dances that have left their original, traditional social context, and the directions of these intentions have been a major area of research in the field of dance studies from the emergence of the revival movement to the present day, exploring many ways of interpreting dance. The descriptive representations of folk dance on the stage, as well as the complex analytical findings of studies that integrate new interpretative perspectives and open up different avenues of approach, are important milestones in the history of research on folk dance on the stage.

In his work, published in 2021, Henrik Kovács places the emergence of stage folk dance and the creative attitudes of the representations of peasant dance culture, which applied different approaches, in the context of the history of ethnological research and provides a short overview of the changes in the functions of folk dance.<sup>1</sup> He considers the staging of traditional dance culture as a unique category of the presentational-dance function and interprets it in the historical past, tracing its earliest manifestations back to the 16th and 17th centuries with the help of dance history. Drawing on works on the process of folk dance's emergence on the stage and its different trajectories, it provides a sketchy cross-section of the phenomenon from its roots to the present day. Like László Maác in 1980, Kovács also refers to the tensions between opposing views on the function of folk dance on stage and the issues that generate lively social dialogues, which have been present in both academic and artistic discourse since the traditional peasant dance was first staged in

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<sup>1</sup> Kovács 2021: 76–79.

the 1930s.<sup>2</sup> The author, while briefly listing the genres and some of the leading figures of folk dance on stage, also highlights the „authentic” choreographic approach that has surrounded the achievements of Hungarian folk dance research to date. His study examines the functions of the dance heritage as part of 21st century urban culture, but it does not cover the meaning of the terms ”authenticity”, nor possible approaches to their interpretation, and the difficulties in defining their scientific and artistic contexts.

### **The question of authenticity and validity of staged folk dances**

The lack of a unified, consensus-based definition of these concepts, and the need for such a definition, is highlighted by Anna Székely in a study published in 2015, which reflects on several problems and issues of folk dance on stage with the results of recent research. In this study, she examines the question of authenticity and validity of staged folk dances in the context of Hungarian folk dance competitions, based on the narratives of the main actors of each forum.<sup>3</sup> One of the key conclusions of his research was that

*„[...]in stage folk dance productions and competitions, the term „authentic” is not uniformly understood by the jury, the audience, and the participants, including the dancers and choreographers who compete, probably because there is no scientific, precise definition of the term.”<sup>4</sup>*

Demonstrating a systematic and complex attitude to research, much of his fieldwork was inspired by the 2013 „Tedd ki a pontot!” International Legényes Dance Competition. The organisers of the annual solo dance competition have set out the objectives of the competition since its inception in 1997:

*„The organizers wish to help the young dancers to learn and continue to live the legényes dance to the highest possible standard. The annual competition will feature a selection of outstanding legényes dancers from the Carpathian Basin, Kalotaszeg, Küküllő, Gyimes and Mezőség. The competition reflects the values of György Martin’s*

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<sup>2</sup> Maács 1980: 71–103.

<sup>3</sup> Székely 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Székely 2015: 26.

*work, which focuses on the analysis and application of archival dance films. The aim of the competition is to promote the development of the dancers' technique and to learn and apply the methods of archival film analysis.”*<sup>5</sup>

Székely compares the stage production with the archival film footage that serves as the „original” in her definition of the event, and in the light of this, she examines the different meanings of the concepts of authenticity and validity that arise in connection with the event. According to the author's interpretation, which is based on well-founded research results, at this competition a performance can be considered authentic if it reconstructs the dance in terms of content and form by adopting the main characteristics and movements of the performer's movement culture. It should also be able to express the dancer's individuality through the movement elements specific to the dance and the structure of the dance as a whole.<sup>6</sup> In the context examined by Székely, the conceptual category of authenticity implies a faithful adherence to the movement material and movement qualities of the peasant dancer, which serves as a framework for the process of re-creation.<sup>7</sup> László Felföldi, examining the content of the category of authenticity from several aspects, notes that the explanations from the point of view of the academic, the choreographer and the performer are different. For the researcher, the relationship to traditional culture, for the choreographer and the dancer it is the similarity to their own work that serves as a scale of authenticity.<sup>8</sup> In folk dance adapted to the stage, the concept of authenticity is realised in the fidelity to the folklore manifestations of traditional culture. As Felföldi points out, the creators and dancers create their stage works based on the results of scientific research, i.e. the researcher's activity.

Looking out to the international horizon, Anna Székely draws on the work of Ukrainian dance researcher Andriy Nahachewsky, who defines the category of reflective, or feedback, dance performance in the study of the staged performances of Ukrainian folk dances.<sup>9</sup> To quote Székely, in this case,

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<sup>5</sup> [anon.] 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Székely 2015: 30–32.

<sup>7</sup> Székely 2015: 41.

<sup>8</sup> Felföldi 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Székely 2020: 138.



„[...] participants consciously seek a link with the past, they see the dances as a „heritage”, [...] where the dance refers back to the past through the performance. This occurs when the dancer „dances as if...”<sup>10</sup> In this sense, in a relevant approach to theatrical folk dance, in the theoretical framework of Nahachewsky, following Székely, we can refer to a theatrical dance performance aiming at representing a specific event of the past as a reflective dance.<sup>11</sup>

In the above-mentioned studies, Anna Székely, who takes a fresh, reflective approach to many issues of Hungarian folk dance on stage, defines stage folk dance as interpretation, i.e. as a performance along the lines of individual interpretations and its result.<sup>12</sup> The results of her research are mainly based on her investigations of the „terrain” created by the phenomenon that emerged in the field of stage folk dance in the second half of the 1990s, which was embodied in the strictly precise and consistent acquisition and staging of the fixed dance processes, movement repertoire, gesture system and sometimes the attitude of outstanding peasant dancers. The first spectacular result of this approach to interpreting and performing the documented peasant dance repertoire in this value system is the performance *Bonchida háromszor*<sup>13</sup> by the Budapest Dance Ensemble led by Zoltán Zsuráfszky.<sup>14</sup> This work has become an important benchmark for the Hungarian folk dance movement within the categories of authenticity and validity (if we accept the relevance of the outlined approach to these concepts). In my study I want to shed light on the

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<sup>10</sup> Székely 2015: 30.

<sup>11</sup> Székely 2015: 30.

<sup>12</sup> Székely 2020: 138.

<sup>13</sup> Zsuráfszky Zoltán has received the Kossuth Prize, and he was awarded with the Outstanding Artist prize. He is the leader of the Hungarian National Dance Ensemble. He was a student in the first class of the legendary folk dance department of the Hungarian State Ballet Institute from 1971-1975, where he learned from Katalin Györgyfalvay and Sándor Timár. Following his studies he worked as the solo dancer in the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble. From 1983 he was the leader of the dance company. He staged works as choreographer in the MÁNE Párhuzam-ensemble, then in 1984 he founded the Kodály Chamber Dance Ensemble. He has worked with the Budapest Dance Ensemble since 1991, and he was the artistic director of Honvéd Dance Theatre from 2007 to 2012. During his career he did several collections, the results of these can be found in Institute for Musicology (Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre for the Humanities). In addition to Hungarian folk dance traditions and dance culture, he has also studied Romanian, Slovak, Goral and Roma dances.

<sup>14</sup> The premiere of the play took place on 23 January 1999 at the Világtojás Theatre, which has a smaller capacity and a more intimate atmosphere.

phenomenon, which in my opinion was initiated in the staging of Hungarian folk dance by *Bonchida háromszor* and Zoltán Zsuráfszky as the creator of the work, by textualizing and explaining the reflective narratives concerning the staging process of the theatre piece and the artistic concept. According to the creative intentions, the piece is an exact stage adaptation of the film footage of György Martin, Adrian Vicol, Emil Petruțiu, Zoltán Kallós and Pál Sztanó recorded on 31 May 1969 in Bonchida. The main choreographic concept of the work is in the mastery and representation of the dancing characters of the four Hungarian and four Romanian data providers, manifested through their dances.<sup>15</sup> The dance repertoire of the Roma people was not recorded in the 1969 research. Its representation on stage is the result of new research and experience of Zsuráfszky and the leading dancers of the Budapest Dance Ensemble, who carried out a kind of „complementary” collection and field study within the Roma ethnic population of the local community.

My work does not deal with the historical background of dance, nor with a complex, theatrical analysis of the performance. Therefore, the exploration of possible implications for the field of theatrical folk dance beyond the above-mentioned contexts is also a subject for further research.

### **Along narratives - reflections from creative thought to realisation... and beyond**

The director and choreographer of the performance recalled the preparations for the first episode of the series *Élő Martin Archivum*<sup>16</sup>:

*”In this kind of deep drilling of folk dance, in the preparation of these monographic shows, I combed through all the original materials, all*

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<sup>15</sup> The archive film recordings can be found online in the database of Institute for Musicology (Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre for the Humanities), with the serial number 682.7-12 Ft.

<sup>16</sup> In homage to György Martin’s academic work, Zoltán Zsuráfszky launched the *Élő Martin* series. The individual pieces, representing a unique artistic approach and vision, are distinctive and outstanding works of Hungarian stage folk dance, provide examples of creating performances of artistic value by mastering traditional peasant dances by thorough analytical work.

Parts of the *Archívum*-series by the Hungarian National Dance Ensemble: *Bonchida háromszor* (1999), *Kalotaszeg* (2002), *Szatmár* (2004), *Mezőség* (2008) és *Gyimes* (2011).

*the scientific descriptions, all the kinetographic materials. My aim was to finally learn every detail from the Bonchida film. I also did some additional filming among the gypsies, since the Tinka family had recorded the Hungarian and Romanian material in ,69. So we had the Hungarian, Romanian and Roma dance material. I gave out the tasks to my dancers and everyone learned a role. The aim was to master the recorded material perfectly, where one of my dancers dances and personifies a data provider, while trying to embrace the dancer's full personality. At first, no one believed that this kind of monographic treatment would be interesting for a non-professional audience, but the show proved me wrong. It is an attempt to show the material in its completeness.”<sup>17</sup>*

Gábor Margittai, in a review published in the newspaper Magyar Nemzet, highlights perhaps the most striking aspect of this novel approach, unprecedented on folk dance stages, by identifying the depth of the dancers' performance with the specificity of the actors' character portrayal: *„The highlight of the performance was the presentation of faces. The dancers - a rare opportunity - became actors, stepping into the skin of a Bonchida peasant to make the atmosphere of Martin's archive films truly alive and breathtaking.”*<sup>18</sup> The lines quoted from the review clearly point to a possible interpretation of the phenomenon, whereby the stage space becomes the most objective medium for communicating the most objective knowledge possible about a segment of the dance culture of a given local community.

Irén Deffend<sup>19</sup> highlighted the methodology of staging the piece from the performer's point of view, the result of which created a new context in the relation between folk dance on stage and traditional peasant dance culture:

*”The kind of film-analytical attitude in which the Martin Archives have been processed is the intention and idea of Zsura. The aim was to try*

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<sup>17</sup> Interview – Zsuráfszky 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Margittai 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Irén Deffend has received several national and artistic awards. She graduated from the Teacher Training College of Budapest, the University of Theatre and Film Arts and Budapest Metropolitan University. Between 1996 and 2017 she worked with the Budapest Dance Ensemble, the Honvéd Dance Theatre and the Hungarian National Dance Ensemble. She is currently the artistic director of the Corvinus Közgáz Folk Dance Ensemble.

*to define a methodology that would focus on the analysis of movement, its thoroughness, so that every movement of the interviewees, their torso position, precise spacing and pacing, speed of rotation, etc. was part of the observational work. No visualisation based on analytical work of such depth had been done before. For Zsura this was very important and this was the first time he tried it in this show. [...] For the Bonchida performance the group had stylistic exercises where the structure and function of the dance was defined - how the speeds of rotation relate to each other in the dances of the different ethnicities. But these were more of tuning in and then determining who would do what. We were selected in terms of habitus, aptitude, character. Specifically, everyone had to look one way or the other. We spent weeks on this, and then we were asked to take stock of where we stood. Then we watched the films again and again we had a grouping where we looked at each other. On these occasions, Zsura would watch with a choreographer's eye when, where and how much emphasis she would put on the dancing of one couple or another.”<sup>20</sup>*

The definition and „assignment” of the roles of each dancer was of particular importance for the stage adaptation during the preparatory phase. The methods used for settling into the concept of the show are illustrated in the narratives of Csaba Taba<sup>21</sup> and Ignác Kádár<sup>22</sup>: „The kind of approach that Zsura had outlined for us was something we had never seen before,” said Csaba Taba, and continued:

*”We were used to someone teaching us a material based on a uniform pattern, and that’s how we learned the main characteristics of the dance types specific to a region. This kind of research and workshop*

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<sup>20</sup> Interview – Deffend 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Csaba Taba is a recognised dancer and dance teacher, and has received several state and artistic awards. Between 1988 and 1992 he was the member of the dance group in the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble, later he joined the Budapest Dance Ensemble. He received his degree at the Hungarian Dance College. He currently works with several amateur folk dance ensembles as leader and folk dance teacher.

<sup>22</sup> Ignác Kádár won the International Legényes Competition in 2008 and 2009. From 2000 and 2007 he was the member and lead solo dancer of the Budapest Dance Ensemble. He has won the Best Male Solo Dancer of the Year award of the Association of Hungarian Dancers. He currently works as the artistic director and choreographer of the Ajka-Padragkút dance ensemble.

*work was fantastic. Zsura found the characters very well. The parallels between each dance's data provider and his dancers. He placed great emphasis on the similarities between the performers' attitudes. He always found these very well. This was true for all the Martin Archive. We were given a green light after the handout. Zsura gave us free space for independent preparation. He had professional confidence in us. After a few weeks he checked on us. There were corrections on his part, but we obviously expected that. We tried to pay attention to every detail, as we had never seen this level of precision before. We knew the film itself, of course, but we were just sketching a general picture of Bonchida dancing, either as dancers or as teachers. This method of assigning the task to us individually was a very big responsibility for us. From then on we had to watch every movement: how he enters the dance, how he leaves it. The way one of the Romanian dancers wipes his forehead with a handkerchief from his pocket was also part of the staging. We had to identify ourselves with the data provider. We searched for the identity through the footage. In the show, the appearance of the individual was clearly dominant.”<sup>23</sup> “Until then I had never worked on any dance material at such a level” - recalls Ignác Kádár. “We all had a great desire to do our best. It was an unparalleled task and demand for us. But Zsura had great confidence in us. Before that, I had never encountered this attitude anywhere. I feel we really developed there. All the films were requested from the academy and there was a preparation period of about three months. Every week or two weeks we had to give an update on the state of preparation.”<sup>24</sup>*

The *Bonchida háromszor* - like the other pieces in the Élő Martin Archivum - involved a peasant dance culture approach embodied in a unique method of processing, embedded in a well-constructed artistic concept, contemporary ideas and messages, which are also the hallmark of the creative attitude, as

*”[...]it brilliantly exploits the metaphorical meaning inherent in the specific form of stage dance, by taking the peasant dance out of its role*

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<sup>23</sup> Interview – Taba 2023.

<sup>24</sup> Interview – Kádár 2023.

*as a „data provider” and elevating it to a carrier of thought. The film is effectively helped by the scenery, but the mobile mirrored panels, which play a complex stage role, proved to be decisive.”<sup>25</sup>*

The director put it this way:

*”In Bonchida, the artistic concept was born with the mirrors. I put the mirrors in front of the audience so that everyone can look into them and ask themselves, what can they do to keep this culture alive? It is a small provocation, that is the function of the set.”<sup>26</sup>*

Anna Székely, in the study cited above, discusses the relationship between stage and authenticity, and based on a 1982 work by József Faragó, she explains the specificities of folk dance on stage, which are due to its unique character and determined position. She also draws a parallel between folk dance and the nature of peasant dance culture in a traditional context. Traditional dances, once on stage, become productions with an entertainment function. And the main task of the choreographer who stages and creates these performances is to represent it faithfully to the formal, structural and functional characteristics of the dance as it is known in its traditional context.<sup>27</sup> Along the lines of this interpretation, in the light of the functions and expectations of folk dance on stage, we can conclude that dance must fulfil the role of entertainment in a form that remains faithful to its traditional form. It is in this approach that Zsuráfszky sees the limitations of the Élő Martin Archívum phenomenon:

*”I was trying to represent the great data providers on stage. Only they can be presented to people on the stage at this level. You have to choose an area, a medium, which and who can keep the viewer’s interest. You can make a piece for the Élő Martin Archívum, but it has to be done with complete thoroughness and careful artistic power, so that the audience is captivated.”<sup>28</sup>*

The idea that gave life to some of the pieces in the series has had a convincing impact in the various arenas of the folk dance movement (solo dance competitions, various forums for the presentation of folk dance ensembles),

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<sup>25</sup> Kerekes 1999: 16–17.

<sup>26</sup> Interview – Zsuráfszky 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Székely 2015: 41.

<sup>28</sup> Interview – Zsuráfszky 2023.

and the work of the Budapest Dance Ensemble has set a clear example and professional standard in the methodology of processing and staging the results of the collection. „This kind of approach has spread like wildfire in the amateur folk dance movement”, says Irén Deffend, reflecting on the unfolding of the phenomenon.

*”This level of mastery of some of the dance processes of the data providers clearly started the movement, and from then on, this is how everyone dances the Bonchida dance material to this day. Until then, no ensemble in Hungary had ever danced in this arrangement. So this conscious concept was also reflected in the costumes.”<sup>29</sup>*

*„Previously, this perception was clearly not present on the stage to this extent”* – assumed Csaba Taba.

*” This was a revolutionary approach to the peasant dance heritage. Typically, it was the amateur movement that reacted most sensitively. It’s everywhere in the professional approach today. Competitions have been created where you have to formulate a specific dance for a data provider. That’s how almost everyone now approaches a piece of material. I do not see much room for positive development in this respect.”<sup>30</sup>*

Then Ignác Kádár concludes with an almost poetic image: *”Zsura has painted an image on the wall of the movement that will remain there for a lifetime and cannot be scratched off. No one had ever done anything like this before.”<sup>31</sup>*

The phenomenon examined in connection with Zsuráfszky’s work is perhaps less prominent in dance studies of Hungarian folk dance on stage. When drawing on reflections from primary sources and from an anthropological perspective, the impact of the paradigm-shifting approach in the folk dance movement can be explored in academic dialogue, helping to explain the phenomenon within a broader interpretative framework and to reveal the mechanisms of its impact.

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<sup>29</sup> Interview – Deffend 2023.

<sup>30</sup> Interview – Taba 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Interview – Kádár 2023.

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## Interviews

MIKULICS Ádám

Interview with Irén Deffend. 22.05.2023. The recording is the property of the author..

Interview with Ignác Kádár. 22.05.2023. The recording is the property of the author..

Interview with Csaba Taba. 22.05.2023. The recording is the property of the author..

Interjú with Zoltán Zsuráfszky Zoltánnal. 23.05.2023. The recording is the property of the author.

# London's double-spiral death dance. A possible Scruton reading of Tragedy

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ÁKOS WINDHAGER

A joint interpretation of *The Tragedy of Man* and *Parsifal*

”Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?!”

(Mt, 27,46)

Where is God at a time of historical tragedy for the community? Is there a purpose to history that can be put into words? Is the world a better place through faith, love and art? The answer to this question is something like the conjecture of Pierre de Fermat (1607-1665), which would not fit on the page margins or on many other pages, and a few hundred years would not be enough to prove it. Imre Madách also sought to answer them in his voluminous dramatic poem *The Tragedy of Man* (1861). Or rather, he presented the wrong answers. Since the work’s first publication, there has been a debate about what answers the author gave, how they can be interpreted in what cultural process, and, by taking them out of the work of art, how valid they are from the perspective of other disciplines (e.g. theology, historiography, philosophy).

I shall undertake to analyse *The Tragedy* on the basis of Roger Scruton’s work on Richard Wagner’s *Parsifal*, for reasons to be explained later.<sup>1</sup> In *The Tragedy*, God and Satan compete for man, in *Parsifal*, Titurel and Klingsor compete for the Grail (the Grail-man). The contest is a mortal combat for the lives of Adam and Parsifal (their souls), which is only worth it to them because in the end good triumphs. In Wagner’s musical drama, the world is given back the presence of the Saviour in the person of Parsifal, and Madách’s hero Adam is given a revelation of how people can hear the voice of the Lord. Wagner’s solution is closer to what we expect today, because the Grail Knights experience the presence of God symbolically in the Eucharist of

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<sup>1</sup> Scruton 2021.

the Holy Chalice, and in the „redemption of the Redeemer” („Höchsten Heiles Wunder! / Erlösung dem Erlöser!”), i.e. in Parsifal.<sup>2</sup> But Madách’s solution is more realistic, because Adam and Eve can hear the voice of God through poetry, music and love - if anything interferes with their direct perception. In both plays, God pours out his grace on humanity through his presence.

In Wagner’s opera, the English philosopher explored what the absence of God’s presence means for the characters, the dramaturgy and the interpretative milieu. He reveals that for Wagner the ideal human community is one in which the leader, the members and the sacredness preserved in tradition form a metonymic unity. It is in this community that Jesus’ promise is realized: „For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I with them.”<sup>3</sup> Thus the Saviour, though absent, is present. It is the presence of this paradox of God that I seek in Scruton’s *Tragedy*. Specifically, the ways in which the Lord does not appear where the characters expect him to be; what explanation there is for his absence, and how his return (if return) can be understood. The practical Hungarian relevance of the question is shown by the fact that the absence of the Lord has been canonically considered by the theatrical tradition since the first performance of *The Tragedy* by Endre Paulay (1836-1894) in 1883.

I have chosen Scruton’s monograph on *Parsifal*, who did not read *The Tragedy*, as the basis for the comparison because it represents the Christian aesthetic tradition in which *The Tragedy* was analysed in Hungarian literature for nearly a century. For a well-known reason, the Christian aesthetic discourse in Hungary was interrupted after 1948.<sup>4</sup> While it is clear that Scruton represented universal European Christian thought, and not the typical Central European phenomenology, his modern questioning refreshes the interpretation of *The Tragedy*. For the Hungarian reader, he continues the line of argumentation used in Hungary by Ottokár Prohászka (1858-1927), László Ravasz (1882-1975) and Sándor Sík (1889-1963), as well as by Géza Voinovich (1877-1952) and Frigyes Riedl (1856-1921).<sup>5</sup> The reference to the English phi-

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<sup>2</sup> Wagner 1882: 259.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 18,20.

<sup>4</sup> Two examples for interpretation of *The Tragedy* from the aspect of the interrupted Hungarian Christian ethics: Fáj 1957. and Fáj 1986.

<sup>5</sup> Voinovich 1914; Prohászka 1923; Ravasz 1924; Ravasz 1934; Sík 1934; Riedl 1935.

osopher also provides an opportunity to go beyond the German Romantic philosophical approach, which is predominant in the Hungarian literature, and in particular the influence of Georg W. F. Hegel and Ludwig Büchner.

The challenge of my research is thus to avoid the many dead ends of the literature dating from 1861, which now stands at nearly a thousand years. Interpreters have read *The Tragedy of Man* as a historical vision, a religious philosophy and a philosophical system. Others have protested against it, including a charismatic reinterpreter of the work, Sándor Hevesi (1873-1939): "*The Tragedy of Man* is not a historical portrait gallery, not a spectacular series of images, not a historical period painting, but something more, greater, more poetic than anything else: the eternal struggle of man in Adam's dream, in changing visions."<sup>6</sup> A later director of the National Theatre, Endre Gellért (1914-1960), came to a similar conclusion from the opposite direction. „Historical images are not lies. Lucifer shows history, but ultimately *not the historical reality*, but Lucifer's intention to show its shadows."<sup>7</sup> More than one researcher has interpreted it as an obvious projection of the author's private life.<sup>8</sup> While each of these analyses contributed to the chain discourse on the Work, the external reference points did not focus on the nature of the literary text. Only a small part of the literature saw it as a theatrical work, although it was through the latter that the play space of the dramatic poem, reflecting the author's intentions, was revealed. Knowing all this, I wonder whether the comparison with Parsifal, the aspect with the absence of the presence of God, is not one of the thousand interpretations.

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<sup>6</sup> Hevesi 1923a: 9.

<sup>7</sup> Gellért 1954, published by Koltai 1990: 200.

<sup>8</sup> Palágyi 1900.

	<i>The Tragedy</i>	<i>Parsifal</i>
Mythical foreplay	Scene 1.: in Heaven – Conflict between Lucifer and the Lord	foreplay music
Falling into sin	Scene 2-3.: Lucifer tempts the human couple, Life at the Edge of Eden	Scene 1.: (earlier: Klingsor self-mutilation, losing the spear, the wound of Amfortas), in the present: the killing of the swann
The struggle of humans for the presence of God	Scene 4-10.: Egypt, Athens, Rome, Constantinople, Prague, Paris,	Scene 1., finale: The Grail ceremony (Die Gralsweihe ohne Mitleid)
Contemporary present: illusions	Scene 11.: London	Scene 2.: The Realm of Klingsor
The World without God	Scene 12-14.: Phalanstery, Space, Ice age	Scene 3., first part: Gurnemanz and Kundry, the arrival of Parsifal
Resolution: The presence of God	Scene 15.: „The salvation of Adam and Eve” (The Lord accepts the couple back into his grace.)	Scene 3. finale: The salvation of the saviour

1. ábra: A structural comparison of *The Tragedy* and *Parsifal*

I have highlighted the finale of the London scene in the title, the double-spiral death dance, because it is the most striking manifestation of the God of the absent. The London scene opens up to two otherworldly points: Heaven (eternal memory) and Death (oblivion). Adam is able to look at human existence through the eyes of a ghost and is revealed to him as the characters are dragged into the abyss by the whirlpool of the *danse macabre* (death dance). The absence of the presence of God has rendered the London scene mean-

ingless, the traditional values of life have been emptied. Only Eve is immune to the pull of death, for she is immortal as a symbol of love [here: emotion], poetry [here: art in general] and youth [here: the birth of new generations]. The image is as biblical as the literary heritage of Romantic philosophy. The prominence of the scene is that, although the Lord himself will similarly declare his presence in the last scene, while it takes place in a mythical scene, the London scene points beyond the earthly existence in the present.

Wagner's opera similarly presents contemporary reality in the finale of the second act. In *Parsifal*, too, the world of illusion (the realm of Klingsor) collapses, and from there the protagonist sets off on a long wander, and it is in his struggles with others that he deepens the virtue of *compassio* (compassion, unity). As in the London scene, so in the post-Klingsor period, the characters are deprived of the presence of God, both real and illusory, and are faced with cosmic loneliness. They experience the presence of God only in the utopian future, in the finale of the third act and in the fifteenth scene. Where they then learn that he was present all along.

### **The Absence of the Redeemer in *Parsifal***

"With you, my Lord, yet without you!"  
(Miklós Boldizsár, 1984)

In his *Parsifal* book, Roger Scruton analyses three phenomena that can be directly related to *The Tragedy*. The three phenomena he examines are related: the splitting of God (the Creator is absent, the Saviour is temporarily present); the Grail metonymy (the symbolic and real identity of the Grail King, the community and the sacrament); and finally, the key-ringing of *kairos* time (the clash between the earthly and the heavenly view of time). Anticipating the analysis, Scruton's reading of *Parsifal* is as follows: a sin-suffering community is renewed by a hero who, through his compassion, appropriates ancient traditions. For the sin of the king, Amfortas, has plunged the community from *kairos*, the eternal present (i.e. living memory), into *chronos*, the ephemeral time (i.e. oblivion). *Parsifal*, the formerly impassive protagonist,

was able to renew the community by showing compassion for the suffering of the penitent king, and thus became „the Grail“. The metonymic relationship between the hero, the Saviour, the Grail and the community that protects the former is thus the key to the opera. It is along this trope that the English thinker explores the field of meaning beneath the Christian vocabulary of opera. The Fall is a prominent narrative in European culture, as is the struggle to restore the original state. Christianity’s response to sin is Redemption, which begins with the Incarnation (Christmas), continues with the Crucifixion (Good Friday), followed by the Resurrection (Easter Sunday), and ends with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost). From then on, Redemption is not a one-time completed past-time event, but a continuous completed present-time action. The key word for Redemption in Christian texts is *caritas*, which has been explained in different ways by different interpreters. Wagner used the concept of compassion (*das Mitleid*), which Scruton interpreted as *compassio*.<sup>9</sup> The basic Scrutonian concept is identical in form and interpretation with the leitmotif of the German Catholic theologian Johann Baptist Metz (1928-2019). The German thinker expounded his theory of compassion in a number of essays, the most definitive version of which he formulated in his book *Memoria passionis* (2006).<sup>10</sup> Like Scruton, Metz sees *compassio* (compassion, commiseration and suffering together) as the basic principle of lived faith (for Wagner, the Grail).<sup>11</sup> Metz emphasizes that Christ turns to our sufferings, that the reason for Salvation is His compassion, His sympathy with our sufferings. „In looking at man, Jesus saw first of all not his sin but the suffering of the other.”<sup>12</sup> Forgetting about the suffering of Christ (and the resurrection), if we reduce the Redemption to a triumphal story, as Wagner does in the plot of *Parsifal*, we achieve salvation in the physical world.

In the opera’s Montsalvat, every day is a day of joy reinterpreted in Wagnerian terms, from Good Friday to Good Friday. According to the text, the composer sees the Crucifixion as the Redemption, repeated over and over again by the enlightening Grail. In Scruton’s reading, Montsalvat, the Grail

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<sup>9</sup> Scruton 2021: 101.

<sup>10</sup> Metz 2006; Metz 2008. Lázár Kovács 2006: 422.

<sup>11</sup> Mezei 2009: 18.

<sup>12</sup> Ratzinger – Metz 2006: 403.

castle, invites us to live in the present world in a different way from the past, in sympathy with the community (compassionate concord). Then, through our own efforts and without God's help, we will achieve Redemption.<sup>13</sup> The community of individuals who take on a collective sin restores the order of Creation, so that they are already pouring out the Redemption. The English philosopher was the first to show that while the narrative plot of the opera really only reached the symbolic joy of Good Friday, the music explores the depths of *compassio*.<sup>14</sup>

For a deeper exploration of the planes of salvation, Scruton introduces the distinction between *kairos* and *chronos*.<sup>15</sup> The ancient Greek tradition calls *kairos* the moments of time in which an event of outstanding importance occurs, in which the presence of God is evident and whose movement is circular. In other words, *kairos* is mythical, celestial time, the eternal present. *Chronos* is ordinary time, whose movement is uniform and unidirectional. In *Montsalvat*, the rituals, with their choreography written in immutable rules, transport the participants into timelessness (the *kairos*) (this is what Gurnemanz's expression "time turned into space" refers to). In the Grail castle, because it is the world of the eternal present, nothing changes. When Parsifal returns to *Montsalvat* in the finale, he transcends and from then he becomes invisible to the outside eye. Not only because „One sees well only with the heart. What is truly essential is invisible to the eye“, but because those who live in the *chronos* have their vision obscured by a veil and cannot see the *kairos*. At most, he can perceive that he cannot see something, as Parsifal perceives in the finale of Scene I. (It is with this vision that Adam sees the London the double spiral dance macabre and claims it as his eternal knowledge in the finale.) The illusion of *chronos* deceives everyone. The clever Klingsor, under the influence of this mirage, sinned first against himself and then against the Saviour: he wanted to rule the Grail in the *chronos*, not to receive it in the *kairos*. Amfortas also fell because he left the *kairos* for Kundry in the *chronos* and found his home only in space, not in time which had become space.

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<sup>13</sup> Scruton 2021: 14.

<sup>14</sup> Scruton 2021: 101

<sup>15</sup> Scruton 2021: 13.



In the image of God in Parsifal, Scruton thus presents the paradox that God exists (and „ehje asar ehje”), but is not present in the chronos-time of the work, absent from the events. The Saviour has thus disappeared from the chronos-world, leaving only mystical traces (here: traces that can be revealed by things that are concealed).<sup>16</sup> The image of a distant God stems from the 19th century, primarily Presbyterian tradition, which in turn derives from Immanuel Kant’s critique of the reason for God (*Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781). The Presbyterian approach is summed up in Wagner’s statement: „I do not believe in God, only in the fear of God”.<sup>17</sup> The composer saw individual faith as an ongoing self-sacrifice, through which, however, the believer could experience a sense of release in the community.<sup>18</sup> For community is important in Scruton’s reading of Wagner because holiness is preserved by the tradition of community - by memory. The memory of the sacrament is itself sacred because of its ritual character. Thus the community itself becomes sacred for the duration of the rite. So just as the community preserves the sacrament through the ritual, which is played out in the eternal present through repetition, so the sacrament preserves the communities.<sup>19</sup> Thus, in the opera, it is not God who „delivers” the Redemption to the people, but the community - even if the first Grail Presbyter (here: king) in the social hierarchy performs the act of exaltation.<sup>20</sup> The relationship between Parsifal and the community becomes metonymic in this way. In the third act, the knight takes over the role of Amfortas in the dramaturgy, but Jesus in mythology, and becomes the Saviour, as the text puts it: the Saviour’s Redeemer.<sup>21</sup> He extends the blessing of Parsifal (the salvation) to the community, as he received it from them and from the Grail that he had turned into a symbol.<sup>22</sup>

But sin also corrupts the ideal community. After the fall, the community falls from kairos to chronos, from the vision of the Grail to the desolation of divine absence, from love to compassion. The best example of the latter

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<sup>16</sup> Scruton 2021: 68.

<sup>17</sup> Scruton 2021: 9.

<sup>18</sup> Scruton 2021: 15.

<sup>19</sup> Scruton 2021: 13.

<sup>20</sup> Scruton 2021: 5.

<sup>21</sup> Scruton 2021: 63.

<sup>22</sup> Scruton 2021: 63.

is the protagonist who kills the swan. Wagner emphasises Parsifal's lack of compassion - in a very didactic way: he is compassionate towards the swan he has shot, compassionate towards Amfortas, who is symbolically and actually identical with the swan, and compassionate towards his own mother, Herzeleide (in English: the pain of the heart). Amfortas' sin is more complicated. The unmarried king's love for a woman would be a virtue in itself. As Grail King, however, he should have known (i.e. remembered) that Kundry is not what she seems. Nor is sensual desire a sin in itself, it can be accompanied by noble feelings and commitment (kairos). In the case of Amfortas, it has become a fatal flaw to favour chronos (momentary lust) over kairos (the sacred goal).

The God of opera left the world when Amfortas was wounded, as the Grail (here: the Wagnerian avatar of Jesus) was mortally wounded with the king. Until the new king can fulfil his office, the world exists in the absence of the presence of God.<sup>23</sup> In Wagner's work, moreover, the Saviour is only metaphorically present on the altar, but is a reality in the lives of those who wait in vain.<sup>24</sup> Everyone suffers for his absence, Titurel dies, Amfortas atones for a Christ-like lifetime, and Klingsor is ashamed in joyless bitterness. Kundry carries the burden of his guilt through rebirths. The Grail community also falls apart. But even Parsifal wanders aimlessly, and falls from despair to despair, though he has reclaimed the sacred chalice through his compassion. The English philosopher identifies Wagner's world as a bleak Wasteland.<sup>25</sup>

As Metz and Scruton put it, Amfortas, fighting against Klingsor, forgot the Grail, and his wound deprived the community of sanctity, bringing the corruption of perpetual forgetfulness to Montsalva. Parsifal also suffers from oblivion, unable to answer a single question about his identity in the first act. Kundry's kiss gave him compassion, but he cannot remember the ride back to the Grail Castle. It was only when his memory of the encounter became a real experience that he was able to return home with the spear. The Saviour's absence is ambiguous, as can be seen from Nietzsche's reading of „God is dead!“. The German philosopher, not least as a direct witness to the

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<sup>23</sup>Scruton 2021: 8.

<sup>24</sup>Scruton 2021: 18.

<sup>25</sup>Scruton 2021: 98.

crystallisation of the Parsifal, pointed to the fundamental contemporary challenges of Christianity by rejecting the idea of compassion in opera. *In Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883), written as a bitter parody of *Parsifal*, God dies (is killed by the most abominable man) because of his infinite compassion for man. Scruton disputes Nietzsche's criticism at length, but agrees with him that Wagner makes such a distinction between the Saviour and the Creator that they are now presented as two separate „beings”.<sup>26</sup> Thus, without expressing it, the English philosopher accepts the German thinker's view: for Wagner shows the death of the Saviour, while he does not speak of the existence of the Creator. In this reading, the Saviour (the former Titurel, the young Amfortas and the finale's Parsifal) resembles other selected Wagnerian heroes (e.g. Siegfried), who possess superhuman abilities and perform the mythical task of ‚redeeming' the community by their own efforts.

It must be clarified how we can know about the above mentioned things. It is already clear that what is important is untellable because of the Wagnerian trope of the trope, and also because the essential plot takes place in *kairos*, and we have *chronos*-language at our disposal. However, through the composer, a narrator has been designated in each sphere, and although they contradict each other at the dramaturgical climax, they still convey the event through their equal parts. Kundry shares and conceals the information between the characters in the opera. The plot (or rather: the interpretation of the plot) is revealed in Gurnemanz's performance. The deeper connections than the story can be gained from the combination of music and text in a non-intellectual way.

### **The Absence of the Lord in the Text of *The Tragedy***

”Adam, Adam, thou hast forsaken me.  
And I leave thee; see what thou dost alone.”<sup>27</sup>  
(Madách)

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<sup>26</sup>Scruton 2021: 100.

<sup>27</sup>Madách 2005: II, 182–183.

*The Tragedy of Man* seeks to answer the same question as *Parsifal*, based on selected events in world history, of how the individual and the community can thrive. This was Madách's prosaic answer:

"The basic idea of my whole work is that as soon as man separates from God and begins to act on his own strength, he does so in succession on the greatest and most sacred ideals of humanity. It is true that he fails everywhere, and that his downfall is everywhere a weakness which lies in the innermost essence of human nature, which he cannot cast off (this would be, in my slight opinion, a tragedy), but, though he despairs, he maintains that all the attempts he has made so far have been a waste of strength, yet its progress has always gone forward and forward, humanity has progressed, even if a struggling individual has not realized it, and the human weakness which it cannot overcome by itself is made up for by *the guiding hand of the divine provident*, to which the „strive on, have faith and trust" of the last scene refers."<sup>28</sup>

To sum it up, we could say that *The Tragedy* reverses the classic line of Hungarian Romanticism: „What, in this world, is our task? To struggle, and to nourish the needs of the spirit." Madách's drama confronts its protagonists with the fact that, although they fight for the noblest ideals to the best of their abilities, they reach a state of mind in which they cry out, „There is no loser in Creation but me!" The answer to the question of why it is worth fighting to the best of our ability - and why it is not - is revealed through the work as a whole. Of course, it does not give a single answer that can be turned into a password. In fact, it illustrates the very emptiness of passwords. Thus, the aforementioned reference to Vörösmarty, „The goal is the struggle itself", cannot become a golden rule either, because it too loses its meaning in the ironic sense of the new ice age.

The protagonists, Adam and Eve, although they ate from the tree of omniscience, did not in fact become omniscient. In Scruton's terms, they fell out of the *kairos* into the *chronos*, where they perceived only partial phenomena and missed wholeness instead of the previous functioning system. They therefore asked Lucifer, after their departure from Eden, to show them whether the

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<sup>28</sup> A letter from Imre Madách to János Erdélyi, 13.09.1862., Alsó-Sztrégova, published by Kerényi 2006: 178. Emphasis by me.

fall was worth it. Satan granted their request and they entered into a dream together in which the future was revealed to them. For the viewer, this is the past. The dream scenes take place in ancient Egypt, Athens and Rome, then in medieval Constantinople, modern-day Prague, Paris and London, and finally in the Phalanx State of alternative endings, in outer space and on the equator of a new ice age on Earth. Madách used historical sources but did not aim for historical fidelity. He depicted history as a dream of life and a reflection of the present. To each age, the dreaming Adam brings impetus and new ideas, which, however, are often deprived of their moral content. Adam gradually becomes despondent, and, awakened, sees the history (and future) of mankind as hopeless. Lucifer almost achieves his goal, and succeeds in driving him to suicide, when Eve announces that she is pregnant. Adam suddenly awakens from his despair and surrenders to the Lord.

While in Wagner it is through compassion that we can pass from chronos to kairos, in Madách it is the other way round: it is through compassion that the existence of chronos becomes possible. In the dream scene, however, the course of time is reversed, because there the new day always begins according to the rules of chronos and ends with a kairos experience. However - and Adam's bitter experience is precisely this - the kairos realisation experienced at the close of the previous epoch is, in the next scene, already a dull chronos for the community. In the wake of original sin (the temptation of self-redemption), a human 'weakness' derails the community's sanctification. This weakness is pointed out by Lucifer, who appears in the dream not as a deadly adversary but as an ally. Eve is for the most part a separate person, sometimes faithful, sometimes unfaithful, sometimes single, sometimes dual.

While in *Parsifal*, order is restored to the world, Redemption is restored, as the protagonist and the community in the Grail become one, Adam finds himself outside the community in every case. In ancient Athens, in revolutionary Paris and in the dictatorial Phalanstery State, they want to execute him. He also experiences loneliness when he is considered a deity in Egypt and in the New Ice Age. It is no better when they do not want to hurt him, when they simply do not understand him, as in ancient Rome, medieval Constantinople and modern Prague. In contemporary London, they mock it, banish it, glorify it and then want to capture it. Likewise, he is denied an idyllic

married life, where he fights only for Eve (Constantinople), where, even when they are together, she is unfaithful (Prague), and where a beautiful married life (Athens) cannot make up for the death threat of the mob.

Place, time	Adam's character	Eve's character	Adam's individual goal	Adam's goal for the community	Social idea
Egypt, antiquity	Pharao	slave	egyediség: dicsőség	-	despotizmus
Athens, antiquity	Miltiades	the faithful wife of Miltiades	the servant of the people	freedom	demagogy
Rome, antiquity	Sergiolus	Julia (prostitute)	the lust of love	-	bacchanalia
Constantinople, the middle ages	Tankred	Izora (nun)	the knight's virtue	fraternity	fanaticism
Prague (1.), „1610”	Kepler	Borbála, Kepler's unfaithful wife	science, the system of science	-	superstition
Paris, 1794	Danton	(1) marchioness (2) revolutioner	serving the people	equality	dictatorship
Prague (2.), „1610”	Kepler	Borbála, Kepler's wife	science: educating the common people	-	dangerous liaisons
London, contemporary	Traveller	bourgeois woman (Margit)	the illusion of loveillúziója	freedom	the world of merchants

Phalanstery, future	Traveller	a working mother	knight's virtue vs. science	equality	social en- gineering
Space, fu- ture	Traveller	-	uniqueness	rejection of the state	(cosmic loneli- ness)
Eskimo, future	Traveller	the eski- mo's wife	finding solace	fraternity	fight for survival

Figure 2.: A summary of the dreams about history

Hungarian literary scholarship traditionally believes that Lucifer paints dark shadows on the sky of the dreams about history - the interpretation of certain events in history. János Erdélyi (1814-1868), one of the most knowledgeable early critics of the work, wrote:

”Instead of producing a mystical relation between man and the good and evil spirits, we see rather why the basic idea of *The Tragedy of Man* is embodied in Lucifer, the motives are derived from him, and events are selected and compiled from history which man has carried out at the suggestion of the evil spirit, that is, the diabolical part of human history.”<sup>29</sup>

But the actors themselves do not accuse Satan of falsifying history. However, Adam tells the Lord in the final scene that „My Lord, dread visions have tormented me. I know not what of truth within them lie.”<sup>30</sup> But even so, none of the characters sees the dream of history as a distorted interpretation of Lucifer. They take it to be a faithful interpretation of reality, and the Lord himself does not hint at a single verse of its misinterpretation. (But he reserves the right to change it.) In the case of the historical vision, the human couple does not receive from Lucifer the darkening, but the opposite. In *The Tragedy*:

”Lucifer:

So be it. I will lay a spell on you.

Ye shall look on the future to its end,

Viewed in the flitting phantoms of a dream.

<sup>29</sup> Erdélyi 1862: 3.

<sup>30</sup> Madách 2005: XV: 110–111.

But when ye see how foolish the intent,  
 How grievous is the conflict to be fought,  
 Lest ye be overwhelmed in grey despair,  
 And leave the battle, smitten to the heart,  
 I give to you one little shining ray,  
 To comfort you, that all things which ye saw  
 Were but illusion. Lo, this ray is hope. —<sup>31</sup>

God, who previously - apparently - only came into contact with the human couple from the lofty loftiness, leans closer to man in the finale. He turns to them with a sincerity and love previously unimaginable to them. He welcomes them (back) into his grace. The Lord was not frightened by dreams, but He was concerned for the human couple - even if God does it differently than we do. As Adam suffered with the characters of each age, so the Lord suffered with the fears of the human couple. The omnipotent Eternal Father (Wagner: Creator) became the Son (Wagner: Redeemer) who bids farewell to the apostles, giving comfort, hope and love. He assures the human couple of his constant presence. He also reveals how they can perceive his presence. He promises a permanent celestial saga (the remembrance of the Saviour), which, however, may be forgotten by the strife, death dance and witch-hunt of each age. It will therefore be available in other ways: in the birth of new generations, in art, and in love. All of these are linked by the Lord to Eve, through whom all this can be achieved.

”The Lord  
 Hark to that voice; but if, amid the stir  
 Of life the voice of heaven be not heard,  
 Yet hath this woman weak a purer soul,  
 And further from the taint of selfishness.  
 Lo, she shall hear the voice, and in her heart  
 It shall to melody and song be turned.”<sup>32</sup>

It is therefore primarily through the „heart” and the unceasing repetition of memory that people can enter into the eternal presence of God. All this, how-

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<sup>31</sup> Madách 2005, III, 546–555. Emphasis by me.

<sup>32</sup> Madách 2005., XV, 161–167.



ever, is not unknown to Adam, for he had already heard the same words on the same subject.

”Eve

Why dost thou gape, dread gulf, before my feet?

Think not my heart doth fail me at thy night.

Only the dust doth fall, clay turn to clay,

But I pass through in passage glorious.

The soul *of love, of poesy, of youth,*

Do point me on the road to heaven’s bliss.

Upon this earth the smile within my eyes

Brings joy alone if, as the sunlight glow,

It cast upon each face its radiance.”<sup>33</sup>

Eve in this scene has assumed the attributes of the Virgin Mary, *Maris Stella*. The key, then, to the perception of God’s presence is love, poetry [art] and eternal youth [the cycle of generations]. The Lord has thus revealed himself on several occasions, at several times. The difficulty of finding him in spite of this is the common experience of mankind. For Adam has also witnessed how love has given him emptiness (Rome, Prague, Eskimo scene), how art has lost its divine character and become a business (London) or even an index (Phalanstery), but also how the charm of youth has been hidden by folly (Prague, London). So, although God shows the way to himself, it is not so clear. Madách remained honest with his heroes, so that in the finale Eve was happy and Adam remained doubtful. The drama closes with these words from the Lord, leaving Adam’s questions unanswered: ”O Man, strive on, strive on, have faith; and trust!”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Madách 2005., XI, 584–591. Emphasis by me.

<sup>34</sup> Madách 2005., XV, 202.

## The Absence of the Lord in the Stage Adaptations of *The Tragedy*

”Although he is not really there, he is there!”<sup>35</sup>

(Endre Gellért)

The fact that the absence of God’s presence (to borrow Scruton’s key motif) became the key motif of *The Tragedy* - contrary to some elements of the text - is due to the unquestioned performance habit of Hungarian theatre history. The most significant influence on the reception of the image of God in Madách’s work was exerted by the aforementioned 1883 premiere of Ede Paulay, in which the Lord did not appear on stage, contrary to the text’s allusions. In the text of *The Tragedy* we read: ”The four Archangels are standing beside the throne of great splendour.”<sup>36</sup> In Paulay’s staging, on the other hand, the Lord did not appear in person, but was symbolized by an eye in a triangle surrounded by a halo on the upper curtain of the stage.<sup>37</sup> His voice was always from behind the scenes, not in an illusionary way.<sup>38</sup> The difference is obvious, but apart from a few cases, Paulay’s interpretation still prevails.

The theatrical portrayal of God was a major challenge, of course, in early modern culture, as the journalist of the *Budapesti Hírlap* has discussed at length:

”It was very good taste that told the director that the role of the Lord should be reduced to a minimum. Another measure he took was to make God invisible. There is much rationale in this too, although the main distinguishing feature of heaven is precisely that God is visible there. But to put the living God on the stage *may be considered profane* on the one hand, but on the other hand, what must and can be put around a human figure to give the illusion of God? On the other hand, the fact that there is no *invisible* actor on the stage, let alone one who

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<sup>35</sup> Gellért 1954: 3.

<sup>36</sup> Madách 2005: instructions for the director, for lines I.1

<sup>37</sup> Németh 1933: 15.

<sup>38</sup> Beöthy 1883: [1]

speaks and acts. If we can hear the Lord's voice there, why not see his face?"<sup>39</sup>

The journalist also gives ideas on how to ensure a real presence:

"What should the one we never saw look like? God, let it be like his voice: let it be human. If we see God in glory, in light, in heavenly rest, and if this God, with his human image, speaks with a human voice, then it becomes natural and the thing is done without the corruption of our illusion."<sup>40</sup>

Paulay thus weakens the dramaturgical role of the Lord, while Lucifer's is greatly enhanced. The four archangels of equal rank are divided into two groups. Gabriel, Raphael and Michael were played by young actresses and declaimed recitativo in an unnaturally high pitch. Lucifer, on the other hand, was played for a lifetime by László Gyenes (1857-1924), the famous male schemer of the time. The dramaturgical balance of power in the clash was thus spectacularly improved in favour of the Tempter. This was compounded by Paulay's omission of the double-spiral London death dance. The director has wittingly or unwittingly made the post-demolition state of the Klinger Empire the contemporary reality, the basic plane of interpretation. The Wasteland in which we can only listen to the tender words of the Lord with doubt, and sympathise with the human couple.

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<sup>39</sup> Rákosi 1883: 1. Emphasis by me.

<sup>40</sup> Rákosi 1883.

<b>Sándor Hevesi</b>	<b>Antal Németh</b>	<b>Tamás Major</b>	<b>László Vámos</b>	<b>Attila Vidnyánszky</b>
<b>1908</b> , Bp. Népszínház-Vígopera	<b>1930</b> , Hungarian Radio (1931, 1932)	<b>1955</b> , Bp., National Theatre, Endre Gellért, Endre Marton	<b>1965</b> , Szeged, Open Air Theatre (1966, 1969)	<b>1998</b> , Gyula Illyés National Theatre, Berehove
<b>1923</b> , Bp. National Theatre,	<b>1937</b> , Hamburg, Staatliches Schauspielhaus	<b>1957</b> , Bp., Open Air Theatre, Margaret Island	<b>1970</b> , Bp. Hung. State Opera (Ránki-opera)	<b>1998</b> , Veszprém, Hung. National Theatre of Cluj-Napoca
<b>1926</b> , Bp. National Theatre,	<b>1937</b> , Bp. National Theatre,	<b>1960</b> , Szeged, Open Air Theatre	<b>1983</b> , Szeged Open Air Theatre	<b>2011</b> , Szeged, Open Air Festival
	<b>1939</b> , Bp. National Theatre, chamber	<b>1960</b> , Bp. National Theatre	<b>1983</b> , Bp. National Theatre	<b>2012</b> , Debrecen Csokonai Theatre
	<b>1940</b> , Frankfurt, Städtische Bühnen Schauspielhaus	<b>1964</b> , Bp. National Theatre		<b>2018</b> , Bp. National Theatre
	<b>1943</b> , Bern Stadttheater	<b>1972</b> , Bp. National Theatre		<b>2023</b> , Bp. National Theatre

Figure 3.: The best known stage directors of *The Tragedy* (1908–2023)

Sándor Hevesi's second production (1923) brought a partial change in the portrayal of the Lord, stating that „there is a battle between the Lord and Lucifer, not a pleasant chat.”<sup>41</sup> He places the struggle at the centre of his staging, and, contrary to Paulay's interpretation, he sharpens the struggle by making the presence of God a process. True, it is through ideas that the constancy of God is assured. „The struggle is already going on on earth, where Adam is caught between two forces: the ideal implanted in his soul (God) and the corrosive and ardent doubt (the devil).”<sup>42</sup> Just as Parsifal struggled with love and vocation after Kundry's kiss, so did Adam. Again quoting Hevesi:

”As Adam feels and understands his true calling through the woman, and then leaves her to live only for his calling, and returns to her again, forgetting his calling, as he becomes disillusioned with his calling, and then becomes enthusiastic about it again: this is the great, never-ending drama that must be brought to life through the visionary images of the stage.”<sup>43</sup>

In his third production (1926) Hevesi interpreted the drama as a mystery:

”All medieval mysteries began with a heavenly prologue, just like *The Tragedy of Man*, and the prologue there, as in Madách, was a battle between God and Satan. This dramatic play, let us say: this divine play, could only be realised and perceived by the spectators if the presence of heaven, that is to say of God, remained evident throughout the Passion, as did that of Satan.”<sup>44</sup>

By 1926, he was not only bringing the image of God to the stage in an ideological sense, but also in theatrical reality. From the beginning of the drama, he made visible the heavens at the top of the three-storey stage, which *symbolised* God. According to the director's statement, the symbolic presence of God and the absence of his de facto presence were visible at the same time.

”As soon as the stage framework makes it possible for heaven - where the Lord is seated - to be in view of the spectator at all times, and as

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<sup>41</sup> Hevesi 1923: 9.

<sup>42</sup> Hevesi 1923: 9.

<sup>43</sup> Hevesi 1923: 9.

<sup>44</sup> Hevesi 1926a: 15.

soon as it becomes possible for the arbour in which Adam and Eve dream their dream of world history to remain permanently on the stage, so that *the eye of the Lord is constantly fixed on the events* and, in turn, behind Adam and Eve acting in history, we can constantly feel Adam and Eve dreaming, then the historical sequence of images on the stage ceases and the composed poem takes its place.<sup>45</sup>

However, Hevesi also has a misunderstanding: from the very beginning, Lucifer is surrounded by a red light, so he too has predetermined the course of history.<sup>46</sup>

In his 1934 production, literary historian Géza Voinovich (1877-1952) took the mystery interpretation as his starting point, but further strengthened the sacral character. His co-director, Árpád Horváth (1899-1944), who disagreed with Voinovich's theoretical and technical details, wrote compulsively about the idea. „*The Tragedy of Man* is a great mass composed in words. The play begins with a myth and ends with a myth. God is the solution of the work. Act XV is like an Alleluia.”<sup>47</sup> He later came in for strong criticism, for which he retired at the age of 35. Even Antal Németh (1903-1968), who was well acquainted with mystery painting, did not use a similar sacral solution, but he still showed transcendence through well-known symbols. Thus, in his 1937 staging, the Lord, Lucifer, the angels, Apostle Peter and the priests of Constantinople all represented their own Christian aspects. In this interpretation, however, *The Tragedy* departed from the earlier horizon, with subtle indications. The voice of the Lord was originally to have been sung by an ensemble of three voices, but ended up as a monophonic chant with orchestral accompaniment (organ and string instruments parts).<sup>48</sup> This time, the Lord's word was not from above, nor from the sides, nor from below, but from the height of the auditorium. He himself was not visible to the spectators, only a bright ball of light that shone throughout his speech. His dialogue with Lucifer, on the other hand, had the air of an operatic duet. The Fall and the resurrection,

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<sup>45</sup> Hevesi 1926b: 12.

<sup>46</sup> Kárpáti 1926: 796.

<sup>47</sup> Horváth 1982: 167.

<sup>48</sup> Koltai 1990: 92.

and the finale, the return to the grace of God, were similarly staged along a strong musical accompaniment.

Németh made the biblical settings of *The Tragedy* operatic in character, but analysed the stories behind them. The music was an accompanying element in the historical scenes, at most giving them a melodramatic character. Beyond the plot, a system of musical motifs (e.g. love motif, fight motif, Lucifer motif) linked the two different sets of scenes. His operatic vision clearly opened up the interpretation of *The Tragedy* towards *Parsifal*, and his influence is evident in the large-scale oratorio *Cantus vitae* (1941) by Ernő Dohnányi (1877-1960). Németh makes the London Scene the centrepiece of his staging, from which he detaches the *danse macabre* as a separate piece.<sup>49</sup> Eve, who conquers Death in it, is not a reflection of the Creator or the Redeemer because of the image of God made operatic (weakened, made a cultural memory). Its meaning is captured in Ady's line, „Life is alive and wants to be alive”. Németh summed up the interpretations of his predecessors in the field of literary theory (e.g. Hevesi) and of his contemporaries (e.g. Voinovich, whom he personally disliked), as well as in the field of religious aesthetics (e.g. Ravasz), and opened up a new era in his own right.

Finally, Tamás Major (1910-1986) shifted the focus from the duel between God and Lucifer to the human struggle. The director, who himself had played Lucifer in a number of productions, understandably chose to play out the dramatic confrontation between Adam and the devil. In his productions, he made Satan the imaginary mouthpiece of the writer, the omniscient protagonist. The Lord still did not appear, but his robe was clearly visible on the stage. In 1955, the National Theatre was given permission to revive *The Tragedy* for the first time since its banning in 1948, but with the collaboration of three directors, Endre Marton (1917-1979), Endre Gellért and Tamás Major. The latter was appointed for his political credentials. Gellért wrote about their interpretation:

”We do not want to mystify heaven. It's a very real heaven, I would say it has a hierarchical order, with archangels, angels and the Lord on the throne. There is order in this heaven, and in this order there is

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<sup>49</sup> Koltai 1990: 102.

confusion with the intervention of Lucifer. The scene here is as realistic, almost naively, childishly realistic, as in Renaissance paintings. The Lord is not present in the scene, but we see his robe. Although not actually there, he is still there.”<sup>50</sup>

These words by Gellért are also revealing:

”Madách’s idea is that the battle between God and Lucifer is for man. Throughout the dream images, *the very human Lucifer* strives to achieve his goal in a constant wrestling match with Adam, to prove the meaninglessness and futility of life. Not only Adam and Eve, but also Lucifer changes in these scenes.”<sup>51</sup>

It is typical that when the party-state system is no longer afraid of *The Tragedy*, they bring God into the scene to make fun of him. Major solved the problem in his 1960 independent production.

”The naïve old wise old man in the popular imagination, sitting on his throne in the mask of Michelangelo’s Moses, not the mystical Lord, who has thus become a more active figure. The Lord in the new setting is not a wrathful Supreme Being, not a tyrannical Celestial Overlord, he is pure symbol, the moving substance itself, the embodiment of the World in Madách’s mythical anthropomorphism.”<sup>52</sup>

God, in the Marxist reading, is thus a symbol, a version of matter (at the same time, he bears a ghostly resemblance to a pious bastard, while the opera about him was not allowed to be performed by the party-state until 1983).

László Vámos (1928-1996) took a step towards the interpretation of mystery with his festive 1983 production, in which the Lord is a dignified old man. With the voice of Imre Sinkovits (1928-2001), Hungarian theatre culture reached one of its high points, his interpretation canonised for a generation. Since then, the Lord has sounded in his voice in the memories of generations of theatre-goers today. But he could not be seen.<sup>53</sup> In his person, he united the stage tradition of *The Tragedy*, having played Adam (Major, 1964, National

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<sup>50</sup> Gellért 1954., handwritten, published by Koltai 1990: 192.

<sup>51</sup> Gellért 1954: 3. Emphasis by me.

<sup>52</sup> Molnár Gál 1971, published by Koltai 1990: 218. Emphasis by me.

<sup>53</sup> He played Adam in 1964 at the National Theatre and Lucifer in 1969 at the Szeged Open Air Festival. In 1994, he played the elderly Adam at the National Theatre, while the 1997 production at the Castle Theatre used his voice again.



Theatre) and Lucifer (Vámos, 1969, Szeged), as well as several smaller characters (The Voice of the Spirit of the Earth, Saint-Just, The Convict - Major, 1955, National). Since Sinkovits was loved throughout the country for his film and theatre roles, the Lord was interpreted as good, just and wise.

The contemporary Spanish director Richard Salvat, on the other hand, renewed the interpretation of the mystery with his visuals in the 1994 production at the National Theatre. Ballet dancer Viktor Fülöp (1929-1997) played the role of Lord and watched the whole performance from the top of the stage. He was present, but only in the finale. The director also emphasised the Lord's 'ehje asar ehje' eternity by adhering to Madách's comments on the age of the characters, with three actors per performance playing Adam and Eve. Lucifer and the Lord remained constant. So it was only in very exceptional performances that one could see the Lord himself, but in the performance tradition of the past one hundred and forty years, that was the rare exception.

### **Summary: The danse macabre with the double spiral in London**

„Dies irae, dies illa” - chants the Gregorian sequence of the death dances. In the conclusion of the London scene, however, Madách evokes not the Last Judgement, but medieval morality, the Anyone. Death comes for all, the good and the bad, the young and the old, the workers and the poets. In medieval play, this metaphor was expressed in the death dance. It was the dance of all. The puppeteer, the skater, the little girl, the gypsy woman, the factory worker, the worker, the apprentice, the soldier, the lecher, the convict and the wimp. Madách described it this way: ”The whole fair turns into a group, digging a gaping grave in the open scene, dancing around it, and then one after the other they all jump into it.”<sup>54</sup> Eve, however, steps over the grave and says the lines quoted earlier. The graces that flow from Eve: beauty, love, new life and art, however, point further to *kairos* and *compassio*. Thus, through remembrance before certain death, it is possible for the individual, if not to become the Grass, then through the acquisition of compassion, to live the Eternal Presence in the chronos. And to enjoy the Redemption. The dance of death in

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<sup>54</sup> Madách 2005: XI, (instructions for the director at line 550)

London, as I mentioned earlier, is a reading of the present (the present of the current readings of *The Tragedy*), and also the point in *The Tragedy* where we can see the Lord at work. At his beckoning, our bodies long for earth, and our weary souls follow Eve into heaven. But with God's guidance we can see it in our earthly life. Whether all this is enough is another matter. We have seen that for Adam it was not enough.

Paulay omitted Eve's ascension to heaven and the dance of death from the performance, for both theoretical and practical reasons. The first generation of directors who succeeded him attempted to include it, but the criticism was harsh. Hevesi undertook to stage it, but in none of his productions did he find its definitive form. Antal Németh, however, managed to turn it into an independent production of international standard. To the music of Ferenc Farkas (1905-2000), Aurél Milloss (1906-1988) created a spectacular choreography. The choreographer, who personifies death, walks through the characters in an expressionistic dance sequence. He performs all the actions so characteristic of his life, staring mechanically ahead of him. He kills them one by one with the dance of death. But the finale introduces a new character:

"The stage turns, and Death does a wild victory dance among the frozen bodies. When it reaches the second circular slice again, a faint whiteness flickers where the nyegle's platform once stood. Death rushes at him. But the whiteness grows until finally the glowing figure of Eve, the eternal woman, appears. At Eve's words, the music clears to heavenly sounds. The light now shines dazzlingly on Eve's figure, which slowly rises upwards. Death lies defeated on the ground."<sup>55</sup>

So the Lord "is not really there, he is there!"<sup>56</sup> Madách's communities did not actually become the Grail, but they did become the Grail in the presence of God experienced in the ways we know - figuratively. And the key to this transformation is love, art and the youth that comes from them.

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<sup>55</sup> Koltai 1990: 103.

<sup>56</sup> Gellért 1954: 3.

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## Reviews in English

1.

The Anthropology of Dance Culture

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GÁBOR BICZÓ

The richness of dance in form, its situational variability, allows researchers to attempt to interpret the universal cultural phenomenon from different theoretical perspectives of anthropology. The aim of this paper is to offer a brief insight into some of the basic issues in the anthropological interpretation of dance culture. In the first section of the text, the disciplinary framework for the interpretation of the subject is referred to through highlighting four major theoretical points: 1) Dance culture as a research topic in the early stages of the history of cultural anthropology; 2) The phenomenological interpretation of dance; 3) The anthropological significance of the hermeneutics of dance. 4) The multifunctional nature of dance, dance as a total and complex cultural phenomenon. In the second part of the paper, the context of the cultural studies of dance by three prominent researchers - Boas, Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard - will be examined. The paper argues that dance culture, or any of its ad hoc manifestations, i.e. dance, cannot be understood without an analysis of the socio-cultural conditions that make it possible. Thus, clarifying the context is both an inalienable element and a prerequisite for interpreting dance phenomena.

Keywords: dance anthropology, science history, phenomenological interpretation of dance, hermeneutics of dance, Boas, Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard

2. Use of space, movement, art – and dance (on the relationship between the anthropology of art and the anthropology of dance)

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KOPPÁNY LÁSZLÓ CSÁJI

Alongside the broadening of the scientific horizon of anthropology, we can also observe a counter-process. With the explosion in the scope and literature of anthropology in the second half of the 20th century, anthropology also gave rise to a series of sub-disciplines. The anthropology of art and, separately, the anthropology of dance were born in the 1960s and 1970s as part of this thematic specialisation. In this paper I will examine how the concept of art anthropology and the relationship between dance anthropology and art anthropology have changed over the last half century, and what changes I envisage for the future. In this paper, I will use a case study to show how dance anthropology is intertwined with other anthropological perspectives. At the same time, the new horizons of the anthropology of art that unfolded in the 2010s offer new opportunities for further reflection on the achievements of dance anthropology and for putting the experience and knowledge acquired into a new dimension. In this paper, I will try to explore aspects of dance anthropology (or dance culture anthropology in other approaches) that could allow it to be more organically integrated into the anthropology of art, which is dynamically expanding its theoretical perspective.

Keywords: dance anthropology, anthropology of art, visuality, Balinese, intermedial art, digital culture, ANTART, contemporary art theory

### 3. Fragments for the Social History of Early Modern Dance Culture

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MÁTÉ KAVECSÁNSZKI

In my study, I will present international examples of the social history method of dance history research, as well as a case study of my own. Historians are not typically interested in the historicity of dance itself (unless they are dance historians specifically investigating the characteristics, history and change of formal and structural issues), but rather in the cultural-historical phenomenon through which they illuminate it - as is typical of holistic dance anthropology, which goes back to the limits of the living past. The cultural context of dance and its relationship to it is thus the subject of research. It is typical that research at the interface of new cultural and social history and dance studies emphasises both the dance-historical and the social-historical aspects of contemporary dance culture, and I will cite several international examples of this in my paper. The case study concerns early modern church discipline: since the 1960s, social and mental history has increasingly turned to the impact of the Protestant and Catholic Reformation on early modern societies. Knowledge about the reform of popular culture has been growing, and even data specifically related to the history of dance have been added. In my study, I will illustrate how it is possible to interpret sources on dance culture in social history by looking at a few case studies.

Keywords: new history of society, early modern Protestantism, social discipline, prohibition of dance, moral theology, microhistory, history of dance



#### 4. The experiments and theories of dance research in the 1940s – Presentation of the dance atlas

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NÓRA ÁBRAHÁM

Very little information is available about the dance research that started in the 1940s. The history of research on Hungarian dance folklore in this period barely discusses the works of István Molnár, Emma Lugossy and Sándor Gönyey. However, as my research progressed, in the spring of 2023, I found the documents of the dance registry in the Ethnological Repository of the Museum of Ethnography. This provides a very accurate picture of the living dance culture of 1940s Hungary, its ethnic characteristics and the methodology of dance research that was then just starting. My present thesis aims to describe this. In this sense, my study attempts a contextualized interpretation of the results, theoretical basis and practice of dance research that started in the 1940s. My hypothesis is that academic research into dance folklore played a role in the creation of a theatrical tradition among urban youth in the 1940s. I present case studies of the Bodrogköz collection and research on the dance tradition of the Székely population in Bukovina. What was the purpose of creating the dance registry? What theoretical basis was it based on? What impact did it have on the evolving style of stage folk dance?

Keywords: dance registry, folklore, Institute of Ethnology, dance folklore, dance research, cultural morphology, Márta Belényesi, Edit Kaposi, Olga Szentpál

The closest I have come to musical asymmetry is in Macedonian folklore, one of my main research areas, which has drawn my attention to some aspects of ethnomusicological study of the issue. In this paper, I summarize the main nodes of research and attempts to define musical asymmetry, and also propose new approaches to the interpretation of the phenomenon: 1) Aksak should be interpreted in the context of chain and circle dance culture; 2) Simultaneity and choreological asymmetry should be interpreted together with aksak as attributes of Balkan chain and circle dance culture. Together, I propose to refer to these as Aksak phenomena. 3) The chain and circle dance culture is a cultural phenomenon quite different from the later couple dances. 4) The Aksak phenomena should be understood together in the context of the choreia phenomenon. On this basis, I propose a new multidisciplinary interpretative framework.

Keywords: musical asymmetry, Aksak phenomena, chain and circle dance culture, oro, „Bulgarian rhythm”, choreia

The precise definition of the Transylvanian Mezőség as a region with a distinct folk culture and a coherent internal structure is still a matter of debate among Hungarian ethnographers. Some consider some small districts to belong to the Mezőség, others not. On the basis of my research, I distinguish a central group of villages in the Mezőség from the rest of the area, as do some Hungarian ethnochoreologists and ethnomusicologists. Within the central region of the Mezőség, a further, smaller group of villages can be distinguished on the basis of their dance and music culture. The regular weekend dance events in these villages, organised until the 1960s by local young people, were performed by Roma musicians from the Hungarian Palatka. In my writing, I refer to this area as the Palatka dance community.

Keywords: Mezőség, dance dialects, linguistics, folklore research, traditions and modernization, displacement of cultural elements

7. Parallel dissimultaneity in dance culture – The organic transformation of the dance repertoire of a rural Moldavian community

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VIVIEN BONDEA

This study deals with the changes in the local dance heritage of the Moldavian village of Magyarfalu (Romania) from the 1940s to the end of the 2010s. The primary hypothesis of the holistic approach to dance anthropology research that has been carried out in the settlement since 2015 is that the dance culture of a community undergoes a continuous transformation, and that this transformation is related to macro- and micro-historical processes or events affecting the community under study. In response to influences from the 'outside', communities must necessarily have an 'internal' response, an adaptive practice, in order to keep the culture and society functioning. In the context of the study of dance culture, we can therefore assume that the changes in the form, style and content of dances, and the transformation of the dance life that provides the framework for the acquisition and use of dance, are the result of individual and community practices of adaptation. In the case of Magyarfalu, adaptation may be the result of interrelated ecological, political, economic and socio-cultural processes or events, such as environmental crises, regime change, labour migration or modernisation. Besides describing the changes in the dance repertoire, the study seeks to answer the question of what macro- and micro-historical processes or events are behind the transformation of the dance repertoire in the Hungarian village and the community's adaptability in the light of the transformation of the local dance repertoire.

Keywords: Magyarfalu (Arini), dance anthropology, community practices of adaptation, transformation of dance repertoire, modernisation

8. Transgenerational processes of traditional gypsy dance:  
the example of Nyírvasvári

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HENRIETT SZABÓ

The present study deals with the traditional heritage of a local Oláh Roma community located in a peripheral region of Northeastern Hungary, especially with the preservation and transmission of folklore elements through the example of the habits of the settlement. Through the case study I will show how and why the cultural transformation of different ethnic sub-communities - with special emphasis on the relationship between Hungarians and Roma people - is achieved in a multi-ethnic settlement during long-term cohabitation. Among the traditional elements found in Nyírvasvári, a special theme, the question of the transgenerational process of traditionalization of Roma dance, will be interpreted. Our approach focuses on the question of what social circumstances result in the survival of Roma dance and how it is an integral part of local Roma culture in a context where dance education and dance events are not institutionalized at the local level. Research in Nyírvasvári demonstrates that the heritage of a local community, in this case the dance culture, can provide an appropriate basis for a more accurate understanding of the community functions of tradition.

Keywords: segregative cohabitation, acculturation, adaptation, transgenerational process of preserving traditions, Roma botoló dance, Master of Folk Art

9. The Kálla Feast – Reflections on the partial results of a dance anthropological micro-research

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MELINDA MARINKA

The preserving of heritage elements presupposes the activity of the community that conserves them, that generates or requires the preservation. When examining the community's context, it may be interesting to know who is involved in the preservation of which elements, and what function or role do these people and elements play? The wedding is one of the contexts that represent examples of many social, communal and individual processes, referring to the functioning of the local community, and not excluding other spatial and temporal dimensions beyond the locality. It is perhaps no wonder, then, that the theme has provided the basis for countless research and artistic approaches of the subject, or has provided ideas for the heritage-building activities of a local community. An example of this is the Kállai wedding dance as a local heritage element, which I will discuss in details, and through which further questions of the process of staging and community building may be brought to the fore.

Keywords: heritage elements, Kállai wedding dance, Kállai double dance, stage arrangement, local memory, construction of traditions, community formation

The case study deals with the question of how and under what conditions dance, as a dominant element of cultural heritage in the community processes of a mixed-ethnic settlement, influences the life of the local community and the development of inter-ethnic relations. The site of the analysis is Nagyecsed, where in 2019 an anthropological documentary was produced, the content of which and the related research form the basis of this paper. In addition to the visual representation of the role of dance in the film, the incorporation of qualitative information from interviews recorded during anthropological fieldwork contributed to the formulation of the idea that dance, as a tool of mediation, functions as a kind of „common language” and as a factor influencing the coexistence of local communities. It can be said that dance culture is an essential factor in the socio-cultural reality of Nagyecsed. The present case study is a good example of why it can be an important task to clarify the contexts that shed light on the role of local traditions in the life of - often peripheral - communities.

Keywords: Nagyecsed, local communities, ethnospecific elements of tradition, Oláh Romani community, Romungro Roma community, tradition preserving in local communities, Roma dances of Nagyecsed

11. On embodiment of local dance tradition as cultural value. The Nagyecséd example

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FELFÖLDI, LÁSZLÓ

The author gives a short description of a recently developed practice of the construction and safeguarding of the local cultural heritage in the field of dance and music tradition. The practice was initiated by the local cultural managers in Nagyecséd settlement in North-Eastern Hungary during the last decade. Its speciality lies in the application of a kind of „traditional model” attuned with the interests of the different generations of the today’s local community. This multi-faceted event caught the author’s attention from the very beginning. As chair of the evaluating board, he was in a favorable position when it came to data collection, but the interpretation of the sources (interviews, personal conversations, video recordings, written documents) required greater caution from him because of his role in the event. It is an ongoing research project, which aims at the examination of the way and practice of embodiment of the local dance and music tradition in a multi-generational, multi-ethnic socio-cultural context in Nagyecséd settlement. Research, which has been hampered by the pandemic, does not yet allow far-reaching conclusions to be drawn. As a first announcement, author undertakes to give a systematic presentation of the event, highlighting the specialities used in the embodiment of dance and musical knowledge.

Keywords: embodiment, personification, dance knowledge, local heritage, Hungary



12. An anthropological approach to Catholic ritual dances: The case of the Obando fertility dance, Subli and Kuraldal

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JOSE ANTONIO LORENZO L. TAMAYO

This study focuses on three Catholic ritual dances on the island of Luzon in the Philippines: *Sayaw ng Panalangin*, a fertility dance in Obando, Bulacan, the devotion to the Holy Cross through the *subli* in Batangas, and the *kuraldal* in Sasmuan, Pampanga, which centers on the devotion to St. Lucy. Using the etic approach, it aims to provide an anthropological framework in which Catholic ritual dances can be analyzed. Relying on the narratives provided by four selected texts, a framework was derived that explains how these ritual dances underwent transculturation and transformative continuity. It was found that transformations resulting from the two notions are still sustained in the ritual dances at present time with the images of saints and *panata* (vow) of devotees at its core. Liminality, *communitas*, and the syntagmatic relationship of the elements in each dance ritual existed in the context of the three ritual dances.

Keywords: *Sayaw ng Panalangin*, Obando fertility dance, *subli*, *kuraldal*, ritual dances, Philippine folk dances, transculturation, transformative continuity

13. *Turumba sa Birhen: Exploring the devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows through street dancing in Pakil, Laguna, the Philippines*

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JOSE ANTONIO LORENZO L. TAMAYO

The dance culture of Filipinos is diverse. This diversity can also be observed in the ritual dances present in the traditions of the Catholic Church in the Philippines. One of the most popular ritual dances is the *Turumba*, which is performed in the *lupi* processions in honor of *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Turumba* (Our Lady of Sorrows of Turumba) in Pakil, Laguna. Current discourses on the said ritual dance are heavily anchored on historical documentation, folk dance traditions, popular religiosity, and musicality. In contrast, the incumbent study focuses on the ethnographic and anthropological understanding of the *Turumba*. The intention is to explore the practice based on the perspective and experience of the participants. Addressing the gaps posed by extant literature, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected devotees, who have been attending the *lupi* processions annually. Findings reveal concepts on *liminality*, *communitas*, the dancing body, and the symbolic nature of the dance.

Keywords: *Turumba*, ritual dance, Philippine folk dance, popular religiosity, Pakil, Laguna, folk Catholicism

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

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FELFÖLDI, LÁSZLÓ

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

15. The Hungarian folk dance community and revival folk dance

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ANNA SZÉKELY

The Hungarian folk dance community can be defined as a specific social group based on its organisation, functioning, ideology and dance culture. In my study, I will describe the characteristics of the contemporary folk dance group culture and the characteristics of revival folk dance. First, I briefly address the issue of defining community, applying theoretical approaches from subcultural studies. The focus of ethnographic and anthropological research since the 2010s has been on the rural and metropolitan folk dance community, amateur folk dance ensembles, revival dancers and the functioning of the urban dance hall. In the second part of my paper, I will present the characteristics of this group not only on the basis of the available literature, but also on the basis of my own research and observations in person and online. Finally, I describe the general characteristics of revival folk dance and dance houses.

Keywords: community of folk dancers, folk pub, revival folk dance, neo-tribe, subculture, folk dance movement

The main aim of institutional dance teaching in public education in Hungary is to educate people in the arts. According to experts, the system is unique in almost all of Europe. Creative pedagogy, agile methods (which mainly reflects the approach), and the development of thinking are all reflected in the dance literacy content in the dimensions of public education. In my writing I touch upon the heterogeneous system of pre-primary, primary and secondary art schools, as it provides the basis for dance literacy. After analysing the dance education at each level of education, I will touch upon the structural challenges of a career in the arts and a career as a dance teacher. I also address a number of issues related to the future institutionalisation of folk dance education.

Keywords: dance education in institutions, system of heritage transmission, framework curriculum, National Curriculum, career of dance teachers

The primary advantage of the potential of VR and AR technologies is that they create an educational environment that is learner-centred. The introduction of their use requires more preparation and development of digital competences on the part of educators. The digital transformation of higher education is not only a necessity but also an opportunity: it is a chance to lay the foundations for a new, modern higher education. This is why we have launched our BalletWhere pilot project to create and test a 3D dance education curriculum. Before compiling the curricula, we conducted research on dance history, where we opened up a new field of comparative research: we examined the origins of ballet history in the Visegrad Four region from the perspectives of institutional history, ballet history and art theory, compared to the specificities of the Balkan region.

The teaching materials were integrated into a 3D curriculum. Translating dance analysis and movement into 3D, the creation of 3D dance curricula offers multiple didactic innovations compared to historical curricula.

Keywords: history of ballet, 3D curriculum, Motion Capture, MaxWhere, virtual history of dance, VR technology

## 18. The use of virtual reality in the presentation and teaching of dance history

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ATTILA GILÁNYI

Today, virtual reality is playing an increasingly important role in many areas of science and everyday life. Recent research has shown that its proper use has a positive impact on human memory, helping the human brain to learn faster, discover parallels and understand complex tasks and data more easily. Virtual reality technologies also have a number of applications for dance education and the presentation of dance history. In this paper, we present some of them, such as the visualisation of the building of the first Hungarian National Theatre and the usability of ballet history curricula in this virtual space. In dance education and the presentation of dance history, these possibilities are particularly exploitable due to the nature of the institutional structure and certain specificities of the educational content and theory.

Keywords: 3D Classroom, MaxWhere, virtuáal theatre auditorium, history of Hungarian ballet, Unity, virtual reconstruction

19. Folk dance and character dance education in the training structure of the State Ballet Institute – sources for an unfolding semantic research idea

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ÁDÁM MIKULICS

The possibilities of revitalizing and artistically conceptualizing the traditional dance matrix in an artificial environment, leaving its original, traditional social context, and the directions of these revitalizations have been a major area of research in the scientific approach to dance and exploring many modes of interpretation from the emergence of the revival movement to the present day. Recent research has placed special emphasis on the conceptual background of authenticity, which in the artistic and theatrical world often seemed unambiguous in the past, revealing a lack of a unified, consensus-based definition of these concepts. The performance of the Budapest Dance Ensemble, led by Zoltán Zsuráfszky, entitled *Bonchida háromszor*, has become an important benchmark for the Hungarian folk dance movement within the category of authenticity. In my study, through the textualization of reflective narratives on the staging process of the theatrical piece, its artistic concept and their signifying explanation, I intend to shed light on the phenomenon that, in my opinion, was initiated in Hungarian folk dance art on stage by *Bonchida háromszor* and Zoltán Zsuráfszky as the creator of the performance. The phenomenon examined in connection with the work is perhaps less prominent in dance studies of Hungarian stage folk dance.

Keywords: stage folk dance, Budapest Dance Ensemble, authenticity, stage adaptation, folk dance movement



20. The Theoretical Approach to Dramatic Dance and its Stage Forms in  
Hungary in the 1930s

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NÓRA ÁBRAHÁM

In my paper I present the forms and contents of works on artistic movement and performances created in the 1930s in Hungary (Budapest and Szeged), and I deal with the content- and space-specific variations of dance as an artistic creation, which can be referred to as a symbolic representation of the body. I will attempt to make sense of space-specific performances of extreme scale by applying the system of relations between body and bodies. In addition, I analyse the manifestations of the mythological role of man and woman in reinterpretations of mystery and morality plays in the early 20th century. My study touches on the cultural politics that influenced theatre art in the 1930s. I will discuss the possibilities of the art-theoretical analysis of the body and dance, the dramaturgy of movement, and I will discuss in detail the possibilities of interpreting mystery plays and morality in movement art. I will use the large-scale performances of the 1920s and 1930s in Budapest and Szeged as case studies.

Keywords: artistic movement, Olga Szentpál, Szeged Open Air Festival, folklore, mystery play, dramatic movement

21.

Snippets from the era of socialist operetta performance:  
Ágnes Roboz on the Problem of Operetta Dance

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EMESE LENGYEL

This study is based on research that focused on the professional discourse on operetta dance in Hungary from the 1950s until the change of regime. I started my research only from the 1950s, although the genre had a history of almost a century in Hungary, because it was under socialism that operetta dance came into the spotlight in the country, and a dialogue within the profession could be initiated, although this could be done in a way that was in line with the expectations of the party state. A closer focus on the writings of the choreographer Ágnes Roboz (1926-2021) is justified by the fact that Roboz was the first professional to initiate a discourse on the problem of operetta dance in the pages of the journal *Táncművészet*, which in a broader sense is nothing other than a set of issues concerning (musical) stage dances. In this paper I will briefly discuss the changes that affected operetta and the Budapest Operetta Theatre after 1949. I will then review the content of the very first discussion paper of 1952, and then the criticism and self-criticism that the theatre exercised on the issue of operetta dance after the first five-year plan (1950-1954).

Keywords: socialist operetta, operetta dance, operetta performance in Budapest, dramaturgy, politics of theatre, stage dance, dancer training

22. Folk dance and character dance education in the training structure of the State Ballet Institute – sources for an unfolding semantic research idea

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ÁDÁM MIKULICS

The starting point of my research, which focuses on the investigation of the institutional frameworks that ensured the search for the path and the supply of professional Hungarian folk dance in the 1970s and 1980s, and which explores the sources and formulates assumptions along these lines in later periods, is the analysis of the artistic and pedagogical careers of two emblematic artists, Katalin Györgyfalvay and Sándor Timár, and the social and cultural environment that influenced them. My research focuses on the relationship of the artists to peasant dance culture in the context of the artistic aspirations of the period. The anthropological analysis of the period in question focuses on the influence of the State Ballet Institute's Folk Dance Department, which started on 1 September 1971. The focus of the current phase of my research - placing the research in the context of the history of the institution - is the methodology and the educational environment of the first class of the State Ballet Institute's Folk Dance Department. In my work, which is based on primary source accounts, exam registers, working group reports and other archival data, institutional documents and their analysis, I would like to reflect on the history and characteristics of the training by briefly cross-sectioning the training of folk dance and character dance within the Institute's training system.

Keywords: State Ballet Institute, art of folk dance, dancer training, professional folk dance ensemble, authenticity, rural local heritage, stage adaptation, generation of choreographers

In my study, I attempt to analyse Imre Madách's *The Tragedy of Man* on the basis of Roger Scruton's book on Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*. Studying Wagner's opera, the English philosopher explored what the absence of God's presence, or more precisely his absence, means for the characters, the dramaturgy and the interpretative milieu. It is this absence of God in *The Tragedy* that I am investigating: specifically, the ways in which God does not appear where the characters expect him to appear; what explanation there is for his absence; and how his return is achieved. And, of course, how all this - the appearance of the Lord - can be achieved on stage. I have highlighted the finale of the London scene, the double-spiral death dance, because it is the most striking manifestation of the absent God, and its staging is a major challenge, so it has been mostly left out of the performances. Antal Németh, on the other hand, managed to turn it into an independent entry of international standard. To the music of Ferenc Farkas (1905-2000), Aurél Milloss (1906-1988) created a spectacular choreography. In the expressionistic dance scene, the choreographer himself personified death.

Keywords: danse macabre, The Tragedy of Man, Wagner's opera, history of Hungarian theatre, dramaturgy, Aurél Milloss, Scruton

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and Hungarian stage folk dance history in a multidisciplinary approach; Macedonian ritual dance tradition; studies on the first Hungarian all-artistic production, the Hungarian *Csupajátéka* by Aurél Milloss; R&D possibilities of dance education; chain and circle dance culture from an ethnomusicological and multidisciplinary perspective; chain and circle dance culture as a common European heritage. She is guest lecturer at Hungarian and foreign universities, lecturer at the Doctoral School of Ethnography and History at the University of Debrecen, and at the Doctoral School of Philosophy at the University of Pécs, senior research fellow at the Institute for Art Theory and Methodology of the Hungarian Academy of Arts. She is founding Editor-in-Chief of the Macedonian Scientific and Cultural Bulletin. Anna Mária Bólya is a member of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society, the Working Committee on Dance of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the European Association of Social Anthropologists, the International Dance Council of UNESCO and the International Council for Traditional Music.

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Working Group (YSWG) on mentoring, publication and integration of young scholars. In 2020, he led the Hungarian part of the working group on quality assurance and accreditation in the EU project FilmEU. He is the translator of the archaic Kyrgyz epic *Manas*. In 2015 he was awarded the Sándor Körösi Csoma Memorial Medal. László Koppány Csáji is the member of the Supervisory Board of the Hungarian Association of Cultural Anthropology (MAKAT).

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ATTILA GILÁNYI, PHD, DR. HABIL.

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Mathematician, professor of mathematics, habilitated associate professor at the Faculty of Informatics of the University of Debrecen. He obtained a diploma in mathematics with honours in 1992 and a diploma as a teacher of mathematics with honours in 1996 at the Kossuth Lajos University of Sciences. He spent 7 months as a student at the University of Paderborn in Germany with a Tempus scholarship. After graduating as a mathematician, he continued his studies at the University of Karlsruhe with the support of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and obtained his PhD degree there in 1995. He also habilitated at the University of Karlsruhe in 2001. In 2001, he was awarded the ISFE Medal („for outstanding contributions to the 39th International Symposium on Functional Equations, 2001”). In 2002 he received the Alexits György Prize of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in 2015 the Best Paper Award of the 6th IEEE International Conference on Cognitive Infocommunications, and in 2019 the Best Session Award of the 10th IEEE International Conference on Cognitive Infocommunications. He is an editor of several major international scientific journals and has been the Managing Editor of *Aequationes Mathematicae* since 2008. His main research interests include: virtual reality, solving mathematical problems with computers, function equations and inequalities, convexity and its generalizations.

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Ethnographer, historian. Habilitated Associate Professor at the Department of Ethnography at the University of Debrecen. In 2014, he presented his thesis entitled “Folk Dance - Ballroom Dance - Social Relations”. Between 2014 and 2018 he was a research fellow at the Research Group of Ethnography of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA-DE). In 2015, his book *Dance and Community* was awarded the János Petőfi S. Publication Prize. In 2016, he received the MTA Academic Youth Prize for his research achievements in the field of dance studies. Between 2017 and 2020, he received the Bolyai grant from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In 2020 he was awarded the János Jankó Prize of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society. His main research interests include the study of changes in folk/popular dance culture, and the interpretation of Hungarian dance culture in terms of mental history, historical anthropology and social history. He is a member, former vice-president of the Hungarian Ethnochoreological Society. Other memberships: Gesellschaft für Tanzforschung, Hungarian Ethnographic Society, Dance Research Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungarian Dance Society.

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PhD student, editor and arts manager. She is a student of the Doctoral School of Literature and Cultural Studies and the Doctoral School of History and Ethnography at the University of Debrecen. She obtained a Master’s degree in Ethnography with honours in 2021. Her thesis on the history of the Hungarian Association of Stage Authors was the winner of the János Ujvári Diploma Award competition launched by the National Intellectual Property Office in the academic year 2020/2021. In parallel to her studies in Debrecen, she was a student of the Master of Design and Art Management at the Budapest Metropolitan University, and graduated as a curator in 2022. In recognition of her outstanding achievements, she received the Metropolitan Diploma Award of the Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries. Her main interests are the history of Viennese and

Hungarian operetta and arts management. She has been awarded six research grants from the New National Excellence Programme during her studies. She is a member of the Expert Committee of the Centre for Arts at the University of Debrecen.

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MELINDA MARINKA, PHD

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Ethnographer. She is a senior research fellow of the ELKH-DE Research Group on Ethnography (formerly MTA-DE Research Group on Ethnography). She received her PhD degree from the University of Debrecen in 2016. Her PhD thesis was entitled “The Traces of Folk Culture of the Satu Mare Swabians, Present-Day Ethnic Characteristics. Individual - Community – Identity”. She has been awarded the grant of the IVDE (Institut für Volkskunde der Deutschen des östlichen Europa) multiple times. She teaches at the Department of Ethnography of the University of Debrecen and at the Dance Department of the Secondary School for Arts in Nyíregyháza. She regularly gives scientific and educational ethnographic lectures in Hungarian and German. Her research interests include the ethnographic and folkloristic characteristics of the Upper Tisza region. In this context, special emphasis is placed on the interpretation of memory and heritage formation processes related to German ethnicity. She approaches local social phenomena through the relationship between individual and community, focusing her research on changes in customary elements.

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## ÁDÁM MIKULICS

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Folk dance teacher, PhD student. He is a secondary school teacher at the Dance Department of the Secondary School for Art sin Nyíregyháza and a lecturer at the Department of Folk Dance of the Hungarian Dance University, where he focuses on exploring innovative possibilities of complex skill and ability development. He completed his higher education at the Hungarian Dance University in the field of folk dance and rehearsal management, and then at the master's programme, where he obtained a master's degree and a diploma of certified dance teacher in 2013. In 2023, he graduated from the Budapest University of Technology and Economics with honours in the specialised further education programme in public education leadership and pedagogy. His research interests include the anthropological study of the cultural and social environment of Hungarian folk dance on stage.

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## ÉVA NAGY, PHD

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Ethnographer. She graduated from the Kossuth Lajos University of Sciences in 1998 with a degree in ethnography and pedagogy. Since 2018, she has been a deputy assistant professor at the Department of Ethnology of the University of Debrecen. Since 2000, she has been teaching at the University of Debrecen in the BA, MA, TMA, OMA, LOMA, PhD courses. She has been a member of the Györffy István Ethnographical Association since 2000, a member of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society since 2003, and secretary of the Ecclesiastical Ethnography Section of the Doctoral College of the Reformed Church of Hungary since 2019. Since 2019 she has been the editor of the journal *Religious Ethnography*. She became a member of the Subcommittee on Subject Pedagogy of the Scientific Committee on Pedagogy of the Hungarian Academy of Science since 2023. Her main research interests include the study of change in the Bihar region, the preservation of traditional elements of nutrition, life strategies.

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Cultural and visual anthropologist, documentary filmmaker. She graduated summa cum laude in 2022 at the University of Debrecen in the doctoral programme in ethnography and cultural anthropology. Her thesis was published in a book form in 2023 under the title *Variations on Coexistence*. She acquired his expertise in visual anthropology and documentary filmmaking at the MA programme of the University of Miskolc. She is a founding member of the AntRom film workshop, where she studies Hungarian-Gypsy coexistence situations in local rural communities and makes anthropological documentaries on the subject. She is the author of the monograph *Kisvilágok* (2022), a book based on the nine episodes of the film series of the same title (co-authors Gábor Biczó and Zsolt Soós). As a member of the ELKH academic research group, working alongside the Department of Ethnology at the University of Debrecen, she is engaged in the study of local ethnic coexistence situations. As a lecturer, she teaches courses in visual ethnography and anthropology, film analysis lectures and seminars. She is also the leader of the Schiffer Pál Film Club at the Balázs Lippai Roma College. The main areas of her studies include the cultural anthropological analysis of Roma-Hungarian ethnic coexistence, the study of community processes in local societies, and the social integration of Roma and/or disadvantaged youth. In addition, she is interested in the theory and practice of ethnographic/anthropological filmmaking, and issues of visual representation of tradition. She is a member of the Hungarian Film Studies Society, its working group on film education methodology and, from 2022, of the board's working group. She is also a member of the Hungarian Cultural Anthropological Society and the Hungarian Ethnographic Society.

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Ethnographer, dance anthropologist. She graduated from the University of Szeged, specializing in ethnography, dance anthropology, dance folklore studies. During her studies she completed the Choreomundus International Master's Degree in Dance Research. She is a doctoral candidate at the Doctoral School of History of SZTE. Her main research interests are the Hungarian dance house movement and revival folk dancers. She has conducted fieldwork in Hungarian and Transylvanian settlements, folk dance camps, dance competitions and festivals. In 2020, she was awarded a Research-Presenter Fellowship by the Hungarian American Teachers Association for her presentation at the conference on Folk Dance and Music Camps in Transylvania as a Subject for Anthropological Research in Dance. Currently, she is a research assistant at the Institute of Musicology, Research Centre for the Humanities, and MTA-SYLFF Sasakawa Fellow. Her research results have been published in Hungarian and English. She is a member of the Hungarian Association of Ethnochoreology and will be its president from 2023. Other memberships include: Hungarian Association for Cultural Anthropology, Hungarian Association for Dance Research, International Council for Traditional Music.

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TAMAYO, JOSE ANTONIO LORENZO L.

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Jose Antonio Lorenzo Tamayo obtained his bachelor's degree in International Studies major in European Studies and master's degree in Teaching English Language at De La Salle University in Manila, Philippines. For twelve years, he taught courses on research, purposive communication, oral communication, and journalism to senior high school and undergraduate students of the same university. His interest in the field of intangible cultural heritage inspired him to apply for a doctoral scholarship in Hungary through the Stipendium Hungaricum Programme. At present, he pursues his doctoral degree in Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Debrecen. He is currently working on his dissertation entitled "*Sayaw ng Bati: an ethnographic*

and anthropological study on the Easter dance ritual of the Southern Tagalog Region in the Philippines.” While his research and publications focused on Catholic sponsorship traditions, particularly the *camareros* (custodian of religious images) and *hermano mayor* (fiesta sponsor), he developed an interest in the field of dance anthropology which led him to publish two articles regarding the Turumba tradition in Pakil, Laguna and an anthropological framework to understand Catholic religious dances in the island of Luzon.

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Ethnologist, ethnographer, ethnochoreologist. Adjunct professor at the Department of Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology, University of Szeged, lecturer and coordinator of the *Choreomundus* international MA dance research course. He is a senior research fellow at the Institute for Musicology, Research Centre for the Humanities. Since 2002 he has been teaching ethnography, dance folklore and dance anthropology in Hungarian, English and German at various universities and colleges in Hungary and abroad. In 2012, he finished his doctoral thesis „Changes in the dance culture of a village in the Mezőség in the 20th century” with summa cum laude at the ELTE Doctoral School of History. He is the president of the Folk Music and Folk Dance Section of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society. Other memberships include Hungarian Association of Ethnochoreology, ICTM Study Group, Gesellschaft for Tanzforschung.

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Cultural historian, researcher of historical memory. Adjunct professor at the Institute of Communication and Media Studies of Pázmány Péter Catholic University, lecturer in political and ecclesiastical communication. Senior Research Fellow at the Research Institute for Art Theory and Methodology of the Hungarian Academy of Arts. His main research interests are the representation of Central European and Hungarian history in cultural memory: in the works of fiction, classical music and film. He has published monographs on the memory of 1956 (*Vivente e morinete - 1956 memory in classical music*, 2016), 1848/49 (*Apocalypse and apotheosis in Petőfi symphonies*, Axis IV/1, 2023) and Trianon (*The musical memory of Trianon between 1920 and 1938*, Magyar Művészet 2020/4). He has organised several international conferences on Central European cultural identity and edited a volume of studies on the subject (e.g. Shostakovich-Syndrome - The Burdened Memories of Central European Societies in the 20th Century, 2021) and has written monographs on several important Hungarian composers (Ede Terényi, 2018 and 2021; György Szabados, 2019; Ödön Mihalovich, 2020). He also researches the relationship between the publicity of fiction and classical music (e.g. Erkel's *Bánk bán* in the light of transcriptions and interpretations, Scenario, 2020/8). Since 2023 he is the director of the Hungarian Scruton Hub, organizing the first Budapest Scruton Seminar for Hungarian and foreign students with international speakers.

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