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Folklore: Memories, Politics, Heritagisation

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Despite many similarities, the understanding and treatment of the folklore movement differs between the various post-socialist countries, both in the conceptualisation of the phenomenon and in the vocabulary used. This paper presents different examples of the practices of the folklore (revival) movement in post-socialist countries. Both memory and auto-ethnographic studies are included.
▪ **Keywords**: folklore activity, revival movement, socialism, post-socialism, folklore studies, heritagisation

Razumevanje in obravnave folklorne dejavnosti se med različnimi postsocialističnimi državami kljub številnim sorodnostim razlikujejo tako v konceptualni zasnovi fenomena kot v uporabljenem besednjaku. V prispevku so prikazani različni primeri praks folklornega (preporodnega) gibanja v postsocialističnih državah. Pri tem so vključene raziskave spominjanja in avtoetnografskih študij.
▪ **Ključne besede**: folklorna dejavnost, preporodno gibanje, socializem, postsocializem, folklorne študije, dediščinjenje

Introduction

Slovene folklore studies have in the past decades only partially been involved (e.g. Babič, 2009; Habinc, 2009, 2014; Klobčar, 2014; Kunej R., 2020; Kunej D., Kunej R., 2019; Poljak Istenič 2011, 2013) in the developing field of research on folklore activities and, more broadly, heritagisation in the post-socialist period (e. g. Creed, 2011; Kürti, Skalnik, 2009; Stavělová, Buckland, 2018; Testa, 2023), despite sharing similarities in the processes of democratization of the political system and social life with Eastern and some Central European countries after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

This is a gap we are to some extent trying to fill with the present issue of *Traditiones* which addresses folklore, especially folk music and dance, memories, politics and heritagisation in the post-socialist milieus. Despite divergent definitions of post-socialism, which, unlike Western capitalist countries, has socialism embedded in the consciousness, traditions, and culture of its societies (Stavělová, 2023: 22), especially in terms of its end (e.g. Brandstädter, 2007; Bryant, Mokrzycki, 1994), the issue at hand considers post-socialism broadly across time. We are also including folklore activity during the socialist period, as it is of relational importance for understanding the dynamics of change in post-socialism. Here, a predominant notion is the state-regulated functioning

of folklore activities (especially folklore ensembles[1]) during socialism, which also influenced the development and modification of folklore phenomena themselves. We trace the dynamics of change in the sphere of folklore activity after the collapse of the one-party system and up to the present day. In our research, we include the question of memory and commemoration, as well as contemporary policies of heritage making.

Some of the authors of research published in this issue have experienced these changes in person, and some have been actively involved in, and even partly shaped the process through their roles – as members of folklore groups/ensembles, members of juries and other bodies influencing folklore activity, or as members of folk revival music groups.

In our introductory text, we thus outline the main questions – referring to content and methodology – that arise when studying so-called folklore activities and the changes in their functioning after the democratisation of the political system in this part of Europe. Based on people's respective environments, the practices of a nationally delimited space and, consequently, our vocabulary, the namings and understanding of folklore activities differ. For some, the term folklore activity (or also folklore movement) implies organised activity within institutions, others understand the phenomena more broadly, beyond structurally organised engagement of folklore ensembles; often depending on geopolitical and sociocultural factors affecting the individual.

Thus, it is evident from published findings on this phenomenon that, despite similar sociopolitical upheavals after 1989, the academic vocabularies in English are not identical across the countries. In Latvian, the term "folklore movement" (*folkloras kustība*) is used alternatively to "folklore revival", which began at the end of the 1970s and points to the initial social-political aspirations of the Latvian folklore revival, especially when it became part of the Baltic Singing Revolution that led to the independence of the Baltic countries from the Soviet Union. The question is whether and when the 'movement' phase ended, whereas the Latvian name for the post-revival phase is still under discussion. Authors have decided to keep the initial "folklore movement" designation because it is an important identifier for the revival community (Weaver et al, 2023: 48). A comparable phenomenon in Moldova is termed the "folkloric movement" (*mişcarea folclorică*) by Jennifer R. Cash (2012).

In contrast, Czech authors interpret the English term "folklore revival movement" (*folklorní revivalismus*) in a much broader scope. They refer to the activity of folklore ensembles as part of the post-Second World War regime's cultural-artistic mechanisms (*folklorní hnutí*, in English folklore movement), and their continuation of activities which are called by various names (e.g. *folklorní aktivity*, in English folklore activity) arising from the processes of democratization in the 1990s. They also include the

[1] For the sake of readability, we shall use the term "folklore ensemble" interchangeably with "folklore group", although we are aware of the different usages, nuanced meanings and distinctions between the "folklore group", "folklore ensemble", "folk dance ensemble", etc.

currently emerging ways of socialising in the reminiscence of the former traditional folk (and/or folklorised) dances.

In the Slovene environment today, "folklore activity" (*folklorna dejavnost*) is mainly understood as the activity related to the practices of folklore and related ensembles, which operate under the Public Fund for Cultural Activities (JSKD), the main institution for amateur cultural-artistic activities. However, especially those who are not practitioners within this segment or the creators of cultural policies, might recognise these phenomena in a much broader sense. The term corresponding to "folklore movement" (*folklorno gibanje*) is not used in Slovenia. Yet, the term "folk revival music" (*preporodna glasba*) is used to describe a musical genre which, in terms of its content, easily finds parallels in the Latvian and Moldovan movements, as well as in the embeddedness of the phenomenon in the last quarter of the 20th century.

Folklore activity under socialism

During the socialist era, which in Eastern and some Central European countries lasted from the end of the Second World War to the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, authorities paid particular attention to the organised presentation of folklore elements. In most of these countries, folklore activity was linked to the totalitarian regimes, which exploited it to a greater or lesser extent as a propaganda tool (Stavělová, 2021; Stavělová, Buckland, 2018). Since the beginning of the 1950s, it has been an instrument of the totalitarian regimes' cultural policy and a performative presentation of a "better future". Stage performances of (music and dance) folklore in particular were one of the most popular instruments for shaping the national identity and image of socialist countries. The system of authorised folk art and culture was financially supported by the authorities and allowed to exist, while also being censored and shaped in accordance with the needs and political aims of the Communist Party (Kurdova, 2023: 104). In most countries in this part of Europe, with a few exceptions such as Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, national folklore ensembles were set up for this purpose after the Second World War.

The national ensembles served to present the country at the international level, they were part of cultural diplomacy and also a model that the semi-professional and amateur folklore groups emerging in villages and towns tried to follow. These co-shaped the leisure time of individuals in the framework of (educational) cultural associations and helped "build the socialist man" through amateur artistic activities. In folklore activities, however, people were not only offered a structured way of spending leisure time and building an idealized "socialist future", but were also given, through controlled performance, an alternative form of satisfying their need for the ritual. To illustrate this, we cite examples from Slovenia during the socialist period: dancing on Easter

Monday became acceptable in a staged form but not in its primary setting (Kunej R., 2017); similarly, carol singing was undesirable in its original context (Šivic, 2014), as the celebration of Christmas was relegated to the private sphere (Klobčar, 2009). It is precisely because of political unsuitability that some folklore phenomena were pushed into the private environment, or have had to change their traditional performance venues: they sometimes took refuge in performances within cultural-artistic stage productions, thus replacing the once informal transmission of knowledge within the community with informal transmission within e.g. a folklore group.

As part of state-supported folklore activities, folklore festivals were being organised from the 1950s onwards, and in some places special infrastructure was built for them as well (e.g. in Strážnice in Moravia). Similar to other countries, organized educational programmes in the field of folklore activities were starting to be conducted in Slovenia in the 1970s, as described by Drago Kunej in his article 'The Changing Nature of Instrumental Music and Musicians in Folk Dance Ensembles' (2023). Since folk dance and the music that accompanies it "had been transferred from its traditional environment to the stage, and transformed from its primal purpose of the social dance and music event into stage presentations of 'past folk tradition' performed by folk dance ensembles" (ibid., 2023: 70), the leaders of folk dance ensembles had to be instructed to stage the most 'correct' performances.

In the last decade, however, researchers have also recognised the ambivalence of the folklore movements within socialist systems. Daniela Stavělová in her article 'Hidden in Folklore: The Past and Present of the Revival Movement in Post-Socialist Countries' (2023), through the study of the memories of this period, establishes that in the former socialist Czechoslovakia, folklore activity was also an alternative space to everyday reality, a space in which ideas that did not fit the dominant political narratives could be realised. Folklore activity developed its own language, which allowed for a double reading of what was happening within its confines (Stavělová, 2023: 18). People who could not actualize their ideas in daily life and work situations found an alternative way to put them into practice through music, dance, and other activities related to the folklore movement (organising festivals, performances, competitions). It also operated as an infrastructure providing a temporary alternative to the contemporary society (Stavělová, 2015) whereby folklore ensembles turned into ideological weapons and became "islets of freedom" (Stavělová, 2023: 21).

Folklore activity in the whirlwind of political change

In the decades after the Second World War, folklore activity became increasingly emancipated in its practice, and the political influences were gradually losing their grip. The loosening of the strictly managed dynamics in the folklore movement was intertwined with the influences of the folk revival, which was becoming increasingly popular in the West. In some countries, most notably and resoundingly in the Baltic states – as Latvian researchers Ieva Weaver, Valdis Muktupāvels, Rita Grīnvalde, Aigars Lielbārdis, Ilga Vālodze Ābele, and Justīne Jaudzema have written in their article 'The Power of Authorities, Interpretations, and Songs: The Discourse of Authenticity in the Latvian Folklore Revival' (2023) – the approval of a new aesthetic approach to folklore performances was also being connected with "resistance to a non-democratic political regime that tried to restrict and control the movement. Latvian folklore revival became a part of a broader social movement, the Baltic Singing Revolution (1986–1991), which aimed at the restoration of independence from the Soviet Union […], so in this case it is an issue not only about the folkloric but also the political authority" (Weaver et al., 2023: 49).

Regimes' officials thus feared the folklore revival movement. Consequently, "[p] rofessional and amateur folklorists experienced interrogations by the KGB, dismissals from work, suspensions of publications, and critical and sarcastic articles in the media" (Weaver et al., 2023: 56).

In the process of emancipation of the folklore revival in Latvia, authority of the academic experts was diminished, and public influence was largely transferred to amateur practitioners. Research, archiving, and publishing of folk music and dance traditions thus spread from public institutions to committed amateurs as well. Part of the reason for this disconnect between state-led, academic institution-based folklore activity and the newly emerging, less academically oriented folklore revival was that during the 1970s, several leading folklorists were suspected and scrutinized by the KGB, and were forced to restrain from participation in the growing folklore movement that was regarded with caution (Weaver et al., 2023: 63).

The divide was also deepened by the clash of different perspectives on folklore activities, especially around the questions of authenticity and propriety of individual folklore practices. Academic institutions and state-supported actors focused on aspects of heritage presentation exclusively, whereas folklore revival modified traditional forms in line with contemporary aesthetics and people's needs for identification, belonging, creating locality etc., regardless of possible structural and morphological changes.

In the countries that gained their independence in the early 1990s, folklore acquired the added significance as a state-sponsored activity instrumentalised for the expression of national belonging and for state promotion.

Folklore activity in the changed (cultural)political circumstances

Changes in political regimes, and in the case of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union also of national borders, redefined the "appropriateness" of folklore presentations within the national contexts as well. The truncated programme of national folklore ensembles and semi-professional folklore groups came under question as to what the renewed direction of folklore ensembles and the entire activity would be. Not only in terms of the dissolution of the national folklore ensembles (in the Czech Republic they were completely abandoned and disbanded) or the reduction of their number – in the absence of financial support, many non-professional associations found themselves in dire straits. With the transition and the collapse of large state-owned factories that had been accommodating their workers' leisure activities (folklore groups also operated within trade union cultural arts societies), and with reduced state support, many ensembles were facing financial challenges and questions of bare survival. Relations between the centre and the periphery were also re-established, where smaller groups focused solely on presenting the folklore of a narrower region or the local environment, emphasising local identities, gained prominence.

After the normalization of tensions and the fall of the socialist regimes, the folklore movement has been subjected to many innovations, especially in regards to the plurality of folklore activity modalities. Thus, in Latvia, 'authentic', 'ethnographic', and 'stylized' folklore groups coexisted, while popular music performers were understood as acceptable appropriators of folklore heritage (Weaver et al., 2023: 55). In Bulgaria, for example, "horoteques" (discotheques for traditional dances) began to emerge alongside the institutionally oriented, private ensembles and dance clubs. In the context of the recreational movement, popular interest in national folk dances has risen in Bulgaria, taking different forms, as Dilyana Kurdova illuminates in her article 'Sunday Horos in Bulgaria Today' (2023).

However, not all changes in folklore activity can be attributed solely to the change in the political system. Technical progress, the rise of social networks and therefore new ways of communicating and transmitting knowledge have also had an impact on the questioning of transmission and the search for its new modes. This is not to highlight the recent challenges offered by emergent AI, though they represent a new breakthrough in communication, including in folklore, from a technological point of view.

By opening up to the Western capitalist world and market logic in general, folklore becomes a marketable commodity, while the commodification of folklore activity helps individuals survive economically. In doing so, they often no longer draw on folk traditions, but on the acquired knowledge and traditions of folklore groups instead.

In the context of what we have written so far, it should be also borne in mind that above all, folklore groups and ensembles have been throughout their existence, in addition to their ascribed functions, a space for weaving often lifelong interpersonal bonds, and also the communities offering a sense of acceptance and security to people of various ages and backgrounds.

The specificities of researching folklore activity in post-socialist countries

If the activities of folklore groups in the early 1980s were still firmly set in the hands of the cultural policies and of the state institutions that directed folklore activity and the functioning of cultural-artistic associations in which most folklore groups generally operated, the first harbingers of new change in the field of folklore and its contemporary guises were precisely the musicians; with musical ensembles that broke away from the established musical configurations of folklore line-ups and sought inspiration in those individuals and groups who explored their expressivity in folk content, rather than in 'high' (Western European) music-and-dance stage aesthetics.

It was the musical folk-revival that was the basis for the dance revival, starting with the Hungarian *táncház*, which then tends to resonate in the other post-socialist countries only in the 21st century (cf. Feinberg, 2018; Kolačkovská, 2023; Kunej R., 2023; Taylor, 2021). This is a departure from the representational function carried by folklore groups towards a more inclusive participatory experience of folklore activity in the 21st century.

The denominations of the performers also require reflection at the turn of the millennium. Are they modern folk singers/musicians, folk song recreators, folk song singers? Are members of folklore ensembles now renamed into folklorists? How should we rename the researchers of contemporary musical folklore, then, when in the emic perspective the term 'folklorist' has acquired new meaning, denoting either a member of a folklore group or a folk-lover, rather than a scholar of folklore? Folklore researchers, on the other hand, scrutinize the repertoire, the actual dance/music culture of the participants, and question what is happening beyond the limelight of the stage and representations, what goes on when engaged communities participate in folklore activities. In the 21st century, folklore activity wants to free itself from the shackles of the stage and theatrical laws to discover its own authenticity, often building on the work of folklore ensembles; and yet it conversely also wants to get even closer to the stage-performance process, by intervening in folklore, by merging it, mixing it, and superimposing it with other artistic expressions.

We also draw attention to the terminology that was particular to the post-socialist countries. Faced with the hegemony of the English language, scholars grapple with the difficulty of translating what they have learned into English, which has not had the same experience of building a "socialist working people" through cultural politics. The most prominent example is precisely the institution of the folklore ensemble/group, part of the broader institution of cultural-artistic associations: encompassing spontaneous, amateur, but also directed and regularly practised leisure activities (cf. Buchanan, 2006: 133). Paradoxically, original terms in the national languages are sometimes more familiar and informative for other scholars of folklore activity in (post-)socialist milieus than their (often impermanent, sporadic) English translations. At the terminological

level and beyond, folklore activities were, and are, both similar and diverse in different countries despite the common socialist essence.

The challenges of transition and the new times in cultural policy were first addressed by foreign researchers, which can also be understood as a search for the exotic on the other side of the Iron Curtain, i.e. in the area that became more accessible and less dangerous for English and American speakers after the fall of socialism. What resonates most in contemporary ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology are in fact books (e.g. Buchanan, 2006; Cash, 2012; Feinberg, 2018; Shay, 2002) resulting from the research endeavours of the Anglo-American authors' exploration of this space, the '(post)socialist folklore fascination' they cultivated in relation to it. Ironically, postcolonial studies linger hegemonically in the persistent use of English as the lingua franca.

Local folklorists needed more time, temporal and critical distance before they started delving into this topic. In fact, such research projects are led by people who rather remember the most drastic forms of the regime in their own countries from the stories and experiences of their parents than from their own experiences, or their experience of folklore activity is limited to the late period of socialism and the transition.

This issue of *Traditiones* is therefore an attempt to give voice to the local authors whose work is embedded in the area they explore. An etic perspective is combined with the emic research while also making space for autoethnography. The researchers' embeddedness in the system and their own terrain provides a different dimension to the understanding and interpretation of the processes of folklorisation and heritagisation in the socialist period and beyond.

The autoethnographical method is employed, for example, by Zdeněk Vejvoda in his article 'The International Bagpipe Festival in Strakonice and the Transformation of the Relationship Towards the Regional Bagpipe Tradition' (2023). He uses historical sources to answer the question of how a town in the south of Bohemia has been connected to the bagpipe tradition since the 19th century. The autoethnographic method, interviews and survey analysis are harnessed to elucidate the reception of the festival among its active participants and the transformation of their attitudes towards the bagpipe tradition in the new millennium.

Folklore activity between autonomous practice and contemporary politics of folklore heritagisation

Unlike in the second half of the 20th century, new forms of folklore activities are increasingly participatory in nature and are therefore changing in form and content, favouring simpler elements with the possibility of quickly involving a broad range of interested publics. The emphasis is on the emotional aspect over more formal presentations by folklore groups (Stavělová, 2023: 46).

On the other hand, the Estonian researcher Taive Särg in her article 'The Institutionalisation of Participatory Singing since the 1960s in Estonia' (2023) uses the questionnaire "Music in my Life" to analyse the dynamics of modern participatory singing, which she characterizes as institutionalization in the framework of contemporary society. In Estonia, modernization reshaped the social organization of communal singing, which resulted in a tendency to develop a formal social structure for this activity in contemporary society.

Although they are just partly guided by authorized heritage institutions, many folklore presentations are still subject to the authorised heritage discourse (Smith, 2006). Zita Skořepová in her article '"Zpěváček" Folk Singing Competition: Regional Identity and Heritage Performance in the Czech Republic' (2023) presents the ways in which children at a singing competition display (micro)regional identities and local cultural heritage. It was only in the post-socialist transformation that the competition went beyond the Moravian context and became a nationwide event with several rounds, from local to regional and national. The judging criteria follow the norms of the authorised heritage discourse, while the organisers rely on the controversial concept of folklore regions, defined by Czech ethnologists on the basis of the 19th century situation.

Music and dance folklore still retains the representative function of performing itself. In line with the UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention, which has brought new terminology to the discipline, elements of the past are – once and in the present time – being selected and chosen for a better future; politically, culturally, economically. Discourses of heritage have replaced discussions of folklorism, and the notion of heritage has replaced the notion of folklore. Thus, the transmission of elements of traditional folk culture from the pre-industrial era remains a constant in the folklore movement, just as spontaneous entertainment as interaction between dancers and musicians has been a constant since the beginning of folklore as well. There has always been a certain discrepancy between what folklore ensembles set on the stage and what they left to perform under the stage, in spontaneous entertainment after the performance. The embodied knowledge gained from participation in a folklore ensemble can thus be useful for performances in many other contexts (Stavělová, 2023: 23). Some contemporary manifestations of folklore activity, which already showcase their sustainability, do not always correlate with the activities supported by the state policies. However, people nevertheless identify with them and carry them out mainly for their own sake, with or without financial support, and with or without the support of cultural policy.

The present discussions in this thematic issue of *Traditiones* thus reveal the similarities arising from related cultural-political systems, while the individual studies at the same time point out the specifics which derive from the implementation in the local environment, time period, and the modality of the activity. Participatory singing, dancing and musicking within and beyond folklore ensembles, organised festivals, singing and folklore competitions, and open-air dance events reflect the multifaceted

nature of folklore activity, which concurrently combines the institutional organisation and reminiscence of the past representational role, and the abundantly present embodiment and emotion that make this activity so attractive to so many. Both in socialism and post-socialism, as well as in today's moment of mass cultural production.

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Foklora: spomini, politike, dediščinjenje

V socialističnih državah je bila folklorna dejavnost v veliki meri instrumentalizirana in državno regulirana. Poimenovanja in razumevanje folklorne dejavnosti ali folklornega gibanja v postsocialističnih državah Vzhodne in Srednje Evrope se kljub podobnostim razlikujejo.

Predvsem odrske uprizoritve (glasbene in plesne) folklore so bile med najbolj priljubljenimi instrumenti za oblikovanje nacionalne identitete in podobe socialističnih držav. Oblast je finančno podpirala in omogočala sistem avtorizirane ljudske umetnosti in kulture, obenem pa ga je tudi cenzurirala ter ga oblikovala skladno s potrebami in političnimi cilji. Državni plesni ansambli so predstavljali državo na mednarodni ravni, bili so del kulturne diplomacije, hkrati pa tudi model, ki so mu skušale slediti polprofesionalne in ljubiteljske folklorne skupine, ki so nastajale po vaseh in mestih.

Vendar je bila folklorna dejavnost več kakor to. V nekdanji Češkoslovaški je bila s specifičnim jezikom, ki je omogočal dvojno branje, alternativni prostor vsakdanji realnosti, prostor uresničevanja idej, ki niso ustrezale dominantnim političnim narativom. Rahljanje reguliranih dinamik v folklornem gibanju se je sčasoma prepletalo z vplivi preporodnega gibanja. V baltskih državah se je folklorni preporod povezoval z uporom nedemokratičnemu političnemu režimu in postal del širšega družbenega gibanja Baltska pojoča revolucija (1986–1991), ki si je prizadevalo za neodvisnost od Sovjetske zveze. V državah, ki so na začetku 90. let 20. stoletja pridobile samostojnost, je folklorna dejavnost postala pomembna za izražanje pripadnosti in za državno promocijo.

Spremembe političnega režima in v primeru razpada držav nove državne meje so na novo definirale »ustreznost« prezentacij folklore. Na novo so se ustvarila razmerja med središči in obrobjem; ob poudarjanju lokalnih identitet so postajale vse pomembnejše manjše skupine. Po sprostitvi in dokončnem padcu komunističnega režima so v folklornem gibanju začele soobstajati različne modalitete (‘avtentične’, ‘etnografske’ in ‘stilizirane’ folklorne skupine, zasebni ansambli in plesni klubi ipd.). Spremembe v folklorni dejavnosti niso bile zgolj posledica spremembe političnega sistema, pač pa so nanje vplivali širši dejavniki, tehnični napredek, razmah družbenih omrežij idr.

Folklorne skupine so bile ves čas svojega obstoja tudi pomemben prostor spletanja medosebnih vezi ter sprejetosti in varnosti. Poleg tega je v folklornih skupinah vedno obstajalo nenapisano pravilo o tem, kaj je za na oder, in tem, kar je ostalo pod odrom ali za spontano zabavo po nastopu.

Izzive tranzicije in novih časov v kulturni politiki so najprej začeli obravnavati tuji raziskovalci, domači folkloristi so potrebovali več časa, časovnega in kritičnega odmika, preden so se začeli ukvarjati z njimi. Raziskovalni etski perspektivi je bila dodana emska, glas je dobila avtoetnografija. Z raziskovalčevo vpetostjo v sistem in lasten teren je dodana drugačna razsežnost razumevanja in interpretacija procesov folklorizacije in dediščinjenja v socialističnem obdobju in po njem.

Nove oblike folklornih dejavnosti so vse bolj participativne narave in se zato oblikovno in vsebinsko spreminjajo ter dajejo prednost preprostejšim elementom, da se lahko hitreje vključi širši krog zainteresiranih. Pri tem je poudarjen predvsem čustveni vidik pred bolj formalnimi predstavitvami. Participativno petje, plesanje in igranje v in onkraj folklornih skupin, organizirani festivali, pevska tekmovanja in tekmovanja folklornih skupin ter plesi na prostem odsevajo mnogoplastnost folklorne dejavnosti, ki v sebi obenem združuje institucionalno organiziranost in reprezentacijsko vlogo ter možnost utelešenja in izražanja čustev, zaradi česar je ta dejavnost tako privlačna za mnoge.

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Hidden in Folklore: The Past and Present of the Revival Movement in Post-Socialist Countries

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The study points to the ambivalence and ambiguity of the folklore movement, which in the environment of the former socialist Czechoslovakia was sometimes associated with the expression "hiding in folklore", describing in particular the act of creating an alternative space to the everyday reality that did not allow a person to fully self-realize or express their own identity. We ask to what extent this metaphor represents the nature of today's folkloric activities in the post-socialist society.
▪ **Keywords**: folklore, revival, post-socialism, memory, Czech Republic

Študija opozarja na ambivalentnost in dvoumnost folklornega gibanja, ki se je v okolju nekdanje socialistične Češkoslovaške včasih povezovalo z izrazom »skrivanje v folklori«. Izraz opisuje zlasti ustvarjanje alternativnega prostora vsakdanji realnosti, ki posamezniku ni omogočala popolne samouresničitve ali izražanja lastne identitete. Sprašuje se, v kolikšni meri ta metafora predstavlja naravo današnjih folklornih dejavnosti v postsocialistični družbi.
▪ **Ključne besede**: folklora, preporod, postsocializem, spomin, Češka

Introduction

The folklore movement in the second half of the 20th century in former Czechoslovakia was, as well as in many other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, connected with totalitarian regimes which used it, to a lesser or greater degree, as its propagandistic instruments (Stavělová, Buckland, 2018). Only recently, after the fall of the so-called Iron Curtain, and with a critical stance, researchers in Bohemia are inquiring to what extent activities of folklore ensembles arising in towns and cities, mainly in the 1950s, actually turned into ideological weapons and to what extent they may have been "islets of freedom" (Vaněk, 2002; Stavělová, 2017; Pavlicová, Uhlíková, 2018) or tools of inner emigration. The research project of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (further as AV ČR) running over several years focused mainly on the study of this ambivalence of the folklore movement and utilised possibilities offered by oral history research. As it can be concluded from interviews with narrators from across Bohemian and Moravian folklore ensembles, the aforementioned phenomenon turned out to be highly ambiguous.[1]

[1] In the course of three years, approx. 230 interviews were conducted with almost 70 narrators from selected ensembles from Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. This was a representative sample from 25 groups existing over several decades which allowed for a view of several generations. The narrators were selected evenly with respect to gender, activity in dance and music part of the ensemble, regular membership or position in the artistic or organisational management of the ensemble.

Their statements confirmed the fact that in the insecure and contradictory times this fellowship became a place where many alternative ideas could be implemented in a creative way (Stavělová et al., 2021). Their narratives often use the metaphor "hiding in folklore", meaning that when people could not implement their ideas within their usual work or spaces, they found another way to render them through music, dance and other activities connected with the folklore movement (organising festivals, shows, competitions). This historical experience was undoubtedly projected into the way through which the folklore movement setting could turn into a communication tool. Moreover, it is obvious that this kind of subliminal talk also generates its other varieties or kinds reaching into the present. However, without understanding the connections to the totalitarian era and to that of normalisation or late socialism, one cannot understand the present form of folklore activities already connected with the era of post-socialism.

Folklore and post-socialism as bricolage

The many discussions and developments of the concept of post-socialism in recent decades (Bryant, Mokrzycki, 1994; Burawoy, Verdery, 1999; Hann, 2002; Bradshaw, Stenning, 2004; Brandstädter, 2007) have brought new perspectives on the trajectory of development in the former Eastern Bloc countries after 1989, and despite the often dismissive attitude towards some theories – or the existence of post-socialism itself in the present day – it appears that this fact cannot be simplified. Some authors argue that the term post-socialist should not be abandoned (Hann, Humphrey, Verdery, 2002: 1–28). In doing so, they point to the fundamental differences of the post-socialist world from the Western capitalist world and to the fact that socialism is imprinted in the minds, traditions and cultures of post-socialist societies, and probably will be for a long time to come. The concept of 'bricolage', which is based on the knowledge that institutional change is influenced not only by the inherited legacies of the past but also by factors, knowledge, and experiences from the current institutional environment for example, is proving to be increasingly relevant. The legacy of socialism is still evident and cannot simply be overlooked, having its roots embedded deep in the period of late socialism (Kopeček, 2019).

Even the sphere of cultural activity under study carries with it a certain heritage, whether consciously or unconsciously, but at the same time it yearns for the realisation of new visions. Here, the boundary between cultural and collective memory is almost invisible; remembering and forgetting is a natural part of the process (Goldfarb, 2019: 55). This often consists of merely glossing over one element and emphasizing another already existing. For example, the now preferred spontaneous entertainment with folklore as an interaction between dancers and musicians is as old as the folklore movement itself – within folklore groups there has always been a certain parallel between what was

Figure 1: Performance of the folklore ensemble Vycpálkovci in 1951. Source: Archives of the Institute of Ethnology of the CAS, Documentation of the Czech Folklore Movement 1950–1970.

for the stage and what remained, so to speak, under the stage.[2] Embodied knowledge or competence acquired through practice in a folklore ensemble can become performance in any number of other contexts. However, this contemporary performance acquires a fundamental meaning and becomes representative of new attitudes and ideas, as sociologist Jeffrey Goldfarb characterizes such collective memory: "There is a need for memory, tempered by imagination. There is a need to not only remember, forget, and re-remember, but also to re-invent, to work to start anew" (Goldfarb, 2019: 63).

Narrator and narratives

In this context one may ask how members of the folklore movement can be viewed generally, and how they can be characterised as members of the contemporary society. It is often difficult to assess to what level they, through the activity in the folklore ensemble, knowingly supported – mainly during Stalinism – the idea of a new socialist society, and to what level it was only a mere temporary post-war euphoria connected with the

[2] Ensemble celebrations of birthdays, weddings, etc. have always been a welcome opportunity for informal entertainment based on folk music, singing and dancing. This practice is also referred to by some authors as the third existence of folklore, i.e. the process whereby the competence acquired through active participation in a folklore ensemble is usable beyond its normal rehearsals and performances.

belief in a better and fairer world. Attitude towards this activity no doubt changed during the post-Stalinist era, and mainly in the consolidation period after 1968. Were they a "silent majority", people seeking their own identity and their place in society during the years of normalisation? Were these people searching for a chance to escape from the stifling reality or looking for an alternative to the everyday life? What were their political standpoints in the era of late socialism? Were they supporters of the political regime or its opponents? Or were they just "ordinary people"? Was their stance totally passive and they approached their existence as life set on the stage of propaganda which everyone gradually stopped believing in? Did they participate through this in "emptying the regime" as historian Miroslav Vaněk (2009: 13) contemplates?

Narrations, remembering and interviews reveal a wide range of motivations leading to a continuous replenishment of new members arriving, during the whole second half of the 20th century, with various expectations. Some of these expectations prevail; generally we can divide them into a few topics and simply characterise them as *"I enjoyed singing, dancing and playing music", "I wanted to impress girls", "it was fun", "I enjoyed learning something new", "we travelled to perform in Western countries"* or *"I found a good bunch of people there"*. The statement *"the whole of my life is there"* could be heard numerous times, and this gives evidence about an activity that surpasses a usual leisure. This is also supported by those narratives that repeatedly stress an inclination to music, singing, physical activity and theatre. It is obvious that people interested in this domain often felt distinctive enjoyment and need to perform on a stage. This was a very strong motivation which required them to sacrifice a big part of their free time and to be ready to channel it from purposeful engagement into an activity leading to the feeling of satisfaction.

The narrators were very willing to give an interview, and were rather open in their answers. Moreover, they regarded the interviews as a chance to retrospect their long-term activity in the ensemble, including their life stories – but still, their statements have to be approached highly critically. Firstly, one must bear in mind that their statements contain an element of nostalgia, which may transfer the message onto a more or less idealised level. The narrators reminisced their youth, the times when they met their loves and future partners and longed for a life without solitude, and they experienced many events together. They wished to turn everything they verbalised into a pleasant memory because they were involved in the ensemble's activities mainly to gain pleasant experiences. If we were to listen to these "voices of memory", we should admit that they are a dubious and unstable source, changeable in time. A process of recollection plays its role here, giving individual memory an extra element of "permanent movement, dynamics and boost which cause its permanent reorganisation" (Le Goff, 2007: 28–30; Vaněk, Mücke, Pelikánová, 2007: 63).

Ego-documents as well can aptly characterise the time spent in the folklore movement, since they significantly complement similar recollections with a more

contradictory perception of life within the folklore movement (Odvárka, 2008; Kabele, 2014). Found in these is a considerable amount of sarcasm and a critical stance. Such a thoughtful self-reflexion allows to distinguish numerous paradoxes which naturally permeate moments of sheer euphoria and joy of simple being in a folk dance ensemble. It serves as evidence of the environment within folklore ensembles. Irrespective of the era, ensembles had their characteristic attributes without which continuous renewal of the community would not take place. Stress on inclination to music and dance and on performing them was an essential part of every ensemble's existence. It appears across all collected narratives and relates to any period. This magic key to establishing bonds necessary to form a community had to be adopted and mastered by everyone who entered the territory.[3] This document and many narrations about common experiences during ensemble tours, trips, training workshops or celebrations prove that, at the same time, it was supposed to be a thoroughly human matter – or without malicious rivalry. Conflict-free relationships are always stressed, as if nobody wanted to admit that some people, whom memories embellish as "ever cheerful" enthusiasts, could have in fact been, under different circumstances, unscrupulous informants or opportunists. When a community was being formed there was a kind of generally accepted consensus that behaviour like this doesn't belong; nobody searched for information, it was a collective participation on building a picture of paradise. After all, it was a community which did not make one permanently obliged, and its picture lasted as long as it was consciously renewed.

Safe place

Due to the changes in society during the second half of the 20th century, the environment of folklore ensembles with their rather stable membership groups meant for many participants a calming counterweight to the insecure world "outside the ensemble" and, as one of the narrators described it, *"a safe place"*.

> *Well, you can't say it any differently. It'll sound like platitudes but it gave you ... kind of way of life that was fun, or still is.* […] *Our life was great, wasn't it? We had a blast. And we had loads of friends, it was* […] *kind of full, all the time we've had lots to do, all the time we were busy and enjoyed it. It fulfilled our life* […]*, it's a kind of hobby, like* […] *you have some interests, you always meet folks, they age with you and at the same time there are some young ones and their kids, and their kids' kids, and so on. And you can still go to that familiar place, which I think is absolutely*

[3] Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2006) characterises the community and its various forms.

> *fantastic when you're old, and that's the biggest trouble – courses for the elderly, I know how it all goes* [from professional perspective]*, because the folks they used to know die, and they don't have any more friends and nowhere to go, because they don't have anyone to go with* […] *they're frightened of a strange environment* - […] *This environment* [of the ensemble] *is closely familiar to us, what happens here and how, what I can expect, who I can meet there* […] *you're not shy there, even if you're not really fit* […] *and when your roles change, you feel safe there. I keep saying that a person kind of starts to be insecure in a new environment, insecure in new company and so on. We're still in a safe environment because we know it.*[4]

As the citation from the interview shows, the environment of a folklore ensemble was perceived not only as a safe space where music and dance could be performed, but also as the place where one could establish, often life-long, social bonds. Traditional cultural manifestations as cultural capital[5] of its own kind provided the feeling of security thanks to its invariability and indisputability. Therefore, the background of the ensemble often became a place where one's own identity and inner freedom could be found. The clearly hierarchically divided community did not ask where an individual was coming from, but what benefit they could bring to the whole community. The clearly divided roles – a dancer, a singer, a choreographer, a costumier and others – contoured this social framework acutely and gave its participants the feeling of social and human attachment. Contrary to the other spheres of public life, this kind of identification with the aforementioned environment could not only bring satisfaction from a voluntary choice, but also from a feeling of togetherness supported by music and dance activities requiring solidarity and sharing equal conditions.

These facts cannot be generalised – an individual character of each statement should be taken into account. A summary of such statements helps to define this social setting, the picture of which is created by narratives with all the pitfalls of subsequent interpretation since human memory and its limited abilities, as one has to keep self-reminding, is the main agent in this process. First of all, we must allow for its selectiveness, but also for the fact that narrating represents not only mere memories of narrators, but to a certain level also a consciously presented picture of past events. It is always a reconstruction of the past, its interpretation and evaluation, sometimes with a need to transform it, make it complete or improve it. Another factor that sometimes plays its

[4] Narrator (1954), producer, dancer, 5. 4. 2019.

[5] In this case we speak of embodied cultural capital – as a long-lasting disposition of body and mind. Equally, it can be perceived as objectivised in the form of goods, i.e. books, collections, and guidebooks, considered as being institutionalised because a certain cultural competence becomes guaranteed through various courses and seminars. For more details see the chapter "The Forms of Capital" (Bourdieu, 1986: 241–258).

role, as the historian Miroslav Vaněk mentions (2009), is a shameful feeling connected with an effort to obfuscate[6] reality. It may arise from some respondents' conviction that participation in the above activities was a way of collaboration with the ruling regime, which may be judged in a negative way in hindsight. The research carried out so far, however, has not confirmed this presumption. Contrary to this, the absence of a shameful feeling points to an apolitical perception of the folklore movement by its members. Partly, it could have also worked as an infrastructure providing a temporary alternative to the contemporary society (Stavělová, 2015: 198–203).

"Until satisfaction lasts"

We still need to inquire how to characterise the meaning of such a community. Also, what actually contributed to establishing and maintaining a community where activities far beyond the scope of everyday life could have taken place? We have mentioned the so-called inner emigration, representing a strategy how not to participate in public matters and hide from social oppression paradoxically into society's own innards.[7] Zygmunt Bauman (2006: 87) develops an idea of the place of safety in an unsecure world as an associated concept. For him, the fact that this should be a "DIY" activity is an essential prerequisite for safety – meaning that this concept should be based on a brotherly unity or communal spirit. In a place where the state has failed, a community will provide the feeling of safety epitomized in "a territory inhabited" by its members, which also means certain separation and isolation.[8] To establish a community, there must be an incentive – a kind of "entry and exit visa". The discourse nature of community lies in the ability to recognize either its ethical or aesthetic nature, but usually both aspects are combined, Bauman states. What constitutes an ethical community is the right to strive for social recognition in fair conditions of equal opportunity; it is woven from long-term commitments and unshakeable duties. This permanency of duties allows the construction of future and elaborate plans with known variables, which creates bonds of "brotherly sharing". All this is done with a vision of guaranteed certainty, security, safety (ibid.: 58–62). An aesthetic community, on the other hand, gives a number of individuals a chance to be temporarily rid of their separately experienced worries and concerns, to which they still return though. Ties which do not bind are made ad hoc, the

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[6] Miroslav Vaněk mentions "a shameful feeling" mainly in connection with narratives concerning the normalisation era, when the narrators were in conflict with the post-November authoritative discourse, and they sometimes tend to obfuscate their statements to avoid negative evaluation due to conformity and participation in the political regime.

[7] The concept of inner emigration is used in connection with inactivity or closure from external pressure. It means building an individual mental space rather than a specific shared environment. This notion was used in a scientific study on German literature of the 1930s and 1940s (see Donahue, Kirchner, 2003).

[8] Compare also with Davidová, 2008: 198–205.

participants do not carry them away as they are only "carnival bonds". When both layers are permeating, an "ethical authority of leaders" as a moral supervision and calming power is amalgamated with the need of permanent ritual renewal of the community, with respect to its transitory and movable nature. In both cases a community survives only until it is beneficial and acceptable (ibid.: 54). Its important role is to guarantee joy from togetherness without inconvenient bonds. However, this togetherness appears to be real. It is experienced to seem real and responsive to the desires of individuals, who do not feel that their freedom is being encroached. The possibility of choice (freedom) is its main weapon and the most sought-after reward; the fight for identity is an ongoing process. This, however, must stay flexible and open to experiments and alterations. The motto "until further notice" is valid here. A chance to leave a community is more important than "realism" of identity being strived for (ibid.: 52).

By all means, the attributes of a community and the relativity of its existence can be transferred to folklore ensembles, where the motto "until satisfaction lasts" goes double (ibid.: 54). The need to practise regularly with the ensemble made the position of its authorities legitimate. The same can be stated about establishing bonds during joint activities, without which such activities could have not been pursued. Commitments to the group of people (a pack) became a permanent duty. In other words, a reliable attitude to getting the performance on the stage, where the absence of any one individual disrupted its realization. For an ensemble to run smoothly, it was essential to respect these rules because all its activities were based on jointly performed work, and so hardly anyone dared to ruin the effort. On the other hand, however, if an individual wished so, it was possible to leave the social environment of the ensemble at any time and without further constraints.

> *It shouldn't be idealized too much. The ensemble could be something like a family, but in fact without commitments. Once you were done with it, you couldn't care less about some of the people. In fact, sometimes, it was a real relief. But it was the leaders who were most preoccupied with this…*[9]

A continuous process of the preparation and practicing of a repertoire – i.e. sharing jointly experienced "humiliation and suffering" that emerge from any drudgery – was also a continuous means of renewing bonds and the common language. The narratives revealed a strong involvement of members in the creation of the repertoire, and the need to identify with its content. This struggle for identity is related not only to what is perceived as purely male or female expression, but also with the way one experiences their situation in the community. The way a person might impress others and gain

[9] Narrator (1954), mathematician, IT specialist, manager, dancer, and organisational head of the ensemble, 8. 2. 2019.

acceptance was connected with the willingness to identify with a particular musical or dance element, or with a specific artistic direction. The above frameworks were rarely declined, since the choice of a particular ensemble, as a voluntary activity, corresponds with the acceptance of certain types of roles implicit within the outlined "entry visa". If one made a mistake in their choice they could always leave – freedom of choice is, as posited, a necessary prerequisite to perceiving the environment of the community as safe and free. Simultaneously, it is a prerequisite for its existence which is also full of paradoxes: to enforce safety, freedom must be sacrificed; while freedom can be extended only at the expense of safety. According to Bauman (2006: 20), safety without freedom is tantamount to slavery, while freedom without safety means alienation. Also, in the case of folklore ensembles, making, maintaining, and renewing a community were ongoing processes of negotiation conducted through joint creativity, but also through other experiences connected with such processes.

Although many friendships and regular meetings of former members last, the narrators perceive the existence of the ensemble only in connection with the era they spent as its members. For them, this was the time when it was *"the ensemble at its best"*. Existence of the ensemble community is experienced separately by every member. It does not have a permanent validity for an individual, but lasts only as long as one participates. Therefore, own participation is undoubtedly an essential principle of the existence of a folklore ensemble community.

Invisible violence

The inconsistency and aforementioned ambivalence of the folklore movement cannot be univocally characterised unless one understands the historical connections, perceiving the links between the socio-cultural and political context. While the narratives referring to the Stalinist era and the following years describe often absurd requirements of the new socialist art characterised by naïve and, from today's point of view, amusing ideas of idyllic society, the complex structure of the folklore movement picture connected to the era of normalisation is far more refined. While the narrators briefly commented on the fifties as *"we were young and naïve"*, the times of political consolidation in the 1970s and 1980s are reflected upon in several different layers. On one hand the ensemble is perceived as an apolitical community where members do not "politically screen" each other, but a toll for this "safe place" is paid – i.e. a kind of overseeing "private eye" is present, which can be either scary or a harmless stooge. The figure of a dangerous, but sometimes also a funny political officer underlined the ambiguity of this environment and facilitated the feeling of solidarity and tight unity against "the others". However, no one could be certain that an informer does lurk within their own ranks. Despite all that, the place was considered safe. No doubt such a split of thinking

was in harmony with the way contemporary power permeated society; in other words – how people comprehended ideological mottos and how they understood the political establishment in which they lived, how they defended their interests and how they set up their lives in a world saturated with ideology. It was accepted as normal, as historians Pavel Kolář and Michal Pullman, authors of a study on late socialism, mention (2016: 40): "no political order can stay in power over a long period of time unless it gets at least passive support of the people, and unless it becomes normal for most of them."

What did the word normal mean, then? One should realize that the normalisation language contained numerous proclamations of a peaceful life and honest work, non-violence, calm coexistence. Nobody was to be frightened of condemnation in political processes and other similar repressions. The picture of an enemy changed – the so-called undesired elements (mobs, hippies, and hooligans) became new enemies, a parasitic way of life and antisocial behaviour were considered new criminal activities: "Injustice put on white gloves and moved from legendary torture rooms into offices with padded chairs occupied by anonymous bureaucrats" (Havel, 1999: 935). Violence became invisible, and because a scientific leadership of society was highlighted, it was hidden in a sophisticated system of expert institutions. "Non-political" repression was to secure calmness and safety, protection against "antisocial elements", dissidents were stigmatised. This dichotomy between power and society was accompanied by various survival strategies and practices. Any democratic society would denote them as "silent terror" yet they started to be seen as normal (Pullmann, 2011; Kolář, Pullmann, 2016: 78–88).

Ambiguous speech, which might have even undermined the validity of an official language, was symptomatic for the period of invisible violence. It was used in communities characterised by affinity based on common language, and which could create their own speech. According to theoretician of communication Mikhail Bakhtin (Bachtin, 1980) we can distinguish between two types of discourse. One is authoritative speech, for instance when repeating a text learned by heart; this works like a ritual through which one affirms a given order. The other is convincing speech, which has potential to develop new content and adapt to new conditions. As anthropologist Alexej Jurčak (2018) states, certain empty phrases were repeated so that they could sound as authoritative speech of a higher validity. Due to this, a performative aspect of the language was shifted to the forefront, i.e. its form which gained prevalence over the content of the message. The environment of folklore ensembles gradually mastered this language performativity, owing to the fact that individual actors believed in the convincing power of their own speech. Members had the impression that they were in a free, and therefore safe space. Emptied phrases from the authoritative speech, in the shape of banners and mottos above the stages where the ensembles performed, created a large enough cover for their own intimate speech connected with specific experiences of their performances. Switching between these two realms had become so automated

that even the aforementioned surveillance and censorship were merely components of the necessary authoritative language under which something else could be expressed. This "cover" created a protective shield, allowing members of the groups to feel safe in their community. In the words of historian Přemysl Houda (2019: 116), "all such words and acts were deterritorialized parts of the ideological language, which, once separated and reterritorialized, began to carry new, previously unsuspected meanings." These facts confirm the ambivalence of the folklore movement and also partly answer the question how a specific phenomenon can, at a certain point, become a weapon of manipulation and ideology while also providing a safe place where personal strategies can be developed.

In the period of the so-called normalisation, the discrepancy between public proclamations and real life increased. It was usual that things were not told as they were. A kind of metalanguage, endorsing the authoritative discourse, was being created, but at the same time things were happening in a different mode, out of sight, on another level. Such a duality, even a split in thinking, can be easily observed in numerous narratives, from which people's reasoning and acting is obvious. The values of truth and lies gained specific dimensions under the conditions of late socialism. Fear was omnipresent even during late socialism, however it sometimes proved pointless – for instance when children performed at a communist party anniversary, some hitches were brushed aside. This is just another case showing paranoia and the manipulative practices of the ruling regime – respective of its individual occurrence. What a person got away with during one occasion could have serious consequences on another occasion. It always depended on who was present, and how they intended to interpret a particular situation.

> […] *a small boy reached out his hand, saying: "I can see a black beast waiting for his feast." And he was pointing directly at the Communist Party district chairman.* [laughing] *I was really worried because of this. He summoned me to his office about 3 days later and I was thinking: "Oh dear, there will be trouble."* [laughing] *And he says: "It was very nice, this performance, but why were the children wearing such scruffy shoes with holes in their tips?" And I said: "Well, it's because they run all the time and I can't tell their parents to buy the kids new shoes three times a year, because they destroy them instantly." And he said: "Well, so send me an official request and I will give you money for their shoes." And he really did.*[10]

[10] Narrator (1947), lab worker, dance teacher, dancer, ensemble leader, 14. 4. 2019.

The heritage of the folklore movement at the threshold of the third millennium

The question remains how this experience with the use and manipulation of folklore is reflected as a certain form of cultural heritage in the transformed socio-cultural and political conditions of the third millennium, and what its further changes and practices are. Since the early 1990s, there has been a visible effort to transform this sphere of the country's cultural life in the former Czechoslovakia. The environment of folklore ensembles is being freed from the traces of the so-called state-controlled culture. The era of competitive shows where participants were taught what is and what is not true folklore, and where the so-called purity and authenticity of the scenic form was evaluated, has ended. Discussions ceased about what could still be allowed within the folklore genre and how far the reins of imagination and innovation could be released. Here, too, the need for democratization has penetrated, new types of shows have begun to emerge with the aim of promoting a diversity of creative tendencies in the scenic development of folklore, and other activities have emerged to counter the so-called preservation of folklore (Facebook page of Folklorní mejdlo). The surviving institutions for cultural and educational activities were renamed as organizations supporting amateur creativity, and began to offer workshops, seminars and educational courses for leaders and members of folklore groups. Even within the broad community of folklore ensembles (which has maintained its numbers), the variability and diversity of approaches to folklore themes and their appropriation began to manifest itself, not only in the ensemble's production, but also in their further use in social gatherings. These activities began to gain momentum in the second half of the 1990s and especially in the next millennium. Urban folk groups see their revival as a process of liberalisation, and the importance of participation is emphasised, as opposed to the presentational form of the previous folklore movement (see Turino, 2008). A participatory approach also means the possibility of greater improvisation and the exercise of individual creativity. Events are organised in which it is possible to participate even without significant competence; membership in an ensemble is also not a requirement. This inclusiveness is usually supported by non-violent teaching, e.g., at events such as "dance house"[11] or *folklorní mejdlo*.[12] While the former activities have their antecedents in the Hungarian *Táncház* (Quigley, 2014), the *folklorní mejdlo* (Hrbáčková, 2018; Kolačkovská, 2023) are exclusively a Prague, i.e. urban affair. The important thing is that these activities are no longer perceived by the actors themselves as an "old school" folklore movement, but as something completely different, denying the continuity with a past era with which they do not identify. They want to act differently, they seek to create their own

[11] There are also many other examples of the existence of dance houses in neighbouring countries (see Pettan, 2010; Kunej, 2023).

[12] The literal translation of this specific term for a party is "folklore soap"; *mejdlo* also means informal party in the jargon of the Czech language.

Figure 2: Dance workshop during the folklore festival Pardubice – Hradec Králové in 2016. Photo: Daniela Stavělová.

relationship to folklore, and in seeking these resources it usually does not matter where the participants are from. It is not unique, therefore, to have a predilection for Moravian or Slovak folklore, e.g., among native Prague residents, etc.[13] These communities refer to themselves as "folklorists". This defines a group of people (a cultural cohort) who like folklore – but what they themselves include under the term "folklore" here is a much more complex question.

When I was writing the introduction to the collective monograph *The Weight and Weightlessness of Folklore*, I was aware of the "dangerousness" of the term folklore, many times bent in various socio-cultural, political, and national contexts, and decided rather to avoid it (Stavělová et al., 2021: 7–11). Unfortunately, however, this did not work with the consistency I imagined, and I had to accept the logic of its use in the context of individual narratives. In writing today, I have already decided to fully accept how the term is used by contemporary actors in diverse folklore activities and to leave it with the meaning they ascribe to what they do. Being a "folklorist" is in fact a process that can only be understood again through the logic of an emic perspective. Today, this includes cliquishness, selectivity and hybridization, eclecticism, and appropriation of elements of different traditional cultures, the search for certainties on the one hand, and the relativization of postmodern or late modern times on the other. The constant

[13] A student and member of the Prague folklore ensemble Rosénka, which focuses exclusively on the folklore of South Moravia and calls itself Jihomoravská Pražanda (Prague girl from South Moravia), comments succinctly on her Facebook page (Facebook page of Jihomoravská Pražanda).

in this process remains the embodiment and transmission of elements of traditional folk culture of the pre-industrial era, which may be understood as a heritage that can be rethought with the subsequent transformation of this knowledge or cultural memory according to current needs. I see cultural memory here as a process, the starting points being questions of who remembers and with what impact on social relations, as researcher in comparative literature Ann Rigney states in her succinct summary of findings in the field of 'cultural studies':

> Central to this line of inquiry is the understanding that culture and cultural practices are not simply that which merely reflects social attitudes, but are formative in their own right, and need to be understood on their own terms as well as in relation to the actors whose attitudes and emotions they shape. Like two sides to the same sheet of paper, the 'collective' and the 'cultural' perspectives on memory should thus be seen as complementary rather than as mutually exclusive paradigms. (Rigney, 2019: 66)

Why just folklore

The speculation about what makes folklore culture, as cultivated in the field of so-called leisure activities attractive leads to a series of hypotheses and cultural anthropological theories. The question still remains as to why the environment of folk ensembles and their activities could have become that trustworthy place allowing a sense of security and the space for alternative thoughts, and what role folklore played in this. Even the fact of portraying elements of traditional music and dance culture in the form of stage compositions represents a certain peculiarity in modern society. What was considered off-putting traditionalism for someone could, on the other hand, gain the attribute of an exotic landscape or romantic visions of a long-lost paradise for another. And perhaps this last aspect may be the main attraction, but not in the same way for everyone. While in the city, folklore could become synonymous with the distant past, for members of many rural ensembles, it was (and in some regions still is) a close experience preserved within the family. Emotional attachment to the transmitted experience through the family background and local community could stand in contrast to the romantic nostalgia of the globalized urban labyrinth. While nostalgia often tends to be associated with romantic nationalism fuelled by the idea of a disappearing world and its native idyll, the handed-down experience is still an existing reality. As sociologist Svetlana Boym (2001: 10) states, nostalgia does not stem from one's own lived presence, but from the lived presence of others. The native is not nostalgic, but contrary to that, it is a stranger who becomes a mediator between the local and the global. Nostalgia is an irreplaceable and non-elective time, and what matters is the difference from the

current state. The object of romantic nostalgia is beyond the current space, usually in the past or somewhere where time has come to a standstill. However, nostalgia does not represent opposition to progress – it does not only aim backward, it goes sideways and rather seduces than overcomes. It is always shared; it does not divide, but rather unites (ibid.: 11).

Nostalgia as a part of romantic nationalism is a significant element that helps create national identity, and this historical experience is undoubtedly preserved in collective memory. For the folklore movement, it is characteristic that this manipulation was carried out in both directions, which means that folk culture and its means also became a tool for individuals to experience moments of weightlessness, belonging, happiness, or dreamlike idylls. The emblematic nature that folk music and dance acquired especially in the second half of the 20th century can thus become a means of creating a sort of sacred bubble that can only be entered after "properly cleansing one's hands and feet". Folk culture is attributed with many other meanings beyond those implicitly given to it. Rural folklore traditions are often associated with patriotism, with images of the so-called pure, primal soul of the nation. Collective memory is then a strong link between the past and present, with the most important moment for its preservation being the synchronization of the phenomenon with the present. The elements of traditional folk culture in modern society can also act as a hyperbole of everyday life. Wearing a "folk costume" allows, similarly to a mask, switching to a world of different and socially excluded values. They belong to the past and thus create a kind of fairy-tale landscape of paradise lost. As the medievalist Jacques Le Goff (1998: 38) writes, characterizing his concept of the long Middle Ages, "it is that world we have lost, even though we are still linked to it by a nostalgic memory of our grandparents' time. It is the Middle Ages which we are still connected with, by an uninterrupted tradition of oral rendering."

Maybe this is why members of folk dance ensembles are willing to wear tight-fitting, uncomfortable traditional costumes to be drenched in sweat and chafing in tight bodices during lively dances. This is related to the hyperbolisation of folklore in modern society, which has given rise to a sort of para-language – something that is not real, but is perceived as such in these intentions. This search for authenticity took place within the folklore movement from the late 1960s and lasted for two decades. It was originally intended to simplify the scenic stylization of folklore, but it eventually took a direction where the language of traditional folk culture became a carrier of current feelings and experiences. It turned into a developed scenic genre that still features not only its specific movement vocabulary, but also a characteristic type of performativity. This lies in the selection and further processing of themes that express universal human experiences, often with the use of a unique perspective through the lens of traditional folk culture values. It is as if the transmitted experience passed on by collective memory continues to have an effect, connecting the past with the present and contributing to the creation of something new. This is confirmed by its enduring strong link to the present,

as collective memory is also socially conditioned and only what has a relationship to the present enters into the process of remembering (Halbwachs, 1992: 52). Similar speech can also be perceived as a certain alibi to escape participating in current societal issues, or as a way to communicate something urgent through "outdated" historical images. It depends on how this "harmless past" is perceived and interpreted by the recipients of the message.

This traditional and latent experience has become a sort of cultural capital, owned by society, or more precisely, by the part of society that has acquired the right ("entry visa") to use it (Bourdieu, 1986: 241–258, 1993). Such right cannot be easily obtained and requires hours of regular training or other practices related to folk music and dance expression. The aforementioned effort is then rewarded with the right to present oneself as part of a unique imaginative world. Although everyone has to wait for this moment for a certain period of time, on the other hand almost everyone is given the chance: no special skills are required, just average singing, playing, and dancing abilities. This is one of the key features of traditional folk culture, which has never been a selective environment. Its purpose has been to integrate as many individuals as possible into the shared living space. At local dance parties, people not only met each other but also negotiated their individual and social relationships.

This cultural capital and its habits are easily transferable and shared within a community. No one is its owner, and anyone who masters its language can become a participant in the communication. Moreover, traditional folk culture contains so-called carnivalesque elements, which, according to British historian Edward Muir (2005), have their own ritual language that enables the creation of a "liminal" time and space for alternative ideas, and the reversal of the common values of everyday life (Bachtin, 1980, 2007). The ritual language and its knowledge thus offer the possibility to utilize participatory and presentational elements and initiate a social conversation that can take place even in a wider public space. The polysemy of such a language (see also Golež Kaučič, 2021) contributes to the creation of the dichotomy of folklore versus society and supports the idea of the ambivalence of the folk movement in the second half of the 20th century in the Czech lands. The weight and weightlessness of folklore are continuously balanced in this process, offering space for various interpretations of human behaviour.

The publication, whose title *The Weight and Weightlessness of Folklore* captures the ambivalence of the socialist folklore movement, worked with this fact. The weight of the excessive conjuncture of folklore groups in the 1950s (Mináč, 1958) was depicted in contrast to the weightlessness perceived as a paraphrase of the title and content of the novel by the Czech writer Ludvík Kundera (2006), *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Weightlessness is here associated with the possibility of escaping from reality into a state that is a mere appearance or illusion of total escape. Like Kundera's unbearable lightness of being, the weightlessness of the folk movement is conceived as

Figure 3: Visual representation of the actors of the Folklorní mejdlo. Photo: Eliáš Slunečko, 2020.

an idyll in a certain ambiguity or polysemy. Kundera presents it as "happiness wrapped in sadness", when even "lightness becomes unbearable" and merges with the image of the contradictory and emotional split of the so-called normalisation. The question arises whether a similar weightlessness is symptomatic of the activities of today's "folklorists" and in contrast to what. Is this milieu of enthusiastic folklore lovers, the "happy ghetto" that musician and sociologist Trever Hagen (2019) writes about? That is, a place where the practice of music and dance helps build resistance to difficult times and contributes to the formation of a common identity through shared emotions? Or is it merely a liminality needed as a counterbalance to the everyday structure? But why is it that folklore, when there is a wide range of contemporary music and dance practices to choose from, again becomes the vehicle for creating space for alternative ideas?

Folklore does not belong in a showcase!

Semi-structured interviews conducted on the topic of folklorists and folklore reveal a number of facts providing answers to the question of the meaning of folklore activities today: folklore's loss of emblematic quality, the desire to be oneself, folklore as a counterbalance to modernity with its frequent concept of home, the search for a deeper meaning of folklore in connection with nature or cosmology, the emphasis on

the natural emotionality of folklore and its interconnection with one's own life stories, the experience of participation and the associated flow, the appropriation of any tradition and the possibility of identifying with it, and finally the conviction that "folklore definitely does not belong in a showcase, folklore is cool after all..."

In interviews with today's "folklorists", the possibility of freely developing a multifaceted tradition and creating one's own concepts of identification with this culture, with the possibility of having multiple identities, is emphasized; as an interview with a musician, educator and leader of a children's folklore ensemble summarizes exemplarily:

> [...] *As well as my siblings, I've been involved in music since I was very young, and we were involved in folklore within the folklore group, which is to some extent the basis of why one likes these community events and why one likes to be with a group and why one likes to go on these tours and getting to know the way... just the colours of folklore in Slovakia, in Moravia, wherever, in Romania. And I was drawn to it. My mom encouraged us and still does, she's a costume maker.*
>
> [...] *I kept telling myself that maybe I belonged in the village, and that I would either like to have some deeper relationship with a village or somewhere, just to be in the countryside more often. And when I was fifteen, I got to know the area of Moravian Kopanice, so actually the Moravian-Slovak border around Starý Hrozenkov, thanks to our mother. And it was love at first sight, at first feeling. And from the age of fifteen we went there and bought a cottage. And it's my second home, it's on my ID card.*[14]

The informant emphasizes the connection between practicing folklore and her own stories with real emotions, such as her own wedding, or wearing parts of traditional folk clothing in everyday life:

> [...] *I even used the costume at my own wedding. I did have different people make me a wedding outfit that was more inspired by the costume, but I wore it at my own wedding and had it made.*
>
> [...] *For example, I'll wear a black pleated skirt and I'll wear a velvet corded "lajblík"* [The upper part of a woman's traditional folk dress, a type of vest in dialect] *from Rejdová* [...] *Or I wear "jupka" a lot, I even used to have winter "jupka" and "kabátek"* [small jacket in Moravian dialect] *that I wore instead of a jacket. And it's just really important what you have and what is the narrow specifics in that village, that if you take*

[14] Narrator (1988), musician, teacher, leader of children's folklore ensemble, 9. 5. 2022.

> *something, for example, from Horňácko, from southeastern Moravia, where there are still some relatively established rules about how the costume should look and what belongs to it, you don't wear everything with such a light heart, for example, with jeans*.[15]

In an interview for Czech Radio, Anežka Konečná, one of the founders of "folklorní mejdlo" in Prague, clearly states:

> One must be a tramp or a folklorist today to be complete. Through song and dance, friendships are formed for life. Collective singing used to be common, but lately more and more people are looking for and finding something in folklore that they miss in their lives. (Klusáková, 2018)

Yet folklore is also often perceived as a natural part of life, especially in places where spontaneous transmission from generation to generation is still possible, as can be seen in an interview for the magazine *Respekt* with Vlastimil Ondra, a primary school teacher and leader of a children's folklore group in a village in Moravia:

> Yesterday, I was on a school trip with my first graders and my second graders to the dino-park. On the bus, I took out my accordion and we sang the whole, more than an hour-long journey there. On the way back. And you think it was just the kids in the band singing? No, not just these. All of them, enthusiastically, and they knew the songs, like, of course. If it was possible, there wouldn't even be ensembles for me. On the contrary, I think they're pretty much a rarity in 2009.
>
> Interviewer: Are the songs written down in a songbook, or are they passed down by oral tradition? Do you know them from your grandparents?
>
> Vlastimil Ondra: We use all the possibilities you listed. We use all of them in different ways in different situations. I don't think I'm reviving anything. It lives through me, among other things. (Respekt, 2009)

We cannot exclude the similarity of today's folklore activities with the search for authenticity taking place in Slovakia as a movement for authentic folklore (Feinberg, 2018; Hrabovská, 2023), although these are two different cultural and historical processes. While the movement for authentic folklore in Slovakia stems from the need to contradict the previous high stylization of the production of folk dance ensembles, and instead create a more natural form of spontaneous performance of music and dance on stage, the form of today's folk dance activities in the Czech Republic is shaped by

[15] Narrator (1988), musician, teacher, leader of children's folklore ensemble, 9. 5. 2022.

the need for community gatherings and the realization of individual imagination. In general, however, both the Slovak movement and Czech folklore activities can be seen as a kind of search for the authenticity of folklore in contrast to an inauthentic present, while folklorism, as Joe Feinberg (2018: 31) writes, mediates the experience of folklore in the context of modern times. From the perspective of philosophy and sociology, Feinberg then seeks to relate this process to the discourse of liberalism which sheds light on a number of tensions.

However, the emphasis on the immediacy and inclusiveness of folkloric encounters – the search for the certainties of proven traditions interfering with lifestyle – also draws attention to the features of hipsterism embedded in other social classes. It has been characterized as an example of postmodern subcultural identity or the characteristic identity of Bauman liquid modernity (Plesník et al., 2008; Malíčková, 2019). The 'folklorists' show signs of subculture as a process of self-awareness and self-definition, where elements of spontaneity and unconsciousness play a significant role. On the other hand, though, its style is a statement, a system of signs and expressive qualities that are transposed into subcultural expression, i.e. "a set of typical expressive aspects by which a person (group) reveals its own identity and understanding of reality" (Plesník et al., 2008: 45). Subcultural semanticisation here takes place by distinguishing between the "authentic" and the "stylised", i.e. sincerity, authenticity, and the individual as the highest value of the authentic (spontaneous) (Plesník et al., 2008; Hebdige, 2012). Contemporary "folklorists" are particularly associated with hipsterism by understanding tradition as a guarantee of authenticity, reinterpreting images of cultural memory in contemporary aesthetic and artistic reflection, linking subcultural identity with lifestyle and mainstream fashion trends, highlighting signs that are given symbolic potential as a sign of a distinct identity (see Daniel, Řídký, 2017; Malíčková, 2019: 51).

By way of conclusion

What we are witnessing here is the return of some traditional values and ways of thinking: the predilection for association, volunteering, moral outrage, the importance of love, which, as the French sociologist Gilles Lipovetsky (2013: 8) writes, is the result of the hypermodernity that is taking place before our eyes. According to him we are in a phase after the second cultural revolution, where these phenomena not only continue to persist, but even deepen when necessary, adding a dimension of humanity to individualism. Traditional folk culture thus regains, not only in urban environments, its specific meaning and becomes a representation of different attitudes; of the intrinsic need of the actors of folk activities themselves to belong somewhere, to identify with an ideological environment and to face new life uncertainties within the security provided by the community. This current wave of folkloric enthusiasm will have to be

Figure 4: Sales stand with clothing with folklore elements at the International Folklore Festival Strážnice in 2019. Photo: Daniela Stavělová.

seen from this perspective, and what the age of late modernity brings will have to be discerned here. As in the folklore movement of the last century, the metaphor of hiding in folklore does not seem to lose its appeal even if it does not manifest in the vocabulary of today's generation of so-called folklorists. It remains evident that even today, this environment is perceived as a counterbalance to the contemporary world, especially in the context of manifesting alternative attitudes or searching for one's own identity and stronger social ties that are not offered by the conventional forms of life. A focus is well deserved on the identification of phenomena where there is a "recycling" and transformation of interrelationships and contexts related to the creation of resilience, and the ability to face the complexities of the times.

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Skrito v folklori: preteklost in sedanjost preporodnega gibanja v postsocialističnih državah

Namen študije je opozoriti na ambivalentnost in dvoumnost folklornega gibanja, ki se je v obdobju nekdanje socialistične Češkoslovaške včasih povezovalo z izrazom »skrivati se v folklori«. Izraz je opisoval ustvarjanje alternativnega prostora vsakdanji realnosti, ki človeku ni omogočala, da bi se v celoti samouresničil ali izrazil svojo identiteto. V drugi polovici 20. stoletja je šlo predvsem za ustvarjanje prostora, v katerem bi se lahko uresničili lastni načrti ali družbene vezi, ki niso ustrezale takratnim političnim idejam. Čeprav je bilo folklorno gibanje od začetka 50. let prejšnjega stoletja instrument kulturne politike totalitarnega režima in je postalo predstava lepše prihodnosti, je kmalu razvilo svoj jezik, ki je omogočal dvojno branje ali sublimno dojemanje tega, kar se je dogajalo v tej dejavnosti. Folklorne skupine in njihove dejavnosti so tako postale okolje, v katerem sta polisemičnost jezika in njegova performativnost omogočili t. i. deteritorializacijo pomenov, tj. nekaj reči ali narediti in nekaj drugega misliti. To dejstvo je bilo podrobno preučeno v okviru triletnega raziskovalnega projekta *Teža in breztežnost folklore*, s podnaslovom *Folklorna gibanja v čeških deželah v drugi polovici 20. stoletja,* katerega spoznanja so leta 2021 izšla v istoimenski kolektivni monografiji.

Analiza pripovedi, posnetih s skoraj 300 pripovedovalci, je prinesla presenetljive ugotovitve, ki kažejo na zmožnost uporabe poznavanja folklore za uprizarjanje samega sebe. Trenutno raziskujemo pomen današnjih folklornih dejavnosti, ki v sodobni postsocialistični družbi uspevajo z neznansko hitrostjo, in se sprašujemo, kako se izkušnja performativnega jezika folklornega gibanja socialistične preteklosti zrcali v današnjih premislekih o ljudskem izročilu v

pretežno urbani družbi in kakšna je dediščina tega gibanja. Sprašujemo se, ali je pojem »skrivanja v folklori« smiseln v današnji svobodni družbi, ki ponuja številne možnosti za samouresničitev. Preučujemo sodobne manifestacije ljudi, ki se označujejo za »folkloriste«, in opozarjamo, da se pojavljajo realnosti, ki posameznike ponovno silijo v iskanje svoje identitete hkrati z iskanjem varnega prostora, kakor Zygmunt Bauman označuje različne oblike skupnosti. Opazujemo nove oblike folklornih dejavnosti, ki so za razloček od druge polovice 20. stoletja vse bolj participativne narave in se zato oblikovno in vsebinsko spreminjajo. Participativnost daje prednost preprostejšim elementom z možnostjo hitrega vključevanja širšega kroga zainteresiranih, tj. ljubiteljev folklore, in poudarja predvsem čustveni vidik pred bolj formalnimi predstavitvami ansamblov. Zanima nas, kateri elementi folklore in njene etnične označenosti so povezani z določenimi stališči njenih današnjih izvajalcev in kako se ti dojemajo kot del nekakšne kulturne skupine. Pokazalo se je, da »skritost v folklori« do danes ni izgubila svojega pomena, čeprav se ne pojavlja v besednjaku današnje generacije t. i. folkloristov, vendar je še vedno očitno, da je to okolje še danes dojeto kot protiutež sodobnemu svetu, zlasti v kontekstu izražanja alternativnih stališč ali iskanja lastne identitete in močnejših socialnih vezi, ki jih konvencionalne oblike življenja ne ponujajo.

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The Power of Authorities, Interpretations, and Songs: The Discourse of Authenticity in the Latvian Folklore Revival

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This is a collaborative study on how, and by whom, the discourse of folklore authenticity was developed in Latvia in the 1970s–1980s and how it affected and still affects the Latvian folklore revival and post-revival practices. Influential positions and vital discussions have arisen in search of meaningful (authentic) folklore practices, such as honouring an unattainable ideal and practicing political resistance, creative ancientness, and spiritual empowerment.

▪ **Keywords**: folklore revivals, non-democratic states, authority, ancientness, creativity, contemporary spirituality

Prispevek predstavlja skupno študijo o tem, kako in kdo je v 70. in 80. letih 20. stoletja v Latviji razvil diskurz folklorne avtentičnosti ter kako je vplival in še vedno vpliva na latvijsko folklorno preporodno in popreporodno prakso. Pojavila so se vplivna stališča in plodne razprave v iskanju smiselnih (avtentičnih) folklornih praks, ki spoštujejo nedosegljiv ideal in prakticirajo politični upor, ustvarjajo starodavnosti in prinašajo duhovno opolnomočenje.

▪ **Ključne besede**: folklorni preporod, nedemokratične države, avtoriteta, starodavnost, ustvarjalnost, sodobna duhovnost

Introduction

Musicologist Allan Moore wrote that the notion of authenticity and its synonyms (real, genuine, true) is perhaps the most loaded of all the value words employed in music discourse (Moore, 2002: 209). This observation fully applies to the folklore and folk music revivals, where authenticity is a key concept both among scholars and folklore performers. In the Latvian 'folklore movement' (*folkloras kustība*, in this article the term is used alternatively to 'folklore revival'[1]), which began at the end of the 1970s, the notion of authenticity links to many discussions, evaluations, emotions, and disagreements. An important turn in folkloristics and ethnomusicology has been the refusal of the role of authenticators in favour of a more critical approach to the history, uses, and effects of this concept (Bendix, 1997; Bithell, Hill, 2014; Feinberg, 2018; Stavělová, Buckland, 2018).

Similarities can be seen in how the folklore revivals in different countries define authenticity. Still, there are also nuanced differences that point to the various historical, political, and social contexts where the revivals emerge: "To understand why authenticity matters and how it is lived out, we need a grasp of the social context in order to understand and articulate the complex relationships surrounding it" (Speers, 2017: 5). Authenticity researchers also pay attention to the different expectations on which the judgments of authenticity are made: "The performance of authenticity always requires a close conformity to the expectations set by the context in which it is situated" (Grazian, 2019: 192). The choice of valuable, protected, and cultivated folklore elements is often selective or even subjective. For instance, in Latvia, special attention has been paid to the authenticity of singing techniques and styles, and traditional vocal music and folksong texts have generally been prioritized in folklore documentation, research, and performance.

Hill and Bithell pointed out that the concept of authenticity is closely linked to legitimizing revivals and the issue of authority (Hill, Bithell, 2014: 19–24). In the case of Latvia, the legitimization of the folklore movement was doubly complicated because it meant not only the approval of a new aesthetic approach to folklore performances, but also the resistance to a non-democratic political regime that tried to restrict and control the movement. Latvian folklore revival became a part of a broader social movement,

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[1] The commonly used Latvian term *folkloras kustība* (folklore movement) has been used publicly since 1981 and is still the primary notion to designate the folklore revival and post-revival community and process. The word "movement" points to the initial social-political aspirations of the Latvian folklore revival, especially when it became a part of the Baltic Singing Revolution, a broad social movement of 1986–1991 that led to the independence of the Baltic countries from the Soviet Union. There is an ongoing discussion on whether and when the "movement" phase ended and if gaining independence was its most vital purpose and culmination. The Latvian name for the post-revival phase is still under discussion. Meanwhile, we have decided to keep the initial "folklore movement" designation because it is an important identifier for the revival community.

the Baltic Singing Revolution (1986–1991), which aimed at the restoration of independence from the Soviet Union (Šmidchens, 2014), so in this case it is an issue not only about the folkloric but also the political authority.

The discussion on authenticity usually includes concerns about its threats. An important question posed by authenticity researchers is: "authentic in opposition to what?" (Davies, 1991: 24). A clear threat in the case of Latvia was the disruption of its cultural continuity by the Soviet occupation. Besides other consequences, it meant the process of Russification and the dominance of "funified" (Klotiņš, 1988) stylized folklore performances. Ethnomusicologist Martin Boiko defined the authenticity of the Latvian folklore revival, referring primarily to the musical style – as a strategic rejection of the elements of stylized Soviet folk music. He also drew attention to the fact that authenticity soon became an ideology that did not support individual creativity, and therefore some musicians distanced themselves from the "authentic" approach (Boiko, 2001). This article will expand the network of meanings and effects of the authenticity discourse by analyzing various sources.

The article aims to address questions posed in the current interdisciplinary studies of authenticity: under what conditions, by whom, and for whom is the concept of authenticity deployed, rejected, or debated and who profits from it; and how do notions of authenticity differ regarding objects, subjects, and collectives? (Claviez et al., 2020: xi). These questions suggest that a discourse of authenticity has actual authors, sources, and motives and that the meanings and attitudes related to authenticity can differ among various social groups. This collective study explores how the discourse of authenticity was created and used and how it has influenced the Latvian folklore revival and "post-revival" (as defined by Hill, Bithell, 2014: 28–30) practices. Various sources and methods have been used to fulfil the goal: institutional and private archival studies, analysis of media and social networks' discourses, and autoethnography. The authors kept in mind that the folklore revival is not homogeneous, and the understandings of authenticity are diverse and changing.

For a long time, staging folklore and traditional music was not accompanied by a broader and public discussion on authenticity. With the emergence of the folklore revival, the discussion on authenticity flourished among professional folklorists and in public media (two chapters of the article will elaborate on this). A less visible and documented part is the revival community's informal, oral, and unpublished discussions. Therefore, two somewhat marginalized areas of the folklore revival and post-revival will be examined. One is an autoethnographic study by Valdis Muktupāvels on how the revivalists of folk music instruments understood authenticity with limited historical sources and information available. The second is a case study of the contemporary post-revival discourse on a Facebook group related to the recently popular concept of 'empowering songs.'

The history of staging traditional music in Latvia

The history of staged representation of Latvian folklore is closely linked to the first Latvian National Awakening of the second half of the 19th century (Plakans, 1971, 2011: 226; O'Connor, 2003: 46). The rootedness of folklore in the past and its oral transmission created the value of authenticity, antiquity, and originality both during the First Awakening and later, during the folklore revival in the 1980s. These terms have been used synonymously at various times in the practice of traditions or in the evaluation of the performances of traditional music (Bērziņš, 1924: 4; Ramans, 1978: 5). Still, mentioning these notions did not raise a broader discussion on authenticity until the end of the 1970s.

Starting from the late 19th century, traditional music gradually made its way from the village to the stage, becoming a key element in demonstrating past traditions. Staging traditions were intended to 1) preserve them as vanishing values, 2) introduce them to others, and 3) affirm performers' belonging and worldview.

The public representation of Latvian traditional music began with the 10th All-Russian Archaeological Congress, held in Riga on 1–15 August 1896. It included a large open-air ethnographic exhibition of Latvian culture and history in the centre of Riga (Plutte, 1896; Stinkule, 2016). A theatrical musical performance was staged during the exhibition, including scenes of housework, night-watch of horses, St. George's Day celebrations, shepherds' songs, weddings, and various folk games (Unknown, 1896). Andrejs Jurjāns, the greatest Latvian folk music expert of the time, made the musical arrangement and selection of folk songs. More than 100 singers took part in the performance. The participants of the performance were likely from Riga and Latvian provinces. They had different musical and traditional backgrounds, which were unified and adapted to the scenario under the guidance of a musical pedagogue. In this event, the emphasis was placed on creating national unity among Latvians and, through the cultural values on display, placing them alongside other colonially dominant cultures in the Baltic region of that time.

Staged traditional music performances became popular in the inter-war period – after World War I and the establishment of an independent state in 1918. Then the focus was on regional cultural peculiarities, emphasizing their antiquity and uniqueness. One of the regions that gained special attention was the Western part of Latvia called Kurzeme (Courland). In the 1920s and 1930s, folk musicians from Kurzeme often visited Riga, invited by folklorist Emilis Melngailis and linguist Ludis Bērziņš. They demonstrated folk traditions and music at universities, schools, and associations (Melngailis, 1924). The traditions of Kurzeme served as the basis for the first ethnographic films made in Latvia – *Latvian Wedding in Nīca* (Latviešu kāzas Nīcā, 1931) and *The Homeland is Calling, or Wedding in Alsunga* (Dzimtene sauc jeb Kāzas Alsungā, 1935). In both films, folklorist Kārlis Straubergs, who was also

the head of the newly established Archives of Latvian Folklore (1924), participated as a consultant and scriptwriter.

Soon after the annexation of Latvia by the Soviet Union in 1940, preparations began for the Decade of Art and Culture in Moscow, which was scheduled to take place in the autumn of 1941. Due to the war and the following occupation, the Decade of Latvian Culture and Art in Moscow was postponed to 1955 (Kalpiņš, 1957: 2). Among the participants were the so-called ethnographic ensembles of Nīca and Bārta villages and a group of folk singers from the kolkhoz named after Zhdanov in the Preiļi district. The groups prepared thematic theatrical performances *Evening at the Kolkhoz*, wedding customs, and the midsummer evening. The Decade encouraged the emergence of new ethnographic ensembles in other regions of Latvia.

The beginning of the folklore revival was marked by several events in 1978. One of them was an extended concert at the Dailes Theatre in Riga on 14 October 1978. The concert was intended to reflect on thirty years of expeditions organized by Latvian folklorists and featured ethnographic ensembles, instrumental bands, and individual singers. Earlier that year, Ģederts Ramans, Chairman of the Board of the Latvian Union of Soviet Composers, spoke out against the stylizations of folk music, calling for listening to folklore in its original forms (Ramans, 1978). The lengthy folklore concert in the capital Riga, several articles on folklore in the media, and other circumstances gave a strong impulse for the emergence of a distinctive community and style of folk music performances, which in the following years developed into a nationwide folklore revival.

Institutionalized folklore studies addressing the concept of authenticity: The case of 1978

If we consider the concert of 14 October 1978 as one of the significant events, but certainly not the only one (see Bendorfs, 2021: 219–222), of the early phase of the folklore revival, it is worth looking at how it fitted into the field of the organizers' aesthetic views and folklore research interests of the time. The concert was exceptionally well received both by the general audience and by folklore professionals, so it was repeated in the autumn of the same year, on the 25th of November. In the atmosphere of late socialism, years later described as "Brezhnev's twilight" (Cherkasov, 2005; Tompson, 2014: 111), it most likely touched a longing for national independence, which was not yet loudly articulated in the public sphere at the time but slowly unleashed in the following years (see Grīnvalde, 2021: 48, 2022: 167–168). Folklore, myths, shared history, language, and vernacular symbolic codes are essential to the so-called ethnic model of nationalism (see Smith, 1996: 446–451). Thus, the many activities of the folklore revival with the embodied manifestations of folk culture strengthened Latvian national values during the last decade of the Soviet occupation.

The concert at the Dailes Theatre was organized by two institutions in cooperation. In terms of personnel, both represented the culturally educated and responsibly-minded segment of the population of occupied Latvia. The Folklore Sector of the Institute of Language and Literature at the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences was a successor of the Archives of Latvian Folklore (1924) and the principal folklore research centre of the Latvian SSR. Already in the early years of Soviet occupation, as noticed by researchers of the disciplinary history of folkloristics, the agency of the Archives' employees had developed in the interaction between acceptance, resistance, and collaboration (Ķencis, 2019: 221–222). The other event organizer, the Literature Propaganda Department (established in 1968), was part of the apparatus of the Latvian Union of Soviet Writers, whose main tasks were to organize promotional events for literature (Eversone, 2016). Both institutions, following the principles of Soviet governance, were built on a unified model; the prototype was to be found in the colonial centre, Moscow, i.e. in the Russian establishments of science and culture. Albeit with some autonomy, institutions of such significance operated on a subordinate basis.

With the 1978 concert, the question of authenticity was first addressed within the Institute, and the workplace magazine *Vārds un Darbs* (Word and Work) became a platform for highlighting the problem. Published from 1965 to 1988, the issues of this small-circulation magazine contained both official information, articles saturated with Soviet ideology, and informal written communication, including humorous reflections and greetings on holidays, between the various departments of the Institute and their staff (Grīnvalde, 2021: 30–59). The concert coverage was given in *Vārds un Darbs* issue 3/4 (51/52), published at the end of 1978. However, the resonant ideas also appeared in several issues of 1979 and sporadically in later years. In the pages of the magazine, researchers such as Zaiga Sneibe, Vilis Bendorfs, Benedikta Mežale, Rita Drīzule, and, to a certain extent, Edīte Olupe discussed the issues of authenticity of folklore performance.

Already the section of papers that introduced the event marked a contrast between the conventional and largely inert view of folk traditions, present at the Institute for several decades, with a focus on textual studies (Bula, 2011: 20) rather than performance, and, in contrast to that, the fresh issues highlighted by Arnolds Klotiņš in his paper 'Actual Tasks of Folk Art Protection and Propaganda.' Elza Kokare, the long-term Head of the Folklore Sector, presented an ideologically well-tailored paper, 'Folklore in the Past and Today.' She reflected on the "contemporary functions" of folklore genres, including the educational and "mass organizing" role of folk songs and other oral forms. Klotiņš, in his turn, spoke about the importance of "authentic folklore ensembles", highlighting their ability to delve into the specificity of folklore and pointing out that these ensembles should preferably not be removed from their usual environment for stage performance (Sneibe, 1978: 22–23). Klotiņš's paper, which was summarized in the Institute's magazine, was later published as an

extended article in the press (Klotiņš, 1978); thus, his views were made accessible to the wider public.

The concert, as seen by then-young musicologist Zaiga Sneibe, was a milestone to take a step back and look critically at how much alienation from tradition has occurred over time. Putting the value of authenticity, i.e. unbroken tradition, at the forefront, she described the striking encounter with the three Dignāja singers as "full of pristine freshness and without stage acting. For most of the audience, this ensemble, which can be called a true ensemble of authentic folklore, was undoubtedly a revelation. The singing of these elderly rural women was a testimony to the great artistic impact of a well-preserved, distinctive regional tradition and a performance untouched by routine" (Sneibe, 1978: 24). Musicologist Vilis Bendorfs was very expressive about the general tendency to present music folklore in a stylistically processed and staged way, comparing it to "food heated up four times" (Bendorfs, 1978: 28). He also repeated the idea that stage folklore is the surest way to kill tradition (Bendorfs, 1979: 26).

Reflection on the 1978 concert shows that the Institute played an ambivalent role then. On the one hand, it still represented official Soviet scholarship and was subordinate to the colonial centre, Moscow. On the other hand, among the researchers at the Institute, there was a need to look for points of contact between the folklore revival and the established folklore researchers. Authenticity was one of the key concepts in the dialogue between the two parties.

Media discourse on authenticity in the rise of the Latvian folklore movement: 1978–1988

The authenticity of folklore in Latvia has been publicly and widely discussed since 1978. In extended articles published by the major newspapers (*Literatūra un Māksla*, *Padomju Jaunatne*, *Cīņa*, *Māksla*, *Karogs*, *Liesma*, *Dzimtenes Balss*), intellectuals – musicologists, folklorists, composers, poets, cultural journalists, as well as the functionaries of the Communist Party and pseudonymized authors, discussed the understandings of authenticity and the emerging folklore movement. Detailed articles, discussions, and reviews indicate the growing importance of folklore in society but also point to the aspect of control as these publications were teaching about acceptable and "right" ways of performing folklore and the duties of the performers. The newspapers were the public platform for the folklore revival, where both the messengers and the critics of the movement were voiced. The media were also used for developing terminology and definitions for the new cultural situation.

The most influential role in theorizing the movement was played by the musicologist Arnolds Klotiņš (1934). In 1968, he started doctoral studies at the Institute of Art History of the Ministry of Culture of the USSR in Moscow and, in 1975, defended

his doctoral thesis on the aesthetics of folklore usage by Latvian composers. Klotiņš had a vast horizon of knowledge and ideas, especially in the fields of aesthetics and sociology of music. In his visits to Moscow and Leningrad, he expanded his intellectual network and attended events. He had access to a broader range of academic literature, including the works of Western researchers. He was familiar with the ideas and activities of the Folklore Commission of the Union of Composers of the USSR and participated in the events organized by the USSR in collaboration with the UNESCO institutions such as CIOFF (the International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts founded in 1970). Since 1971, Klotiņš has been a researcher at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia (then the Art Sector of the A. Upīts' Institute of Language and Literature at the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences).

When the Latvian folklore movement emerged, folklore revivals were already established in the neighbouring republics of Estonia, Lithuania, and Russia (Olson, 2004; Šmidchens, 2014). They impacted Klotiņš's conception through the circulation of ideas and practices. In our search for direct and provable connections and influences, Klotiņš emphasized the influence of Estonian folklore ensemble "Leegajus" and composer Veljo Tormis and mentioned the ethnomusicologists Eduard Alekseev (the then Chairman of the Folklore Commission of the Union of Soviet Composers) and Izalij Zemcovskij, as well as Dmitrij Pokrovskij and his at that time well-known ensemble. Though it is important to clarify that because the folklore revival in the Baltics had a political, nationalistic component next to the aesthetic aspirations to cherish and study the "authentic" forms of folklore, the history of Latvian folklore revival can't be equated with the conceptual model developed at the then political and intellectual centres in Russia. Still, the historical connections between the Baltic and Slavic folklore revivals and, more broadly, the international network of folklore revivals in and out of their political contexts is a field for further investigation.

During the formative years of the folklore movement (1978–1981), Klotiņš published several extensive newspaper articles (Klotiņš, 1978, 1979, 1981, 1982). He intended to theoretically position and legitimize the movement, polemicize with other publications, defend the movement from its critics, explain the specific features of folklore performances, and propose the terminology and definitions, including for 'authentic folklore'. In 1988, when Latvia first organized the international folklore festival "Baltica", he reappeared with an extended newspaper article (Klotiņš, 1988) where he called for the renewal of a broader discussion that was diminished during the previous years.

The background of the theory described by Klotiņš was the internationally used division of folklore festivals and performers into three types. He got familiar with this typology from an informational treatise on the objectives and approach of CIOFF, which he acquired on his visit to Russia sometime before October 1978. Klotiņš also referred to the 1978 decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the

Soviet Union that folklore propaganda should be expanded. Klotiņš presented a clear program at the Dailes Theatre's folklore concert on 14 October 1978 and in a following long article (Klotiņš, 1978). He criticized the third type of folklore stylizing groups, which were mostly folk-dance groups in Latvia. He described the roles and characteristics of the first (authentic groups) and the second type (ethnographic groups). Apart from these three types, popular music performers were also mentioned as acceptable appropriators of folklore heritage.

Klotiņš's definition of 'authentic folklore' included the following characteristics: it is spontaneous, orally inherited, unconsciously performed, unspecialized, the performers have not been trained professionally, and it is not separated from life, work, and customs ("unseparated art" Klotiņš, 1978), as well as rooted in agriculture and patriarchy and born of inner necessity, not for spectacle or amusement (1988). He suggested that the word 'authenticity' is used as rarely as possible and only with a precise meaning. Authenticity is interpreted as a kind of unattainable ideal with folklorists and musicologists as its gatekeepers, separating and protecting it from everything else: academic and popular music, specialization, professionalization, staging, theatricalization, reproduction, commercialization, entertainment, replication, and passive reception (1979). Even the rural music groups of the older generation, who have inherited the local folklore orally, were not considered truly authentic, with rare exceptions. They were characterized as "having the breath of authenticity", "rooted in authentic tradition" (Čaklā, 1981), or "relatively authentic" (Klotiņš, 1982).

During the first years of the folklore revival, the second type of folklore performers was called "contemporary ethnographic ensembles" (separated from "authentic groups" until 1981–1982), "reproducers of folklore heritage" (or simply "reproducers"), and "imitators". Their main characteristics were that they consciously learned folklore and imitated or cautiously arranged it as close as possible to the original. Their tasks were creating folklore integrity without differentiating genres, naturalness, the unmediated closeness of performers and audience, searching for folklore bearers in their surroundings, and learning from them (Klotiņš, 1981). Their performances were evaluated on the scale of "ethnographic correctness".

Klotiņš stressed that establishing groups of the second type was the most expected and needed activity. Because they learn folklore consciously, staged performances do not endanger them, so they could satisfy the growing demand for folklore performances and were promoted for the task of "the main keepers of folk-art memory […] because, in the conditions of our republic, they could become the most suitable purifiers, animators and forwarders of folklore traditions" (1978). That way, Klotiņš allocated an important social function to these groups: to be promoters of social change, "enlivening folklore heritage for the audience […] and awakening the audience to co-creation" (Klotiņš, 1981), "promoting spirituality and non-formalized, therefore deeper human relationships among ourselves" (1988). These ideas were unwelcome by the Soviet regime.

There is an essential dimension in the discourse of authenticity that has strongly influenced the history of the Latvian folklore movement: it is the role of functionaries of the communist party and the KGB. A more detailed analysis of this is out of the scope of this article and should be elaborated on in further publications (several publications that include information on controlling and limiting professional and amateur folklorists in the 1970s and 1980s are Latvija Šodien, 1982; Zālīte, 1998; Raipulis, 2006). Klotiņš remembered a saying of Latvia's Minister of Culture of that time (1962–1986), Vladimirs Kaupužs, a Soviet-trained musicologist himself: *"If we allow everything that is in folksongs to be sung, then we are doomed"* (Interview with Arnolds Klotiņš on 14 February 2022). Composer Imants Zemzaris has publicly formulated a similar observation: "Among officials, there is a constant fear of folklore, say what you will, but this feeling does not let me go" (Zemzaris, 1987). Professional and amateur folklorists experienced interrogations by the KGB, dismissals from work, suspensions of publications, and critical and sarcastic articles in the media. The folklore revival was criticized for "sectarianism of apartment folklore", "sickly archaic liberties", "strange masquerade acts", "various 'fashionable' meditations" (Dambrāns, 1984), "a metaphysical approach to the values of folklore and ethnography" (Atvars, 1981), "archaization of folklore", "mechanical imitation of old customs", and "idealization of the feudal and pre-feudal way of life" (Atvars, 1983). The movement's concept of authenticity appeared to be a dangerous position threatening the sustainability of the Soviet system.

Besides the reviewed press discourse in 1978–1988 with a focus on Klotiņš's theoretical views, this study did not include other sources (event brochures, lectures, academic publications, methodical materials). By focusing on the emergent historical discourse analysis, we also left out the later retrospective publications by Klotiņš in academic journals (2002, 2008). Generally, press discussions are permeated by the idea that folklore performances must be scientifically well-founded and "sealed" by professionals, emphasizing the "scientific informative function of ethnographic ensembles" (Kokare, 1982). Several types of authorities appear in the media: art professionals and academics who were supportive or critical of the aesthetics of the new folklore performances, and party functionaries trying to control its social impact. Folklore performers were often amateurs, and their views were not so visible in the media. Their values were based on ethnic nationalism, patriotism, informal relationships, self-initiative, and a DIY approach. This group of people grew and began to play an increasingly decisive social role, creating a new way of interpreting folklore and a lifestyle alternative to Soviet norms. Besides the official publications, oral, unpublished discussions took and are still taking place among the movement's members. Therefore, the following chapters will analyze the interpretations of the authenticity by the folklore performers and their attitudes to this concept.

Authenticity as ancientness in the revival of musical instruments

This chapter is based on an autoethnographic study by Valdis Muktupāvels. The validity of this method, as suggested by David Hayano (Hayano, 1979), rests on the in-depth association of the researcher with the studied group: the researcher has been an active member of the folklore revival movement since 1979, and participants of this movement have considered the researcher as one of them. Following Leon Anderson's idea, this autoethnographic text's objectivity is based on reflexivity by involving other sources and marking sociocultural context (Anderson, 2006).

As was presented before, the musical interests of the participants of the folklore revival were primarily connected with singing. However, since its beginnings, a certain interest was also directed at musical instruments. To characterize the initial period (1978–1981) of the revival of instrumental music traditions, three main interacting aspects that determined the course and peculiarities of this process are to be mentioned: the claim for authenticity, availability of information and materials, and personal experience and creativity.

The idea of authenticity in the field of instrumental music was not as clear, strict, and discussed as in vocal music, and it is reasonable to look for a set of alternative qualities which represented or explicated the idea better. Among these qualities, one could mention closeness to ethnographic samples and truthfulness, but a special role was attributed to ancientness.

It was informally agreed among participants of the folklore revival that the older or more ancient the tangible or intangible item is, the more valuable it appears to the user. Such a view was partly rooted in the romantic idea of the "golden age of independent Baltic tribes before the Teutonic conquest in the 13th century, followed by the seven centuries of slavery"; the genuine Latvian culture was thought to have been corrupted by the conquerors. The relative age of the items of traditional culture was evaluated following commonly accepted evolutionist ideas. As an example of such ideas, possibly having affected folklore revival practices, the article 'Latvian Folk Music', originally written in 1879 by composer and folk music researcher Andrejs Jurjāns and republished in 1980, could be mentioned. He considers three kinds of folksongs: the first – songs originating before the Teutonic onslaught (before 1200), they have a tonal range from a third to a sixth; the second – originating during serfdom (1200–1800), their tonal range is about an octave and they display "old church music scales"; the third – songs of the period of liberation from serfdom (after 1800), displaying harmony and containing leaps outlining a triad. In the same article, the periods of musical development are also described. Music of the first or undeveloped period consists of sound and noise; the instruments are only "noise instruments" (percussion) and the most primitive one-tone woodwinds. The first tonal scales consisting of three to four tones developed in the second period, and the instruments are woodwinds with two

to three finger holes. All other scales, including major and minor scales displaying harmony, as well as stringed instruments and "elaborate" woodwinds, developed in the third period (Jurjāns, 1980: 20–24). Furthermore, the idea of "genuine" or "local" versus "borrowed" or "migrated" instruments was circulated. Comparatively simpler instruments – clappers, rattles, drums with the body made of a trunk, carved *kokles* (a box zither of Baltic origin) with no more than 12 strings, wooden and clay pipes, ocarinas, reeds, horns, wooden trumpets – were considered as "genuine", whereas more elaborate instruments – cylindric drums, multi-string zithers, hammered dulcimers, mandolins, violins, harmonicas, clarinets, bagpipes, metal horns, and trumpets – were treated as "borrowed".

The claim for authenticity in the initial period of folklore revival (up to 1981) seems to closer resemble an ideological hint than a demand, because any activity to include instruments was considered important or benefit-producing *per se*. Thus, members of the *Skandinieki* music group were, since its foundation in 1976, performing with a guitar and a set of modernized concert *kokles*; or musicians of the *Bizīteri* group since 1980 with a guitar, violin, and a modernized bass *birbynė* (herders' clarinet of Lithuanian origin). Valdis Muktupāvels obtained a 17-stringed modernized *kokles* in 1978 and was playing the instrument with *Skandinieki* until the beginning of the 1980s, when finally traditional and more "ancient" 9–11-stringed instruments were made and played.

At the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, there was a dramatic lack of information about traditional instruments and instrumental music, let alone the possibility of purchasing these instruments. In the academic publications of traditional music, just a few dozen instrumental melodies could be found; moreover, the most important of them could only be found in major libraries or even in specialized collections.

Even more lacking was the availability of recordings of traditional music. Two vinyl records – *Latviešu folklora. Alsunga* and *Lībiešu folklora* – were published in 1981 with only some examples of violin and zither ensemble, or violin solo. A mini album of hammered dulcimer music *Latviešu tautas instrumentālā mūzika* was published in 1984, and the anthology *Latvijas PSR muzikālā folklora* in 1986, containing very few instrumental examples, including the only one existing bagpipe music track (Muktupāvels, 2020: 16). Some enthusiasts were searching for instrumental music at the Archives of Latvian Folklore, discovering but a dozen *kokles*, four mouth-harp, and very few violin and harmonica recordings in the collection. Thus, the real activities to include instrumental music in the revival were sporadic and largely dependent on the musical experience and intuition of the participants.

The third aspect – personal experience and creativity – had varied expressions, and its real manifestations were as numerous as the membership in the folklore movement. People with previous rock band experience tried to establish a similar instrumental setting in a folklore ensemble – solo, rhythm, and bass parts, with a more or less elaborate percussion part. Thus, in the early *Iļģi* music group, the former member of a rock band

Juris Riekstiņš played a bass part resembling that of a bass guitar but on a traditional zither. The instrumentation in the *Bizīteri* music group was congruent with that in a rock band even more: solo – violin, rhythm – acoustic guitar, bass – bass *birbynė*, percussion – a tall rattle-stick. Music teachers familiar with Carl Orff's music education system tried to apply similar principles to music-making in a folklore group: everybody should participate, even if it is a very simple musical role, easy-to-learn instruments such as recorders and percussion are welcome, intuitive musical interaction can replace score.

The importance of each of the three aspects can be exemplified by the first published traditional instrumental music recording *Senie balsi* (1982), by *Skandinieki*. The group was generally considered a flagship of the folklore movement in Latvia, and it also presumed high respect for the criteria of authenticity. The cover sleeve text author Arnolds Klotiņš wrote: "When reproducing folklore materials, the musical text (melody, harmony, form) is left intact. But in creating the ensemble (instrumentation, texture), *Skandinieki* have been guided by ethnographic samples or descriptions, they have followed the principles of folk improvisation" (Skandinieki, 1982). Such traditional instruments as hornpipes, duct flutes, monochord, harmonica, *kokles*, mouth harps, and bagpipes are presented on the disc. Though most of these instruments are traditionally played solo, or in a small ensemble if it is dance music, 5 of the 11 tracks feature ensembles of some melodic instruments accompanied by as many as 13 different clappers and rattles, which is far from being considered traditional.

The intent of the ensemble is clear – to present as many "ancient" instruments as possible, thus pretending to have revived a significant stratum of traditional culture. Also, the ancientness of the musical content is marked by the album's title *Senie balsi*, meaning 'the ancient melodies'. Thus, the ideological setting to demonstrate the "original" (meaning 'non-Soviet') culture has overshadowed the importance of authenticity. Guntis Šmidchens has made a similar conclusion about the *Skandinieki* folkloric activities in this period: "For them, the struggle for authentic folklore was part of a larger political battle for Latvia's independence from Soviet control" (Šmidchens, 2014: 276–277).

In general, it can be concluded that at the initial stage of the folklore revival, the very activity of doing something and of exposing the most ancient strata of music culture has been more important than copying recent ethnographic examples. Ancientness was thus the dominant idea of the claim for authenticity.

Authenticity and the contemporary phenomenon of 'empowering songs'

The current discussions on the authenticity of folklore practices in Latvia remain ongoing and comprise various perspectives on how to approach folklore sources and what can be considered authentic. One of the authenticity discourses besides those earlier described has a connection to contemporary spirituality. Looking for deeper ("esoteric")

spiritual meanings and powers of folklore leads to redefining older repertoires and creating new customs (see Bowman, 2014). The spiritual interpretations of folklore are a significant source of authenticity for many folklore enthusiasts in contemporary Latvia. The endeavours to understand and interpret folklore's symbolic and spiritual meanings were important for the revivalists already in the 1980s but have gained more popularity in the 21st century. Contemporary spirituality is nowadays practiced in sauna or fire rituals, in assigning meanings and powers to ornaments or plants, and in other forms such as folksong meditation events. Revived and new meanings are often applied to the folksong texts, adding a new layer of interpretations to the folklore symbolism's previous academic or religious readings. Still, the folklore practices in the contemporary spiritual milieu of Latvia have been under-researched.

We took a closer look at a new phenomenon of 'empowering songs' (*spēka dziesmas*), which is grounded in the contemporary spirituality worldview and has become increasingly popular in the past decade. This term appears in some contexts of Latvian culture before the 2000s, referring to songs within a religious context or patriotic songs. It also appears in articles to which the participants of folklore revival have contributed. Sometimes, it seems to be used as a synonym for folksongs (Grudule, 1989; Stalts, Stalte, 1989). In other cases, 'empowering songs' are described as older folksongs "with more spiritual substance" (Krogzeme, 1996). While some references to the term can be found before the 2010s, those were exceptional cases, and the term was not yet widely used.

A significant event that raised the popularity of 'empowering songs' as a concept was the publication of a book and compact disc *Spēka dziesmas*, by the Latvian Folk Wisdom Association Latve in 2012. The book contains 27 songs, many of which are well-known folksongs, and there are also some authored songs in the aesthetics of Latvian folklore. The compiler Sarmīte Krišmane (Strautmane at that time), well known in the field of contemporary spiritual folklore practices, has published several books on similar topics and held seminars about the 'empowering songs'. Every song in the book is complemented by personal opinions and interpretations of its meanings and symbols called "code keys", by Krišmane as well as Ieva Ančevska and Ģirts Ančevskis.

This chapter is based on a qualitative study of a public Facebook group *Spēka dziesmas. Risinājumi* (Empowering Songs. Solutions), created on 18 November 2019 and containing more than 2000 members in August 2023. The group was created by music producer and singer Inese Muižniece with the permission of the book publishers. The group initially aimed to find and discuss the original sources of published melodies and song text combinations included in the *Spēka dziesmas* book, which does not contain such references (Muižniece, 2019a). It was stated that the group does not discuss the "private symbolism" (Hanegraaff, 1999) of songs proposed by the book compilers or users; however, it became a platform for a broader discussion on authenticity and freedom of improvisation in traditional music. Thereby, the New Age perspective of

the book is complemented by questions and interpretations of its perceivers, and it can be seen that some of the initial questions of the folklore movement are still significant.

Among the Latvian folklore performers, there is a wide and ongoing discussion of the "right" approach to folklore sources and how to practice folklore in the modern world. The Facebook group discussions contain references to previously formulated opinions, for instance, the contrasting definitions of Latvian folklore *versus* Soviet folklorism (Boiko, 2001; Muktupāvels, 2011). A similar contrast is vivid in the discussions of 'empowering songs' – "authentic" is formulated as a synonym for something old ("the old folklore", primal, ancient, original, unchanged), real, or even correct. In contrast, anything else is "newly created 'esoteric' post-folklore", artificial, changed, and incorrect (Draguna, 2019; Muižniece, 2019b).

When identifying the border between authenticity and inauthenticity, improvisation can be considered as one idea that draws such a line. Still, there is also an argument justifying improvisation and authorship as a legal approach to folklore sources. As one of the most active posters in the group Valdis Jurkovskis writes, "Discussions about the right and wrong song texts are groundless if we remember how many hundreds of variations of one song have been written down" (Jurkovskis, 2019). Nevertheless, debate participants are encouraged to be careful with self-made changes, and it is stressed that folklore carries a code of the nation that can be lost when folksongs and other forms of folklore are modified (Muižniece, 2019b).

Sarmīte Krišmane explains the demand for 'empowering songs' in society: "I think that the soul and heart have memory and people want something real and substantial, and folksong is what awakens that thoroughness. Because the folksong has gone through all the circles of time, all the political and economic games, and has remained clear. And this clean part is inside each of us. The folk song just helps to keep it clearer" (Krišmane, 2015). The book's songs have been complemented by a discussion about the meaning of symbols weaving through the song texts. However, it is mentioned that it is only their perspective, and any user can choose one of the many layers fitting their views best (Krišmane, 2012: 5). The fact that many of the song texts have been arranged by the main author Sarmīte Krišmane is not mentioned, and brings up the question of how much of the folklorized text combinations are recently made by particular authors, and what difference it makes to the song users. The presence of an author can be evaluated as unappealing: "I think I did not buy this book exactly because, when flipping through it, I encountered the 'breaking off the branch' and attached verses. And probably something else strange, not acceptable to me" (Lemhena, 2019). "Breaking off the branch" is a modified folksong line that was actively debated in the Facebook group, as well as a general poetic reference to the most popular discussion object, namely, the ethics of changing folksong texts (breaking branches when going through a silver birch forest). Known authorship can even evoke a feeling of one's previous musical experience being deformed: "Now I am waiting with a shattered heart

how many more of the published songs will turn out as someone's innovation – and not the authentic, ancient folksongs" (Draguna, 2019).

As was visible in the previous quote of the book's author, spiritual interpretations are often present when there is an attempt to explain authenticity through the origins of a song. In these cases, particular terms like "national code" or "channelling" are mentioned that are used by healers and other spiritual practitioners. The impulse to such interpretations could come from the book itself as it can be categorized as a New Age publication with references to neo-shamanism: "In *dainas* [Latvian folksong texts], we speak in pictures, and it is the oldest, shamanic kind of perception of the world" (Krišmane, 2012: 6), and "throughout the text, one can find different terms of Eastern religions such as mantras, transcendental environment, reincarnation, etc., mentioned and explained" (Krišmane, 2012: 89). The continuous popularity of 'empowering songs' with over 10,000 copies of *Spēka dziesmas* sold and followed in 2014 by the second edition *Spēka dziesmas. Uguns* (Empowering Songs. Fire, same publisher) suggests that the book users and performers of 'empowering songs' are generally a much bigger network of people than the Facebook group discussing the sources of songs. It means that besides understanding authenticity as keeping the songs in their original form and knowing their sources, another way of authentic experience is to use folklore in a more generalized and free way, in search of ethnic spiritual identity and power.

Conclusions

This study contributes to the previous research on the history, contexts, and values of the Latvian folklore revival in line with the interdisciplinary authenticity studies and the comparative research of folklore and folk music revivals in different countries. Since the end of the 19th century, Latvian (music) folklorists introduced folklore to the public by organizing folk music concerts. Their knowledge and understanding of folk music and their aesthetic views shaped the tastes and perceptions of the public. Though, for a long time, the staged folk music performances were not accompanied by a broader discussion on authenticity, the notion was most likely treated as self-explanatory. A turning point was the late 1970s when the number of folklore groups grew rapidly, creating a folklore movement. The various backgrounds and approaches of the groups raised the need for a broader discussion on authenticity and folklore interpretations. The foundation of the discussion was laid during the initial stage of the movement (1978–1981), and it continued to develop from those years on. The article furthers the academic discussion on several issues concerning the meanings of authenticity.

One is the question of authority and legitimacy, namely, who had (and has nowadays) the "rights" to understand and interpret authenticity fully: academic experts, public intellectuals, artists, journalists, functionaries of the Communist Party (or contemporary

policymakers and bureaucrats), or folklore performers. Discussants legitimize or limit the meanings and uses of authenticity. Based on several case studies, this article takes a closer look at different meaning-makers and discussions: the circle of professional folklorists, the public media and a theoretically well-educated musicologist, an early revivalist of folk music instruments, and an online group discussing contemporary interpretations in the frame of new spirituality. The most active or educated discussants have remarkable influence over the folklore interpretations and practices; still, the understandings of folklore and authenticity are varied and do not result in homogenization. For instance, ethnographically-informed and spiritually-experienced performers both search for the origins and true meanings of folklore, even if their approaches contradict one another. The second issue is the dynamics between professional and amateur folklorists and between institutionalized and informal knowledge. During the early years of the folklore revival, public influence shifted from academic professionals to practicing amateurs. Participants of folklore revival started to fill the niche of activities previously associated with professional, institutionalized folklorists – organizing expeditions, creating private archives, and publicly performing folklore and radio and television programs and publications. An influential factor was also the KGB activities. During the 1970s, several leading folklorists were suspected and scrutinized, and were forced to restrain from participation in the growing folklore movement that was regarded with caution. Other reasons also led to a somewhat distanced relationship between the Archives of Latvian Folklore and the participants of the folklore movement.

Returning to the question "under what conditions, by whom, and for whom is the concept of authenticity deployed, rejected, or debated, and who profits from it," a concise answer would be that the revival community and authenticity discussion in Latvia developed in a non-democratic context. The pursuit of authenticity turned out to be a position dangerous to the sustainability of the political system. Besides the political context, there were also aesthetical considerations that differed among the leading academics and musicians. One can conclude that the "community" of authenticity discourse was and is very diverse and leads to a rich network of the meanings and uses of the notion. Besides legitimizing and restricting the movement during its initial phase, the authenticity discourse also shows the folklore performers' unceasing and vital search for meanings and revision of values and practices.

The article adds to the previously studied meanings of authenticity in the Latvian folklore revival. The questions discussed in contemporary folklore communities have much in common with the ideas that originated in the initial phase of the folklore movement. However, further research would be needed to see the gradual changes in the discourse. Besides the influential and restricting definition by musicologist Arnolds Klotiņš and other experts in the first decade of the movement (1978–1988), the understanding of authenticity as creative ancientness, as keeping informed about the sources or unlocking the spiritual code of the song texts can be distinguished. It can

be seen that the meanings of authenticity vary in different social networks and periods. However, the main difference might be between more disciplined and freer approaches to folklore. A shared interest in folklore unites diverse interpretations; still, the differences create smaller communities where authenticity can be, or not be, a specific concern.

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Moč avtoritet, interpretacij in pesmi: diskurz o avtentičnosti v latvijskem folklornem preporodu

Skupna študija raziskuje, kako in kdo je v letih 1978–1988 v sovjetski Latviji razvijal in uporabljal diskurz folklorne avtentičnosti ter kako je ta vplival in še vedno vpliva na prakse oživljanja latvijske folklore. Za temeljito raziskavo teme so bili uporabljeni različni viri in metode: študij institucionalnih in zasebnih arhivov, diskurzivna analiza medijev in družbenih omrežij ter avtoetnografija.

Odrskih predstavitev folklore v Latviji do leta 1978 ni spremljala širša javna razprava o avtentičnosti. Z vznikom folklornega preporoda v poznih 70. letih prejšnjega stoletja so se razprave razmahnile med poklicnimi folkloristi in v javnih medijih. V dveh poglavjih članka je analiza teh razprav s poudarkom na notranjih in javnih stališčih poklicnih, institucionaliziranih folkloristov, zlasti muzikologa in teoretika latvijskega folklornega preporoda Arnolda Klotiņša. Manj viden in dokumentiran del so neformalne, ustne in neobjavljene razprave preporoditeljev. Da bi predstavili njihove glasove, sta v nadaljevanju preučeni dve področji folklornega preporoda in popreporoda: avtoetnografska študija Valdisa Muktupāvelsa o tem, kako so avtentičnost ob minimalni količini razpoložljivih zgodovinskih virov in informacij razumeli zgodnji preporoditelji ljudskih glasbil, ter aktualni diskurz v skupini na Facebooku, povezan z nedavno priljubljenim konceptom »pesmi za opolnomočenje« v kontekstu sodobne duhovnosti.

Članek poglablja razpravo o več vprašanjih. Prvo je vprašanje avtoritete in legitimnosti, in sicer kdo je imel in ima »pravico« do razumevanja in razlage avtentičnosti: akademski strokovnjaki, vidni intelektualci, umetniki, novinarji, funkcionarji komunistične partije in drugih vladnih institucij ali izvajalci folklore. Druga tema je dinamika med poklicnimi in amaterskimi folkloristi ter prenos javnega vpliva z akademskih strokovnjakov na prakticirajoče amaterje. Latvijski folklorni preporod se je v zadnjem desetletju Sovjetske zveze razvijal v nedemokratičnih razmerah, prizadevanje za avtentičnost pa se je pokazalo kot stališče, nevarno za vzdržnost političnega sistema. Poleg nedosegljive ali »nevarne« avtentičnosti so se v iskanju smiselnih folklornih praks pojavila tudi druga vplivna stališča in pomembne razprave, npr. o ustvarjanju starodavnosti ali duhovnem opolnomočenju.

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The Changing Nature of Instrumental Music and Musicians in Folk Dance Ensembles

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The paper presents the role of the instrumental music and musicians in folk dance ensembles in Slovenia, and examines different influences on the shaping of its musical image. It focuses on two milestones that have significantly influenced the work of folk dance ensembles: the beginning of organized educational activities in the early 1970s, and the impact of socio-political changes caused by the breakup of Yugoslavia and Slovenia's independence in 1991.

▪ **Keywords**: folk dance ensembles, traditional music, amateur musicians, stage presentations, educational activities, expert guidance, Slovenian independence

Prispevek predstavlja vlogo glasbenikov in instrumentalne glasbe v folklornih skupinah na Slovenskem ter obravnava različne vplive na oblikovanje glasbene podobe teh skupin. Osredinja se na mejnika, ki sta pomembno vplivala na delovanje folklornih skupin: na začetek organizirane izobraževalne dejavnosti na začetku 70. let 20. stoletja in na vpliv družbenopolitičnih sprememb, ki sta jih povzročila razpad Jugoslavije in osamosvojitev Slovenije leta 1991.

▪ **Ključne besede**: folklorne skupine, tradicionalna glasba, ljubiteljski glasbeniki, odrske postavitve, izobraževalna dejavnost, strokovno vodenje, slovenska osamosvojitev

Introduction

Folk dance ensembles[1] have had over a century of tradition in Slovenia, and belong to the broader framework of "folklore activities" (*folklorna dejavnost*) representing traditional-based music, dance, costume, rituals, and customs. In many cases, these elements of tradition are most comprehensively encompassed in the activities of folk dance ensembles, which combine, intertwine and unite them; presenting them at various public events in the form of music-dance performances. The activities of folk dance ensembles rest on amateur foundations, which is especially true for artistic reproduction, i.e. music-dance performances within the framework of participation in a folk dance ensemble.

Today, folk dance ensembles in Slovenia are institutionally organized. As a form of cultural production they operate as sections within cultural societies, or as independent societies, and are non-profit entities whose activities are often made possible through the financing of amateur cultural activities from state and local sources, as well as through symbolic membership fees.

[1] The Slovenian term *folklorna skupina* is translated into English in various ways, often as "folk dance ensemble", whereby the dominant role of dance in this, generally complex activity, is implied (cf. Šrimpf Vendramin, 2017).

The activities, purpose, and stage production of folk dance ensembles have recently been the topic of various folkloristic and ethnological discussions addressed by authors at such practices in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, with a particular focus on the second part of the 20th century and their function in the socialist societies (Ilieva, 2001; Herzog, 2010; Pavlicová, Uhlíková, 2013; Kapper, 2016; Petkovski, 2016; Stavělová, Buckland, 2018). The authors mainly address the activities of folk dance ensembles in their countries of origin, as well as their activities in diasporic communities (e.g. Zájedová, Rüütel, 2009, 2014; Kunej, Kunej, 2016). Likewise, the history and development of folk dance ensembles in Slovenia has been discussed in various works (e.g. Kunej, 2018, 2020), but attention is yet to be directed at folk dance music and ensemble musicians (the band) in particular.

Folk dance music has, similarly to folk dance, been transferred from its traditional environment to the stage, and transformed from its primal purpose of the social dance and music event into stage presentations of "past folk tradition" performed by folk dance ensembles (cf. Kunej, 2020). In this, folk dance music likewise appears as a reinterpretation of traditional music – rather than the setting of still-living tradition into the context of the stage. Generally, the performance of folk dance music and its musical image are redesigned, adapted and arranged for presentation to the public, where the music shows certain properties we wish to illuminate in this article while comparatively presenting them in relation to dance.

Though the dominant role of folk dance is often put forward in this context, the music plays a vital part in the activities of folk dance ensembles. It is usually performed live by musicians, and so these have carried a significant, often key role in folk dance ensembles. The paper aims to present the role of the instrumental music and musicians in this phenomenon, and to examine different influences on the shaping of its musical image. It addresses the period between the 1970s, when the systematic expert guidance of folk dance ensembles into the study of tradition first began, and the mid-2010s, when essential changes and novelties occurred in the conceptual framework and activities of folk dance ensembles.[2] In this, it focuses on two milestones prominently affecting the operation of folk dance ensembles in the period: the first was the beginning of organized educational activities, seminars and gatherings (*srečanja folklornih skupin*),[3] institution-

[2] Rebeka Kunej establishes that the novel approach "brings more artistic freedom and choreographer's creativity, no longer bound to historical sources but rather following the theatrical and dance rules of the stage performance" (Kunej, 2023: 44).

[3] At the beginning, annual ensemble gatherings consisted of a demonstration (exhibition) program and were essentially non-competitive. The gatherings were held at the local, regional and national levels. After each gathering there was a discussion with an expert evaluator, who gave their assessment of all the performances and provided some guidance, encouragement and commendation to each participating ensemble. Since the 1990s, the three-tier selection system for the gatherings has had a competitive/evaluative nature. The expert evaluator assesses the performance of each ensemble according to certain criteria, grades it with points, and makes the selection for the higher-level event based on the total scores. Promotion to higher event levels represents a key reference in various tenders for co-financing the programs and activities of the ensembles.

ally conducted in the early 1970s; and the second the impact of socio-political changes caused by the breakup of Yugoslavia and the independence of Slovenia in 1991. The article primarily wishes to examine the consequences of the start of comprehensive expert guidance and education on the music of folk dance ensembles, and the factors that made the independence year of 1991 a historical turning point for the music and the ensemble musicians alike.

The author bases the research on personal experience, having actively participated in different folk dance ensembles in the 1980s and 1990s; first as a musician and instrumental band leader, and later as the author of musical arrangements. He has attended a variety of seminars, workshops and education programs for musicians and folk dance ensemble leaders, initially as a participant and subsequently, for a number of years, as a lecturer as well. He witnessed many changes in repertoire and performing practice, including changes to the programs and new guidelines in the work of folk dance ensembles following the breakup of Yugoslavia. For the analysis of the recent years, the author has replaced the autobiographical method with observation of, and participation in, various events featuring folk dance ensembles. In addition, the author leans on collected sources, literature, records, and digital ethnography.

Characteristics of the activity of folk dance ensembles in Slovenia

The beginnings of folk dance ensembles in Slovenia date back to the first half of the 20th century. Early inklings are connected to the celebration of the 60-year anniversary of the rule of Emperor Franz Joseph, on 12 June 1908 in Vienna, which was also attended by selected groups of locals from various parts of Carniola where folk dance ensembles later emerged. In the 1930s, the initiative for the establishing of the first folk dance ensembles were folklore festivals, organized in several places (in Ljubljana, Maribor, Črnomelj, Metlika) by France Marolt within the framework of the Folklore Institute with the purpose of presenting and popularizing folk culture. Various local groups (so-called ethnographical groups) participated, from Bela Krajina, east Štajerska and Prekmurje in particular, presenting their music-dance tradition at these festivals (more in Kunej, 2004, 2009). The establishing of folk dance ensembles gained momentum after the Second World War, driven by cultural and educational societies. Among the first was in 1948 the Folk Dance Ensemble in Ljubljana (now *Akademska folklorna skupina France Marolt,* the France Marolt Students' Folk Dance Ensemble), whose founder France Marolt wished to channel the findings of ethnomusicological research to the public. In the following decade, other folk dance ensembles emerged, either within the various trade union associations or as independent educational societies.

Very early folklore activities in Slovenia were related to the presentation of music and dance of mostly living traditions, and focused on those of Slovenian origins only.

In the 1970s, when increasing numbers of different folk dance ensembles appeared, a division of ensembles was made and persisted for a while, namely into the "original folk dance ensembles" and "reproduction folk dance ensembles". The former presented their still-living music and dance tradition or experience from the local environment on stage, were usually active in a rural environment, and were smaller in membership. The latter presented a newly-learned dance repertoire from various Slovenian regions drawn mainly from written records, were active primarily in the urban environment and had numerous memberships[4] (cf. Kranjec, 2001; Kunej, 2020). In the 1990s, such division was no longer sensible since ensemble members no longer shared a common own experience of traditional music and dance, but their shared experience was rather one of dancing – reproduction on the stage and public performance.[5] This has been recently pointed out by several authors (e.g. Wrazen, 2005; Bejtullahu, 2016; Shay, 2016; Kunej, 2020, 2023) and applies in Slovenia to various types of folk dance ensembles.

In the 1960s and 1970s many folk dance ensembles were established in urban environments, belonging to the field of the so-called *reproduction folk dance ensembles* and soon became widely known and recognized, in Slovenia as well as broader Yugoslavia.[6] The leaders of these ensembles were frequently also among the first participants who successfully completed educational seminars for folk dance ensemble leaders, which began taking place in the early 1970s.

The activities of folk dance ensembles, consistently an important pillar of educational-cultural-amateur happenings, were always under the supervision of state cultural policy or its relevant institution. The name of this institution changed several times, but its mission remained more or less constant. The starting role of the institution responsible for folk dance ensembles was mostly political-financial, but over time its mandate as a professional training and guidance mechanism also strengthened. From the year 1984 on, it employed a special folklore activities expert, who also conducted monitoring, organisation and coordination of folk dance activities. In addition, the activities of folk dance ensembles were regularly overseen and guided by various expert work bodies

[4] In particular, many *reproduction folk dance ensembles* during the time of former Yugoslavia held repertoires that were not connected exclusively to the Slovenian tradition, but also showcased traditions of other republics of former Yugoslavia. This was true in all republics of the former Yugoslavia, both in terms of amateur folk dance ensembles active in larger towns and cities, as well as professional national folk dance ensembles. Slovenia was, next to Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the republic without a professional national folk dance ensemble (more in Petkovski, 2016; Kunej, 2018).

[5] Due to changes in the way of life and discontinued ties with traditional music and dance, members of the once *original folk dance ensembles* likewise had to begin re-learning their tradition and cultivate it deliberately, if they wished to portray it on the stage. This brought them closer to the way of work of the *reproduction folk dance ensembles.* Thus, a new specification was proposed for folk dance ensembles, which in the 1990s in Slovenia all exhibited reproduction tendencies – one based on the region from which their staged tradition originates (home town, home region, some or all Slovenian regions, etc.) (Kranjec, 2001).

[6] E.g. folk dance ensemble at KUD Študent in Maribor was established in 1964, folk dance ensemble Emona in Ljubljana in 1967, folk dance ensemble Koleda in Velenje in 1971, the Celje Folk Dance Ensemble in 1973, folk dance ensemble Stu Ledi in Trieste in 1973, folk dance ensemble Kres in Novo Mesto in 1975.

made up of external members,[7] which, while monitoring the work of the ensembles, also designed educational activities for them, and advised on the organisation of various ensemble gatherings and public presentations.

Intertwining of music and dance

The important role of dance music in folk dance ensembles originates in folk tradition. In Slovenia, generally speaking, people always used to dance to instrumental music. Thus, there was hardly any traditional folk dance event that did not feature the participation of performing musicians. This is also attested by certain common sayings and fixed expressions among the people. In these, dance music is strongly connected to dance and musicians, and they describe the meaning and role of the musician in society. One traditional folk musician for example colourfully stated that "the musician is always around, like the broom" (Kumer, 1983: 152), since it was impossible to dance without them in times when recorded and broadcast music was not yet available. This is why they were highly sought after and respected, often enjoying a privileged role in the local community (cf. Kumer, 1983; Strajnar, 1986).

In the Slovenian folk culture, instrumental music and dance are often closely intertwined, even inseparable. The usual contemporary term is that the musicians or music are "accompanying" (*spremljati*) the dance. And yet, it would perhaps be better stated that it is dance that accompanies the music, since it is the music and musicians who are a sort of animating spirit and motor of dance, and the ones who determine many aspects of dance and dance events. This is also characterized by the popular saying or set phrase "you will dance to my tune" (*plesal boš, kot bom jaz igral*), which communicates the prime role of music over dance, while metaphorically acquiring still broader meaning in the sense of doing precisely as someone dictates or commands (cf. SSKJ, 2014).

The close connection of traditional music and dance is also reflected in the relation of the musicians towards dancing and dancers. Interaction between them is constantly taking place. Traditional musicians were highly familiar with the dances, they also knew when and how to interpret individual dances so that the outcome is appropriate for the event and accordant with custom and tradition. Often they were skilled dancers themselves, and while playing they observed the dancers closely, adapting the style of play to the character of the dance, the ability and the mood of the dancers (cf. Strajnar, 1986). Thus, the dancers indeed *danced to their tune.* Accordingly, it was important for musicians to

[7] The work bodies included participation of various experts and scholars in the field of ethnology, (traditional) music, and dance; coworkers of the Institute of Ethnomusicology, the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, the University of Ljubljana and other institutions, as well as some acclaimed and experienced folk dance ensemble leaders (in the 1970s and 1980s e.g. Bruno Ravnikar, Radoslav Hrovatin, Marija Makarovič, Mirko Ramovš, Julijan Strajnar, Iko Otrin, Janez Bogataj, Marjan Kralj, Mile Trampuš, Andrej Košič etc.).

play enthusiastically so as to encourage the attendance to "let music into their feet" (*gre glasba v noge*), and so that everyone present should have "itching heels" (*zasrbijo pete*). This means that music was performed in a way as compelling and zestful as possible, to entice and excite the present for dancing, to elicit a dancing, physical response. The primary function of dance music is therefore its "danceability", to which the performance, including the aesthetic component of the music was adapted, whereas the "virtuosity" of the performance was of secondary importance though still appreciated.

It is therefore not surprising that in the folk dance ensembles in Slovenia, live music rather than recorded music continues to be the customary way of performing. Musicians in folk dance ensembles, much like the ensembles themselves, can be very different, with different musical preferences, abilities and knowledge, but also inclinations, roles and intentions. The musicians and their music often also reflected the orientation and activities of the folk dance ensembles they were part of, as well as shifting trends in the work practices and tendencies across various time periods.

Folk dance ensemble musicians are most frequently amateur musicians. In the early period, those folk dance ensembles performing largely local tradition and predominantly active in the rural setting sometimes featured the participation of local traditional musicians. They were well versed in the traditional dance music repertoire and the traditional style of playing, which just had to be adapted with the stage choreography of the music-dance performance event. An example of such cooperation was the folk dance ensemble KUD Beltinci, an exception in general terms – namely, its establishment in 1938 was closely connected with music. France Marolt then, during his exploration of traditional music in Beltinci, came to know the Kociper Band, a typical Prekmurje traditional ensemble that also performed a great deal of dance music. He was impressed by their playing, and so familiarized himself with the traditional dances with local Matija Kavaš, proposing the establishment of a folk dance ensemble that began operation that very year based on his instructions. The Kociper Band, which eventually partly transformed and renamed itself into the Kociper-Baranja Band, played within a folk dance ensemble for several decades, eventually also taking care of a younger generation to perpetuate their activity (KUD Beltinci, s.a.).

In general, however, folk dance ensembles mostly involve amateur musicians who no longer have direct contact with traditional music. They may be self-taught or without any music education, or might have basic music education attained in the system of musical schooling, where traditional music is not part of the curriculum. In the past decades folk dance ensembles are seeing increasing numbers of musicians with basic music education, even those once comprising mostly local folk musicians. Familiarization with the traditional folk repertoire and style of playing is then required, as these musicians generally are not acquainted with it prior to joining a folk dance ensemble. This tends to lead to certain divergences between the traditional way of playing (and traditional musical aesthetics) and the view of music and playing style acquired during musical schooling.

Academic musicians are rare in the folk dance ensemble. Exceptionally they participate in larger ensembles in urban environments, often only occasionally e.g. for major performances and tours. Their playing is based on the academic approach, often of a highly advanced technical and musical standard, though at times lacking a deeper connection with the dance and dancers as it is not based on so-called danceability but rather on the virtuosity of musical performance.

Yet the way of presenting traditional music on the stage depends not only on the musicians, but very much also on the authors of the musical arrangement and dance choreography. Instrumental music in folk dance ensembles was, due to changes in context and stage presentation, adapting and transforming in similar ways as has been established in the context of traditional dance by Rebeka Kunej (2010, 2023). Music and dance on the stage, being subject to the demands of public performance and stage design constraints, can no longer appear in their original form but may only approximate the genuine traditional template. Two principles offering two poles of the stage presentation spectrum are the concept of passive adoption and the concept of active transfer to the stage. In passive adoption, traditional music and dance are adapted to the stage in a form as close as possible to the original template, and are therefore imitated in all their characteristic elements. Active transfer to the stage, conversely, uses only select traditional elements whereas evidently transforming or newly creating the rest. The passive adoption model wishes to portray authenticity, frequently even idealization and fixation of the image of folk tradition; whereas the active transfer one subjects the original tradition in great part to the creativity of the authors of the performance. Based on the examination of the contemporary presentation of traditional dance on stage, Rebeka Kunej (2023) points out the evident changes to the concept seen particularly in the past decade.[8] The music-dance stage presentation is also impacted by various foreign influences (e.g. through festivals abroad and encounters with foreign dance traditions), and especially domestic influences from institutional educational activities, organized gatherings and meetings of folk dance ensembles, as well as the activities and influences of leading domestic ensembles.

As an example of different approaches to music and musicians shifting across time we may address the case of the France Marolt Students' Folk Dance Ensemble, a frequent model for other folk dance ensembles. In its early years of operation this ensemble did not have its own music band but nevertheless always danced to live music: music correpetition at rehearsals was conducted on the piano by Tončka Marolt

[8] "This idea shift is also revealed in the terminology employed within the folklore activity itself: the adaptation of traditional folk dances to the stage, which was once called 'staging' and meant a passive transposition of folk dance practices onto the stage, is now replaced by 'choreography', by which creators aim to signify that the performance is an original work where choreography is understood as invention, design, composition and structuring of dance into a harmonious artistic whole, for which traditional folk dance is only a loose inspiration" (Kunej, 2023: 45).

(the wife of France Marolt and later long-time band leader in the ensemble), whereas the performances included "hired" musicians in the line-up of piano accordion, violin, clarinet, and double bass. At important performances music might even be played by established music bands of other genres, such as e.g. the Bojan Adamič Orchestra, the Radio Orchestra, or the Military Orchestra (Kunej, 2018). Later on the group had its own band of musicians, some of whom played in various combinations with accordion, clarinet, violin, double bass, etc., others in a tambura band. It also collaborated with musicians from other bands and folk dance ensembles, who occasionally joined for major performances and tours. Other folk dance ensembles around Slovenia have followed the same approach and band line-ups as the France Marolt Students' Folk Dance Ensemble.

Shaping the music and guiding the musicians

Since the vast majority of folk dance ensembles featured musicians who did not have direct experience with traditional dance music,[9] the musical image had to be "designed" or shaped, meaning arranged for a particular band. Next to the music arrangement, which ensures the connection between the choreographed dance presentation on stage and the performed music, guiding also the band to some extent, it soon turned out that it was sensible to familiarize the musicians, as well as folk dance ensemble leaders and dance choreographers, with the folk music tradition.

In the arrangement of the musical part of the staged music-dance performance we can observe various approaches, depending on the practices of the ensemble as well as the musicians participating. A frequent approach is that the music arrangement is prepared by the musicians themselves (see Figure 1, item nr. 6). In this, in accordance with the choreography of the dance performance, the musicians together assign the order of the melodies they receive from the choreography author, the number of repetitions of individual melodies, their potential modulations etc., and agree on the role of the individual instruments in the performance. The musicians most often build upon the choreography concept, which presents the dance choreographer's perspective of the music-dance event, arranging music accordingly. The music concept is generally not fixed with sheet music but is shaped during live rehearsals into a form that is eventually memorised, then partly improvised during performances. This approach is characteristic particularly for those folk dance ensembles that operate in the local setting and present local tradition, but also for other ensembles where musicians are actively included in the work of the ensembles and the creation of program.

[9] Regardless of the historical period of their activity, this holds true for all *reproduction folk dance ensembles*, as well as all those once-designated *original folk dance ensembles* that did not feature the participation of local musicians well versed in the traditional dance music repertoire and the traditional style of playing.

Many times, the music arrangement is prepared by a musically educated individual who is usually familiar with the characteristics of folk music tradition, in addition to music fundamentals. Since 1990s, these were in particular the researchers of traditional music (in the beginnings of folk dance ensemble activity for example France Marolt and Tončka Marolt, later on Julijan Strajnar, Bruno Ravnikar and others) whose field research granted them insight into folk music tradition and the work of folk dance ensembles; and in the recent period also those more engaged and ambitious among the ensemble musicians (see Figure 1, items nr. 1, 3, 4, 5 and 8). Such musicians are often well familiar with dance tradition, which proves to be highly useful and reflects in the popularity of their music arrangements and the success of the ensuing music-dance performance. Frequently, in the creation of the arrangement, they cooperate with the dance choreographer, jointly shaping the music and dance to its final form. The arrangements are most often written down as sheet music, learned by the musicians at their rehearsals with the dancers and then normally played by memory. Arrangers often receive fees for such arrangements. This approach to the arrangement is typical especially for ensembles that perform traditions from several different parts of Slovenia, operate in an urban environment and have a large number of musicians in their band, at least some of whom have a basic musical education. Often the arrangers have a joint rehearsal with the musicians (and dancers) to finalise the sound image and the intertwining of music and dance, and to guide the musicians towards the envisioned playing style.

On exception, authors of dance choreography can also create the music arrangement themselves (cf. Figure 1, program item nr. 2). Among such artists, one standout is certainly Bruno Ravnikar,[10] who authored the musical arrangements for all his numerous staged music-dance performances. In this it is interesting that he builds the music-dance performance from the music arrangement concept first, to which he then matches the dance choreography. This approach is quite distinct from the one employed by most choreographers who normally ground their work in dance to which music is then adapted, with arrangements prepared by a third party (the musical arrangement author). According to Ravnikar, his holistic music-based approach and the authorship of music and dance by the same individual were key in catalyzing the great popularity and success of his music-dance performances (cf. Ravnikar, 2020).

In the recent years, increasing numbers of music-dance arrangements are specifically described as arrangements of arrangements. These emerge both in the choreography of dance performances as well as arrangement of music. Here, the dance choreographers and music arrangers no longer build directly on documentary materials (e.g. field sources

[10] Dr. Bruno Ravnikar was the leader of several folk dance ensembles, and the author of many music-dance stage productions. He participated in the organization of folklore activities in Slovenia and was in 1969 among the founders of the International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts (CIOFF). He was an expert in recording folk dances with Kinetography Laban, and the initiator and contributor of several magazines dedicated to folkloric activity.

and archive records of dances and music), but on already existing original arrangements or stage music-dance performances.[11] Such arrangements normally list both authors, e.g. the author of the secondary adaptation as well as the first (original) arrangement's author, or these are named as co-authors (see Figure 1, item nr. 5).

The music in folk dance ensembles, and likewise the musicians, were importantly affected by the start of organized institutional educational activities commencing in the 1970s. Then, the Association of Cultural Education Organizations of Slovenia began its regular training courses for artistic leaders of folk dance ensembles. The inspiration was the well-received and already established Summer School of Folklore in Badija on Korčula in Croatia, which had been running annually since 1963 and also featured lectures by Slovenian experts, for example Mirko Ramovš and Bruno Ravnikar. This summer school, regularly attended by Slovenian folk dance ensemble leaders, ran education courses and workshops on the traditional music and dance culture of all the republics of Yugoslavia.

The first institutional activities in Slovenia were in 1970 the so-called Introductory Seminars for folk dance ensemble leaders (*Začetni seminarji za vodje folklornih skupin*), followed in the mid-1970s by the Advanced Seminars for folk dance ensemble leaders (*Nadaljevalni seminarji za vodje folklornih skupin*). Both seminars were quite extensive and systematic in scope, and were usually held annually. Soon, various thematic training courses, seminars and workshops on specific topics related to dance, costume, vocal and instrumental music and other topics were also organised, aimed at both the leaders and the more ambitious members of folk dance ensembles. At the end of the 1980s, the so-called Folklore Camps (*Folklorni tabori*) began to be held annually, at first mainly for leaders and members of children's folk dance ensembles, and later for those of adult folk dance ensembles as well. To this day, various training programs continue to remain a vital element in the guidance of folk dance ensemble activities.[12]

Though in the recent decades, a number of rather specific and themed seminars and workshops on instrumental traditional music were conducted, intended primarily for musicians in folk dance ensembles or even specific ensemble instruments, we shall in the following focus on the Introductory Seminar for folk dance ensemble leaders,[13] which represents an important foundation of educational work in the field.

The content of the seminar call, essentially the same for many years, defines who the course is for and what it covers:

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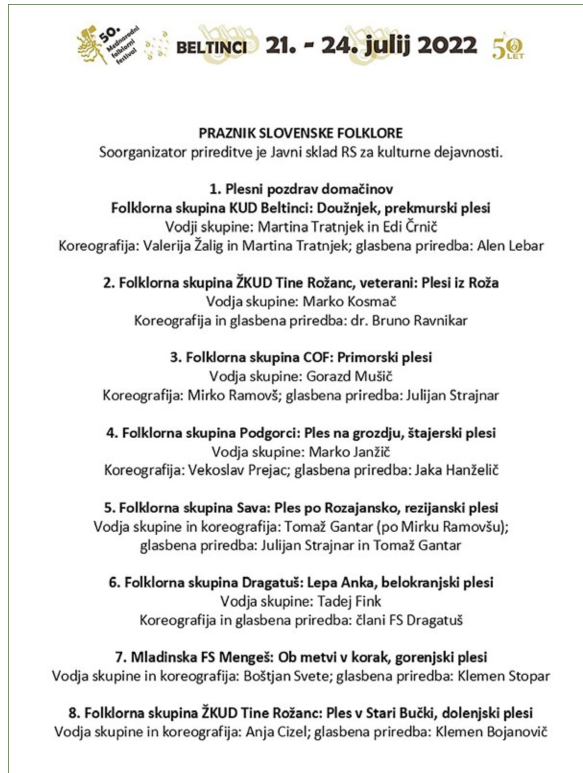
[11] This also occurs in other countries (cf. Nahachewsky, 2001: 233).

[12] The Public Fund for Cultural Activities (JSKD) presentation of folklore activity states the great importance still attributed to education: "So that the work of these folk dance ensembles can further improve in quality, and the performances grow even more compelling, the JSKD organizes workshops and seminars for the acquisition of necessary competencies and familiarization with appropriate stage interpretations" (JSKD, s.a.).

[13] The seminar was initially intended for leaders of all folk dance ensembles, eventually forking into separate fields of the children's ensemble leaders, and the adult ensemble leaders.


50. Mednarodni folklorni festival BELTINCI 21. - 24. julij 2022 50 LET

PRAZNIK SLOVENSKE FOLKLORE
Soorganizator prireditve je Javni sklad RS za kulturne dejavnosti.

1. Plesni pozdrav domačinov
Folklorna skupina KUD Beltinci: Doužnjek, prekmurski plesi
Vodji skupine: Martina Tratnjek in Edi Črnič
Koreografija: Valerija Žalig in Martina Tratnjek; glasbena priredba: Alen Lebar

2. Folklorna skupina ŽKUD Tine Rožanc, veterani: Plesi iz Roža
Vodja skupine: Marko Kosmač
Koreografija in glasbena priredba: dr. Bruno Ravnikar

3. Folklorna skupina COF: Primorski plesi
Vodja skupine: Gorazd Mušič
Koreografija: Mirko Ramovš; glasbena priredba: Julijan Strajnar

4. Folklorna skupina Podgorci: Ples na grozdju, štajerski plesi
Vodja skupine: Marko Janžič
Koreografija: Vekoslav Prejac; glasbena priredba: Jaka Hanželič

5. Folklorna skupina Sava: Ples po Rozajansko, rezijanski plesi
Vodja skupine in koreografija: Tomaž Gantar (po Mirku Ramovšu);
glasbena priredba: Julijan Strajnar in Tomaž Gantar

6. Folklorna skupina Dragatuš: Lepa Anka, belokranjski plesi
Vodja skupine: Tadej Fink
Koreografija in glasbena priredba: člani FS Dragatuš

7. Mladinska FS Mengeš: Ob metvi v korak, gorenjski plesi
Vodja skupine in koreografija: Boštjan Svete; glasbena priredba: Klemen Stopar

8. Folklorna skupina ŽKUD Tine Rožanc: Ples v Stari Bučki, dolenjski plesi
Vodja skupine in koreografija: Anja Cizel; glasbena priredba: Klemen Bojanovič

Figure 1: Part of the program schedule stating the repertoire of performing folk dance ensembles and the authors of music-dance performances at the event in Beltinci in 2022. Source: private archive.

> The Introductory Seminar for leaders of adult folk dance ensembles is aimed at folk dance ensemble leaders in cultural and artistic societies, and their prospective staff who could take up expert or leadership roles in folk dance ensembles in the future. The seminar enables the acquisition of a wide range of knowledge, nowadays indispensible for the successful guidance and leadership of an adult folk dance ensemble. It provides at least a basic introduction to most of the elements ensembles include in their programs (music, dance and costume heritage, heritage of dance-related customs and traditions, etc.), as well as to the ways in which these elements can be brought to the stage and into the present day. (JSKD, 2014)

The end of the call points out how the participants will conclude their education:

> Upon completion of the seminar, the participants will have the option to conduct an examination proving the knowledge of fundamental content necessary for the successful leadership of an adult folk dance ensemble. In

> addition to the imparted knowledge, a successfully completed exam grants them the title of the expert leader of an adult folk dance ensemble, and a certificate enabling the attendance of advanced seminars. (JSKD, 2014)

The complete seminar encompassed 75 hours, it was organized during weekends once per month, generally 6 consecutive times.

A relatively stable seminar concept has been set from the very beginning, predisposing a practical and theoretical test of dance knowledge, as well as basic knowledge about traditional music and costume. The course and the final examination were apparently not easy, since the early reports on the number of seminarians, about 60 to 70 per year (cf. IFS, 1975, 1977), show that the vast majority of them did not successfully complete the training: e.g. one report states that 6 participants obtained the title of expert folk dance ensemble leader in 1970, and in the following years about 15 each year (IFS, 1976). Among the successful seminar participants were several individuals who later became leaders of acclaimed Slovenian folk dance ensembles. Exceptionally, these seminars were also attended by ambitious ensemble musicians wishing to gain more knowledge about traditional music and its integration with other forms of traditional folk culture, especially dance and involvement in customs and traditions. Some of these musicians successfully completed their training and passed the final exam, subsequently establishing themselves as eminent musicians and arrangers of music in folk dance ensembles.

The great significance of the seminar to this day remains that the participants (leaders or more active members of the ensembles, who are often also choreographers of the dance performances) acquire a relatively broad basic knowledge related to the activities of folk dance ensembles, including knowledge of the basics of vocal and instrumental traditional music. The seminar has thus enabled the participants, who are usually mainly dance-oriented, to also learn about the meaning and role of music in dance, to understand it better and to cooperate with musicians and authors of musical arrangements. However, it was apparent already from the first surveys conducted among the seminar participants that they were not specifically interested in music per se, as very few seminar participants expressed desire to extend the music-related content of the course, e.g. 2 out of 23 in the questionnaire from the year 1977[14] (IFS, 1977). This is probably why the majority of the seminars' program is devoted to dance education (cf. JSKD, 2014), while other topics are treated only in a basic and relatively cursory way, e.g. traditional vocal and instrumental music were together often given about 4 hours out of the 75 hours of training.

[14] A similar state is also revealed by the questionnaire from 1974, asking, among other, about content proposals, wishes and orientations for the preparation of a planned advanced seminar for folk dance ensemble leaders. In terms of musical content, opinions diverge among ensemble leaders since "some specifically demand and expect advanced musical knowledge that might facilitate independent creation of music arrangements, while others decidedly oppose the comprehensive treatment of music" (Ravnikar, 1974a: 2).

Changes following Slovenia's independence

After the breakup of Yugoslavia and the independence of Slovenia in 1991, radical changes occurred in the repertoires of many folk dance ensembles, since they discontinued the program of the nations and ethnicities of Yugoslavia, shifting exclusively towards the presentation of the Slovenian tradition.[15] According to estimate, some folk dance ensembles thus lost about two thirds to one half of their existing program overnight (Kunej, 2020).

The Yugoslav program type was normally performed by the so-called *reproduction folk dance ensembles* in larger cities, where there were also the most immigrants from other Yugoslavian republics. In the smaller folk dance ensembles, active particularly in the rural environment, these changes did not occur as most of them had already been presenting mainly Slovenian traditions with their program.[16] Notably, the focus on presenting the program of the different nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia in folk dance ensembles must be understood from a pragmatic point of view in addition to the political context. A folk dance ensemble with a varied program was more attractive to the audience and more popular and successful at festivals at home and abroad. For the ensembles, a content focus on the music and dance traditions of the entirety of Yugoslavia was an informal condition for participation in folklore festivals abroad, where they primarily represented the common Yugoslav state. The ambition to represent the country at international festivals was especially shared by the larger and more established ensembles, which also had a larger membership, were better organised, and had better financial (and political) support.

In terms of content, for musicians and those who directed instrumental music activity in folk dance ensembles, the changes of 1991 were perhaps not as acute and critical as they might initially appear. In the larger folk dance ensembles whose program featured traditions from various republics of Yugoslavia, of course, the changes also led to a rather different emphasis in the repertoire of the music and musicians, focused on the presentation of Slovenian musical tradition exclusively. On the other hand, the training and guidance of musicians, folk dance ensemble leaders and those who prepared musical arrangements, even in the larger ensembles, did not change significantly after 1991, as it was from the outset oriented towards the Slovenian tradition.

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[15] At the same time, folk dance ensembles began to be established within the cultural societies of minority ethnic communities, organized by nationals of former Yugoslavian republics living in Slovenia. Due to socio-political changes and the shifting relationships on the identity axis us-others, they experienced a need to strengthen their ethnic identity and boundaries between minority and majority culture (more in Kunej, Kunej, 2019). Given the specifics of this type of folk dance ensembles, we shall not be presenting their issues here.

[16] There were several reasons for this, most evidently leaning on the local tradition and smaller membership numbers which were also ethnically more homogenous, next to presenting the music and dance tradition primarily in the home environment rather than festivals abroad.

The institutional educational activities being conducted since 1970 were throughout aimed specifically at familiarity with the Slovenian traditions. This might be surprising, since they ran in the time of the former common state Yugoslavia, and in addition were attended in particular by members of the larger and more visible folk dance ensembles from the urban environment, whose repertoire also included the folk traditions of other Yugoslavian republics. Nevertheless, both the yearly seminars (the introductory and advanced seminar) for (artistic) leaders of folk dance ensembles, as well as various thematic trainings, seminars and workshops were in their content focused exclusively on the treatment of the Slovenian traditions. This planned orientation was delineated from the early beginnings.[17]

Focus on Slovenian tradition in the instrumental music of folk dance ensembles is also reflected in the gradual introduction of certain traditional Slovenian folk instruments into musical ensembles and stage performances, which had not been used in folk dance ensembles earlier. Generally, the instrumental music in the larger ensembles was based on the so-called Alpine band, a rather typical and uniform line-up in which the piano accordion was the foundation to which, based on the possibilities and availability of the musicians, a melodic instrument (clarinet and/or violin) and a bass instrument (mainly the double bass) were added. Furthermore, such ensembles often had a tambura band, which mainly performed music for various dances from Bela Krajina. Both these sets were also suitable for performing music in the stage presentations of the traditions of other Yugoslavian republics. In smaller folk dance ensembles there was often only one musician, playing the accordion, most often of the piano type. With institutionally organised educational activities however, participants also began learning about other traditional Slovenian instruments, eventually introducing them into stage performances, e.g. (shepherd's) flute, the clay pot bass, pan pipes, transverse wooden flute (*žvegla*), Jew's harp, various occasional instruments and, above all, the diatonic button accordion.[18] Precisely the introduction of the diatonic button accordion offers a telling example of the shifting use of traditional folk instruments in folk dance ensembles, and of the changes that have taken place since Slovenia's independence.

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[17] This is also evident from the aforementioned questionnaire conducted in 1974 among those seminar participants who successfully passed their exam. Among 26 interviewees, two expressed the desire to learn about the folk tradition of other Yugoslavian republics at the advanced seminar. The general reply to the proposal was clear and resolute: "Our stance is well known – to focus heavily on Slovenian folklore" (Ravnikar, 1974a: 2). From the rest of the records, it appears that this alone was considered a sizeable and difficult task, while potential expansion to the content of entire Yugoslavia would make it even harder. The organizers advised those wishing to gain expertise on the folk traditions of the other Yugoslavian republics to seek it at the "Summer School of Folklore" in Croatia (Ravnikar, 1974a: 2).

[18] Thus e.g. in the Association of the Folk Dance Ensembles of Slovenia (ZFSS), in 1980 established under the auspices of the Association of Cultural Organizations of Slovenia (ZKOS), the content guidelines of activity among other set forth "the shaping of foundations and content of educational programs for traditional folk instruments" (*Informativno glasilo ZFSS* 1981: 6), in which the education was a "constant and permanent activity" including the planned "school of old traditional instruments" (*Informativno glasilo ZFSS*, 1981: 8).

The diatonic button accordion began appearing in folk dance ensembles relatively late. This is surprising from today's perspective, since the diatonic button accordion is now a widely known and popular instrument; one of the most played and heard musical instruments in Slovenia. In addition to its tremendous popularity, this accordion and its sound are often used as a symbol of Slovenian-ness[19] (cf. Kovačič, 2015).

Although it was only introduced in Slovenia in the second half of the nineteenth century, the diatonic button accordion soon became a central traditional instrument and fundamentally changed the way traditional music was made. Traditional musicians played it in ensembles with other instruments, but often also solo – since its ability to play melody and harmonic accompaniment simultaneously with a bass foundation might replace several traditional instruments at once. In traditional music, it was primarily intended to be played for dancing.

The early use of the diatonic button accordion in Slovenian folk dance ensembles corresponds with the emergence of organized institutional educational activities in the 1970s. Much credit for this goes to Bruno Ravnikar who, as a physicist and acoustician by education, was highly interested in traditional instruments. He researched them closely and had personally reconstructed and used some (simple) instruments in his music-dance stage presentations. Ravnikar played the diatonic button accordion as a child, beginning his long career as a folk ensemble musician on this very instrument. (cf. Trampuš, 1979). That the diatonic button accordion was implemented in Slovenian folk dance ensembles relatively late, with quite some difficulty and uncertainty, and was connected with the efforts of Bruno Ravnikar, is also supported by the introduction to his article 'Diatonic Button Accordion' from the year 1974:

> At all the seminars for the leaders of folk dance ensembles we strongly recommended musical accompaniment on the diatonic button accordion. Perhaps we have even been successful in these endeavours, since quite a few participants have returned to us saying: "We have found a diatonic button accordion, but sadly no one to play it!" Truly, it is not easy to find a button accordion musician these days, especially in the cities. The music schools consider the instrument taboo, and any curious beginners have nowhere to turn for guidance. This of course goes to all those folk dance ensembles whose leadership wishes to seek tradition, and looks to include in its performances the diatonic button accordion, or the "button box" (*knofarca*) as we colloquially call it. The following article is intended for them. (Ravnikar, 1974b: 15)

[19] As is for example also evidenced by the remark in a newspaper article titled "The accordion is the voice of the Slovenian nation" which characterized the diatonic button accordion as "almost a national symbol" (Vaš, 2020).

On several pages, his article then presents the characteristics of the diatonic button accordion and fundamentals of playing the instrument, finishing with three sheet music examples of folk dance tunes with added markings for the finger positions and combinations of the appropriate buttons and direction of the bellows. The highly practical and insightful article is likely a consequence of a considerable need for an "old folk instruments teacher" in folk dance ensembles, as is stated in the questionnaire analysis where concrete cases of "lacking a musician able to play the diatonic button accordion" appear (Ravnikar, 1974a: 3).

In the 1980s, the diatonic button accordion was becoming an increasingly popular instrument in folk dance ensembles. In 1980, the first seminar of diatonic button accordion was organized in the frame of regular education courses, for which Mile Trampuš, musician and alongside wife Neva also the artistic leader of the well-established folk dance ensemble Koleda from Velenje, prepared written materials for the seminar participants.[20] At similar seminars in the following years, experience in diatonic button accordion play was transmitted by various renowned musicians, among the first Lojze Slak, who revived this accordion from oblivion in the 1960s and massively popularized it in the framework of the Slovenian folk pop music (*narodnozabavna glasba*) he was performing.

Julijan Strajnar, a researcher of traditional music at the Institute of Ethnomusicology of the ZRC SAZU, long-time musician in the France Marolt Students' Folk Dance Ensemble, and author of many musical arrangements for folk dance ensembles, in 1986 in a special themed edition of the magazine *Folklorist* titled *Musicians' Tunes* (Strajnar, 1986) stressed the important role of the diatonic button accordion in Slovenian traditional music, publishing several field transcripts and music arrangements for the instrument. Mile Trampuš then, in his manual from the early 1990s, already states that the diatonic button accordion is "beyond doubt extremely popular" among the people and has become "the most important Slovenian traditional instrument" (Trampuš, 1993: 3). Nevertheless, due to some of its (musical) limitations and a pronounced connection to the Slovenian space, it was not able to fully replace the "universality" of the piano accordion in folk dance ensembles, especially in the performance of traditions from other Yugoslavian republics. After the year 1991, when all the folk dance ensembles reoriented themselves into the Slovenian program, coupled with the gradual rise in the popularity of the diatonic button accordion in various popular music genres and among youth, and the implementation of its teaching privately and in music schools,[21]

[20] In 1993, Mile Trampuš based on his seminar materials published the Musician's Manual (*Godčevski priročnik*, Trampuš, 1993), a workbook for playing the diatonic button accordion introducing students to the instrument in a systematic and simple way, featuring examples of Slovenian folk melodies.

[21] In the year 2000, the diatonic button accordion course became part of public music education in Slovenia, while the instrument was simultaneously introduced and categorized as a "traditional instrument".

the diatonic button accordion became the dominant and central instrument of folk dance ensembles in Slovenia.

The emergence, rise to prominence and finally dominance of the diatonic button accordion in Slovenian folk dance ensembles is an apt example; on the one hand reflecting the expert orientation of the folklore activities and on the other the historical circumstances and broader context of presenting "traditional folk music instruments and music" on stage. In the time of the beginning of organized educational activities in the 1970s and the early expert guidance of folklore activities, the shaping of the instrumental music was focused on approaching traditional music, in accordance with the general currents. At that point, the very inclusion of the diatonic button rather than the piano accordion denoted taking a step closer to traditional folk sentiment, as is attested by various records referring to it as a "traditional" or "authentic" instrument.[22]

With the rise of the general popularity of the diatonic button accordion, and following Slovenia's independence also its mass adoption in other musical genres (especially Slovenian folk pop and popular music) along with the media being favourable to this instrument, folk dance ensembles no longer had difficulty finding musicians skilled at the diatonic button accordion. Gradually as well, increasing departures from the traditional style of play began to emerge. Thus, the expert guidance of folk dance ensembles responded with the organizing of numerous music workshops and seminars directed particularly at diatonic button accordion musicians, presenting them with the traditional playing style and folk use. Expert articles and written guidelines concerning the play style of the diatonic button accordion within the framework of the traditional music performance or in folk dance ensembles were also published (e.g. Volk, 2008; Rauch, 2008, 2010). The need for such guidance in time increased, since "ever younger musicians introduced ever more elements of modern playing, along with modern instruments, into folk dance ensembles as well – first to the rehearsals, and then, of course, to the performances" (Rauch, 2010: 20), an influence that has been moving the diatonic button accordion and its playing style away from the traditional playing style of the past.

[22] Thus e.g. Ravnikar in his article in 1974 already stresses that the implementation of the diatonic button accordion is sensible "for all those folk dance ensembles whose leadership wishes to seek tradition" (Ravnikar 1974b: 15), while Trampuš points out the use of folk instruments in folk dance ensembles, including the diatonic button accordion: "At our seminars for folk dance ensemble leaders, we constantly recommended the use of traditional folk instruments, the diatonic button accordion in particular" (Trampuš, 1993: 3). In the document *Program tasks and actions of the Association of Cultural Organizations of Slovenia in the field of folklore activities 1983*, education on the diatonic button accordion is simply titled as "seminar for traditional accordion" (*Programske naloge*, 1983).

Conclusion

On the case of the diatonic button accordion we can see how changes in the performing practice, superficial knowledge of the characteristics of traditional instrumental music, modernized line-ups as well as shifts in the views on the presentation of folk tradition on stage have in recent times been shaping in folk dance ensembles a different musical image to that planned in the historic endeavours of education and expert training. Records of guidelines and teachings concerning the performance and arrangement of traditional music in folk dance ensembles had for a considerable time expressed, up until the 2010s, an orientation towards "genuine" folk tradition and custom (cf. Strajnar, 1986; Volk, 2008; Rauch, 2010). Such orientation, which followed the historical and geographical features drawing on ethnographical data, corresponds to the concept of the passive adoption to the stage, meaning the stage presentation of traditional music and dance closely following the original, and with all the characteristic traditional elements.

It appears that the independence of Slovenia in 1991 primarily facilitated a closer and more comprehensive realization of ideas and concepts that had already been set quite far back in time. With the reorientation of the folk dance ensembles exclusively into repertoire based on the Slovenian folk tradition, the arrangers of the music, musicians, and ensemble leaders were compelled to dedicate themselves to the understanding and presentation of the Slovenian traditional instrumental music, following aspirations whose seeds were planted in the 1970s with the start of systematic education. From this aspect the year 1991, which naturally offered many radical shifts, is perhaps seen as less quintessential for the workings of the folk dance ensembles than the year 1970, when the institutional education and expert guidance focused on the Slovenian tradition first began.

In the last decade then, the expert guidance of musicians and those creating the musical image within folk dance ensembles has focused elsewhere, corresponding more closely to the concept of the active transfer to the stage. Similarly as it has been established by Rebeka Kunej (2018, 2023) within traditional dance, in instrumental traditional music the initial ideas gravitating towards the faithful portrayal of "tradition", "veracity", "authenticity" have transformed into an "artistic concept", in which folk tradition moves into the role of inspiring the creativity of authors. In the *Manual for Folklore Activity* from the year 2017 we thus find instructions that folk dance ensembles may "freely manipulate musical content (e.g. music, lyrics, band line-up) so as to reinterpret it artistically" (Šivic, 2017: 118). In this it is pointed out that "the context of time and space set by the ethnographical data ought to be expanded, taking into account a broader artistic frame", which incorporates the inclusion of other musical genres, for example Slovenian folk pop, choir, or popular music (Šivic, 2017: 143). Accordingly, the concept and execution of educational activities and expert guidance engaged with folk dance ensembles has changed to a fundamental degree.

In the recent years, all this reflects in the musical arrangements, utilized instruments, instrumental line-ups and style of performance, as well as in the overall stage presentation of music-dance performances. The connection between music and dance is no longer as meaningfully intertwined, mutually dependent and inseparable as it might be expected or was evident in tradition. The reasons for such changes in the approach of expert guidance must be researched in detail, though it would appear they do not arise from the past expert guidance, nor are they directly connected to the consequences of Slovenian independence, but ride the currents of other changes and concepts instead.

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Spreminjajoča se narava instrumentalne glasbe in glasbenikov v folklornih skupinah

Folklorne skupine imajo v Sloveniji že skoraj stoletje dolgo tradicijo in sodijo v širši okvir »folklorne dejavnosti«, ki predstavlja na tradiciji temelječo glasbo, ples, oblačilno kulturo ter šege in navade. Pogosto so ti elementi najbolj celostno zaobjeti prav v folklornih skupinah; te jih združujejo in povezujejo ter v glasbenoplesnih odrskih postavitvah javno predstavljajo na različnih prireditvah.

Čeprav je pogosto poudarjena prevladujoča vlogo plesa, pa ima v dejavnostih folklornih skupin pomembno vlogo inštrumentalna glasba. Praviloma jo v živo izvajajo glasbeniki, ki so aktivni člani folklornih skupin, in tako je tudi vloga glasbenikov osrednjega pomena v tem procesu. Namen prispevka je predstaviti vlogo instrumentalne glasbe in glasbenikov v folklornih skupinah ter preučiti različne vplive na oblikovanje glasbene podobe v njej. Obravnavan je čas od leta 1970, ko se je začelo sistematično strokovno izobraževanje in usmerjanje delovanja folklornih skupin, do okoli leta 2015, ko je v vsebinskem konceptu usmerjanja in delovanja folklornih skupin prišlo do bistvenih sprememb in novosti. Pri tem sta pozornosti deležna mejnika, ki sta pomembno vplivala na delovanje folklornih skupin v tem času: prvi predstavlja začetek organiziranih izobraževalnih dejavnosti, seminarjev in srečanj skupin, ki so se v začetku 70. let začela institucionalno izvajati, drugi pa vpliv družbenopolitičnih sprememb zaradi razpada Jugoslavije in osamosvojitve Slovenije leta 1991. V članku je analizirano predvsem, kakšen vpliv je imel začetek strokovnega usmerjanja in izobraževanja na glasbeno podobo v folklornih skupinah in v čem je bilo leto 1991 prelomno tudi za glasbo in glasbenike v njih.

Raziskava je pokazala, da je osamosvojitev Slovenije omogočila predvsem doslednejšo in popolnejšo uresničitev zamisli in konceptov, ki so bili postavljeni že veliko prej. S preusmeritvijo vseh folklornih skupin izključno v repertoar, ki temelji na slovenskem ljudskem izročilu, so se bili glasbeniki, vodje skupin in oblikovalci glasbene podobe v folklornih skupinah primorani temeljiteje posvečati razumevanju in predstavljanju slovenske ljudske inštrumentalne glasbe in dosledneje uresničevati tisto, kar je bilo zasnovano že z začetkom sistematičnega izobraževanja. S tega vidika se pokaže, da je sicer vsestransko prelomno leto 1991 morda manj vplivalo na oblikovanje glasbene podobe v folklornih skupinah kakor čas, ko sta se začela sistematično izobraževanje in strokovno usmerjanje, ki sta gradila na temeljitem poznavanju slovenskega izročila in njegovem predstavljanju na odru.

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Sunday *Horos* in Bulgaria Today

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The paper focuses on the phenomenon of open-air folk dance gatherings occurring every Sunday afternoon in Bulgarian towns. Modern Sunday *horos* (a cumulative term used to signify the event of chain folk dances performed on Sunday afternoons in open public spaces), as a bottom-up social dance phenomenon, is hailed as part of the "back-to-the-roots" movement and has become, together with recreational dance clubs, an important part of the overall Bulgarian post-Communist folk dance and music context since 2015.
▪ **Keywords**: tradition, recreational dances, folk fitness, back-to-the-roots movements, folklore

Članek se osredinja na pojav srečanj ob ljudskem plesu na prostem, ki v bolgarskih mestih potekajo vsako nedeljo popoldne. Sodobno nedeljsko *horo* (skupen izraz označuje dogodek, ob katerem se ob nedeljah popoldne na odprtih javnih površinah izvajajo skupinski plesi v koloni-kolu) kot pojav družabnega plesa od spodaj navzgor je razglašen za del gibanja »nazaj h koreninam« in je skupaj z rekreativnimi plesnimi klubi od leta 2015 postal pomemben del celotnega bolgarskega postkomunističnega konteksta ljudskega plesa in glasbe.
▪ **Ključne besede**: tradicija, rekreativni plesi, ljudski fitnes, gibanje »nazaj h koreninam«, folklora

Intro

Dance in folk culture responds to changes in its environment with qualitative shifts. Bulgarian folk dance of today relies heavily on the ghosts of its glorious past. During Communism, stage folklore was one of the most popular instruments utilized in forging Bulgaria's national identity and image. The "good" folk art-culture system (Clifford, 1988) was sponsored and censured by the government, shaped according to the needs of the Communist party and its political goals. After the regime's grip was loosened and with its thorough fall, the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century witnessed many new developments in the folk dance scene, such as private ensembles and dance clubs, the *horoteque*[1] etc. Consequently, within the larger context of the recreational folk dance movement in Bulgaria, there is a rebirth of people's interest towards Bulgarian folk dances, traditional or not, which takes different shapes and forms.

In her 2008 book *Between the Village and the Universe: Old Folk Music from Bulgaria in Modern Times*, Lozanka Peycheva states that concentrating on classical

[1] A *horoteque* is a dance party at a club and/or the club itself where people gather to dance *horo* following the example of a discotheque. See Kurdova, 2021.

folk forms is a widespread idea among researchers in the sphere of Bulgarian folk studies. She further poses the question whether in the quest to record what is subject to extinction, one fails to document current forms of contemporary folklore. In addition, Peycheva criticizes the insufficient attention paid to the scientific interpretation of these forms (Peycheva, 2008). Sunday *horos* on the main squares of big cities in Bulgaria have emerged in modern times to provide entertainment without financial gain. These gatherings are not a *horoteque*, but just like a *horoteque* they have become a major source for dance material in Bulgaria and abroad via viral videos on social networks. The information I have acquired through informal conversations with participants in Sunday *horos* held in the towns of Sofia, Varna, Plovdiv, and Smolyan over the course of 7 years (2015–2023) is the foundation underpinning my research. Coupling it with my own observations as a Bulgarian folk dance teacher and a participant in such Sunday gatherings on many occasions, I will try to answer how, and why, the modern Sunday *horos* originated. What is their context? The research will also observe if and in what way they relate to similar dance phenomena.

Verse

To delve into the topic of the Sunday *horos* today, we must venture on a small journey in history, explaining the context in which those open-air gatherings originated, how they were born, and their connection to the *megdanski hora*[2] in the traditional folklore context. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, when the first Bulgarian dance groups were formed, there was a change in the socio-economic and cultural context which inspired a kind of movement for the preservation and transmission of traditional dances through the generations, due to the fear of their disappearance. As early as 1882, a dance school opened where *horos* dances were taught alongside ballroom and character dances. On the other hand, after the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, major urban centres were already beginning to resemble European cities and migration towards them increased. Large groups of rural population began to amass in the cities, longing culturally for traditional *megdanski hora* that would bring back the comfort of home. As a result, in many professional associations, workers themselves initiated the creation of dance groups, thus continuing their local dance traditions in the urban settings (Grancharova, 2012).

The inner need to dance one's own dances along with striving to preserve traditional folklore laid the grounds for forming non-professional dance groups in an urban setting. Their leaders observed folk dances with the intention of processing them artistically

[2] *Megdan* is the central square where the whole village would gather for festivities. *Megdanski hora* are chain dances that have lost their ritual context and were performed mainly during village festivities, such as every Sunday after attending church for example.

and presenting them to an "enlightened public" (Dzhudzhev, 1945: 77). A parallel can easily be drawn between those developments and the phenomena we witness today in the form of recreational dance clubs, *horoteques*, and Sunday *horos*. Anna Shtarbanova, a prominent Bulgarian ethnochoreologist, notes:

> from a cultural point of view, this repeats the phenomenon from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, when intellectuals replaced the village *horos* with dances created and taught in schools, emphasizing their gymnastic functions for the sake of physical education. (Shtarbanova, 2013: 94)

In Bulgaria, the post-war period of the 1940s was marked by the rapid development of stage dances based on traditional folklore following the example of the USSR. Such a process was taking place in other Communist territories as well – for example in Croatia where folk dance ensembles were established to pave the way to publicly presenting traditions (Ćaleta, Zebec, 2017). In Bulgaria, the State Ensemble for Folk Songs and Dances "Filip Kutev" was created in 1951. Afterwards the number of professional ensembles began to grow, reaching as many as twenty by 1989. Just like in Croatia or in Slovenia, the Bulgarian folk dance scene was divided between city ensembles performing stylized choreographies and rural groups performing their native traditions (Ćaleta, Zebec, 2017: 142; Kunej, 2020: 18). Professional training of young Bulgarian folk dance performers started during the same period – the State Ballet School opened its doors in 1951, whereas the Bulgarian folk dance education of students started in the same school in 1956. 1967 is the year when the National School of Folk Arts was founded in the town of Kotel, while in 1972 the National School of Folk Arts in the town of Shiroka Laka accepted its first pupils. In 1964 a branch of the Bulgarian State Conservatory was founded in Plovdiv and later (1972) transformed into the independent Higher Music and Pedagogical Institute. There, in 1974 Kiril Dzhenev laid the foundations of the Department of Choreography and the Bulgarian Folk Choreography major.[3]

The opinion that prevails up until today among researchers and the general public is that well-educated dance high school and/or university graduates, as well as the skilfully choreographed stage dances based on folklore samples, were and are a valuable advantage that helped the "Bulgarian choreographic model" develop. Describing this professionalized dance model is important because today, most of the recreational dance club leaders in Bulgaria have choreography degrees and teach their dancers by borrowing practices from professional ensembles: for example, the structure and content of the dance class; the methodology and metalanguage of teaching; uniformity in dance

[3] According to Daniela Dzheneva (2015: 22) "with the launch of this training, folk dances evolved to be worthy of the big stage art, placed on a solid foundation of the research and preservation of authentic folk material."

clothing; a dance style with big movements so that even the last rows of the audience can see it. In addition, dance clubs often participate in festivals and concerts, sometimes even receiving some small remuneration for their performance. Modern Sunday *horos* are, to a large extent, influenced by such recreational folk dance clubs. Hence, the folk aesthetics picked up in the dance hall plays a crucial role in the development of this new dance phenomenon.

In his paper 'Folklore and Modernity', Todor Iv. Zhivkov mentions that by 1981 in Bulgaria, nearly half a million Bulgarians were engaged in the so-called *hudozhestvena samodeinost* (Zhivkov, 1981). To quote Donna Buchanan who explains the same term in the context of music:[4]

> *Hudozhestvena* means 'artistic' or 'something accomplished with artistry'. *Samodeinost* means that the musical creativity is spontaneous and amateur. There isn't supposed to be any kind of director imposing an opinion on the music. So, putting the two words together as *hudozhestvena samodeinost* embodies an enormous contradiction, because the performers are supposedly amateurs but in fact they are led by a conductor, rehearse regularly, and may well be advised by a folklorist. (Buchanan, 2006: 133)

However, *hudozhestvena samodeinost* (*HS*) was an academic and political construct of the Bulgarian Communist government and did not originate as a cultural phenomenon, or a continuation of such related to tradition. The participation of as many people as possible in *HS* was imperative to the state policy during Communism – through *HS* the free time of the people was filled with useful activities regulated by the state, offering prestige and a type of freedom. This massive cultural phenomenon was a needed psychological "valve" to let off steam and appease the masses – folk tradition in Bulgaria had always been fused into an inseparable amalgam with Orthodox beliefs. Cultural engagement in the form of the *HS* was the quickest way to alleviate the outcry after everything church-related was forbidden. Even the poet Paun Genov recommended that citizens "participate as much as they can [...] because this increases their spiritual horizons, contributes to their cultural development and entertainment" (Genov, 1966: 63–64). All in all, *HS* in its initial stages, as a part of the general artistic folk model described above, was created to serve as an educational tool, and was used for pro-Communist campaigning. However, it also aimed at aiding the shaping of the new Bulgarian cultural identity in the period of socialism – as Goldschmidt (1964: 27) puts it, "a proper, creative approach to the abundance of forms in our dance folklore provides a broad basis for creating dances that reflect the new man."

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[4] This explanation may be successfully applied to dance as well.

Pre-chorus

Based on my research, modern Sunday *horos* have a birth date and a birthplace – 1st March 2015, in the town of Varna on the Black Sea coast. March is the month when in many Balkan countries people celebrate the upcoming spring by gifting/receiving and wearing a *martenitsa*[5] on their hands or clothes. During the break of a folk dance workshop I taught on 23rd April 2023, in an informal conversation with Magdalena Petrova (leader of the recreational folk dance club "Ludetini" (Crazies) in Varna), she shared that back in 2015, together with several enthusiasts from her club, she went out for a Sunday walk to celebrate 1st March with the intention to dance in the open in celebration of this national holiday. Passers-by joined them for a *horo* and thus the Sunday *horos* in Varna were born. A week after that, a similar initiative was held in the capital of Bulgaria – Sofia. Afterwards the idea of regularly dancing Bulgarian folk dances in the open spread exponentially. Today, almost all big towns have a Sunday *horo* gathering every week.

Sunday *horos* have a similar scenario – people organize themselves via social networks on Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, etc. Either someone brings a personal loudspeaker, or the Sunday *horo* dancers gather money to buy one. With the help of a laptop, at a certain hour (usually around 16:00 h), dancing will start. Often initiated by dance group leaders, there are also plenty of cases when the entire organization of such events is done by people who are simply folklore connoisseurs. Either way, an official permission to hold such an open space gathering in public locations must be obtained beforehand.

Many Sunday *horo* participants from Sofia, Varna, Plovdiv and Smolyan whom I spoke to in informal conversations stated that they took their first *horo* steps during those Sunday dance gatherings in the open. The age of dancers varies between 5 and 90, most of the women and men are Bulgarians, though due to the central locations of the events many times foreigners also take part. A lot of the Sunday *horo* participants later on join recreational dance clubs but continue to attend the Sunday gatherings.

The repertoire of Sunday *horos* heavily depends on dancers and/or the preferences of the one in charge of the music, who often is the un/official leader overseeing the venue. The most usual dance material visible during the event consists of choreographed *horos* easily accessible as video material from Facebook and YouTube. Most popular are the dances taught by prominent dance choreographers in *horoteques*, on dance vacations and festivals, or in dance halls, etc. There are no official dance instructors showing the steps of the dances. Once the music starts, people join hands and form

[5] *Martenitsa* is the name given to creations made of intertwined red and white threads – woolen, silk, or cotton. The most typical *Martenitsa* represents two small dolls, known as Pizho and Penda. *Martenitsa* is worn from the 1st March until the bearer sees a tree that has bloomed, a stork, or a martin. Afterwards it is hung on a tree.

an open circle where the more experienced dancers keep to the front while the less experienced either follow or stay outside the dance circle and watch until they feel secure enough to join the dance chain.[6]

Many people believe that these gatherings are a continuation of the old Bulgarian tradition of *megdanski hora* which took place on the village square after church before Communism established itself in Bulgaria. The notion of preserving and transmitting those traditional values and dances is a widespread belief among the participants in the modern Sunday *horos*, deeply rooted yet far from truth. Ethnochoreologist Goritsa Naidenova writes that artistic activity, and its cultural product, began to be accepted as identical with traditional folk dances around the beginning of the *hudozhestvena samodeinost* (Naidenova, 2017). This statement is important and is confirmed also by the answers of many of the Sunday *horos* dancers when I posed the question as to why they attend Sunday *horos*: *"I dance because I am Bulgarian"*, *"We preserve the authentic Bulgarian horo"*, *"Our folklore is ancient and we must continue it"*, etc. despite the fact that the dance repertoire during the Sunday *horos* has nothing to do with root and/or traditional dances.

Professor Anna Ilieva, one of the pioneers of Bulgarian ethnochoreology and a member of the International Folk Music Council,[7] distinguishes between two types of *HS*, which she named "folk" and "artistic" *HS* (Ilieva, 1971: 113). The former is upheld by village ensembles, whose participants are "direct descendants of the local dance traditions, who present on the stage the *hora* and the games of their ancestors in the most authentic form... having acquired their dancing skills from the *megdanski hora*" (Ilieva, 1971: 113). Furthermore, Ilieva defines the artistic *HS* as the various urban and rural ensembles which perform artistically processed, stage and stylized folk dances and have been trained by a leader. If we assume that the second concept refers to the *HS* dance ensembles, the first one directs us to the folklore groups operating in the community centres, the so-called *izvorni* groups (root ensembles). In the years after its creation, the *HS* unfolded and evolved in parallel with the pedagogical development of the professional dance cadres. Numerous written guidelines were disseminated via books and magazines in order to include both types of *hudozhestvena samodeinost* in this process. With much effort, love and enthusiasm, the "Bulgarian model" was born. In the dawn of its creation, the aim was to present Bulgaria and its cultural wealth to the world in the best possible way, whereas in its golden era, masterpieces of our folk-lore-based dance art were created and displayed on stage by professional and amateur ensembles (Ivanova-Nyberg, 2011).

[6] A video published by user Черно коте (Tscherno kote) on 4.6.2023 at 22:04 h in the public Facebook group "Sunday Horo Sofia" https://www.facebook.com/100002391386851/videos/606477491246336/.

[7] Today: International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance.

The massive effort to transform dance folklore into a high-level stage art influenced the perception and aesthetics of people involved in both types of *HS* mentioned above. This gradually shifted the idea of traditional *horos* towards overlapping with choreographed creations resembling *horos* mainly due to the outer shape of the dance (performed mostly in a circle). Recreational dance clubs in Bulgaria came to existence in the late 1990s after the political changes in 1989 and the fall of Communism. Their repertoire in the first years consisted mainly of *horo*-resembling dances, albeit choreographed by professionals. Logically, Sunday *horos* rarely if ever display a repertoire comprising traditional village dances.[8] Just like the dancers in many recreational clubs, participants in the Sunday events have a strong preference to modernized synth folklore-based music and elaborate quick tempo choreographies they have seen in clubs, *horoteques*, or videos online.

Chorus

Parallel to the development of the recreational dance club in Bulgaria, other phenomena equally important for the Sunday *horos* came to existence. They have influenced and shaped the very essence and repertoire of clubs and their impact is visible in the repertoire of the Sunday *horos*. One of the first recreational clubs in Bulgaria – "Tchanove" (Cow Bells) – is important for the overall club activity in Bulgaria due to several bold economic decisions. In 2007 they created the first tutorial with Bulgarian dances in the form of a series of DVDs, dedicated to different regions of Bulgaria. This was the first of similar products on the market in our country, and its launch coincided with the birthday of the first festival (also a dance competition) for amateur clubs in Bulgaria – "Horo se vie, izviva" (The Dance Line is Winding) – in Sofia. Twenty groups from all over Bulgaria met for the first time in front of an audience to show their level by dancing two *horos* and competing for the prize of the jury panel consisting of famous choreographers. A year later, at the second edition of the festival, there were almost twice as many clubs, while at the same time over the course of the year, more and more clubs opened their doors in bigger cities. Many of them operated in several locations in Sofia, and some such as "Tchanove" and "Gaitani" (Woolen Cord Decorations) opened branches in other cities outside the capital – a successful business model to this day. Club "Folklorika" created an online database with free access to videos from all editions of "Horo se vie, izviva", as well as from other festivals subsequently.[9]

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[8] The term "traditional dance" throughout the paper would mean a *horo* which still exists and is performed in a particular village, whereas the concept of tradition signifies transmission of knowledge and experience from one generation to the next within traditional contexts. See Nahachewsky, 2012.

[9] A link to the database of *horos* from various festivals; filmed, collected, and arranged alphabetically by the "Folklorika" dance club is available here: https://www.folklorika.com/forum/viewforum.php?f=11.

The “Tchanove” began the first hybrid festival on the Black Sea coast in the resort Albena under the name “Festival of the Horo” (in 2008). I call it hybrid, because the format of the festival combined the useful with the pleasant – clubs from all over Bulgaria gathered to show off their dancing skills. Thus, in the evenings they danced and celebrated together, while during the day there were organized dance lessons, with each of the clubs’ leaders present showing a new *horo* for everyone to learn.

The year 2008 marks the start of the festival “Tapan Bie, Horo se Vie” (The Drum is Beating, the Dance Line is Winding), a national folklore dance competition in the city of Kazanlak, organized by the cultural center “Zhar 2002” that took place with live music on the central square of the town. 2008 is also the year when the first *horotheque* was born in Plovdiv. Andrey Ivanov – a connoisseur of Latin dances and a frequent visitor to Latin dance parties – started the first *horo*-only party in May 2008. *Horoteque* quickly gained popularity among clubs from Plovdiv, Assenovgrad, Smolyan and other nearby cities.

Up to this point, it can be summarized that the start of the folklore dance club form in Bulgaria was incited by professional dancers/dance teachers in search of profit and new market opportunities in post-socialist times. The phenomenon quickly gained momentum, and in 2007 numerous festivals with a competitive nature appeared, reminiscent of the prominent Communist festivals-competitions for professional and amateur ensembles. At this point there was little focus on collecting and preserving traditional dances.

I suggest that there are three types of recreational dance clubs. The boundaries between these types are often not clear-cut since they flow from one type to the next at different stages of their existence, depending on the circumstances and the leaders in charge:

1. Clubs in the first category are those where the joy of dancing is the main purpose. Focus on physical activity and learning basic dance material is the general modus operandi; dancers attend the classes to find friends, get in shape and – as a rule of thumb – simply have fun. I refer to those clubs as “folk fitness” clubs. The preference there leans towards quick rhythm and quantity of learned material. Many of the Sunday *horo* participants tend to choose such clubs for further dance activity.
2. Semi-professionalization is the trait of the second type of clubs. These have already accumulated plenty of dances in the group repertoire, and members want to go to competitions and meet with other fellow recreational clubs to exchange ideas and dance together. This type of club might later venture into more “professionalization” by repurposing itself as an ensemble for stage choreographies. Such ensembles often start a choir and musical band to form the trinity considered standard by professional ensembles. Many times, those clubs close the development loop by laying the foundations of a children’s ensemble. Many Sunday *horo* participants belong to such clubs. A possible scenario for

this second club type is to split into two or three fractions which in turn become separate clubs, thus beginning the "growth" cycle anew and entering in the above-mentioned 1st category of clubs.

3. The last variation of the club is the tradition-seeking one. Such dance groups choose to go beyond the physical dimension of dance, preferring to delve into its cultural side by searching for the roots. They gather and practice traditional dance material to live music, or at least to music which was recorded especially for the purpose. Often the club leaders of such groups organize field trips to villages for all the club members. They also attend village festivities alone or with the group, forming bonds with the locals and accepting the dance aesthetic of the village folk for their dance and music tradition, as well as the costumes used. My observation is that members of such clubs do not attend dance competitions and *horoteques* and might only take part in an occasional Sunday *horo*. There are a few non-competitive festivals which were especially created by and for such clubs,[10] the most prominent being "Na Armane s Tapane" (On the Threshing Floor with Drums) held annually in the town of Razlog and hailed as a festival of traditional dances.[11]

All in all, modern Sunday *horos* as an event resemble recreational dance clubs, however in comparison, participation in them is charge-free, they take place in the open and there is no leader in the sense of one central teacher, since everyone can show the dances they know and teach them to the others. Just like in many dance clubs, there is rarely, if ever, live music. The preference towards quick and elaborate dance steps is visible in all the editions of the Sunday *horos* I have attended.

Bridge

Undoubtedly, the *megdanski hora* are a dance phenomenon. A dance phenomenon occurs in a logical sequence without prior preparation, just as *megdanski hora* appeared every Sunday, that is, at a certain fixed time. They are awaited by the public (both in the role of dancers and/or spectators); repetitive in nature though each time constituting separate dance phenomena, if only because of their participants who may be the same on every occasion but in a different state of mind and/or body. In tradition, this dance phenomenon takes place over a period of time (a few hours, an afternoon, a whole day) and consists of music, narrative and movement which interact with each other, but also

[10] A post-festival enjoyment to live music in one of the main streets of Pomorie can be seen here: https://www.facebook.com/100023839605712/videos/491753876468241/ (accessed 18.6.2023). The festival in question is called "Horo krai Pomoriiskiya bryag" (Horo along the Coast of Pomorie town), has a non-competitive character and its 14th edition was held 17.–18.6.2023.

[11] For more on the subject see Grancharova, 2018.

with the environment in which they occur, as mentioned above. Additional variables depend on the dancers – whether they are male or female; whether performing alone or with others; whether at the beginning, end or middle of the dance chain; their age, whether they can hear the music well etc. (Shtarbanova, 1995a). On the other hand, the "group body" (Shtarbanova, 1995b: 69–70) which consists of all the people who dance in a chain has a greater stability on a structural level (Ilieva, 2007) precisely because everyone moves together, and improvisations are sporadic along the chain of the *horo*, as well as within its motives. Last but not least, the traditional "group body" dancing in a circle has no beginning or end, no visible leader. What about modern Sunday *horos*?

According to Kealiinohomoku, old traditional dance cultures have a large context compared to the small context of newer dance traditions (Kealiinohomoku, 2001). Changing dynamics often introduces activities and behaviours that differ significantly from older traditions of the larger context. In addition to this, Malinowski's concept of "contact diffusion" as a transition between higher and lower levels, thus reflecting the decline of (in our case) folklore culture (Malinowski, 2004; Ivanova-Nyberg, 2016), could be applied to the phenomenon of Sunday *horos*. They could be considered as being of low context as compared to recreational dance clubs, though actually are much closer to tradition in terms of transmission of knowledge and place of happening. Before 2007, recreational clubs as a new environment for dance folklore were not discussed by the scientific community. In her work from 2011, Ivanova-Nyberg defines a recreational dance club in the Bulgarian context as an urban phenomenon that combines the tradition of "the former groups from the beginning of the 20th century and the folk dance ensemble" (Ivanova-Nyberg, 2011: 334), based on the model of the Bulgarian choreographic school. Using this analogy, Sunday *horos* are a combination of the recreational dance club and a partial aim at the *megdanski hora* context and form. The major difference here is that modern Sunday *horos* have not much in common with the *megdanski*/church Sunday *horos*, which were part of traditional community's life almost a century ago. The modern phenomenon stems from a different, rather urban "folklore". Traditional Sunday *horos* vs. modern Sunday *horos* show the contrast of the village vs. the urban; the traditional vs. the choreographed. Often the dance macroform in the open-air gatherings of today resembles the one a chain dance would acquire between the walls of a dance hall: the chain moves mainly to the right or to the left, no shifting in and out (that is – moving in and/or out of line); no elaborate competition between dancers within the chain so typical for traditional dances. This is because microform and foot placement are often the only thing taught in clubs due to the limitations of the closed space, and due to the huge shift from transmission of traditional knowledge towards folk fitness and moving for fun.

Recreational clubs and modern Sunday *horos* in the open intertwine their existence. As the bond between dance and ritual had weakened before, but especially during Communism, the entire contextual power and energy concentrated into the spirit of

the dance and the elaborate steps. There no longer was a ritual situation, ritual role, ritual behaviour, or ritual costume. All that remained was the music rhythm, dance ethos, style and the pleasure and exhilaration of dancing. The original *raison d'etre* of the dance has survived only in its name and style, structure, movement behaviour and meaning (Shtarbanova, 1996).

Outro

"I saw this in a video" is the preferred way to obtain new dance material in amateur clubs, whether in Bulgaria or abroad. From March 2020 to the spring of 2022, the world entered an unprecedented time of uncertainty and emergency. Social channels such as Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram; video content platforms such as Vimeo and YouTube; sites for philanthropy and fundraising against a digital cultural product (e.g. Indiegogo and Patreon) as well as online communication programs (Zoom, Google Meet, etc.) have shifted meetings and lessons/teaching from physical to cyberspace. Enclosed between four walls, many connoisseurs of Bulgarian dance, music and song folklore published their personal video and audio archives from the Koprivshtitsa open-air festival, the "Pirin Pee" (Pirin Mountain is Singing) festival and other internationally known forums where traditional Bulgarian folklore can still be seen by the larger public, albeit somewhat altered in order to be suitable for stage presentation. Never have users had such a wide variety and choice of what and where to learn, be it by themselves at home, online as a lesson from their club, or from a paid seminar of a Bulgarian or foreign teacher of Bulgarian dances held on one of the online platforms. Reasonably, access to various information should imply access to older recordings and possibly forgotten samples to be brought back into the dance hall. But can a *horo* from one or more sources be trusted to be what we think it is if not crosschecked with other sources?

Sunday *horos* of the 21th century are an entirely bottom-up dance event which divides the Bulgarian community today into those who support it and those who heavily oppose it. The former cherish Sunday *horos* as the continuation of the namesake practice from the times when traditional folklore culture was the common denominator and not merely cultural pockets with some well-preserved local traditions here and there on the map of Bulgaria. Those opposing the Sunday *horo* consider it unsuitable for cities, going as far as to claim it is a quasi-nationalist notion that could easily be weaponized for political use. One thing is certain – the Sunday *horos* and their repertoire are very visible and vocal on the internet while rapidly growing in numbers. Their development and evolution resemble the birth and expansion of recreational folk dance clubs in Bulgaria and within the diaspora communities abroad. As a relatively young phenomenon, it is yet to be observed how it will mature and spread but also how it will influence Bulgarian folk dances, whether traditional or created.

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Nedeljsko *horo* v Bolgariji danes

Članek obravnava pojav ljudskih plesov na prostem, ki se redno odvijajo vsako nedeljo popoldne v bolgarskih mestih in vaseh. Ta srečanja, ki so v celoti družabni plesni dogodek od spodaj navzgor, so vključujoče, participativne narave in jih organizirajo ljudje za ljudi. Nedeljska *hora* (plesi v kolu-koloni), ki so bila razglašena za del gibanja »nazaj h koreninam«, so postala pomemben del splošnega postkomunističnega konteksta ljudskega plesa in glasbe in so pogosto povezana s plesnim dogodkom, ki je pred letom 1950 navadno potekal po nedeljskem bogoslužju pred cerkvijo.

Današnja bolgarska plesna folklorna dejavnost se močno opira na duhove svoje slavne preteklosti. V času komunizma je bila folklorna dejavnost eden od najbolj priljubljenih instrumentov za oblikovanje nacionalne identitete in podobe Bolgarije. Sistem »dobre« ljudske umetnosti in kulture (Clifford, 1988) je sponzorirala in cenzurirala vlada ter ga oblikovala skladno s potrebami komunistične partije in njenimi političnimi cilji. Po sprostitvi režima in njegovem dokončnem padcu je bilo konec 20. stoletja in na začetku 21. stoletja na plesno folklornem prizorišču veliko novosti, kot so zasebni ansambli in plesni klubi, *horoteke* (Kurdova, 2021) itn. Posledično je v širšem kontekstu rekreativnega ljudskega plesnega gibanja v Bolgariji prišlo do prerojenega zanimanja ljudi za bolgarske ljudske plese, tradicionalne ali ne, ki se pojavlja v različnih oblikah in izvedbah.

Nedeljsko *horo* na glavnih trgih velikih mest se je v sodobnem času pojavilo, da bi prineslo zabavo brez finančnega izkupička. Ta urbani pojav je oddaljen odmev časov, ko je bilo ljudsko izročilo del vsakdanjega življenja, ples po nedeljski sveti maši pa je bil prej pravilo kot izjema. Sodobno nedeljsko *horo* ni *horoteka*, tukaj ni didžeja, ki bi določal in uravnaval tempo z izbiro naslednje skladbe. Vendar so ta srečanja, tako kot *horoteke*, postala glavni vir plesnega učnega gradiva prek viralnih videoposnetkov na družbenih omrežjih, uporabljajo in posledično se ga učijo folklorne rekreativne skupine v Bolgariji in tujini. Raziskava, predstavljena v tem članku, temelji na terenskem delu in razkriva izvir sodobne različice tradicije nedeljskega *hora*. Nadalje pojasnjuje kontekst, v katerem se pojav razvija, in njegovo povezavo s širjenjem rekreativnih plesnih skupin za bolgarske folkorizirane plese. V sklepnem delu članek obravnava še načine, kako se nedeljska *hora* 21. stoletja povezujejo s podobnimi plesnimi fenomeni, pa tudi o tem, kako preoblikujejo predstavo o bolgarskih plesih.

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"Zpěváček" Folk Singing Competition: Regional Identity and Heritage Performance in the Czech Republic

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"Zpěváček" is a competition for children singers of folk songs, which has been held in the Czech Republic since 1978 in several rounds, from regional to national. The article explores the ways in which the children act as performers of the (micro)regional identity and negotiate local cultural heritage. Accounting for both historical and contemporary contexts, the text draws from fieldwork including participant observation and autoethnography, interviews, and document analysis.

▪ **Keywords**: children's folk singing competitions, cultural heritage, Czech Republic, folklore revival, regional identity

»Zpěváček« je tekmovanje otroških pevcev ljudskih pesmi, ki od leta 1978 na Češkem poteka na več ravneh, od regionalne do državne. V članku so predstavljeni načini, na katere otroci izkazujejo (mikro)pokrajinske identitete in lokalno kulturno dediščino. Besedilo upošteva zgodovinski in sodobni kontekst ter temelji na terenskem delu, vključno z opazovanjem z udeležbo in avtoetnografijo, intervjuji in analizo dokumentov.

▪ **Ključne besede**: tekmovanja otrok v ljudskem petju, kulturna dediščina, Češka, folklorni preporod, pokrajinska identiteta

Prologue

It is Sunday at the end of June 2022, about 1 pm and, as several times before, I am entering the Radost Theatre in Brno. I am representing the region of Bohemia as a juror in the national round of the "Zpěváček – Děti a píseň" ("Little Singer – Children and Song" in English) contest of children folk singers. The seventy finalists will start competing at 2 pm, and the jury needs to find ten best children singers between the ages 10 and 15 in the Czech Republic; their position in the contest will not be specified. Although the area of the Czech Republic is not large, completely different performances are impressive. The children represent various regions, sometimes they sing in their everyday clothes, other times they wear diverse folk costumes. Some sing in standard Czech and their voice has classical training, others catch the panel's attention with dialect, a distinctive way of singing or hints of dance moves. A person unfamiliar with Bohemian, Moravian or Silesian folk songs would not know most songs in the repertoire. Four jurors, including me, are in casual-smart attire; only one juror from South Moravia, a distinguished folklore activist and leader of several folk music and dance ensembles, is wearing a folk costume from the Horňácko region and is stating that this is the way to support the contestants. Among the judges are well-known regional folk song singers, teachers from various levels of music schools as well as from the

Prague Academy of Performing Arts, and ethnomusicologists – including myself. Jurors whose anchor point are the principles of singing in Western art music disagree with the way of phrasing or the glottal attack of the children from Moravia-Silesia. This, on the contrary, is advocated especially by other jurors: Moravian-Silesian singers of folk songs, who defend the specifics of the regional style of singing. Over an hour long, and sometimes heated debate of jurors about individual performances follows the contest. No subpar children singers advance to the national round, therefore the main subject of criticism is how the so-called regional style and coherence between the identity of the song and its performer have been maintained. Personally, I take a moderate position, trying to evaluate the overall performance of each contestant; I don't stick to details. On the other hand, I am sympathetic to children who try to imitate the singing patterns of their models – adult folk singers.[1]

Introduction

Competitions and festivals of amateur singers and musicians of different kinds, of both local pop and folk music, held in various parts of the world have gained the attention of scholars across many fields, including culture studies and ethnomusicology or social and cultural geography (Ó Laoire, 2000; Duffy, 2000, 2005; Tan, 2005; Wood, 2012; Ellis, 2013; Kearney, 2013; Rhodes, 2021). However, the regions of Central and Mid-Eastern Europe have only been explored to a smaller extent (Bohlman, 2011: 95–107; Szalay, 2017; Nowak, 2018). We can thus investigate the role and purpose played by a children's singing competition with a forty-five year history within the phenomenon of folklore revival. What does it say about the national, or more precisely regional identity, and about the treatment of local song folklore in the Czech Republic? Since 2018 I have been a juror in the national round of the "Zpěváček" competition. Therefore, the study takes into account data from my personal observation together with the method of autoethnography. Also, informal and formal semi-structured interviews[2] with participants of the competition at various positions, i.e., organizers of rounds on various levels, members of accompanying bands, panellists, previous children singers who repeatedly participated, all served as a source of data. The research is complemented with a content analysis of documents, mainly from contributions to the newsletter *Folklor* from 1993 to 2012[3] which directly concern the competition.

[1] The prologue is based on my fieldnotes from the "Zpěváček – Děti a píseň" national round held on 19. 6. 2022 in Divadlo Radost, Brno (Skořepová, 2022a: 2).

[2] Audio recordings and transcripts of interviews are available in the archive of the Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Sciences.

[3] Due to the lack of financial resources, the newsletter ceased to be published after 2013.

Competition history and propositions

The predecessor of the current “Zpěváček” competition was the radio show of the Brno Radio Orchestra of Folk Instruments[4] “Děti a píseň”. In the 1970s, BROLN’s dramaturge Jaroslav Jakubíček addressed, in the press and on the radio, children who like to sing to record their songs on cassettes and send them to the Brno radio station. The best recordings were selected, and their performers were invited to the studio to sing with the accompaniment of the BROLN. From the compilation of these recordings, the show “Děti a píseň” was eventually created and held annually since 1978 (Bukovský, 2007: 22)[5] as the only children’s competition in singing folk songs in Czechoslovakia. At that time this was a regional, *de facto* Moravian thing: the repertoire and performers came from various areas of Moravia, less frequently from Silesia. This circumstance stems from the fact that – compared to Bohemia – in the areas of Moravia-Silesia, there was and still is a much higher frequency of singing folk songs and engaging in folklore activities in general (cf. Kučerová et al., 2019; Uhlíková, 2020).

After the fall of communism, the competition became an all-national contest. Its organization was then taken over by the newly-founded nationwide[6] Folklore Association of the Czech Republic (*Folklorní sdužení České republiky*, further as FoS ČR). Because of concern from the Bohemian side about the predominance of Moravia, representatives of the regional folklore associations in Bohemia have been involved in the organisational aspects of the competition since the early 1990s. Bohemians have insisted on the competition’s nationwide character, which would not leave Bohemian regions behind. The change in the concept was also reflected in the name change. In 1995, the competition was renamed to “Zpěváček”. Nonetheless, due to financial bankruptcy and dissolution of the FoS ČR, the Moravian orchestra BROLN has been the forefront organizer again since 2014. The intention to express continuity with the original phenomenon can be seen in the re-inclusion of the words “Děti a píseň” in the name of the competition, which is now called “Zpěváček – Děti a píseň”.

Since the beginning of the competition, the organizers have expressed the aims of the original non-competitive show and the current competition as: 1) strengthening children’s relationship to local folk songs; 2) recognition of singing traditions from various regions and a chance to establish cooperation with key folk music ensembles and musicians – prominent personalities of the Czech folklore movement (Stavělová et al., 2021) in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. The over forty-year history of the competition

[4] Brno Radio Orchestra of Folk Instruments (further as BROLN) was founded in 1952 for the needs of the Czechoslovak Radio broadcasting (Pavlicová, Uhlíková, 1997: 139–140).

[5] According to the current chairman of the competition organizing committee, the first proof of the show’s realisation dates back to 1972 (Skořepová, 2022c). However, various years of the first year of the competition can be found in document sources.

[6] Thus including Bohemian, Moravian and Silesian scope.

might have brought partial changes into its propositions,[7] but the main declared requirements continue (Skořepová, 2022c): competitors are requested to perform two folk songs at a different pace, the songs are to be – both musically and textually – adequate to the child's age and voice disposition. According to the organizers of all rounds,[8] one of the songs is to be sung *a capella* and must at the same time come from the region the child represents. The second song is to be accompanied by a folk music ensemble. The spectrum of accompanying ensembles varies; however, the main requirement is still the compatibility of the regional origin of the competition songs and their instrumental accompaniment. Therefore, competing children from Bohemian regions are accompanied by various Bohemian bands, while children from Moravia and Silesia were accompanied by their local, mostly Moravian music ensembles, though in the last years it has been exclusively the BROLN. The selection of accompanying bands is generally limited by time constraints of involved musicians and their willingness to accept very low or no financial compensation. If a participant wears a folk costume from their region, it brings a declared advantage in the evaluation of their performance.

While the number of competitors is not limited in local and regional rounds and there are also more age categories, an advancement key is applied to nominations from individual regions into two land rounds, the Bohemian and the Moravian-Silesian. Eventually, 20 children in one age category of 10–15 years compete in the nationwide round; 8 of them come from the Bohemian land round and 12 from the Moravian-Silesian one.

Figure 1: Contestants in the national round of the competition *Zpěváček,* 19 June 2022. Photo: Milan Zelinka, source: BROLN Archive.

[7] For instance, age limitations of competition categories, demarcation of borders for individual regions and numbers of competitors – representatives of particular regions. Also the concept of the semi-final, winner's status and their position changed. In 1993–2013 one Gold, between two to three Silver and Bronze little singers were awarded in the nationwide round. This approach was dropped and from 2015, ten best little singers from the Czech Republic are chosen without specifying the position in the contest (*Folklor,* 1993–2012; Skořepová, 2022c).

[8] In the period when the *Folklor* newsletter was published, the propositions were repeatedly published here every year. Today they are available on the website of the BROLN: https://broln.com/ke-stazeni/pravidla.

Regional identities: Mutual rivalry and fragmentation of "sub-identities"

Since the beginning of its activities in the 1990s, FoS ČR has proclaimed its aim to strengthen relationship to folklore, promote it to the youngest generation and support its interest in folk songs, both of its own region and the folklore nationwide. However, the conception of the competition and its course during various rounds from local to nationwide reveals that regional diversity is strengthened, yet the micro-regional identities are further fragmented. In connection to this, the persevering antagonistic and stereotypical delimitation of the Bohemians, Moravians and Silesians is embodied in images of "ours" versus "theirs" song repertoire and the style of its rendition.

One should realize that the concept of "a region" is disputed and difficult to delimit (cf. Applegate, 1999: 1158). With respect to the context of the competition, which is localised in the nowadays Czech Republic, it is possible to think in terms of micro- or at the most of meso-regions (Roth, 2007: 18–19), but primarily of cultural regions (ibid.: 21, 26). In the Czech context, ethnologists or social geographers call them cultural-historical ethnographic or folklore regions. Regarding this, we can look for connections with ethnologic research in Central Europe, which – not only in the German speaking areas – attempted to define culture areas or culture regions (Wiegelmann, 1968; Woitsch, 2012) on the basis of folk culture (Roth, 2007: 21). Their borders do not fully overlap the borders of formal and administrative regions of the Czech Republic and even in their case, the process of institutionalisation has not been finalised (Paasi, 1986). Nevertheless, they can be recognised in everyday actions and in minds of local inhabitants (Chromý, 2003: 172) who themselves feel that they belong to ethnographic areas, i.e. folklore regions.[9] However, it should be recalled that the borders and characteristics of folklore regions have been set up and defined by ethnologists (Woitsch, Bahenský, 2004; Woitsch, 2012). Their range included researchers from the field of music folkloristics and ethnochoreology, where the first institutionally backed attempts to collect and categorise music and dance materials date back to 1819 in connection to the so called *Sonnleithner Sammlung* (*Guberniální sbírka* in Czech) in Austria-Hungary (cf. Tyllner, 2018).

When defining ethnographic areas or folklore (micro)regions, Czech ethnologists based their definitions on the frequency and uniqueness of living traditions. In Bohemia, they generally distinguish amongst three larger regions: the West, the North-East, and the South. Contrary to this, especially Moravia displays a much deeper diversity. While in Bohemia with 52 065 km^2 ethnologists delimit 12 ethnographic areas, we can find as many as 22 of them, including distinctive sub-areas, in the territory of Moravia and Silesia which covers the area of only 26 801 km^2 (Woitsch, Bahenský, 2004).

[9] In 2003 Czech sociologists surveyed the importance of historical and ethnographic regions. While for 41 % of respondents these regions are "only partially important", 56 % consider them to be important for strengthening identity. For 78 % the regions are important due to the development of cultural traditions and folklore (Kunštát, 2003).

Although ethnographic (micro)regions can be understood as a certain historical and paradigmatic construct of researchers, the persistence and frequency of local folk music and dance activities in micro-regions of Moravia-Silesia is generally higher than in larger regions of Bohemia. However, to this date there has not been a clear consensus on exact borders of the ethnographic (micro)regions in the Czech Republic. This is naturally related to the criticism of Culture Area Research. The critique points to elusiveness, not accounting for cultural change, focussing on the dominant ethnic groups and excluding various marginal groups, and establishing of regions with rigid and time-less borders and characteristics.

Aspects of the competition reveal that even a small and ethnically nearly homogenous Mid-Eastern European country as the Czech Republic still maintains its diversities across regions. They are manifested here in the singing heritage people can relate to as an abstract form of the (micro)regional cultural symbols (Šifta, Chromý, 2017: 105). The regional diversity of the Czech Republic is already determined by historical circumstances: Moravia had a rather peripheral position in relation to Bohemia. Due to a certain transport isolation, different pace of urbanisation and industrialisation, and the stronger position of the church and conservative values, forms of traditional folk culture have been preserved here to a greater extent, therefore there is also a larger number of distinctive micro-regions (Jančář et al., 2000; Doušek, Drápala, Novotná, 2015). Additionally, the folklore movement that started from the 1950s developed in different ways in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia (Pavlicová, Uhlíková, 1997; Vondrušková, 2000; Stavělová et al., 2021).

In connection to the "Zpěváček", it is important to emphasize that not only organizers of the competition but all Czech "folklorists"[10] refer to the conceptualization of ethnographic regions created by ethnologists, including music and dance folklorists. Music teachers or leaders of folk ensembles who prepare children for the competition control the choice of their competition repertoire. They pay attention to the belonging of the song to the local folklore repertoire and try to provide the children with an appropriate way of interpreting the song with respect to the regional style. There are children from smaller villages, where there is an awareness of regional folklore and some practices even take the form of living traditions (Toncrová, 2017: 70; Uhlíková, 2020: 78). The situation is different for children who are members of folk ensembles established in urban contexts of Prague or Brno. Such ensembles perform non-local folk music and dance repertoire due to the disappearance of local folk traditions in cities. Competing children from city folk ensembles may thus perform the repertoire of their ensemble even when the origin of the song does not match the region the child represents.

[10] The term "folklorists" is used by members of folk ensembles, but also by other active agents and those interested in the sphere of folk music and dance, to denote themselves. Therefore, "folklorists" as actors in the so called folklore movement in the Czech Republic can be perceived as a specific cultural cohort (Turino, 2008) of folklore lovers in general.

Figure 2: A contestant from South-East Moravia in the national round of the *Zpěváček* competition, 19 June 2022. Photo: Milan Zelinka, source: BROLN Archive.

The significantly different numbers of children advancing according to the advancement key in individual regions are already mentioned above. The advancement key respects the so called “folklore potential”[11] of a particular region. Negotiations about the number of children delegated to represent individual regions were the subject of numerous disputes in the past: only 2 children advance from regions with a “low folklore potential”, mainly from Prague, Brno, or North-Eastern Bohemia. In contrast, from Slovácko[12] alone – a small but the most distinguished folklore region – 13 children advance. Each of the two Silesian regions is represented by 6 children.[13] The numbers set this way are still perceived as contradictory; on the one hand Bohemians fear that Bohemian children will be disregarded or even eliminated from the competitions, on the other Moravians and Silesians criticise negligible competition in the Bohemian regions. While as many as several hundred children will go through local rounds in the “folklore-rich” regions in the south and the east of the Republic, there may be only a dozen competitors in Prague and Central Bohemia. This means that practically each child from that region competing in the “Zpěváček” will advance to a higher round.

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[11] The wording is used by the authors of the competition proposals.

[12] It covers a substantial part of South-Eastern Moravia. Slovácko is also one of distinctive ethnographic regions of the Czech Republic (Woitsch, Bahenský, 2004: 51–55).

[13] Partial numbers of children delegated on behalf of individual regions have slightly changed over the thirty years of the competition in the contemporary Czech Republic, but the fundamental folklore contrast between the “low potential” and “high potential” regions still persists.

Last but not least, local and regional rounds are administratively organised within the boundaries of ethnographic (micro)regions. Nevertheless, during the forty-five years the competition has been running, delimitation of competing regions and children's affiliation to them have slightly changed. The fundamental role has been played by pragmatically conditioned and sometimes purposive and supported fluctuation of competitors. For instance, the competitors from the border of two regions participate in the local round in this particular region, which is more accessible to them by transport. In some cases, competitors are purposefully invited "to support" a neighbouring region. These individual pragmatic strategies then disrupt the essentialist and rigid conception of folklore regions and reveal their certain permeability.

Competition song repertoire as a symbolic indicator and a negotiated heritage of cultural-historical (micro)regions in the Czech Republic

The discourse of organizers and other participants at the competition "Zpěváček" is grounded in a presumption that each individual (micro)region has its own particular repertoire of songs. This presumption, however, omits the fact that folk song repertoire and the definition of its regional origin was often uncritically constructed by folklorists and other authors of influential editions of local music and dance folklore, gradually published in the course of the 19th century.[14] Organizers and part of jury members tend to view song repertoire as a historically formed local cultural heritage that reflects ethno-national aspects. At the same time, it defines and symbolically represents (micro) regional identities (Smith, 2006: 30) manifested in a sum of songs, a specific style which is rendered through singing and also through performing in a properly chosen regional folk costume. Although this is unofficial heritage, which is not recognised by official forms of legislation (Harrison, 2013: 15), a process of authorized heritage discourse (Smith, 2006: 11–13) is manifested here. Such a process is applied by leading personalities in the Czech folklore movement, who come from specialists in ethnology, but mainly in ethno-musicology/choreology as well as committed and enthusiastic amateurs. Therefore, "folk costumes and folk songs acquired new standardised and stereotyped meanings and a moral value as identity-markers" (Köstlin, 1999: 34) in the Czech Republic, as well as for instance in neighbouring Austria.

As my informal questioning of children at the competition reveals, children do not primarily think about their regional identity.[15] It is the adults who try to emphasize and

[14] For example, František Sušil's chief and monumental collection of Moravian folk songs was published in 1835. For other collections see Brouček, Jeřábek, 2007: 885–888.

[15] For example, at the national round held on 19 June 2022, the children I approached answered as follows: "I am just looking forward to singing", or "I came to sing the songs I sing with my dad", etc. (Skořepová, 2022a: 3).

motivate them to represent it. One juror from a Bohemian regional round described it eloquently:

> When we sent the children from our regional round to the national round, we lent them folk costumes. Because it was obligatory basically, even though it's not explicit in the rules, but those kids felt like it was stupid that they were dressed in civilian clothes and the others were in these beautiful folk costumes. (Skořepová, 2022b)

As is evident from the implicit requirements arising from the competition's propositions, and from my observation of the jury members' attitudes directly at the competition, the children participate mainly to duly perform the heritage (Haldrup, Bærenholdt, 2015: 55–58) and identity of the region they represent. They do so not only through a corresponding choice of the repertoire, "proper" interpretation of the style and adherence to the dialect, but to a large extent also thanks to the attire – the folk costume.[16] In the Goffmanian sense, at that particular moment and in the setting of the competition, this is a performance in the "front region" (Goffman, 1956: 66–67). It should be added that in the case of the children coming from cities, this exhibited identity is often purposefully chosen and acted out at the competition. However, for the contestants coming from the Moravian-Silesian (micro)regions with the so called strong folklore potential this frequently originates in their inner experience and encountered daily reality. Especially in some Moravian micro-regions, people's willingness to wear folk costumes and sing folk songs during local festivities is based on their spontaneous decision.

With regard to the historical cultural heritage of song folklore and the national identification of contemporary inhabitants, regions with the so-called lost identity present a certain problem (Chromý, 2003: 172). About 3 million Germans still lived in the territory of the present-day Czech Republic, mostly in the borderland, in the period between the wars, i.e., 1918–1938. However, their presence here dates back even to the 19th century during which fundamental collection of both Czech and German folk song and dance repertoire took place. Firstly, it was through the so called Gubernatorial collection, subsequently followed by initiatives of individual collectors and by the state[17] controlled activities, which lasted until the inter-war period. "Folklorists"

[16] This incoherence has been the subject of verbal and written complaints: "It proves problematic when children from some regions do not represent their ethnographic region, but borrow costumes, dialects and song repertoire from various corners of the country ... one of the singers, for example, this year performed in a costume from Kyjov and sang one song from Hanácko and another from Horňácko ... it is then the mistake of the juries from the lower rounds to overlook these faults and send the child to the national round." (Petráková, 2004: 229).

[17] Collection activity under *Das Volkslied in Österreich*, and further through institutions: State Institute for Folk Song (*Státní ústav pro lidovou píseň*) (1919–1937), and Institute for Ethnography and Folklore Studies of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (*Ústav pro etnografii a folkloristiku Československé akademie věd*) (1954–1998) – the predecessor of the current Institute of Ethnology CAS.

draw on this legacy and its re-editions to this day. While the knowledge of folk songs in various Czech dialects, compiled in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia mainly through the course of the 19th century, is preserved and passed on even nowadays, the German song repertoire in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic has become abandoned in people's memories and, only with some exceptions,[18] it has *de facto* been forced out from the music awareness of the general public. It is well known that most Germans were transferred or expelled from Czechoslovakia soon after the Second World War (Glassheim, 2000). Together with the inhabitants, their folklore[19] also disappeared from some regions not only in the German borderlands.[20] With respect to "Zpěváček", these regions are questionable areas, since they are historically free from folk songs in the Czech language. Hence the principle on which children are to represent their folklore area through the competition repertoire reveals a selective approach towards understanding the cultural and historical legacy of music and dance. This is currently tied solely to the Czech[21] language and national identity, thus it excludes the lost German identity and the song repertoire belonging to it. Therefore, we can state that contemporary "folklorists" in the Czech Republic approach the identity of folk songs from an essentialist perspective while applying the regional nationalism view that refers to Bohemian, Moravian or Silesian identity. On top of that, they evidently ignore minority identities, primarily the Roma identity. A dilemma concerning the choice of the repertoire arises for children who represent the regions with a historically important presence of the German minority. They do not enter the competition with German songs; "loans" from neighbouring and nearby areas are tolerated – therefore also a repertoire from the Western or South-Western Bohemia can be heard at the Karlovarsko[22] regional round. On the other hand, disputes about compliance with a micro-region the performers come from and the song they perform appear on the level of Slovácko, probably the most canorous Moravian region. If a child representing for instance the Horňácko micro-region performs a song whose origin is assigned to another micro-region, it becomes subject to strong criticism.

Apart from identity and regional aspect of the competition folk song repertoire, as a negotiated culture and historical heritage, aesthetic aspects are also to be considered. Children do not enter the competition with inappropriate lascivious, jocular, or drunkard

[18] There are individual cases where music teachers or leaders of folk ensembles tried to introduce children to originally German songs, or their variations, not always successfully translated into Czech. As a rule, these songs are not well accepted as they are *ländler* type dance melodies with a large vocal range, which are less suitable for children mainly due to high demands on singing skills.

[19] The songs were maintained in records written by collectors between 1819 and 1937; the collection was published by the State Institute for Folk Song (Jungbauer, 1930–1936).

[20] Regions of Brno, Znojmo, Karlovy Vary, or the North-Eastern Bohemia.

[21] Meant including the Bohemian, Moravian, and Silesian dialects.

[22] The region in North-Western Bohemia.

songs,[23] although these make a substantial part of the collected folk song repertoire. For instance, songs belonging to the Prague urban folklore are considered inappropriate for children. The reason is that they often refer to life of marginal social strata at the late 19th century, and they do not avoid vulgar expressions.

Folklore and "Zpěváček" in postsocialism

After the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia in 1989, all subjects involved in music and dance activities – mainly folk ensembles themselves – had to come to terms with processes of privatization, liberalization, and democratization in postsocialist conditions[24] (Müller, 2019: 536), and had to start operating as independent subject of civil society. All this related to the need to start using one's own initiative and apply for funding from public grants or private gifts. "Lobbying" skills to establish contacts with relevant "influential" people could not be disregarded. As the people engaged in the folklore movement were more than willing to keep continuity in their activities, an umbrella organisation for both adult and children folk ensembles – FoS ČR – was founded in the Czech Republic in 1990.[25] It focused on programme, editorial, and education activities. Apart from that, the association became a promoter and temporarily also the main organiser of nationwide folklore shows including "Děti a píseň", which changed its name into "Zpěváček" at the beginning of the 1990s.

In conditions of the newly-established capitalism, the management of FoS ČR tried to obtain support for activities of folk ensembles but also to build its individual PR and medialize folklore in general. The nationwide competition "Zpěváček" was its flagship event. From the Association's point of view, it was also the most prestigious event mainly during Zdeněk Pšenica's[26] chairmanship. Pšenica was attempting to gain the favour of regional and top Czech politicians representing different political parties, and on behalf of the Association he submitted applications for grants to three Czech ministries.[27] At the same time and in the new conditions, folklore was rendered in a new way and gained different connotations: while in the previous regime it was in fact misused by the communist ideology, in the second half of the 1990s FoS ČR started

[23] Despite this, it is a matter of individual taste if mostly love folk songs will be acceptable or not.

[24] The concept of postsocialism has become a target of criticism (Müller, 2019). The year 2004 can be considered as the end of postsocialism in those Central European countries which joined the EU (Pickles, 2010: 135). In this paper I am using the term mainly in connection with the 1990s transition period following the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia after 1989; with respect to the issues of not only music activities including folklore cf. (Milanović, Milin, Mihajlović, 2020).

[25] At the end of the 1990s the FoS ČR associated about 400 folk ensembles (Synek, Jánoška, 2011: 8).

[26] Zdeněk Pšenica (1963–2019), came from a small town of Zubří in Walachia and worked as a labourer in the Zlín rubber factory. He proved successful in the FoS ČR from the beginning of the 1990s. In 1997 he took its lead and remained at the post until its dissolution in 2014.

[27] Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, Ministry for Regional Development.

to be supported mainly by regional politicians from the CDU-CPP party,[28] which endorsed Christian and conservative values combined with regional patriotism. The national round of “Zpěváček” was purposively held in Velké Losiny in the Olomouc Region between 1995 and 2013.[29] Competitors faced difficult transport and accessibility to the venue, local accommodation far from being comfortable and other glitches in organisation. The complicated logistics was rather demanding on folk ensembles, which accompanied the competing children without a fee. On the other hand, the attractive and representative venue in a private thermal spa in the foothills of the Jeseníky Mountains suited hosting receptions aimed at self-promotion and effort to attract the attention of regional politicians and other “influential” public figures.

The other strategic intention supposed to raise awareness of the competition was the engagement of famous personalities. Between 1999 and 2006, the Slovak tenor Peter Dvorský[30] personally took part in and patronage over the competition. Dvorský was among others also the instigator of “Slávik” (Nightingale in English), a similar competition that was established in Slovakia at the beginning of the 1990s.[31] “Slávik” winners were guests at the Czech competition and vice versa, and they also appeared at a newly initiated event – joint galas held in representative venues in Prague which also attracted the attention of media and private sponsors. Those who performed at these galas and next to the best children singers from the Czech and Slovak Republics[32] were personalities from local opera theatres, pop singers and members of both classical and folk music ensembles. Also, Czech and Slovak VIP guests could be found amongst the attendees.

Pšenica’s activity might be summarized as rather ambivalent. On the one hand the numbers and promotion of folklore events increased significantly together with received funding from state subsidies during his tenure. On the other, since November 2014, regional and nationwide print and online media started publishing news about serious financial difficulties experienced by FoS ČR.[33] The Association owed money to several subjects, while mismanagement of funds and suspected fraudulent behaviour in connection with received funding transpired. Representatives of regional folklore associations were displeased with the high cost of promotions and representation, while the folk ensembles received much smaller sums of money to cover their activity and equipment. The fact that FoS ČR filed for bankruptcy in November 2014 (Městský

[28] Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People’s Party.

[29] Due to the financial problems of FoS ČR the nationwide round of “Zpěváček” was called off in 2014.

[30] Zdeněk Pšenica managed to engage Dvorský in co-operation thanks to coincidence – Pšenica’s wife came from the same Slovak village as the famous opera singer. Due to his work commitments, from 2007 Peter Dvorský was no longer present at the nationwide rounds and galas.

[31] Official competition website http://www.slavikslovenska.org/start.htm.

[32] Winners of similar children singing competitions from Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Russia, and Austria took part at the gala in 2006.

[33] See for example Kabátová, 2014.

soud v Praze, 2014) and was eventually dissolved discredited folklore activities overall. Despite that, the continuity of the competition was not disrupted. FoS ČR regional branches perpetuated their activities and at their own expense organised district and regional rounds of the competition. Nevertheless, marginalisation of the competition has taken its toll, and is apparent even nowadays in considerably lower funds provided by state institutions.[34]

The competition's significance for regional folk singing style reproduction

Ongoing generation continuity can be seen in various aspects through which "Zpěváček" is involved not only in the folklore community despite the change of the political system in early postcommunist and contemporary contexts. Generation continuity is obvious firstly in the personalities of those individuals who are engaged in the competition, and at the same time perceived as key representatives of the folklore movement. From the second half of the 20th century, the most prominent folk ensembles intertwined with "Zpěváček" – and the foremost folk singers as well – developed to be textbook representatives of individual music styles. They contributed to the gradual implementation of unwritten rules[35] for music and interpretation characteristics of (micro)regional styles.[36] One of the judges and organizers of the Bohemian regional round adds:

> The development of the folklore movement in Moravia has not led to a levelling, but on the contrary to a sharpening of the style differences in the individual so-called ethnographic regions or sub-regions, whereas in Bohemia it is not possible to observe this, I am not able to say that some music is more South Bohemian and some is more Chodish. (Skořepová, 2022b)

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[34] During Pšenica's chairmanship at the end of the 1990s the FoS ČR used to receive sums even as high as CZK500,000; its current organizer of the nationwide round, the BROLN, receives only about CZK70,000 (Skořepová, 2022c).

[35] On the influence of institutionalized standards on the transformation of folk singing cf. (Šivic, 2007).

[36] An analysis of the detailed aspects of micro-regional styles is beyond the scope of this article. In general, Czech folklorists and ethnomusicologists (Tyllner, 2014: 570–573) distinguish the so-called western (instrumental) type characteristic of Bohemian folk songs. Moravian songs correspond to the so-called eastern (vocal) type. Bohemian songs are characterised by formal periodicity, regular metre, diatonic melodicism of scale runs and staggered triplets. Moravian songs, on the other hand, are characterised by variable metre, with the melodies and rhythm based on the spoken word. Modality and more complex forms of harmonisation appear. Polish influences are reflected in North-Eastern Moravia, while South-Eastern Moravia is characterised by the so-called New Hungarian style influenced by Romani musicians from Hungary and Slovakia. The Moravian instrumental ensembles feature the cimbalom, which is absent in Czech ensembles. Compared to the Bohemian singing style, the Moravian has a different way of phrasing, vocal ornamentation and phonation, which is characterised by glottal, or "hard" attack.

Generation continuity in connection to the folklore movement is sustained also thanks to former "Zpěváček" competitors. They are active as prominent singer personalities in various music ensembles often extending beyond folklore. Some asserted themselves in the singing of other genres or in acting. After all, former participants in "Zpěváček" can still be found amongst jurors, organizers and accompanying musicians in regional and nationwide rounds of the competition.

On the other hand, a closer look at the competition reveals that, as a priority, only some children competitors will enjoy the implicit privilege of success in "Zpěváček" connected to singing folk songs. Firstly, they are the children for whom the aforementioned generation continuity is present thanks to natural everyday singing patterns within a family – and this is evident in micro-regions rich in folklore. The second group of successful little singers is represented by children who are or have been, often since pre-school age, members of folk ensembles where they encounter the repertoire and its model interpretation at internal and public performances. Therefore, these competitors come with a particular experience of integration into a community of folklore revivalists. They will fulfill the juries' expectations due to the "right" choice of the competition repertoire, the way it is presented, performed, and sung. In this respect their competences represent a certain form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973). In many cases, competing children grounded in a totally different starting point style-wise and regarding interpretation, with no broader knowledge of folklore, are marginalised. Typically these are children attending music schools or schools with a general study programme, who have no experience with participation in a folk ensemble.[37] An inconsistent regional origin of the chosen repertoire and the folk costume that the participant is wearing is almost an unforgivable mistake. In spite of all this, even the competitors who select a suitable repertoire but sing it according to a classical singing style and technique may not receive the jury's recognition and be successful, as their interpretation does not correspond to the given (micro)regional style of folk singing. In other words, the competitors do not meet the conditions of the authorised discourse in the cultural heritage of regional songs. In such cases, the jury often decides not to send the competitor to a higher round. The jurors presume that the child's performance will not be convincing enough amongst little singers from "folklore-rich" regions.

Conclusion

Due to the "proper" choice of the competition repertoire, "Zpěváček" *de facto* ties up a direct connection between a child and the region which the child represents in the competition, and whose identity the child is supposed to refer to. The song repertoire

[37] In some areas, children who do not come from folk ensembles or are not even descendants of direct bearers of the traditional folk singing and music prevail in local and regional rounds of the competition.

is, primarily from the organizers' standpoint, perceived as a negotiated (micro)regional and cultural heritage and, at the same time, a symbolic identity marker. In connection with that it needs to be stressed that the Bohemian or Moravian and Silesian identity respectively (and alternatively their partial micro-regional, sometimes competing "sub-identities"), eliminate former historical and contemporary minority identities. As for the minority identity, we can list mainly the German one, to which no competitors can relate any longer. However, with respect to the frequency of song collecting prior to the Second World War, it was the German repertoire that best characterised certain regions. Furthermore, contemporary minority identities are only a marginal matter. In 2002 the winning singer was a Polish boy Filip Koziel from Těšínsko, a region near the Czech-Polish border. Roma children, sometimes even performing Roma songs, appeared amongst competitors on regional levels, but they have never won the nationwide round. Even though it is possible to find children who performed a Slovak song in the history of the competition, its propositions do not allow for Slovak folklore after the split of Czechoslovakia. Also, the above-described activities of the Czecho-Slovak cooperation under the patronage of Peter Dvorský, the founder of the "Slávik" Slovak competition between 1999 and 2006, were in fact an episodic marketing strategy.

Deeper insights into the competition reveal the aforementioned limits of inclusion. Therefore, only those who overwhelmingly already have some previous connection to folklore join and succeed in "Zpěváček", which continues to be one of the main platforms maintaining the homogeneity – but simultaneously also a certain exclusivity – of the Czech folklore movement. Further, it significantly contributes to the integration of young performers into already established folk music and dance ensembles. Regardless of the crisis and fall experienced by the FoS ČR after 2014, and despite stereotypical belief that interest in singing folk songs is generally receding, the competition gained a permanent place and importance, albeit only within the Czech folklore scene. The number of children participating in the competition has a steady but gradually increasing tendency, not only from the more "canorous" micro-regions of Moravia and Silesia, but also from Bohemia.[38] The over forty-five-year long history of the competition eventually exposed the transformed stance towards politics. In the early postsocialism there might have been an effort to integrate the firm ties of folklore and politics, which existed prior to 1989, through individual "lobbying" efforts and principles of marketing propaganda. The fiasco in connection with the fall of FoS ČR resulted in the opinion that an apolitical standpoint, or non-partisan position of folklore activities are necessary. In the conditions of the current Czech pluralist political spectrum there is a widespread belief that folklore does not have to bear the same significance and be perceived in the same positive way for all garnitures.

[38] In the early 1990s about 2,000 children went through all the rounds of the competition, starting from the lowest levels of the regional rounds up to the nationwide round, but in recent years their number has reached 5,000 (Skořepová, 2022c).

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Tekmovanje v ljudskem petju »Zpěváček«: regionalna identiteta in uprizarjanje dediščine na Češkem

Članek se osredinja na tekmovanje otrok v ljudskem petju »Zpěváček - Děti a píseň« (Mali pevec – Otroci in pesem), katerega začetki segajo v konec 70. let 20. stoletja. Takrat je bilo to edino otroško tekmovanje v petju ljudskih pesmi na Češkoslovaškem, vendar je imelo omejen regionalni obseg: repertoar in izvajalci so bili z različnih območij Moravske, redkeje iz Šlezije, kot najbolj »pevskih« čeških pokrajin. Na območjih Moravske in Šlezije je bilo namreč petje ljudskih pesmi in ukvarjanje s folklornimi dejavnostmi precej pogostejše kakor na Češkem. Šele v obdobju postsocialistične preobrazbe je tekmovanje preseglo moravski okvir in postalo vsedržavna prireditev z več krogi, od lokalnega do regionalnega in državnega. To se je zgodilo po zaslugi ustanovitve vsenacionalnega Folklornega združenja Češke republike, katerega cilj je bil podpirati in organizirati folklorne dejavnosti v vseh pokrajinah, tj. na Češkem, Moravskem in v Šleziji. Državno tekmovanje »Zpěváček« je postalo vodilni dogodek Folklornega združenja Češke republike. V skladu z zahtevami tekmovanja morajo tekmovalci dve ljudski pesmi izvajati v različnem tempu: ena pesem mora biti zapeta »a capella«, drugo pa spremlja regionalna folklorna skupina. Glavna zahteva in merilo za ocenjevanje je skladnost izvora pesmi z ustreznim narečjem, regionalnim slogom petja in ljudsko nošo, v katero so otroci oblečeni na tekmovanju.

Študija izhaja iz perspektive glasbe in antropologije, upošteva zgodovinski in sodobni kontekst ter temelji na terenskem delu, vključno z opazovanjem z udeležbo in avtoetnografijo, intervjuji in analizo dokumentov. Obravnava naslednji vprašanji: Kakšno vlogo ima tekmovanje s štiridesetletno zgodovino v okviru folklornega preporoda? Kaj nam pove predvsem o (mikro)regionalni identiteti in o načinu obravnave, ohranjanja in reprodukcije lokalne pesemske folklore na Češkem? Članek osvetljuje zgodovino tekmovanja, spremembe v zahtevah in organizaciji od začetka do danes. Opozarja na nasprotje med t. i. folklorno šibkimi in folklorno bogatimi (mikro)regijami. Raziskava je pokazala, kako se organizatorji tekmovanja, učitelji otrok in člani češke folklorne skupnosti opirajo na sporen koncept folklornih regij, ki so ga češki etnologi opredelili na podlagi razmer v 19. stoletju. Repertoar pesmi skupaj s posebnim slogom interpretacije petja in nastopanja v ustrezno izbrani regionalni ljudski noši velja za abstraktno obliko (mikro)regionalnih kulturnih simbolov in lokalne dediščine, ki izraža etnonacionalne vidike in predstavlja (mikro)regionalno identiteto. Čeprav gre v tem primeru za dediščino, ki je uradna dediščinska zakonodaja ne prepoznava, se tu kaže proces diskurza avtorizirane dediščine. Organizatorji natečaja ga uporabljajo po zgledu vodilnih akterjev češkega folklornega preporoda.

Na tekmovanju ima osebna identiteta otrok drugotno vlogo, saj naj bi – predvsem v goffmanovskem smislu – tekmovalci uprizarjali dediščino in regionalno identiteto, ki jo predstavljajo. Na ta način »Zpěváček« vzpostavlja in *de facto* stabilizira neposredno vez med otrokom in regijo, ki jo predstavlja, ter identiteto, ki naj bi jo označevala. Češka oziroma moravska in šlezijska identiteta (ali tudi njene delne mikroregionalne in včasih celo konkurenčne »podidentitete«) odpravlja ali izpušča nekdanjo zgodovinsko nemško identiteto, pa tudi sodobne identitete manjšin, predvsem Romov.

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The Institutionalisation of Participatory Singing since the 1960s in Estonia

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Previous research into the social structure of participatory singing indicates its decline within modern society (e.g. Blacking, 1973; Turino, 2008). The present study focuses on processes in amateur singing in Estonia using the "Music in my Life" questionnaire (2022). The results show the dynamics of contemporary participatory singing, which can be characterised as institutionalisation within the context of modern society.

▪ **Keywords**: ethnomusicology, vernacular music, music in everyday life, social structure of music, joint singing

Dosedanje raziskave družbene strukture participativnega petja kažejo na njegov zaton v sodobni družbi (npr. Blacking, 1973; Turino, 2008). Pričujoča študija se osredinja na procese v ljubiteljskem petju v Estoniji z uporabo vprašalnika Music in my Life (2022). Rezultati kažejo dinamiko sodobnega participativnega petja, ki jo lahko v okviru sodobne družbe označimo kot institucionalizacijo.

▪ **Ključne besede**: etnomuzikologija, vernakularna glasba, glasba v vsakdanjem življenju, družbena struktura glasbe, skupno petje

Introduction

Singing exists as a diverse set of practices, from entirely communal singing to various concert settings or even solitary humming. According to a growing body of evidence, group singing or playing instruments together offers a wide range of benefits for its participants, but despite this the practice seems to be diminishing among Western people, who prefer to leave music-making to professionals (Turino, 2008; Kokotsaki, Hallum, 2011; Camlin et al., 2020; Perkins et al., 2020; Spitzer, 2021). Participatory music-making began to receive attention from ethnomusicologists in the second half of the 20th century (e.g. Blacking, 1973), challenging the prevailing narrative of Western music as an aspect of progress while highlighting the value of traditional cultural practices.[1]

Given that many folk song styles, including Estonia's historical *regilaul* (runosong), assume a participatory nature, a question emerges: does communal singing disappear or transform after the decline of older folk song practices? I especially wonder if any alleged truths about singing habits in Western society are valid in my own country of Estonia, and whether our region can be described as 'Western' with respect to participatory music discourse. Estonia's location in the Northeastern corner of Europe and

[1] Comparative musicology, which emerged in the late 19th century, emphasised the aesthetic and cognitive value of traditional music.

its post-socialist status make it ambivalent in the binary division of the world that was already considered too "harsh, evolutionary and naïvely optimistic" in the 1950s and 60s (Galland et al., 2008). However, this dichotomy has influenced ethnomusicology, a field which historically has been focused primarily on non-Western music by and for Western researchers. Writing about the lack of participatory singing in the Western world, Turino (2008) references "middle-class Euro-Americans" who grew up in the 1950s and 60s and did not experience music-making at home.[2] Slobin defines the West as "Euro-America"; notably including "the former USSR as part of Gorbachev's European home" and admits that "ethnomusicology has been less attracted to this region than to Asia, Africa, and Latin America" (Slobin, 1992: 4). Ethnomusicologists are trying to expand the field of their research (e.g. Witzleben, 1997; Blum, 2023), and the present article adds to the diversification of viewpoints.

Estonians prefer to identify themselves as Nordic and Finno-Ugric people, neither East nor West, while their geographic setting in Eastern Europe is not always perceived as an essential feature of local identity construction, but at times as an unfortunate reality.[3] To become a modern European nation was a dream for Estonians, after centuries of living as an ethnic minority without human rights under various foreign rulers and local landlords, mostly of Baltic German origin. Estonia was conquered in 1227 and governed by different states until 1710, when it became part of the Russian Empire. This serfdom was abolished, with reforms taking place in 1816, 1819, and 1868. The Estonian national awakening began during the 1860s, and thus the early 1900s brought the slogan "Let us become Europeans, but remain Estonians!" This slogan, which may seem paradoxical from a people geographically living within Europe, was a call to modernise while preserving their own unique language and culture.

This aspiration was fulfilled after establishing the Estonian Republic in 1918 and achieving victory in the War of Independence in 1920. Such a hard won European/ Estonian identity might have been questioned during the years of Soviet occupation after 1940, but it was reinforced once more after the regaining of Estonia's independence in 1991 and its joining with the EU in 2004.

The present article analyses the social structure of amateur (including vernacular, folk, grassroots) singing in Estonia over the last sixty years. This time frame was chosen because it marked the beginning of a relatively stable period after the disruptions of WW2, Stalinism, and mass deportations (1944–1953) as well as the beginning of an extensive folk music revival movement during the 1960s.

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2 Turino (2008) does not rely on special research into Western vernacular music. From his work it also appears that in North America there existed communal singing in church and around the fire, as well in some religious or ethnic communities.

3 In the 1980s the Johanson brothers wrote and performed the song *Hey boys! Are you ready?* which describes how Estonians actually sail their land away from the Soviet Union.

In order to describe the social structure of music, Thomas Turino's (2008) basic terms *participatory* and *presentational* singing, which distinguish between singing within the group for the singers' own sake and public presentation in front of an audience, are used. The participatory singing tradition in its entirety, which includes open form, co-creation, etc., belongs genuinely to oral music tradition; however, many aspects of participatory music are attainable in other fields of music, e.g. free jazz, choral singing, etc.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, following the Industrial Revolution, traditional ways of participatory singing in modernising countries began to decline. However, in the second half of the 20th century movements like *participatory art* and *community music* emerged. This interest was influenced by folk and traditional culture, giving rise to a cultural trend aimed at involving the audience in the pursuit of artistic innovation, marketing sensory and physical experiences, and contributing to social and personal wellbeing (Veblen, 2007; Yi, Kim, 2023).

The hypothesis of this article is that modernisation in Estonia has altered the social organisation of participatory singing, leading to its partial institutionalisation. This means that singing together, which used to belong to the private and community sphere and was taken up spontaneously or within the framework of traditional customs, has partly shifted to the public and commercial sphere of society. Group singing and sing-along events are arranged by cultural institutions, media, business enterprises and non-profit organisations, and so their financial needs are supported by the respective funds or regulated by market laws. This process reflects the changes in society, as well as in the conceptions according to which singing within an official group or public event became valued.

In this context, the term *institution* refers to "an organisation that exists to serve a public purpose such as education, or support for people who need help" (CD, 2023). Additionally, *institution* encompasses a broader concept of the formal and informal rules that organise social, political, and economic relations, and which can, in practice, combine with each other (Carter, 2014: 6).

The present article raises the question: what is the state of participatory singing among Estonians – who started to identify proudly as "a singing people" in the 1860s, and rushed through modernisation during the last century – today? (Some earlier insights: Vissel, 2004; Särg, 2009, 2014; Raudsepp, Vikat, 2011). The article begins by addressing the theoretical aspect of the social structure of singing, followed by the introduction of the research methodology, and an analysis of the manifestations of participatory singing in Estonia. Although these processes are examined through the lens of one small nation, the aim is also to bring out their international background and show how they represent more general trends. Beyond academic goals, I also hope to inspire readers to find their own way to participatory singing.

The social setting of singing

During the second half of the 20th century, it became apparent from the growing knowledge of various music cultures that the social organisation of singing is an integral part of the music system (Lomax, 1962; Merriam, 1964). The social structure of music is related to several central concepts such as the musical/non-musical, necessity/non-necessity of music-making for humans, and the authentic/non-authentic music style of a culture etc.

Traditional music and language, along with peoples' cognitive and social musical conventions, developed as a result of intercommunication within a group. It seems that the process of making music may be a genuine and necessary human activity and that everyone is musical enough to do this (Blacking, 1973; Cross, 2012; Clayton, 2016). However, the opposite opinion is widespread: that it is sufficient for people to merely listen to great music. For example, Professor Jere Humphreys claimed that if you include the activity of listening, people are still actively engaged with music – and indeed, singing is not for everyone (Russell, 2011). The same opinion was expressed in a discussion that took place in Estonia during the summer of 2022 (Särg, 2022).

Researchers have highlighted several reasons why participatory singing has decreased: the lack of contemporary tradition; the eclecticism of styles and a musical glut fostered by the music industry; the scarcity of suitable repertoire and singing opportunities; the problems of music education, and the feeling of being non-musical; the stigma of amateurism (Turino, 2008; Russell, 2011; Spitzer, 2021: 21). I have outlined the historical processes contributing to the decline of participatory singing in European culture, up to where doubts arose about its necessity and human musicality, as follows:

1. the development of Western music into an elitist art form that demanded attentive listening, the aesthetics of which became a universal criterion of musical value;
2. the modernisation of society after the Industrial Revolution, and the subsequent development of music recording and distribution; urbanisation and disintegration of earlier communities; emergence of consumer society and commercialization of music;
3. a decline in the prestige of oral folk music owing to its being seen as the music of socially lower and "backward" groups, often associated with physical activities, such as working or dancing (see Bohlman, 1988; Slobin, 1992; Baumann, 1996; Inglehart, Welzel, 2007; Thacker, 2012; McCarthy, Goble, 2023 [2011]).

The ideological background of these processes was the belief in human progress, where technological innovation was linked with cultural development, and underdevelopment was seen as a consequence of a people's inherent characteristics, especially its traditional psychological and cultural traits. The Romantics idealised folk culture, but without adopting the oral tradition of folk songs. Against such a background, Blacking's (1973) notions of the lost values of joint music-making influenced both musical study and practice. Slobin echoed Blacking's idea: "Everyone can sing something sometimes. In that sense, there are folk singers everywhere" (1993: 21).

The movements of revitalising folk music emerged in waves after the 19th century and encompassed wider social aspects as well (Hill, Bithell, 2014; Livingston, 2014). There were even some attempts to revive the participatory practices, e.g. in Germany the *Wandervögel* (Migratory Birds) movement started in 1896, in which young people went to the countryside with folk songs and dances (Bröcker, 1996). But it became more common to perform arranged folk songs for audiences as presentational music in revival. Enhancing the prestige of traditional music and the self-esteem of the singers themselves became possible by incorporating elements of modern music − arrangements, performing on a stage etc.

A second wave of the folklore movement emerged in the 1960s, when a new generation of urban individuals discovered folk music alongside rock and other contemporary music styles. Folk music was imitated or fused with rock music for performing to audiences, as well as informally cultivated among young people, whose keywords were "active, living participation" (Ronström, 1998: 40). Staged folklore became the accepted branch of performing arts (Honko, 1990; Hill, Bithell, 2014).

The followers of authentic folk music continued to hold on to the idea of the live folk song presentation as open for participation. In order to protect still vibrant folk song traditions, the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage was initiated under the aegis of UNESCO in 2003. The generation that took part in the revival of the 1950s and 60s aspired to performances on a professional level, but also fostered collective music-making events, such as workshops, jam sessions, or special events like the Natural Voice Camp (Ronström, 1998; Bithell, 2014).

Examples of organised sing-alongs outside the discourse of folklore come from the US. The TV series *Sing Along* began there in 1958 and invited audience participation, providing the lyrics to the songs (IMdB). The importance of participatory singing to contemporary people became known when the discussion on the decline of group singing in the US had a strong social response; it was considered an "illness" and compared with the silence of the birdsong.[4] To revive participatory singing, the campaign Get America Singing… Again! was launched in 1995 (Schmid, 1995; Russell, 2011: 4). Russell argues that lamentation of the loss of singing in America arose from the "tension between the musical culture we have and the one certain people think we should have" (Russell, 2011: 78).

Camlin et al. (2020) shows that singing together has a variety of benefits on a person's wellbeing, emotional regulation, and physical health as well as interpersonal effects. The authors conclude that "group singing might be taken − both literally and figuratively − as a potent form of the 'healthy public', creating an 'ideal' community, which participants can subsequently mobilise as a positive resource for everyday life" (ibid.). However, the kinds of problems and negative consequences that may arise due to exclusion from singing or playing music have not been studied to the same extent.

[4] The concern about birds was expressed in Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* (1962).

Terms and method

According to Turino's (2008) classification of the social organisation of music, there are four main categories:[5]

1. participatory music, where everyone takes an active part;
2. presentational music, with the performers and the audience clearly separated;
3. a high-fidelity recording of a live performance;
4. music recorded in a studio.

By the term "participatory music", Turino does not mean simply singing or playing music together, but more specifically musical activity where participation is valued and integral to the performance. He characterised it by the following features:

1. everybody is expected to take part according to their ability;
2. the blurred or non-existent distinction between artists and audience;
3. open forms – the piece is recreated at every performance from short structural parts and can be prolonged and repeated;
4. loose "feathered" beginnings and endings, in which the participants might join or leave gradually;
5. much repetition, improvisation and variation within predictable structures;
6. game-like practice – what happens musically depends on individual contributions in the moment;
7. dense textures and timbres, partly the result of approximate tuning and timing.

Turino (2008: 47–48) distinguishes between simultaneous and sequential participation, to involve situations where everybody takes a solo in turn (cf. Thacker, 2012). The actual singing situations might be different however, for example in the case of group singing that always has a participatory aspect for singers (cf. Klusen, 1986 [1967]).

European folk song researchers have labelled analogical distinctions between the "primary function" or "first life" of songs, and their "secondary function" or "second life" (Wiora, 1959; Klusen, 1986 [1967]; Honko, 1990; see Table 1). Although performing to the audience is not obligatory for revived folk songs, in practice the second life was mostly presentational; and this very change in song function was considered a feature of "revival" (Hill, Bithell, 2014).

Table 1: Terms describing the social structure of music.

Klusen	Wiora, Honko	Graves, Turino
songs in primary function	first life of folk songs	participatory music
songs in secondary function	second life of folk songs	presentational music

[5] Turino (2008) adapted his central terms from Keil (1987) and Graves (2005).

The rise of interrelated questions about people's involvement in music, their musicality and the impact of music, instigated inquiries into daily musical practices. Mostly people's listening habits were explored, but sometimes the questions were set more widely, such as "What is music about for you?" (Crafts et al., 1993; DeNora, 2000; North et al., 2004; Reyes, 2009; Sloboda, 2010). There were also arranged experiments on the impact of music-making (Bithell, 2014; Woody et al., 2019). The questionnaires about "the meaning of music in Finnish life" were organised in 1994 and 1995 by The Finnish Literary Society (SKS).

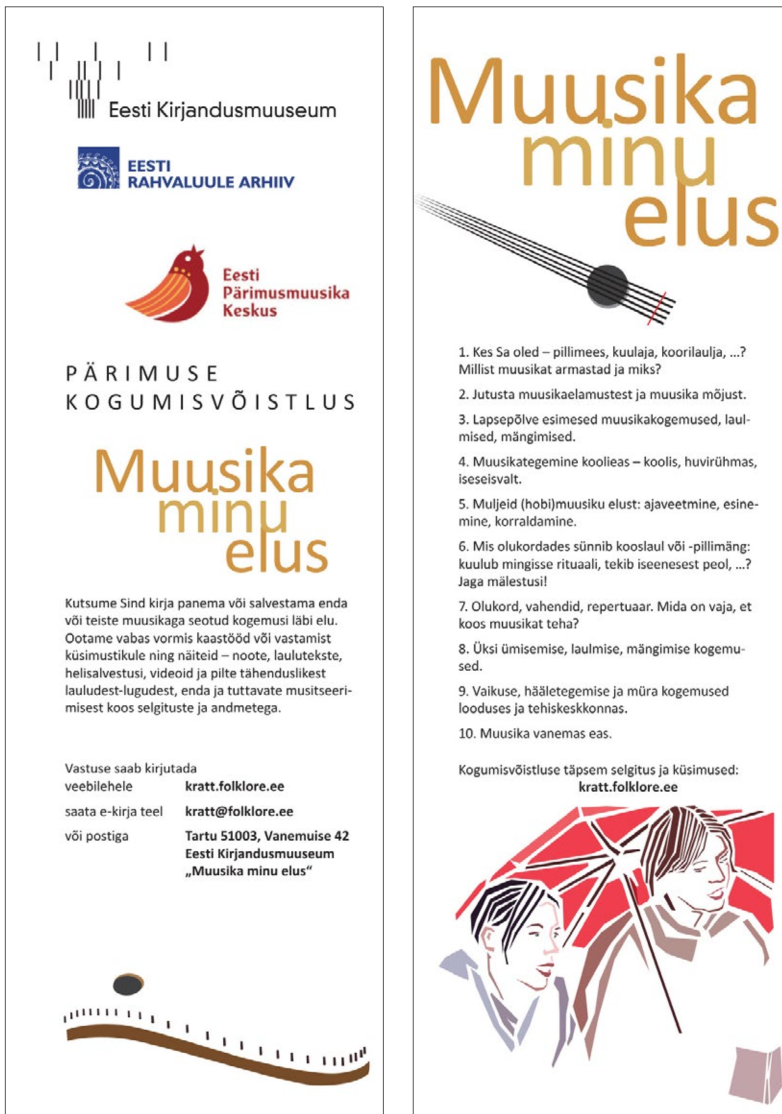

Figure 1: The two sides of the flyer for the questionnaire "Music in my Life" in 2022. Designed by Pille Niin.

Given my background as an ethnic Estonian, I was interested in the joint singing of our people. However, as participatory singing might not exist today with all the characteristics described by Turino, I defined it for the present research as singing together outside of professional activities.

The present study utilizes qualitative research, which involved gathering information through the questionnaire, organising the responses into meaningful units, and drawing conclusions (see Flick, 2007 [1999]). As there was a more extensive interest into the personal relationship of Estonians with music among my colleagues, in 2022 the "Music in my Life" collection was organised by the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum in cooperation with the Estonian Folk Music Centre (Fig. 1).

The 49 questions, divided into 10 sets, were created by the ethnomusicologists Janika Oras and Helen Kõmmus, the student of linguistics Margit Kooser, and the author of the article. The groups of questions were prepared mostly according to life stages, but there were also two sets about making music together, e.g. "In what situations do people start to sing and/or play music together [...]?" (Kratt). The campaign was successful and produced approximately 300 writings with various appendices.

A contract was signed with all the respondents, in which they indicated whether they would agree to the publication of their contribution and the use of their names. In the present article, the longer written entries are treated as artefacts that deserve to be credited with the author's name (unless there are contractual restrictions on publication), but in the short text samples only the writer's gender, age, and the time of the occasion were indicated. All the original works are found in the Estonian Literary Museum's online repository Kivike, the project *Muusika minu elus*, 2022 (KIVIKE).

As the campaign was finished only on 21 April 2023, it is not yet possible to give a thorough analysis of the extensive and varied material. The respondents involved a greater share of younger people (90 respondents born before, and 200 after the midpoint in 1966), but the older respondents' contributions were more comprehensive. Although we had encouraged everybody to take part, there were many people whose musical interests and experiences were above average. A balanced representative sample of 38 respondents of various social backgrounds, musical experiences, and ages − ranging from around 12 to 100 years − was drawn up for further research.

Information about participatory singing was grouped into relevant topics and ordered on a timeline to discover any possible changes. The year of the activity was not always precisely determined, but usually the period was mentioned. When making conclusions, the subjectivity of the answers was considered and thus sweeping generalisations avoided.

The trends and spheres of participatory singing in Estonia

The ancient Estonian folk song *regilaul* has a participatory structure in which the leader's lines are repeated by other singers. However, since the 1800s, newer folk songs, choral singing and Western art music have gradually displaced *regilaul*, except in the border areas of Setomaa and the Kihnu Island. Many intellectuals tended to treat amateur choral singing as a new form of participatory singing, although its style is more complex, and amateur choirs (*koor*)[6] typically have a professional conductor and mostly sing secular multipart songs written for performance by composers. In 1912 the pedagogue Märt Raud raised a question: what should Estonians sing together when *regilaul* was considered too outdated, the newer end-rhymed songs aesthetically too poor, and choral songs too difficult (Särg, 2012: 125). To address this question, and to discover the ways of participatory singing, a sample of "Music in my Life" submissions was analysed against the following topics: singing in the private sphere, in formal groups, at public events; technological innovations, and perceived changes.

1. The singing tradition in the private sphere has proven to be relatively stable (Rüütel, Kuutma, 1996–1997; Vissel, 2004). Strong family and community ties have helped to preserve the unbroken singing tradition (Särg, Oras, 2021). Our research shows the continuation of joint singing in families, although with declining frequency.

a) Singing in childhood with family members is frequently described: *"At home, we made music with our family* […]*, and we sang a lot of children's songs.* […] *Mother had a beautiful soprano voice, and she also led the singing"* (1950–60s, F, 76). *"*[E]*very evening father came to our bedroom with a guitar and instead of reading a fairy tale, he played the guitar and we sang together"* (1950–60s, M, 43). Sometimes it happened that the young musician's *"co-singer was a dog"*, when they were alone at home (1920–30s, M, 100). In religious families, church songs continued to be sung throughout the Soviet era despite the government's disdain for religion: *"At home, mother and father sang chorals and taught us children's songs"* (1950s, F, 76). However, some families did not engage in singing: *"We didn't sing much at home.* […] *At grandma's and grandpa's in Hiiumaa, a prayer hour was held, and there they sang religious songs together with the spiritual sisters"* (1950s, F, 70).

From the 1950s to the turn of the century, early childhood memories of singing have become more associated with kindergarten: *"All my first experiences of music, singing, playing during my childhood were in kindergarten, because I started there in the nursery group"* (2000s, F, 20). However, singing remained in homes that had a stronger musical tradition. Two music students who grew up in the 2000s recall: *"My brother and I have only sung together in the meantime, we haven't done much else"*

[6] In English, but not in Estonian, a distinction is often made between 'choir' and 'chorus': "an ecclesiastical body of singers is invariably called a choir, as is a small, highly trained or professional group; 'chorus' is generally preferred for large groups of secular provenance" (Smith, Percy, 2001).

(F, 20); *"My first vivid memories of listening to music are related to simple songs and accompanying movements.* […] *I remember how at first my mother sang them alone, later my mother with my sister and finally all of us together"* (F, 22).

b) In the first half of the 20th century, the various celebrations and activities with singing (holidays, handicrafts) occurred in the local village community. *"Much was also sung on the village's 'big swing' in youth, it was a two-sided swing"* (1930s, F, 82).

With the growth of urbanisation in the second half of the 20th century, the assemblies moved from the village community to a more personal circle as well as to formal membership groups. The main events mentioned in the questionnaires that included singing with family and friends were: birthdays, weddings, funerals, Christmas, Martinmas Eve (10 November), St. Catherine's Eve (24 November), as well as Easter, *guljanje* (Russian for 'walking'), singing on a swing, the camp party, Mother's Day, after work bees (Est. *talgud*), singing in the sauna, barbeque evenings etc. (Fig. 2) As one respondent noted: *"In our family, music was a part of all gatherings"* (1960–70s, F, 61). The best-known song ritual was and still is singing to the birthday child. Celebrating Christmas with singing at home endured throughout the Soviet era and was also part of people's mental resistance to the occupation. Singing at weddings is described less frequently, probably because a band would usually be invited to play dance music; however if a folk musician performed it might be different: *"There was singing at our wedding. We got married in 1974 in Ranna park in Kärdla. The MC*[7] *was the*

Figure 2: Martinmas in Estonia in the 2000s. Source: ERA, DF 42252.

[7] Master of Ceremonies. Estonian term *pulmaisa* or *pulmavanem* or "wedding father" goes back to the groom's older male relative.

Figure 3: A songbook for a golden wedding. Sildoja family, 2019. Source: ERA, EFA, AK 1343.

accordionist and the crowd sang along with him. There were folk songs and obligatory songs at weddings" (F, 70). Emotional singing was also a part of funeral gatherings: *"I remember the evening of my mother's wake at our home.* […] *the villagers sang, our family as well. I remember, when the neighbour woman* […] *was departing, she said with tears in her eyes: 'It was a nice funeral. Sing as nicely at my funeral, too'"* (1984, F, 82). The repertoire and style of informal singing usually contained newer folk and popular songs, and in some areas even old *regilaul*. Ritual songs and mumming on St. Martin's Day and St. Catherine's Day continue, but because of the gradual decline of this custom the Estonian Folklore Council has began promoting it, too.

There are signs of modernisation in private musical activities. In the 19th century people started to use handwritten personal songbooks, or the songbooks compiled for special events: weddings, funerals etc. (Fig. 3) During the 20th century, professional MCs were hired for weddings, who would also organise group singing. Among our respondents was Henno Sepp (b. 1922), a popular MC, folk musician and organiser of sing-along events. He has led 614 weddings since 1958 and completed the MC course at the Folk University. Amongst the materials of the Estonian Folklore Archives there is an example of a family gathering structured like a song festival with a procession and concert, followed by a bonfire with participatory singing (ERA, EV 397). At the end of the 20th century formal ensembles were sometimes organised around large musical families, a church organist for example established an ecclesiastic children's ensemble when she became a mother (1997, F, 51).

2. Singing inside (semi)formal groups, such as school classes, societies, and music collectives takes place as part of their regular activities, and their more informal social life.

The development of joint singing skills through education and the establishment of school choirs started in the 19th century and is in principle continued today (Raudsepp, Vikat, 2011). Social processes and ideologies were reflected in school: *"The thing about elementary school singing is that it was taught in the singing lesson as being patriotic, but there were still dance games"* (1940–50s, F, 82). In the 1950s, the boys of the last secondary school class in Tallinn secretly celebrated Christmas by lighting candles and humming the song *Holy Night* (M, 86).

Society seemed to have expectations about children's singing that teachers had to take into account. One teacher is remembered for enthusiastically organising singing during the music lessons, while she closed the classroom windows (1960s, F, 70). The ability to hold a tune was seen as inborn, and teaching it was considered quite a feat: *"Teacher Valdma was able to teach even those students who could not hold a tune before meeting with her to sing"* (1963, F, 70). In the questionnaire, several people answered that singing together was the nice part of school music lessons (e.g. M, 86, 1940s; F, 20, 2000s). A teacher with a background in traditional music wrote: *"It would be necessary to change the myth that music is for the few chosen ones - it is everyone's right"* (F, 49).

Estonian schoolchildren and students had a lively singing tradition in their working brigades in the 1960s–1980s (M, 77). An organiser of group singing, Jaagup Kippar (1993), confirmed based on his own memories that teenagers sang together in the 1990s. The student societies of Tartu University hold closed participatory singing events, a tradition which dates back to German students' fraternities. I asked Kadri Vider, Magister Cantandi of the female society Indla: *"In Indla, what is done with the people who can't sing?"* She replied that everyone learns to sing there (2022).

The number of registered folk singers/musicians in Estonia is 2,200, while there are 35,522 amateur choir singers in a population of only some 1.3 million people (Statistikaamet). The amateur collectives are established for presentational music, but more time is given to the rehearsals which actually resemble singing for the group's own sake. A singer of a female choir stated:

> *The emotions we get from the choir are important for our health. If at home, now and then it hurts here and there, or there is some unfortunate illness going on, then during the singing rehearsal everything is forgotten and it's as if there are no problems. Also at all the choir events, old age is forgotten and passports are not checked.* (2022, F, 76)

Informal singing thrives in musical groups or where their members take part, because they have skill and a repertoire. An experienced vinyl DJ and leader of singing events stated:

> *Singing unites people – in my experience – I would even say that people want to relive what filled the evenings of parties or communities of their youth. Similar gatherings are coming up in the next months – I'm positive that a significant part of the time will be spent singing together. Achieving this gives the participants something to be proud of. The elderly feel their responsibility in keeping the custom of singing together alive – it's part of our nation's culture.* (2022, Valter Parve, 77)

3. Participatory singing at public events, such as workshops, festivals; and various rituals.

a) The "authentic" folklore movement started in Estonia in the 1960s and contributed to the national identity in opposition to the official Soviet folklore performances, which were infused with socialist ideology. Folklore groups performed on stage, but also organised singing along at concerts and participated in village festivals which helped traditions survive (cf. Kuutma, 1998; Kalkun, Oras, 2018). A member of a rural folklore group said: *"*[W]*e held concerts titled 'Back Home with Folklore' every summer in the villages of the Muhu Island. There, the line between performers and listeners often disappeared"* (2000s, F, 82).

The composer Veljo Tormis initiated the tradition of participatory singing of *regilaul* with audiences in the 1960s. Together with folklorist Ülo Tedre, he published the special songbook *Regilaulik* (Tedre, Tormis, 1975).

During the revival movement, new organisational structures evolved, and in 1988 the Estonian Folklore Society was founded. When Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania had re-established their independence in 1991, they were given full membership at CIOFF with the rights of a national section. To represent the Estonian Republic in the CIOFF, the Estonian Folklore Council was established in 1992.

In 1991, the teaching of traditional music began in the Viljandi Culture College and in 2007, at the Academy of Music and Theatre. The students of traditional music are praised for contributing to social life: *"When celebrating with students of traditional music, singing together and playing instruments is one of the mandatory parts of the party"* (2020s, M, 25).

The Viljandi Folk Music Festival (established 1993) started to organise workshops of various singing styles, as well as a "Regilaul nest" (*Regilaulupesa*) where participants can sing along with the experienced leaders. A similar monthly singing event "Regilaul room" (*Regilaulutuba*) has been organised in Tartu museums since the 2000s. In 2005 was established the Society of Archaic Male Singing whose aim is to organise both participatory singing evenings and concerts.

At a participatory singing event, a free atmosphere is created: people are sitting in a circle outdoors on the lawn or in a cosy room; or they are playing dance games. If possible, they are offered drinks and snacks and never discuss the "artistic quality" of singing.

b) Congregational singing is the common practice of the Lutheran Church but has diminished after persecution during the Soviet era. In the 1940s and 50s, spiritual gatherings and singing might be held under the guise of birthdays (F, 76). A funeral from the same period was described as follows: *"I didn't go to church as a child - firstly, the Kanepi church was far away and secondly - it was forbidden. However, I always sang along when there was a funeral and the priest was there.* […] *Later this* [deceased] *Juuli's nephew was amazed at my courage to participate. As an employee of the local party committee, he was hiding behind the corner"* (1940–50s, F, 80).

Today, there is not much singing in church, because there are only around 30,000 active members (Viilma, 2019; Zõbin, 2021) and many of those do not join in the singing. *"In the church at Christmas time and at the cemetery day, the priest sings mainly alone, accompanied by a few timid voices"* (2010–20s, F, 71). Some larger city congregations still have good singing skills and choirs.

The Lutheran Church has started a new institutional use for *regilaul* as congregational singing and includes some *regilaul* songs, adapted as needed, to the spiritual theme, in the new evangelical church hymnal.

c) Various public occasions are organised for participatory singing. In the TV-show "Sing Along" during the early 2000s, singer Reet Linna organised events all over Estonia, and encouraged people to sing: "Doing a TV show together, it's not a concert!" (Suitso, 2003). With the New Age ideology, the participatory singing of "power songs" began, sometimes including *regilaul*. Various people organised sing-along events for a fee, offering also a spiritual experience. *"It had a particularly powerful and tension-relieving effect together with the movements,"* wrote a participant in Tom Valsberg's "Power Songs" (2020s, F, 74). Valsberg advertises the singing evenings online: "The ticket includes a good vibe, hugs and a cup of ceremonial cocoa, which will increase your happy hormones and give you euphoric energy for several hours!" (Wäelaulud).

Among our respondents were two skilled leaders of sing-along events: Henno Sepp, an accordionist who has organised gatherings of village musicians since 1984 (Fig. 5), and Valter Parve, a DJ for vinyl records. The latter coordinated various events including group singing: e.g. the celebration of the 390th anniversary of Tartu University.

4. The performance of a singing collective has a participatory facet for singers, and can take on an additional participatory aspect when the audience joins in, or when performers switch to spontaneous singing without leaving the stage. This happens more easily in less regulated situations, for example after the end of the concert program.

a) The Choral Song Festivals began in Tartu, Estonia in 1869 and they played an important role in the nation's cultural and economic self-determination. The Song Festivals continued, (with a break during WW2), and have been held normally every five years until today. The chorus of up to 30,000 people performs to the audience on the Tallinn Song Festival Ground. But in addition to that, it forms a special singers' community, where sometimes the audience becomes "merged" with the chorus. At the

most recent song festival in 2019 special songs were added for participatory singing, including a *regilaul* adaptation. Almost all respondents had vivid memories of the song festivals. One boy wrote: *"I sing only in music lessons because the teacher makes me,"* and added: *"After attending the Song Festival I have thought, probably, to start singing, too"* (2020s, M, 14).

The mood of the Singing Revolution began to develop at the festivals. When one of the Song Festival concerts in 1960 was cancelled due to heavy rain, choirs remained on the stage, singing songs that "put the organisers of the festival in trouble" (LTP). The end of this festival was particularly memorable as a joint choir of more than 10,000 people refused to leave the stage because the final song was banned. One of the leaders of the Singing Revolution, the artist Heinz Valk, then a member of a student choir, wrote (Fig. 4):

> *It was the Estonian Song Festival in 1960. The Communist Party had prohibited to sing 'My Fatherland is my Love' by Gustav Ernesaks.*[8] *For what reason were we gathered there at all, then? The festival without this song would be a shame on us before all the Estonian people.*
>
> *The culmination arrived. The obligatory Soviet songs had been performed and there were no more songs in the concert program, but the joint choirs refused to leave the stage even when told to do so several times.*
>
> *The movement coordinator of the choir was shaking hands in front of the stage and kept repeating: 'Start moving now! Front rows first. Quiet, no rush! Fine, let's go! Concert is over. Let's go! Let's go!'*
>
> *The joint choirs were buzzing ever louder and the same could be heard from the square. Baffled conductors were standing there, looking around as though they were waiting for someone to come or something to happen. Tension kept rising. Some officials were running back and forth in front of the stage, giving orders to the conductors who still lingered. The movement coordinator kept repeating: 'Let's go! Let's go! Start moving!'*
>
> *Then, high voices came from the women's choirs: 'Song! Song! Song!' There was the excited [conductor] Gustav Ernesaks standing next to the rostrum wearing an oak wreath and looking at the singers. Officials were already panicking before the stage. Also people in the rows of VIP's stood up, glancing behind and at the stage with scared faces.*
>
> *Ever louder demand: 'Song! Song! Song!' was exclaimed by the singers. The tension in the air was electric, palpable, as if something should erupt at any moment.*

[8] Lyrics by Lydia Koidula (1843–1886). Gustav Ernesaks (1908–1993) is an Estonian composer and conductor.

And then it began. I can no longer recall which voice group launched the first syllable: 'My...' Thereafter it started rolling like an avalanche. […]

We had been singing without the conductor already a half of the first stanza when the ideological secretary, Leonid Lentsmann from the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party, ran to Gustav Ernesaks and shouted at him in a loud voice that could be heard by the singers: 'What are you still doing here! Get up to conduct!' Ernesaks rushed up the staircase with quick steps, caught exactly the right phrase and started conducting us with already familiar movements.

People on the whole square were standing up. Singers had taken off their black and white college caps. The public was singing along. We were all like in a trance. […] *The only clue to reality was the warmth of tears on our cheeks. There was a cosmic power filling the whole square and probably all Estonia at that moment.*

As the song ended, Gustav Ernesaks waved finally and covered his face with his hands. We saw him cry. Was it out of joy? Or out of pride he had made such a marvellous song for his people, who deserved it and proved it. (2022, Heinz Valk, 86).

At the end of the 1980s, a new wave of singing events arose: the Singing Revolution, where in Heinz Valk's words, we fought by "singing, laughing, and dancing" (2022).

Participatory singing has also taken place in the context of recent social events, such as the Forest War, which escalated in 2018 and brought about the Forest Song Festival. This is a singing of *regilaul* on the small swamp island of Hüpassaare, Viljandi county, to highlight ecological problems.

5. The influence of technological means and perceived changes in tradition. These themes run through almost all the writings, and technology-mediated music acts both as a substitute, effective teacher or leader for sing-alongs: it has a loud voice and knows the words and the tune. Estonian Broadcast already promoted joint singing in the 1930s (Raudsepp, Vikat, 2011), but in my sample the first memory of learning a song from the radio was in the 1950s (F, 71). In the 1960s TV began to arrive and the song programs *Horoscope* and *Entel-Tentel* especially became popular. *"My relatives even say that I sang before I learned to speak. This is partially confirmed by a clip from a home video where I dance and sing* [*lalisen*, lit. 'babble'] *along to Entel-Tentel's songs"* (2000s, F, 22).

Singing on the road was replaced by singing in the car or on the bus. (Fig. 5) Many submissions described listening and singing together to audio cassettes or CDs during car journeys with the family (2000s, e.g. F, 49; M, 25). Young people sing along to music in their headphones (2022, F, 22). Karaoke is rarely mentioned.

23 Oli 1960. a. üldlaulupidu. Kompartei oli keela-
nud laulda Ernesaksa „Mu isamaa on minu arm."
Kuid milleks me siis üldse laulupeole tulime? Ilma
selle lauluta me oleks end häbisse saatnud terve
eesti rahva ees.
Ja siis oligi kulminatsioon käes. Kohustuslikud
nõukogulikud laulud olid lauldud, kontserdikavas
rohkem laule enam polnud, ent ühendkoorid ei soos-
tunud isegi pärast mitmekordset nõuet laulukaare alt
lahkuma.
Laululava ees vehkis kätega kooride liikumisjuht
ja aina kordas: „Hakake nüüd liikuma! Kõigepealt
esiread. Minge rahulikult, ilma trügimiseta! Noh,
lähme siis! Kontsert on lõppenud! Lähme! Lähme!"
Ühendkoorid sumisesid aina tugevamalt, sama kos-
tus ka väljakult. Kooride ees seisid nõutud nägudega
dirigendid ja vahtisid ümberringi nagu oodates kellegi
tulekut või millegi juhtumist. Rahvas väljakul tõusis
püsti. Pinge aina kasvas. Laululava ees sibasid edasi-
tagasi mingid ametiisikud, jagades käske või korraldu-
si dirigentidele, kes aga jäid endiselt seisma. Liikumis-
juht aina kordas: „Lähme laiali! Lähme laiali! Haka-
ke juba liikuma!"
Siis hakkas naiskooride poolelt kostuma kiljumist:
„Laulu! Laulu! Laulu!" Dirigendipuldi kõrval
seisis ärevil näoga Ernesaks, tammepärg kaelas ja vaa-
tas ainiti lauljate poole. Ametnike sebimine lava ees
oli juba paanikailmeline. Ka ees olevates VIPide rin-
[illegible]

Figure 4: Fragment of Heinz Valk's manuscript, where he describes the 1960 Song Festival. 2022. Source: ERA, EFA I 425.

Figure 5: Singing in the bus near Pärnu. Accordionist Henno Sepp. The 2000s. Source: ERA, Foto 19355.

With modern amplification it is possible to hold song festivals with less people on the stage. This has enabled various events to be organised on the Song Festival Ground, including several gatherings that eventually became the Singing Revolution. Singing for Ukraine was organised in 2022 as a huge chorus performing *Oy u luzi Chervona Kalyna* (Oh, the Red Viburnum in the Meadow) in Tallinn, and the event was shared over media.

During the Covid pandemic, a new form of online group singing spread. In 2020 a digital choir of 2,500 people sang "live" at the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds on the screens of nearly 1,000 tablets, and over 200,000 people were watching the live stream at their homes or in their cars on location (GVS).

Several of the older respondents point out the decline of the tradition of participatory singing: *"In the past, we used to sing together more on birthdays and Christmas Eve, unfortunately it is fading now, because the grandchildren have a newer repertoire and there are few songs in common, we are now more in terms of listeners"* (2022, F, 76).

Group singing often flounders because people don't know the words by heart. A sign of new technology are also the photocopied and printed songbooks for family events in recent decades, and finding song lyrics online on the smartphone.

One of the reasons for the decrease in singing along might be the orientation towards performance. *"I think that the culture of preparing for song festivals and the strict requirements of high level performance have greatly reduced the spontaneity of singing. The joy of singing is left completely behind,"* writes a teacher of traditional music (2022, F, 49).

A young lady characterised a typical Estonian relationship to music with a participatory aspect:

> *Gatherings of a musical family, maybe just an Estonian family, include making music together.* […] *My relationship with music, as so often in Estonians, starts from childhood in choir singing.* (2022, F, 20)

Conclusion

The institutionalisation of participatory singing is a tendency to give this activity a formal social structure in the context of modern society. The following trends can be drawn over the last half-century in Estonian participatory singing:

1. In the private (family, friends) sphere, informal group singing seems to have been diminished, but is still a well-known activity in childhood and on family occasions.
2. Singing in (semi)formal groups such as school classes, music collectives and societies happens as regular practice in music lessons, rehearsals, camps, and also at informal gatherings.

3. Participatory singing in public happens as part of various rituals (e.g. church service); or it is organised in the course of a folklore or inclusive culture movement (workshop, singing "room", TV-show etc).
4. Choral (and other group) singing has both participatory and presentational aspects. Song festivals persist since the 19th century and have given a model to other singing events, such as the gatherings of the Singing Revolution, or Singing for Ukraine. The song festivals often address social and political problems.
5. Technology has likely reduced the occurrence of participatory singing, but has also offered new opportunities, e.g. the emergence of an online singing group during the Covid pandemic. Technology also supports participatory singing with sound amplification and various possibilities to rely on written song texts or sound recordings − however, older people do feel that the tradition of spontaneous participatory singing has diminished.

Much of music-making has become based on formalised groups and societies, and funded through projects or commercial activities. Similarly to the commodification of the musical listening experience, there is offered the experience of participation. Singing has united Estonians during the last half century and helped to preserve national identity and resistance throughout the Soviet era.

Within the framework of the modern narrative of progress based on knowledge and technology, music was also seen as a subject to evolve to a higher level, which is probably why special value was given to written music culture, formal music education, the performance of music as an artefact, as well as the technological means in 20th century music. In the early days of modernisation, fast positive changes in society might cause arrogance toward old traditions, but many people have felt that some emotional needs remain unfulfilled, and have established revival activities, as indeed has happened with participatory singing.

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Institucionalizacija participativnega petja v Estoniji od 60. let prejšnjega stoletja

V članku so analizirani procesi v družbeni strukturi ljubiteljskega (ali ljudskega, vernakularnega) petja v Estoniji s poudarkom na njegovih participativnih vidikih. Uporabljena sta osnovna izraza Thomasa Turina (2008) »participativno« in »predstavitveno« petje, ki razločujeta petje v skupini in javno nastopanje. Etnomuzikologi so predlagali, da je proces muziciranja lahko pristna in nujna človeška dejavnost in da je vsakdo dovolj muzikalen, da to počne (Blacking, 1973). Skupinsko petje ponuja udeležencem številne koristi, vendar se kljub temu zdi, da ta praksa med ljudmi na Zahodu usiha (Turino, 2008; Camlin idr. 2020; Spitzer, 2021).

Članek gradi na hipotezi, da je modernizacija v Estoniji spremenila družbeno organizacijo skupinskega petja, kar je privedlo do njegove delne institucionalizacije – težnje, da bi ta dejavnost v sodobni družbi dobila formalno družbeno strukturo. Estonska zgodovinska tradicija participativnega petja je *regilaul*, lokalna veja finskih runskih pesmi (ang. *runosongs*). Pričujoča študija analizira dinamiko tradicije petja na ozadju zgodovinskih procesov modernizacije, razvoja nacionalne identitete in države (1919−1940), sovjetske okupacije in protisovjetskega odpora (1940−1991), folklornega gibanja (začelo se je v 50.–60. letih prejšnjega stoletja) ter ponovne uveljavitve nacionalne neodvisnosti (1991).

S kvalitativno metodo je preučen vzorec gradiva iz zbiralne akcije »Glasba v mojem življenju«, ki jo je leta 2022 organiziral Estonski folklorni arhiv pri Estonskem literarnem muzeju. Rezultati predstavljajo transformacijo tradicije sodelovalnega petja v zasebnem in družbenem življenju v zadnjega pol stoletja:

1. V zasebni (družinski, prijateljski) sferi se zdi, da se je neformalno skupinsko petje zmanjšalo, vendar je še vedno močno v otroštvu in ob družinskih srečanjih.
2. Petje v (pol)formalnih skupinah (npr. šolski razredi, glasbeni kolektivi in društva) se redno izvaja pri pouku glasbe, na vajah, taborih in tudi na neformalnih srečanjih.
3. Sodelovalno petje v javnosti se dogaja kot del različnih obredov (npr. cerkvene liturgije) ali pa je organizirano v folklornem ali inkluzivnem kulturnem gibanju (delavnica, pevska »soba«, televizijska oddaja itn.).
4. Tradicija zborovskega petja ima tako participativni kot prezentacijski vidik. Estonski festivali pesmi se ohranjajo od 19. stoletja in so bili zgled za druge pevske dogodke, kot so srečanja Pevske revolucije, Pojemo za Ukrajino. Pesmi na festivalih navadno obravnavajo družbene in politične probleme.
5. Tehnologija je verjetno zmanjšala pojavnost sodelovalnega petja, vendar je ponudila tudi nove priložnosti, npr. med pandemijo koronavirusa je nastala spletna pevska skupina. Tehnologija podpira sodelovalno petje tudi s krepitvijo in različnimi možnostmi opiranja na pisna besedila pesmi ali zvočne posnetke; kljub novim možnostim starejši menijo, da se je tradicija sodelovalnega petja zmanjšala.

Petje je v zadnjega pol stoletja združevalo Estonce ter pomagalo ohranjati nacionalno identiteto in odpor v času Sovjetske zveze, čeprav je velik del glasbenega ustvarjanja postal osnovan na formaliziranih skupinah in društvih, ki se financirajo prek projektov ali komercialnih dejavnosti. Podobno kot komodifikacija glasbenega poslušanja se ponuja tudi izkušnja sodelovanja. V okviru moderne pripovedi o napredku, ki temelji na znanju in tehnologiji, je tudi glasba veljala za predmet, ki se mora razviti na višjo raven, zato so verjetno posebno vrednost v glasbi 20. stoletja imeli pisna glasbena kultura, formalno glasbeno izobraževanje, izvajanje glasbe kot artefakta in tudi tehnološka sredstva. Na začetku modernizacije bi hitre pozitivne spremembe v družbi lahko povzročile pozabo starih tradicij, vendar so mnogi ljudje začutili, da nekatere čustvene potrebe ostajajo neizpolnjene, in so dejavnosti oživili, kar se je dejansko zgodilo s sodelovalnim petjem.

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The International Bagpipe Festival in Strakonice and the Transformation of the Relationship Towards the Regional Bagpipe Tradition

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Strakonice is a South Bohemian town closely associated with bagpipes, a connection dating to the early 19th century. The theme of the bagpipers was already harnessed by the Czech national movement of the 19th century, and revived in the folk revival movement after the Second World War. In 1967, the highly popular International Bagpipe Festival was established in Strakonice. New changes in the relationship to the bagpipe tradition can be observed since the beginning of the millennium.
▪ **Keywords**: bagpipe, festival, music tradition, Strakonice, South Bohemia

Strakonice so južnočeško mesto, ki je tesno povezano z dudami; povezava sega v začetek 19. stoletja. Dude so bile kot nacionalni simbol uporabljene že v češkem nacionalnem gibanju v 19. stoletju, po 2. svetovni vojni pa jih je obudila folklorna dejavnost. Leta 1967 je bil namreč v Strakonicah ustanovljen zelo priljubljen mednarodni festival dud. Nove spremembe v odnosu do tradicije igranja na dude lahko opazimo od začetka 21. stoletja.
▪ **Ključne besede**: dude, festival, glasbena tradicija, Strakonice, južna Češka

Significant attributes of traditional folk culture and folklore tend to be loaded with symbolic meanings exploited by the political and local-patriotic representation of towns, regions, or entire nations. Strakonice is a South Bohemian town with a long and rich history. The symbol, or indeed trademark, it is most closely associated with is the bagpipe and bagpipe music, a connection dating to the early 19th century and possibly even earlier. In South Bohemia and beyond, Strakonice has for a long time been popularly known as “Dudákov” (Town of Bagpipes). Since 1967, this tradition has been reflected in the existence of the International Bagpipe Festival.

It was not until about a decade ago – when enough time had elapsed from the fall of Communism in 1989 – that genuinely intensive research began into the dynamic transformations occurring in Czech society’s relationship to traditional music and folklore. Prior to this renewed interest in the topic, the Czechoslovak folklore movement of the second half of the 20th century was generally accepted, on the one hand, as a “showcase” or “servant” of the Communist regime; on the other hand, people who had been directly involved in the movement in the 1970s and 1980s welcomed it as an “island of creative freedom” devoid of major ideological pressures. This ambivalence was discussed in detail in the project entitled *Tíha a beztíže folkloru* (The Weight and

Weightlessness of Folklore) (Stavělová et al., 2021). Transformations of the phenomenon in the European context were presented in the proceedings of the Prague conference 'The Folklore revival movement of the second half of the 20th century' (Stavělová, Buckland, 2018).

International research to date has specifically examined festivals concerning their various social, religious, ethnic, national, linguistic, or historical connections (Falassi, 1987; Getz, 1990); the expression of cultural identities of festival audiences (McKay, 2000); or the economic background of festivals and impacts on tourism (Picard, Robinson, 2006; Gibson, Connell, 2012). A thought-provoking paper with the theme of festivals and their relationship to intangible heritage and the process of folklorization has been published by Valdimar T. Hafstein (2018) who, in a somewhat provocative shorthand, notes that "where we have intangible cultural heritage, we find festivals" (163). Substantial summary works on the topic of festivals and their multifaceted roles have been compiled by Judith Mair (2019), Andy Bennett et al. (2014), and Ullrich Kockel et al. (2020). Valuable contributions to the concept of musical revival have been made recently, for example, by a monograph compiled by Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill (2014), and a contribution specifically to bagpipe music by Valdis Muktupāvels (2020).

The questions in the ongoing Czech-Slovenian research project concern, among other things, the general awareness of historical roots and especially the changes in the relationship to music and dance tradition (Stavělová, 2023). In fact, in addition to the mainstream music and dance ensembles within the established structures of the Czech folklore movement (including "folk" festivals with a tradition from the 1950s to the 1960s), an association of bagpipers has been operating quite informally in South Bohemia for 13 years. It is rather a spontaneous social institution and an open creative workshop than a mere musical ensemble. As we will indicate at the end of this paper, the association's members are searching for and redefining their relationship to musical tradition within their activities.

The research questions posed are as follows: In what ways is the Czech bagpipe tradition in the 20th century reflected in the form of the modern urban music festival? What impulses does the festival give to the contemporary perception and transformation of the musical tradition?

The author of this text has explored the above, aware of his position as an interested observer and participant in formal and informal conversations and musical opportunities, including active participation in the most influential bagpipe music festival in Central Europe. For more than thirty years, he has participated in the International Bagpipe Festival in Strakonice as a musician, later as an author and director of festival programmes, and since 2016 as a programme director. At the same time, for decades, he has been consistently following and reflecting on musical events in this field in the Czech Republic and neighbouring countries, with a focus on bagpipe music ensembles.

In addition to the historical study of archival sources, he continuously engages in field research and conducts and analyzes interviews with actors from the contemporary folklore movement, as well as from the education system and regional cultural and political institutions.

For a deeper understanding of the multilayered background of the phenomenon under study, at least a brief overview and an attempt to interpret older Czech sources, especially from the period of the emergence and fundamental changes of the national emancipation and political programmes of the 19th and 20th centuries, is undoubtedly useful.

The roots of the bagpipe tradition

There is written and visual evidence of bagpipe playing in the Czech lands as far back as the Middle Ages.[1] It is important to note that the social status of musicians and their European audiences changed considerably over the centuries. Between the 13th century and the middle of the 17th century, the sound and visual attractiveness of the bagpipe brought this instrument to the residences of the nobility and the royal families, as well as to important churches. However, with the rise in popularity of more modern instruments, bagpipers gradually descended the social ladder, becoming restricted again to an environment where they had originated: communities of shepherds and – on a more general level – rural areas and small towns (Markl, 1962; Vejvoda, 2015).

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Czech bagpipers came almost exclusively from poor rural backgrounds (shepherds, small craftsmen, poor farmers). Accordingly, their music and dance performances, though widely popular, came to be considered a cheap alternative to the more sophisticated – and expensive – string bands and, later, brass bands organized by local teachers (Markl, 1962, 1974).

A further feature typical of the 18th and 19th centuries was that the motifs of the bagpipe and bagpiper were found in Czech folk song lyrics and other forms of folklore. Furthermore, they appeared in folk visual arts such as painted furniture. Folk fairytales and legends often featured Švanda, a bagpiper from Strakonice, whose bagpipe had been bewitched by the devil and was used by Švanda to mesmerize his audiences and dancers (Režný, 2004: 15–18). This story was later exploited to the full by very diverse forms of arts, coming to play an important role in the "renaissance" of the bagpipe as a cultural and national symbol.

[1] Conclusive evidence of the use of the bagpipe in music bands in the Czech lands dates back to the 13th century, although trustworthy indications date it as far back as the 10th and 11th centuries (Zíbrt, 1917; Režný, 2012).

Figure 1: Strakonice-native Švanda the Bagpiper pictured on a 1920s postcard. Source: collection of Z. Vejvoda.

Švanda the Bagpiper and the national movement

The impetus for a second, symbolic life of the "Strakonice Bagpiper" came almost exclusively from Prague, the natural centre of the Czech national movement. The drama called *Strakonický dudák aneb Hody divých žen* (The Strakonice Bagpiper or The Feast of Wild Women), written by a leading Czech journalist and author, Josef Kajetán Tyl (1808–1856), opened in the Royal Estates Theatre in Prague in 1847. Tyl had stayed in Strakonice shortly before that when he toured the country with a travelling acting company. Undoubtedly, he had heard and seen live bagpipe music when in South Bohemia, and it seems very likely he had come across one of the existing versions of the story of Švanda the Strakonice Bagpiper. Before Tyl, the story had been rearranged and published by another revivalist, Jan Nepomuk Josef Rulík (1744–1812; his book

of stories and legends of 1799 was titled *Veselý Kubíček aneb V Horách Kašperských zaklený dudák*, Merry Kubitschek or A Bagpiper Under a Spell in Kašperské Hory), later by the priest, author and folklore collector Václav Krolmus (1790–1861; his collection of 1845 was titled *Staročeské pověsti, zpěvy, hry, obyčeje, slavnosti a nápěvy*, Old Bohemian Legends, Songs, Plays, Customs, Feasts and Melodies) and, finally, the journalist and collector Jakub Malý (1811–1885; his collection called *Sebrané báchorky a pověsti*, Collected Tales and Legends, was also published in 1845). The motif of the "Strakonice" bagpiper was revived by Josef Jungmann (1773–1847), a leading representative of the Czech national movement, in his 1835 Czech-German dictionary, and later, in 1852, by the poet František Ladislav Čelakovský (1799–1852) in his *Mudrosloví národu slovanského v příslovích* (The Wisdom of the Slavic Nation in Proverbs).

The fairytale motif of the magical bagpipe and the exotic attractiveness that this almost forgotten "Ancient Bohemian" instrument had for Prague intellectuals were a perfect match with the romanticism of Tyl's drama. The play was received extremely well by audiences as well as critics. For his part, Tyl was so engrossed in the story that he continued to rewrite the play up till a few days before his death, making a substantial contribution to the popularity of the bagpipe at a critical time when a modern Czech nation was being established. The popularity of the bagpipe was further enhanced by leading Czech painters, Mikoláš Aleš (1852–1913), Augustin Němejc (1861–1938), Jaroslav Špillar (1869–1917), and Ludvík Kuba (1863–1956). Tyl's play was also turned into a 1926 opera by Jaromír Weinberger (1896–1967), *Schwanda the Bagpiper*.[2]

Prague bagpipe productions in 1871–1921

The type of bagpipe used, in Tyl's day, in the wide region of South-West Bohemia but also in the neighbouring regions in Austria and Bavaria had an air reservoir made from animal skin and blown from the mouth (with no bellows yet); it had one chanter (the melody pipe) and one drone pipe, typically tuned in D, E ♭ and F (Režný, 2012: 101).[3] The instruments that have survived in South Bohemia and Lower Austria are almost identical and were sometimes produced by the same manufacturer. Yet it was only the Czech bagpipe (and more specifically the so-called Strakonice bagpipe) that grew into something of a national symbol, not the Bavarian bagpipe or the Austrian bagpipe. This was made possible by the systematic effort of the 19th century Czech intelligentsia to

[2] Much later, when Czechoslovakia had been occupied by the Soviet army, the Švanda story was turned into a 1974 musical film called *Hvězda padá vzhůru* (A Star Is Falling Upwards), directed by Ladislav Rychman and starring pop music icon Karel Gott.

[3] As almost all melodies in the Czech bagpipe repertoire are in major keys, Czech bagpipes tuned in D are composed of a melody pipe with a, $c\#^1$, d^1, e^1, $f\#^1$, g^1, a^1, b^1, and a drone pipe with *D*.

educate the general public "in the national spirit"; in parallel to these efforts, a number of artistic and commercial activities were pursued with the same implicit goal.

The available evidence suggests that the first enthusiast to raise awareness about bagpipe music was Josef Formánek (1844–1926), the headmaster of a Strakonice school. In 1871, Formánek gave a lecture about the bagpipe together with a concert, hosted by *Umělecká beseda*, a Prague-based artists' forum bringing together creative artists in literature, music and fine arts (Formánek, 1894). The event was a success and was reportedly attended by the composer Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884). Formánek continued to give these performances up until 1916. The bagpipe was played either by Formánek alone or in tandem with members of Prácheň, a Prague-based society of Strakonice patriots. Consisting of the bagpipe, violin, clarinet, and cello, the band played folk songs alongside their own compositions imitating the "genuine Strakonice" bagpipe musical style.

Formánek was a source of inspiration for Čeněk Zíbrt (1864–1932), a cultural historian, university professor and founder of the ethnographic journal *Český lid* (Czech Folk). His educational programme called Švanda the Bagpiper in Prague was first presented at the renowned cultural centre Žofín on 1 April 1917 (Režný, 2012: 102–104). Although Zíbrt was a bagpiper, he was happy to be joined by a young teacher named Karel Michalíček (1893–1937). Michalíček had learned the art of bagpipe playing in the Chodsko and Blata regions, from the renowned bagpiper František Kopšík, a resident of Soběslav, South Bohemia, whose bagpipe playing remains recorded on phonographic cylinders (Tyllner, 2001). Zíbrt gave a lecture that was very well received and was followed by a successful bagpipe performance by Michalíček and two violin players: the repertoire comprised folk as well as authored songs and patriotic poems, all centred around the motif of the bagpipe and performed by two experienced concert singers. At the end of the show, the audience burst into spontaneous singing, and another such event followed soon. Zíbrt's lecture appeared in print not long afterwards (Zíbrt, 1917) and the performers received invitations to appear in various parts of the country. In the First World War, Zíbrt's bagpipe shows often turned into manifestations of national pride. After the independent Czechoslovakia was established, Zíbrt received fewer and fewer invitations, the last performance taking place in Velvary in May 1920.

The popularity and success of Josef Formánek's bagpipe initiatives compelled his son, Jaroslav Formánek (1884–1938), to come up with his own commercial activity called *Umělecká družina krále dudáků, Mistra-dudáka Jardy Formánka ze Strakonic* (The Artistic Company Led by the Bagpiper King, Bagpipe Master Jarda Formánek of Strakonice). Beginning in 1921, Formánek Jr. held regular public concerts, lectures and bagpipe academies (Režný, 2004: 151). In a similar manner, Prague and various regions of the country occasionally saw other bagpipe bands that already used the trademark "Strakonice bagpipers" or "Švanda the Bagpiper" to attract bigger audiences. There are even reports about Czech immigrant communities in America attending concerts by

Czech musicians who called themselves "bagpipers from Strakonice", no matter what their true place of origin was (Cwach, 2012). Furthermore, Prague and rural regions were home to a great number of solo bagpipers of varying musical skills; some of these people offered educational programmes and musical productions for school children, also using the "Švanda" trademark.

Becoming the town of bagpipers

In sum, in just several decades – and at a sensitive time when the nation was becoming emancipated – Strakonice rose to nationwide fame, developing a symbolic association with Švanda the Bagpiper and bagpipe music in general. Loaded with positive connotations, this association was, and still is, naturally exploited not only in culture, but also in tourism and marketing.[4]

It is symptomatic that although the Czech bagpipe tradition has been associated with the town of Strakonice since the 19th century, its real representatives came almost exclusively from the villages around Strakonice. Generally, this transfer of "rustic" musical traditions into towns in the Czech lands first occurred during the national revival, and later – more significantly – during the folklore movement of the second half of the 20th century. Strakonice produced some remarkable artists and organizers who played a key role in this process.

At the very beginning of the Second World War – in 1939 – the Strakonice Bagpipe Band was established by Jiří Malkovský (1920–1986), a civil servant. The band was composed of: a bagpipe, a violin, two clarinets (in Es and in B), and a violoncello (Režný, 2004: 159). Not long after that, the cello was substituted with a double bass, played by a graduate of the Strakonice Grammar School, Josef Režný (1924–2012), himself a gifted bagpiper who went on to become the leading personality of the bagpipe revival in the region of Strakonice and the entire Czechoslovakia.[5] Režný was one of

[4] Since 1887, beer called Dudák (The Bagpiper) has been made in the Strakonice brewery, which was founded in 1649; an ornamental painting of Švanda the Bagpiper, designed by the South-Bohemian painter Václav Malý (1874–1935), can still be found on the wall of a 1906 Neo-Renaissance structure, the former municipal savings bank; the motif is featured in contemporary campaigns advertising local and regional products.

[5] A native of Strakonice, Josef Režný was born on 2 February 1924. Upon completing his secondary education at a local grammar school in 1943, he trained in music in public classes and privately. After completing his compulsory work service in Nazi Germany, he changed jobs several times, working in administrative as well as blue collar positions, before becoming – in 1953 – a primary school teacher in Strakonice. In 1955–1970, Režný was a training specialist and innovator in music, singing, dance and theatre. Between 1971 and his retirement in 1984, Režný served as director of the Municipal Museum in Volyně, in addition to his positions as leader of the Prácheň Ensemble, choreographer, choirmaster, author and arranger of music. 1950 saw the beginning of his collecting efforts in the domain of South Bohemian folk music and dance, with his collection amounting to over 1,000 written recordings of folk songs and 60 folk dances. Režný was a leading expert in folk musical instruments, especially the bagpipe, and their role and place in the Bohemian and Central European musical tradition (Vejvoda, 2000).

the founders, in 1949, of the Prácheň Song and Dance Ensemble, which remains till the present day an active stage presenter of folk music and dance of the Strakonice and Šumava regions. Later, Režný was the principal initiator of the Strakonice International Bagpipe Festival.

Following the Second World War, bagpipe playing was introduced as a subject in the Strakonice School of Music, which has produced hundreds of graduates since the 1950s who helped establish dozens of successful bagpipe bands. These bands have been the urban epitomes – and modern continuation – of musical traditions of the region, reflecting likewise the transformation of these traditions. This was a time of post-war euphoria and general enthusiasm about folk culture. The Communists, who came to power in 1948, provided massive support to folklore, which was understood to be part of what was officially called leisure artistic activities; at the same time, however, they also introduced their own ideological agendas into folklore, exploiting it for political purposes, especially by having folklore ensembles participate in political rallies and folklore festivals (cf. Stavělová et al., 2021).

The bagpipe festival in 1967–1989

Before the Strakonice International Bagpipe Festival was established, there had been seven editions, in 1955–1961, of what was known as the South Bohemian Song and Dance Festival. This was a regional festival which was intended to be the South Bohemian equivalent to the Folklore Festival in Strážnice, South Moravia (Stavělová et al., 2021: 371). The South Bohemian Festival was initiated by Zora Soukupová (1922–1981), leader of the folklore ensemble Úsvit based in České Budějovice, employed at the time by the Regional Educational Centre; her husband, Lubomír Soukup (1915–2001), a folklore editor at the České Budějovice regional office of Czechoslovak Radio; and Josef Režný, leader of the Prácheň Ensemble from Strakonice, who at the time worked at the District Educational Centre. The first edition of the South Bohemian Festival included a meeting of bagpipers from South Bohemia, bringing together authentic representatives of the waning tradition with younger bagpipe enthusiasts from among the folklore movement. Providing an opportunity for sharing expertise, the meeting was received very well, expanding in later years to include musicians from other regions of Bohemia, as well as from Moravia, Silesia, and Slovakia (Režný, Veselá, 2002: 8).

The second edition of the South Bohemian Song and Dance Festival in 1956 was followed by a workshop. It was at this workshop that Josef Režný first proposed the establishment of an international bagpipe festival. However, this idea could only be turned into reality in the politically more liberal times of the mid-1960s. The occasion provoking preparations of the festival's first edition was the 600th anniversary, in 1967, of Strakonice being granted the privileges of a town. The celebration of bagpipe music

Figure 2: Josef Režný (pictured left with the double bass) and the Strakonice Pipe Band during the visit of Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš to Strakonice in 1945. Courtesy of the Museum of Central Pootaví, Strakonice.

Figure 3: The Prácheň Ensemble from Strakonice pictured in a Labour Day parade in the 1980s. Courtesy of the Museum of Central Pootaví, Strakonice.

as a symbol of folk entertainment, optimism and the interconnection between the socialist town and its past (interpreted here in an ideologically biased manner) received support from the Communist management of the town, region, as well as the public at large. Moreover, the pre-1968 government policy allowed a limited amount of cultural exchange between the East and the West, which continued to be a remarkably constant feature of the microcosm of the bagpipe festival for many years until the fall of communism in 1989.[6]

Režný proposed that the International Bagpipe Festival should "serve to present musical folklore with a special focus on bagpipe music, more specifically bagpipe dance and song folklore" (Markl, 1979). The first edition of the festival was held in September 1967, and was co-organized by the Strakonice town and district authorities, the regional council of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, and the Prácheň Ensemble. The positions of chair of the executive board and the administrative secretary were given to political officials loyal to the official communist ideology, while Josef Režný served as chair of the programme board.

As has been suggested above, one feature of the festival was rather unusual in Czechoslovakia under communism: festival participants included ensembles and groups from the other side of the Iron Curtain.[7] It is evident from the list of international participants that ever since the first festival, there have been regular appearances by performers from the United Kingdom (in particular the north of England and Scotland), Ireland, Spain (Galicia), France (Bretagne), Germany and Austria and, in recent years, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, Turkey, New Zealand, and the US. Bagpipers from the former Eastern Bloc came from Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia (Croatia, Slovenia), Bulgaria, Romania and the former USSR. The regional diversity, which in turn reflects the diversity in the types of instruments, music repertoire and traditions of interpretation of bagpipe playing in Europe and beyond, is one of the fundamental attributes of the festival, and one that has remained unchanged over the years.

The second edition, scheduled for 1968, was postponed to September 1969 due to the Soviet occupation. At the same time, however, the fundamental change in the

[6] As a token of reciprocity for the participation of foreign ensembles in the Strakonice festival, the local, regional and national governments would grant members of the Prácheň Ensemble the permission to attend festivals in Western and Southern Europe (Belgium, the Netherlands 1967, 1969, France 1968, 1973, 1989, West Germany 1968, 1969, Spain 1973, Austria 1974, 1978 and other countries) (Pilík, 2009: 21).

[7] Režný is known to have exchanged letters with John Forster Charlton (1915–1989), a resident of Newcastle who would later become Režný's friend of many years and a regular participant in the festival; of special note is their correspondence before Charlton first came to Strakonice. Responding to the invitation that he was sent by Režný in 1967, Charlton wrote he was afraid of coming to Czechoslovakia, given the alarming reports by the British press; he asked Režný to say whether there really was shooting at the border, with cameras being confiscated and passengers arrested, and whether Strakonice was a safe place. He was assured there were no risks involved, and the festival director would come and pick him up at the border. The festival's executive committee arranged for a special permit allowing Režný entry to the prohibited area of the border, and Režný was able to welcome the worried guest in person in Rozvadov, a border crossing from West Germany (Režný, Veselá, 2002: 7).

country's political course, which was officially referred to as the start of "normalization", put an end to Režný's official involvement in the running of the festival for a long time.[8] Following ideological clashes that he had with the Communist leaders of the Strakonice town administration, Režný now was a political persona non grata and had to resign from his public posts, leaving his status as an influential public educator for the insignificant position of director of a small museum in the nearby town of Volyně. Being leader of the Prácheň Ensemble, however, Režný was indispensable for the official system. On the one hand, he was not allowed to serve as programme director of a festival that showcased the impeccability of socialist culture, yet on the other, he maintained some informal influence on the Festival agenda and the choice of performers, being in contact with his friends from among the Prácheň Ensemble or members of the programme board.

The following six editions, which were held every two or four years in the 1970s and 1980s, were designed by invited experts in folklore, alongside musicians affiliated with Czechoslovak scientific institutions (Zora Soukupová, Karel Krasnický, Jaroslav Jakubíček, Jaroslav Markl, Jiří Janoušek, Ludvík Kunz) and Czechoslovak Radio (Jaroslav Jurášek, Lubomír Soukup, Zdeněk Bláha). Programmes were normally directed by Zdeněk Podskalský, the renowned film and TV director, who brought popular actors and singers from Prague to serve as programme presenters (Režný, Veselá, 2002). Josef Režný was reappointed to the Programme Board in August 1989 (several months before the fall of communism), heralding a new era of the Festival, which came in the 1990s.

Despite the unique focus on Czech and international bagpipe traditions, the format and content of the festival prior to 1989 were similar to other events held in Communist-ruled Czechoslovakia at the time (Stavělová et al., 2021). The courtyard of the Strakonice castle and the open-air theatre – with political slogans devoid of content hanging above the stage – served as the venue for regional shows featuring folklore ensembles from towns and villages in South and West Bohemia, as well as festivals with international participation. Despite the organizers' emphasis on professionalism, it was entertainment that was often the dominant aspect of these productions. Other popular components were (and still are) pompous street parades.

Since the very first edition, the festival's opening has had the form of *kasací*, an ancient custom whereby pipers make a ceremonial request with the mayor of the town in order to be given permission to organize their musical productions. This show, played outside the town hall and, in later years, on the open-air stage, was inspired by traditional folk festivities, some dating back to Baroque times (Zíbrt, 1910). Traditional bagpipe music has been complemented with crossover programmes,

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[8] Režný's unacceptability resulted from his sincere character and sometimes saucy remarks. There was clearly a personal animosity between Režný and the new political representation of the town and the local branch of the Communist Party. Režný never engaged in political opposition (Vejvoda, 2022).

presenting authored music in particular.[9] Over time, the festival was expanded to include a wide selection of off-stage programmes, all related to bagpipe playing, such as workshops, lectures, exhibitions and publishing activities, completely in line with Režný's founding vision.

Figure 4: Josef Režný pictured in 2007. Courtesy of the Museum of Central Pootaví, Strakonice.

[9] Czech composers have produced new compositions for the bagpipe and symphonic or chamber orchestras or, as the case may be, chamber ensembles and choirs, with the recordings made by the Czechoslovak Radio. The personalities invited by the Festival Board to contribute in this way include Zdeněk Lukáš (1928–2007), Zdeněk Bláha (*1929), Jaroslav Krček (*1939), Josef Krček (*1946), Jiří Teml (*1935), Jan Málek (*1938), and Karel Krasnický (*1937).

The recent history and present state of the festival

In the last three decades, the festival has grown into a large enterprise of European renown, becoming a member of the International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts. The repertoire has broadened beyond music and dance folklore, and authored music, to include pop – especially rock – music featuring different types of the bagpipe[10] as well as various fusions of popular and (pseudo)historical genres inspired by medieval music.

However, the core of the programme still consists of performances by solo pipers, small groups, folklore ensembles and bagpipe bands from a wide range of Czech and European regions, presenting traditional folk music and dance in a more-or-less authentic rendition. Bagpipe manufacturing is also a regular topic. Manufacturers are sponsored and invited by the organizers to present their products and manufacturing processes on the festival premises, with a special programme dedicated to the manufacturing technology and organological issues. Each edition is complemented with exhibitions held by the Museum of Central Pootaví in Strakonice, as well as other institutions.

The four-day festival has a budget of 5m crowns (210,000 euro) and is organized by the Strakonice Town Council, assisted technically by its Municipal Cultural Centre, with sponsors including the South Bohemian regional government, the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, as well as local donors. The programme board is nominated by the organizing bodies and consists of members of municipal and regional institutions (Museum of Central Pootaví in Strakonice), scientific bodies (Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, National Heritage Institute in České Budějovice), and leading personalities of the regional folklore movement.[11] Starting with 1992, the festival has taken place every two years, with the 2020 edition cancelled due to COVID-19 related measures. Participants normally include 10-15 foreign bagpipe ensembles and a similar number of domestic ensembles; the total number of participants amounts to 900, playing to an average audience of 30,000.

The festival's stability and sustainability are guaranteed primarily by the numerous local bagpipe bands and dance ensembles, whose family members and friends constitute a substantial proportion of the festival audience. Strakonice and its environs are currently home to an incredible thirteen independent bagpipe music bands, as well as music and dance ensembles, representing different generations. Their proliferation is

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[10] The bagpipe brings a breath of the exotic and the strange into the musical structure of these groups; it is only occasionally that the bagpipe is used to identify musicians regionally, which is in line with the romantic thrust as well as the aural urgency of rock music. In order to achieve a more penetrating sound, bands use double-reed pipes, in general preferring instruments native to Scotland.

[11] Following Režný, the position of programme director was assigned in 2012 to Zdeněk Bláha, a radio editor and composer, Josef Krček, a composer and author, and – beginning in 2016 – the present author, ethnomusicologist Zdeněk Vejvoda.

the result of the many years of dedicated efforts by Josef Režný, leader of the Prácheň Ensemble, who died in 2012 just as the 20th edition was in preparation, in addition to the fact that bagpipe training has for a long time been offered by the Strakonice school of music. The largest of these ensembles include the Prácheň one, with 40 members, and the children's dance group called Prácheňáček with a similar number of members; both these ensembles are accompanied by their own bagpipe bands. Other bands normally recruit members from among graduates of the Strakonice school of music, who have been trained by Vojtěch Hrubý (1915–2006) and Bohuslav Šabek (*1947). The value shared by all these ensembles is the concept of continuity with regard to the regional style of music and, more significantly, the conservative band composition (bagpipe, violin, viola, double bass, clarinets), in addition to other aspects such as regional costumes. On the other hand, the bands each have a different approach to the music and dance, and a different specialisation, ranging from involvement in traditional folk festivities (carnivals, maypole festivities, carol rounds), to dance accompaniment (Elčovická Dudácká Muzika, Veselá Dudácká Muzika and others), to performing at folklore festivals and commercial events (Mladá Dudácká Muzika, Strakonická Dudácká Muzika), to expert-level reconstructions of historical instruments and music bands informed by regional manuscript and audio sources (Pošumavská Dudácká Muzika led by the ethnomusicologist Tomáš Spurný). Bagpipe bands active in the region regularly make their own recordings, documenting their styles and distinctive approaches.

A similar diversity of takes on traditional music has been observed in performers from abroad. In the recent two decades, a genuinely academic approach has been pursued by Unisonus based in Salzburg (led by Michael Vereno), Steirische Bordunmusik based in Graz (led by Sepp Pichler), and Dudarski Rej, a group of Belarusian migrants residing in Poland, led by Vital Voranau. Of particular note is the innovative approach presented by huge piper ensembles from various parts of Hungary (Magyar Dudazenekar), as well as Croatia (Hrvatski Gajdaški Orkestar), and Slovakia (Spojené Huky Slovenska), offering concert versions (highlighting the virtuosity) of traditional shepherd repertoire, which was originally only played solo as dance accompaniment. A similar tendency can be observed in Czech bagpipers, as will be presented at the end of this study. No less interesting are huge bagpipe orchestras, originating from various parts of Europe and modelled on Scottish military bands. Apart from repertoire inspired by traditional music typical of their regions, these bands play contemporary compositions accentuating sound effects as well as originality in harmony and instrumentation (e.g. Kevrenn Brest Sant Mark from Brittany, France; Banda de Gaitas de Ourense from Galicia, Spain).

The one aspect respected by most domestic and international ensembles is the fusion of bagpipe music and dance, with the staging of dance oscillating between the restrained (ensembles from Polish mountainous regions) and the spectacular (municipal folklore

ensembles from Turkey, Bulgaria, and Italy).[12] The Pipers Ball, accessible to festival audiences as well, is a combination of social event involving members of international and domestic ensembles, and a dance workshop.

The current festival reception

A questionnaire survey conducted by the organizer after each festival[13] and interviews with Czech active participants (musicians, dancers, and ensemble leaders) and visitors to the International Bagpipe Festival in Strakonice in 2022 revealed that most respondents are regular attendees, with the older among them having first attended or performed in the 1990s. Aspects especially appreciated by respondents are the diversity of shows and the exclusivity resulting from the narrow focus on bagpipe music. Performers native to Strakonice appear to assign vital importance to the participation of exclusive guests from France (Kevrenn Brest Sant Mark Ensemble, a regular participant since 1967), Scotland (the Neilston and District Pipe Band based in Glasgow has never missed the festival since they first came to Strakonice in 1978), England (Robson's Choice was introduced to the festival in 2004 by Neil Smith, a piper born in 1924, who was mentored by the above-mentioned John F. Charlton and developed a love of Czech culture), and the Netherlands (Hailander, the favourite trio from Zaandam, has been a regular participant since 1994). Most respondents appreciate the street parades and shows introducing international guests. Events highly popular with domestic audiences include concerts by local and regional dance ensembles and bands, including children's groups, and topic-dedicated programmes taking place in the courtyard of the Strakonice castle. Pop music concerts featuring bagpipes are especially popular with young audiences, as are pipers balls. Sacral music concerts taking place in the church, lectures and workshops for parents and young children appear to draw much smaller audiences, given the limited capacity of the venues and the narrow focus of such events. When complaints were made by respondents, they were related to the festival's organization, not content.

When asked about their motivations for membership in folklore ensembles (or attending folklore festivals), most respondents pointed to: a sense of responsibility for – and continuation of – local or regional traditions, the social aspect, and passing traditions down the family line. Similar motivations have been reported by surveys among organizers, although the utilitarian aspect is also present: the focus appears to be on promoting regional values, responsibility for cultural development, building the

[12] The ensemble representing Slovenia in 2006–2012 was the Tine Rožanc Folklore Ensemble based in Ljubljana (led by Bruno Ravnikar).

[13] Questionnaire survey 2010–2022. Archival funds of the Municipal Cultural Centre in Strakonice.

"trademark" of Strakonice being the town of pipers (to be used in tourism and commerce), and promoting the town among Czech as well as international audiences. This is one of the reasons why the town management has, since the 1990s, approached the festival as the most important cultural enterprise, no matter their political affiliation. The town has funded the festival from the municipal budget, in addition to providing regular support to folklore ensembles and bands, whose dedicated work and training capacities are crucial to the sustainability of Strakonice's status as the town of Švanda the Bagpiper.[14]

Festival as a commodity?

From the position of the programme director, the author of this text observes the behind-the-scenes events, but at the same time, he is a participant and co-creator of important negotiations that have been influencing the shape of the bagpipe festival for several years. He sees an advantage in his "expert" position as an outsider who does not come from Strakonice or the South Bohemian Region, so his decision-making is not influenced by deep personal ties or direct dependence on financial and political support from the city and the region.

One of the important moments before the 22nd edition of the festival in 2016 was the negotiation of greater openness and the removal of mental and financial barriers. This is because the income from the admission fees for the various festival programmes hardly covered the costs of its administration. Surprisingly, the decision to open the festival grounds free of charge was met with resistance from some performers who perceived it as a disparagement of the quality of their artistic production. Some out-of-town festival-goers also lost the security of a seat in the auditorium when it was full, especially for the evening gala concerts in the summer theatre. The result is the current compromise of several dozen seats that can be reserved in advance for a fee. At the same time, the main objective of this measure has been met: visitors of all generations freely pass through the festival and actively participate in it, and a social barrier – albeit a minimal one – has thus been removed. The city comes alive with dozens of spontaneous musical opportunities for interaction between local, international, and national guests.

It is also not easy to balance the interests of the numerous local ensembles and bands, which are irreplaceable carriers of the local musical tradition, with the well-thought-out dramaturgy of the individual programmes and festivals. However, through long-lasting patient communication and lecturer cooperation, organizers have been quite successful in fulfilling the chosen concept of the particular festival years and, at the same time,

[14] The 25th edition of the Strakonice International Bagpipe Festival is tentatively scheduled to take place on 22–25 August 2024.

presenting the repertoire of local ensembles in the whole spectrum of contemporary adaptations of musical folklore. Negotiations mainly concern the selection of material and its presentation in the necessary stage abbreviation and the creation of programme contrasts and thematic arcs.

The town of Strakonice, as the organizer of the bagpipe festival, specifically its political leadership, also pursues its interests in relation to the festival. The long-term goal, richly fulfilled for decades by emphasizing the bagpipe music tradition, is to support tourism and promote the town and the region abroad. The shape of specific festivals also reflects the influence of political cycles. Presenting the current city leadership to local audiences is particularly advantageous in the final days of the election period. A disagreement between the festival's programme management and the organizer resulted in the removal of the ceremony, which once had the form of a spectacular show on the walls of Strakonice Castle using video mapping and fireworks, from the remit of the programme board. The disagreements concerned the aesthetic concept and the financial cost of the overall programme and budget of the festival. The pop-rock bagpipe scene and the opening ceremony, in which the town's mayor personally welcomes bagpipers from all over the world, are finally arranged and organized by the Municipal Cultural Centre, which is directly subordinate to the town hall, by mutual agreement. Except for this opening ceremony, however, the Programme Board has not experienced any similarly significant political pressure. The economic background is the demanding organization of stalls selling all kinds of goods and catering associated with the festival. For obvious reasons – except the presentation of Czech and foreign bagpipe makers – the festival's programme management does not influence this field and it is the responsibility of the organizer, the City of Strakonice.

The evaluations of the individual festival years and the interviews with festival participants reveal exciting facts that can be reflected in this context more generally. The reasons behind the (almost exclusively) positive reception of the bagpipe festival and the bagpipe as a national or regional symbol are manifold. Older generations tend to have a natural need for being culturally rooted in what is an increasingly globalized culture. They actively seek out traditional music and folklore performed at festivals or played on the radio as a counterbalance to contemporary music production, which older generations believe to be incomprehensible and even aggressive, given the ubiquitous marketing. Opposite reasons are often found in the younger generation of the festival's attendees. The bagpipe is present in a wide range of countries and regions and exists in numerous types and sounds, appealing to young people as a "cosmopolitan" instrument of traditional, "ethnic" – and even popular – music. Young festival audiences tend to consume music and entertainment without the prejudice associated with the totalitarian Communist era. Furthermore, research has found respondents, irrespective of age, to possess little or no awareness concerning the regional history of traditional music and how it was practiced in the past. The festival performers and most of the audience

normally fail to be aware or critical of the way in which cultural heritage has recently been manipulated by political marketing, tourism, and advertising. It can be concluded, with the benefit of hindsight, that the crucial significance that the bagpipe festival has for all those involved lies in negotiating, constructing, and regularly verifying the identity of the place and region. In this respect our research of the Strakonice bagpipe festival has found a strong continuity of the above-mentioned nationalist, regionalist and romanticizing constructs typical of the 19th and 20th centuries, rather than any link between the present and more ancient traditional expressions of South Bohemian bagpipe music.

Rethinking the Czech bagpipe tradition

Parallel to the above-described activities of music and dance ensembles within the more or less formalized structures of the Czech folklore movement, processes have been taking place in this field since the beginning of the millennium that are subconsciously motivated by the desire to rediscover and, in some cases, reassess the relationship to the bagpipe tradition. Since the 1950s, its transmission within the folklore movement has taken place exclusively within individual ensembles. Young talents first learned the basics and later went on to develop their own style. Playing off-sheet music was a very uncommon thing, although most of the older pipers respected the musical arrangement in a relatively strict way. Beginning in the late 1950s, bagpipe lessons were available in selected state-run music schools. Instruction sheet music was made, as well as new compositions, and teachers noted down concrete melodic variations of folk songs. From the 1960s to the present day, dozens (somewhat less than a hundred) of graduate pipers have worked almost exclusively in established regional folk ensembles. On top of that, each new generation brought its innovative formations. The fall of the Communist regime in 1989 also meant the end of government institutional support to regional music schooling. But, paradoxically, bagpipe lessons at Czech leisure-time artistic schools never stopped.

It was the fall of the state system that provoked ten performers, mostly non-professional, to establish, in 2010, the *Budějcké dudácké sdružení* (The Association of České Budějovice Pipers, known by the acronym BUDUS). The informal leader of this group is a person called Miroslav Stecher, who was born in 1946 and is a piper as well as a bagpipe manufacturer. What is interesting are the group's international inspirations. In the interview, Stecher said more than once how he admired the "impressive and attractive sound" of Scottish bands, in addition to pipers' groups from Slovakia (Cech Slovenských Gajdošov – Spojené Huky Slovenska), Hungary (Magyar Dudazenekar), and Croatia (Hrvatski Gajdaški Orkestar) – he has regular contact with these groups at the Strakonice Festival. All these groups play a social as well as educational role in

their public performances, which are innovative compared to the traditional set-up of bands and orchestras. Joint performances by several pipers were only made possible by advances in manufacturing technology and the fact of precise tuning. Last but not least there is the audio and visual attractiveness.

The chronicle of BUDUS said in 2010 that the mission of the association was to "make it possible to get together, play together, teach one another the technique, and to play bagpipe music publicly in order to make people happy".[15] The importance of the social dimension of BUDUS sessions was reported in all my interviews: *"It means so much for me to be able to be part of this community; it gives me so much motivation and self-confidence."*[16] *"First we'll talk about bee-keeping, which is something that all of us share, chat about what's new in our ensembles and families, and then we'll have a nice playing session."*[17]

Who are the BUDUS members? The association has 19 members from all the ethnographic regions of South Bohemia. Members include students, people in their forties and fifties as well as the elderly; age groups appear to be evenly distributed. From my observations of group activities, I can safely say that there is a completely natural dialogue among generations. Members have very diverse occupations, including teachers, engineers, economists, company owners, farmers and farm owners as well as manual workers.

BUDUS has 12 male and 7 female members. The gender aspect of bagpiping is extremely interesting. Traditionally, playing folk instruments (and all the more so the bagpipe) was restricted to men. However, several of my respondents told me that the youngest generation is dominated by girls, especially in state-run music classes. It appears from what the respondents stated that girls are better at concentrating and patience while boys and men tend to be good at improvising and performing with a certain ease in public performances. Needless to say, generalizations are impossible.

BUDUS members get together at a particular restaurant in České Budějovice one evening monthly. The sessions are open to anyone interested in bagpipe music. There is friendly conversation but the highlight of the evening is a team music production, partly directed by Miroslav Stecher or Ladislav Chyňava (born in 1962), who is the administration manager. The production is a two-voice performance of selected bagpipe songs from all regions of South Bohemia, normally having the following structure: overture, choral singing of one or more stanzas accompanied by bagpipes, and postlude. Sometimes, there is polyphonic singing a capella.

Public productions of the BUDUS take place during rural and urban folklore festivities. The pipers perform in their own folk costumes which represent the region they

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[15] https://budus.cz/budejcke-dudacke-sdruzeni/ [quoted 3.9.2023].

[16] Narrator, female (1993), bagpiper, 23.5.2023.

[17] Narrator, male (1951), bagpiper, 25.5.2023.

come from. They only play instruments tuned in E♭ major.[18] This makes their performances somewhat stereotypical, especially in long concerts. Therefore, the ensemble performance alternates with solo performances, duets and small ensemble pieces, whose role is to show virtuosity or to present the repertoire of specific regions and variations written by various authors. Very often, the audiences are invited to join in the singing.

The interviews as well as public presentations by the BUDUS also show the members' relationship to their region and its past, a relationship which they live through bagpipe music: *"I can feel I'm connected to the landscape, to nature and to my ancestors. I am a South Bohemian"*,[19] *"This is where my grandfather was born, where my father was born, where I was born; and this is also where this type of music belongs."*[20]

Sustainability and continuity recurred as a leitmotif throughout the research. Sustainability and continuity are related to the establishment of the BUDUS, to its activities, and they were also present in the reflections of BUDUS members. Music schools and folklore ensembles based in South Bohemia are reporting that young people are still interested in the bagpipe. It is, therefore, not surprising that my respondents were fairly optimistic about the future: *"Do I worry about the future? No. I actually have to reject some of my potential pupils, as I'm no longer young"*,[21] *"I think the future lies in children's folklore ensembles that have good management. That is where the new generation is growing up. I feel I'm part of that mission."*[22]

The open communication I had with BUDUS members revealed that they are aware of the transformations of the social context in which they perform their music. They are able to feel – and give an unbiased formulation of – the seeming contradiction between sustainability (in the sense of passing conserved artefacts down generations) and natural development, continuity and accessibility. Their attitude can be summarized in three key points: (1) local and regional patriotism and openness; (2) sense of responsibility; and (3) tolerance – an emphasis on good interpersonal relationships and an understanding for a diversity of approaches to, and motivations for, cultivating bagpipe music.

Conclusion

Reflection on the formal and ideological innovation in the cultivation of bagpipe music in South Bohemia brings us back to the theme of the festival. With its musical production and, in fact, its very existence, the BUDUS Bagpipe Association responds to the

[18] Czech bagpipes tuned in *E♭* are composed of a melody pipe with *b♭*, d^1, *e♭*^{1}, f^1, g^1, *a♭*^{1}, *b♭*^{1}, c^2, and a drone pipe with *E♭*.

[19] Narrator, female (1974), bagpiper, 15.2.2023.

[20] Narrator, male (1968), bagpiper, 23.5.2023.

[21] Narrator Miroslav Stecher (1946), bagpiper; bagpipe manufacturer, 25.5.2023.

[22] Narrator, female (1958), bagpiper; bagpipe manufacturer, 15.2.2023.

impulses of the International Bagpipe Festival in Strakonice. Here, in the 1950s and 1960s, the organizers commissioned an opportunity for bagpipers to play together on the festival stage which continued informally behind the scenes. These attractive stage elements and subsequent spontaneous options are still present at the festival today. At the same time, in interviews, members of the association partially define themselves against the festival with justified criticism of its massiveness, commercialization, and distorted or insufficient presentation of local musical traditions alongside spectacular performances by foreign participants. V. Hafstein (2018: 134) aptly speaks in this context about the festivalization of cultural heritage, which can become "the first step towards its alienation from the source community."

The Czech bagpipe tradition is reflected in the modern urban music festival in the full range of manifestations, in a single line (since 1967) the legacy of more than fifty years of development. It is a great entertainment and educational institution of its kind. Simultaneously, the festival is a contemporary platform for presenting conservative and new approaches to the processing (or reinvention?) of bagpipe music folklore. Many of the presentations are commissioned by the festival, or its terms motivate amateur music and dance groups to prepare new programmes. The festival is an opportunity to bring together a regional and international community of musicians and an equally diverse audience from Strakonice, the town of Švanda the Bagpiper, from all over the Czech Republic and Europe. Last but not least, the festival gives an opportunity and impulse to speak out against some of its aspects, as the story of the BUDUS bagpipe association shows. In any case, the International Bagpipe Festival in Strakonice is an excellent research environment and an object of compelling observation and reflection, far from exhausted by this text.

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Mednarodni festival dud v Strakonicah in preoblikovanje odnosa do regionalnega dudarskega izročila

V čeških ljudskih pravljicah je že od 18. stoletja priljubljen lik »dudar Švanda iz Strakonic«, ki s svojim od hudiča uročenim inštrumentom nadzoruje poslušalce in plesalce. Zgodba o njem je bila umetniško uporabljena na različne načine (v igri, operi, likovni umetnosti) in je imela pomembno vlogo pri »ponovnem rojstvu« dud kot češkega kulturnega in nacionalnega simbola. Zaradi tega je mesto Strakonice na južnem Češkem pridobilo nacionalni sloves in splošno pozitivno zaznano simbolno povezavo z dudarjem Švando in igranjem na dude. K temu je prispevala folklorna dejavnost v drugi polovici 20. stoletja, ki jo je podpiral komunistični režim. Njena glavna osebnost v regiji je bil Josef Režný (1924–2012), glasbenik, skladatelj, koreograf in zbiralec folklore. Leta 1949 je ustanovil še danes dejavno folklorno skupino Prácheň in bil tudi pobudnik mednarodnega festivala dud, ki je bil prvič organiziran septembra 1967. Po letu 1989 je festival prerasel v ugledno evropsko prireditev. Poleg glasbeno-plesne folklore in njenega prepletanja z umetnostjo je prišlo z uporabo različnih vrst dud do žanrske širitve v zabavno glasbo. Štiridnevno festivalsko dogajanje s proračunom 210.000 EUR organizira mesto Strakonice, udeleži pa se ga povprečno 900 nastopajočih in 30.000 obiskovalcev.

Vzporedno z delovanjem glasbenih in plesnih skupin, ki delujejo pod okriljem češke folklorne dejavnosti, smo od začetka 21. stoletja priče procesom, ki jih spodbuja želja za odkrivanje in prevrednotenje odnosa do izročila igranja na dude. Leta 2010 je deset amaterskih glasbenikov ustanovilo Budjejsko dudarsko združenje (Budějcké dudácké sdružení, skrajšano BUDUS). Trenutno je vanj iz vseh etnografskih pokrajin južne Češke včlanjenih 19 glasbenikov (12 moških in sedem žensk), ki igrajo na dude. Člani so študenti, osebe srednjih let in starejši; po poklicu so učitelji, tehniki, podjetniki, ekonomisti, kmetje in delavci. Redno se enkrat mesečno srečujejo v restavraciji v Čeških Budjejovicah. So odprto društvo. Poleg družabnega pogovora je glavna vsebina njihovega večera skupno,

delno nadzorovano glasbeno ustvarjanje. BUDUS javno nastopa na podeželskih in mestnih folklornih festivalih. Skupno igranje se izmenjuje s solističnimi nastopi, dueti ali manjšimi zasedbami, ki so osredinjene na virtuozno igranje ali na predstavitve repertoarja posamičnih območij.

Odprta komunikacija s člani društva BUDUS je jasno pokazala zavest o spremembah družbenega konteksta, v katerem izvajajo svojo glasbo. Njihov pristop je mogoče povzeti v več točkah: 1. lokalni in regionalni patriotizem, 2. zavedanje odgovornosti in 3. strpnost – s poudarkom na dobrih medčloveških odnosih in razumevanju različnih pristopov.

BUDUS se odziva na spodbude Mednarodnega festivala dud v Strakonicah, kjer se je ponudila priložnost za skupen nastop (več deset) godcev na festivalskem odru, ki se je neformalno nadaljeval v zakulisju. Hkrati pa člani društva delno nasprotujejo festivalu s kritiko njegove množičnosti, komercializacije in izkrivljene ali nezadostne predstavitve domačega glasbenega izročila ob spektakularnih nastopih tujih udeležencev.

Češko izročilo igranja na dude se na sodobnem mestnem glasbenem festivalu izraža v nizu izvedb, ki so (od leta 1967) dediščina več kot petdesetletnega razvoja. Festival je svojevrstna zabavna in izobraževalna institucija. Hkrati je sodobno prizorišče za predstavitev konservativnih in novih pristopov k interpretaciji dudarskega glasbenega izročila. Je priložnost za srečanje regionalne in mednarodne skupnosti glasbenikov ter prav tako raznovrstnim občinstvom iz Strakonic, mesta dudarja Švande, iz celotne Češke in Evrope. Navsezadnje daje festival priložnost in spodbudo, da se opredelimo do nekaterih njegovih vidikov, kakor kaže zgodba dudarskega društva BUDUS.

TRADITIONES

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FOLKLORA: SPOMINI, POLITIKE, DEDIŠČINJENJE

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Daniela Stavělová, Hidden in Folklore: The Past and Present of the Revival Movement in Post-Socialist Countries *(Skrito v folklori: preteklost in sedanjost preporodnega gibanja v postsocialističnih državah)*

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Zdeněk Vejvoda, The International Bagpipe Festival in Strakonice and the Transformation of the Relationship Towards the Regional Bagpipe Tradition *(Mednarodni festival dud v Strakonicah in preoblikovanje odnosa do regionalnega dudarskega izročila)*

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