

Staging the Folk: A Suggested Framework for Researching Staged Folk Dance in Hungary

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ABSTRACT: Staged folk dance is a unique performance genre that has the ability to display and, in many cases, transform folk elements as a basis for representation, commentary, and reflection. In Hungary, the staging of folk dance forms has a significant history, dating back to the 19th century and continuing to the present day. Throughout its history, the staging process of folk genres has adapted in accordance with social, political, economic, and cultural conditions of the given time. This paper summarizes my preliminary research into how folk elements are used to provide a basis for the creative activity of folklore ensembles. I start with an examination of the relationship between staged folk dance and the development of folk dance ethnography, since this relationship has in many cases defined the constitutive elements of the staging process. A basic historical overview, focusing on contemporary precedents of staged folk dance, particularly on the defining features of the staging process at each historical stage, follows. In conclusion, I will briefly discuss other contexts of dance folklorism in Hungary, suggesting a basic outline for how to best analyze the current phenomenon of staged folk dance in the early 20th century. This is a work in progress for my doctoral dissertation in ethnomusicology at Indiana University on the staging processes of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble.

1. Introduction

Staged folk dance is a unique performance genre that has the ability to display and, in many cases, transform folk elements as a basis for representation, commentary, and reflection. The creative activity for all folklore ensembles begins with folk forms. Even though many different manifestations are possible through the staging process, the common denominator in all of these expressions is the tension inherent in their existence, since the aesthetic and creative demands of staged, choreographed works are at odds with the supposedly tradition-bound nature of the originating folk forms. Yet it is precisely this tension that has the ability to make these works so laden with meaning. In Hungary, the staging of folk dance forms has a significant history, dating back to the 19th century and continuing to the present day. Throughout its history, the staging process of folk genres has adapted in accordance with social, political, economic, and cultural conditions of the given time. In addition, like any other artistic work, modern staged presentations take place as a part of a historical process – they are necessarily shaped by what came before, and shape what will come after. Thus, what is presented on stage today by the numerous Hungarian folklore ensembles – and the way it is presented – arises from a particular contemporary array of conditions.

This paper will very generally summarize my preliminary research into how folk elements are used to provide a

basis for the creative activity of folkdance ensembles, research that will ultimately formulate my dissertation on the staging processes of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble. I will suggest a research framework that has been helpful for me in deciding how to best approach this topic in Hungary. Among the issues included in this framework is the relationship of staged performances to the state of folk dance research, the relationship of contemporary staged presentations to their historical predecessors, and the presence of other significant folkloristic activity in the country.

2. The Study of Folklore in Hungary

Understanding how folk dance scholarship (or ethnology¹) developed in Hungary is crucial to understanding contemporary staged presentations of folk dance, and I provide a very general overview here. The catalyst for the modern discipline of ethnology was the nationalist sentiment sweeping through most of Europe in the late 18th and 19th centuries. In the belief that by proving cultural distinctiveness, political autonomy would follow,

¹ The term *néprajz* (ethnology) is the term generally used in Hungary (and in many cases, Europe as well) to mean the study of folk forms, although the study of folk dance in culture, particularly as studied in different parts of the world, has also been examined through other disciplinary lenses, including anthropology, folklore, sociology, ethnomusicology, etc., and thus may use different names for the study of these forms. I also use the term “ethnography” in this paper to specifically refer to the writings and body of scholarly literature on ethnologic subjects.

many countries, including Hungary, looked to their cultural expressions as evidence of their uniqueness. Preserved in the peasantry, which was at that time considered the poorest, most uneducated layer of society, these expressions were thought to be free from the “corruption” of foreign, cosmopolitan influences. Centering first on verbal genres, orally transmitted folk tales, stories, legends, etc. were held up as cultural forms that embodied the very spirit of the people, or the “folk”, because they were passed on informally from generation to generation in the native Hungarian, as opposed to German, which was at that time artistically and culturally dominant. Inseparable from this notion was the romanticized belief in their natural, organic development – since the peasantry was tied to the land, these cultural forms were thought to be naturally shaped by the environment and the people that occupied that land over the centuries. Conceptually connecting the forms to the land in this way was not only an important element in the search for geo-political independence; it was also a sort of naturalizing process, one that was adopted by national poets and writers as the work of developing great national literary works used these folk genres as their source.

The songs, music, and dances of the peasantry were likewise thought to represent the pure, “spontaneous” expressions of the “folk”. Research collecting expeditions began in earnest to document these forms before they were pushed out of existence by cosmopolitan, modernizing influences.

The documentation of folk genres in all spheres of cultural life, but particularly in music at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, was systematized and pioneered largely by Hungarian ethnographers. Folk music researchers like Béla Vikár, Lajtha László, and later, Béla Bartók, and Zoltán Kodály are widely considered to be the first ethnomusicologists, as they went from village to village with phonographs to record folk songs and folk music, and also to collect music of neighboring peoples in the Carpathian Basin for comparative examination. Bartók and Kodály carried out their work with a sense of urgency, intending to use these collected forms to create a new national Hungarian art music. They felt that the natural organic development of art music deriving from folk sources over the centuries, which had produced great national bodies of art music in Germany and France, had been violently disrupted in Hungary.²

Although historical studies of Hungarian dance were prepared around the turn of the century, equally comprehensive folk dance collection and documentation was not systematically carried out until several decades later, when scholars like György Martin made extensive research trips in Hungarian villages throughout the region. Notably, this research was carried out in part specifically in response to what was being presented on stage at that time in Hungary, which will be discussed later. Additionally, this research

² See, for example, the writings of Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály listed in the bibliography.

took place in the context of a general folk revival movement that was just gathering strength. In one sense, their work in the mid 20th century took on perhaps even greater significance, since by that time, as is well known, Hungary's geo-political territory had been reduced by over two-thirds.

The combined, diligent research efforts of these ethnographers resulted in an extremely rich ethnographic record of Hungarian areas in the Carpathian Basin, as well as a documentation of neighboring peoples and traditions. With the development of this body of documentation, important precedents were set by the discipline of ethnology that affected how this record was subsequently used as a basis in transmitting the forms for public consumption and display: 1. The precedent of pastness. Ethnology specifically privileged those forms that were considered to be old and archaic, since the impetus for the research was that these forms were being somehow lost or pushed out of existence by the threat of impending modernity. In this way, "folk" genres were thus associated with "oldness". 2. Resistance to innovation. In connection with the idea of "pastness", folk forms were thought to exist basically unchanged throughout the centuries, resisting modernizing influences and technological advancement. The language of "saving" and of "preservation" was abundant in the ethnography, and continues even to the present day. In a sense, then, the scientific study of folk genres was itself a kind of resistance to modernization and globalization (though this term had not

yet come into common parlance). 3. The product-oriented nature of ethnology. The ethnographic record that was destined for archival preservation and scientific analysis meant a record that was tangible in the form of products (tapes, video recordings, transcribed musical notations, clothing artifacts, etc.). Yet folklore is equally constitutive of both product and process. The fact, for example, that the forms are passed down from generation to generation, and that they are passed on within families or tightly knit communities, informally and in the course of everyday life, define them as folklore as much as the characteristics of form do. Of course, ethnology as a discipline has undergone significant conceptual changes in the past several years, and these attitudes are not necessarily as dominant as they once were, or are at least increasingly reflexively acknowledged. Yet these key precedents, which shaped the developing field of ethnology in Hungary and elsewhere, have informed the debates about staged folk dance and authenticity ever since.

Staged Folk Dance: A Brief History

3.1 Prior to the State Folk Ensemble

The presentation and display of folk forms developed almost simultaneously with the collecting of these forms. Yet it is important to acknowledge that staged presentations and displays are not folklore *per se*, but examples of folk forms that are either used or otherwise present in

a "non-folklore" setting, a phenomenon generally referred to as folklorism.³ The Hungarian ethnographer Ernő Pesovár dates the earliest folkloristic activity involving folk dance around the period of romantic nationalism referred to previously.⁴ He notes that during this time, the conscious process of selection, a defining feature of folklorism, allowed the *verbunk* and the *csárdás* to be adopted as the national dances of Hungary, even though these dances belonged to the category of "newer-style" dances and were danced and introduced primarily by the upper classes and the hussars in the military. The fashionable western European social dance styles that had become popular in Hungary were, in the context of romantic nationalism, modified with movements and elements of older, more archaic Hungarian peasant dance styles, and performed at balls and on social occasions. For Hungarians, this served to foster a sense of national pride, while it represented Hungarian-ness to foreigners abroad.⁵

In general, the *csárdás* and the *verbunk* lasted as one of the cultural representatives of Hungarian-ness even after the Hungarian defeat in the Revolution of 1848-9. Though still danced in the cities, they were typically now only danced at special occasions or celebrations, like

end-of-the-year balls. In village theaters, these dances figured prominently in staged productions that included music and dance, as in Ferenc Erkel's *Bánk Bán*. But it was in response to the fact that these dances and the accompanying music were essentially thought to be only superficially representing "Hungarian-ness" that Bartók and Kodály began their work of discovering what true "authentic" Hungarian music actually was, as mentioned previously. With their own distinctive, individual styles, the collected original material was used and re-presented in compositions that were designed to educate the public about their own folk music heritage as much as to build a national art music. In staged dance, Kodály's *Szekély Fono* was an attempt to put the dance forms in context as well, showing not just individual songs and dances but tying them to the social groups and occasions that were associated with these forms.

Pesovár characterizes the significance of this era in the following way:

For us, the peculiar feature of this early self-conscious folklorism is that in the awakening of national consciousness, it is more than just a symbol in the continuing battle for independence and social renewal. It is a preliminary picture . . . for the art movement of two centuries (effective to the present day) in which our dance and music customs played a decided role [my translation].⁶

The *Gyöngyösbókréta* (Pearly Bouquet) movement during the 1930s and early 40s

3 Refer to the bibliography for the work of two Hungarian scholars who have written very specifically on this topic: Vilmos Voigt, and Imre Katona

4 Ernő Pesovár, "Hagyomány és Korszerűség", in *A Magyar Állami Népi Együttes: 50 Éves*, 2.

5 See the entries on "csárdás" and "verbunk", for example, in Pesovár, "A Magyar Táncművészet Évszázadai".

6 Pesovár, "Hagyomány és Korszerűség"; 2.

was, among other things, also an attempt to unmask the romantic ideology of national folk dance. Increasing familiarity with the historical layers of Hungarian dance, thanks to recent dance history publications, such as Márian Réthei Prikkel's *Dances of the Hungarians* (1924), prompted an initiative to make the public aware of "real" Hungarian dances and go beyond the superficiality of what was being represented as national dance, in much the same way that Bartók and Kodály carried out their work. Though it was not the sole activity of the movement, by bringing amateur ensembles to Budapest from the villages, performing their own dances, on the newly-established national holiday of St. Stephen's Day on August 20, Béla Paulini, the newspaper writer who is considered to be the founder of the movement, created a staged framework that fit in very well with the populist mood of the interwar era. These were "real" peasants, brought in from the countryside, to display their customs and their traditions on a day designated as celebrating Hungarian-ness.

The *Gyöngyösbókréta* had the help and support of significant institutions, particularly the Ethnographic Museum, who through their role as advisor, lent an air of ethnographic authority to the movement when, for example, they recommended showing the authentic dances with "as little choreography as possible"⁷, as well as support of Ministries in the government, who formed

the *Magyar Bokréta Szövetség*, or the Hungarian Bokrétás Association; in 1933, designating Paulini as the president. But ideological problems presented themselves as well. Among those seen as most troubling by critics of the movement was the disparity between the image of "happy peasants" being shown on stage, especially for tourists, and what life was really like for the village peasants. Additionally, there were basic differences about what ethnographic authenticity even meant on the stage; for Paulini, expressions of the folk should be left to the folk. Individuals from the various villages who had no experience at all in ethnographic methodology but who wanted to choreograph became the choreographers of their respective village ensembles, rather than trained professionals, for example. As a result, though Paulini claimed he was against professionalism or "staging", he was criticized precisely for the staging of the dances, and the perceived distortions that the ethnographic discipline, and increasingly the ever more knowledgeable public, recognized. For example, folk songs were arranged in several parts, when in the living tradition it was a solo part-song. The village choreographers made rhythmical gymnastic exercises out of the dances, when in real life, people danced according to their own temperaments, a little differently from each other. As a result, the government placed the *Bokrétás* Ensembles under the ethnographic jurisdiction of the Ethnographic Society. But the advice wasn't taken, and in 1938, support of

7 Csaba Pálfi, "A Gyöngyösbókréta Története", in *Táncstudományi Tanulmányok: 1969-1970*; 120-121.

the Ethnographic Society, "the judges", ended.

After Paulini's death in 1945, the *Gyöngyösbókréta* movement eventually lost momentum, but the amateur spirit that was fostered in this movement lived on in various amateur folk dance groups associated with youth organizations, like the Scouts, and also worker's ensembles, particularly factory ensembles. Yet just as there was a dramatic ideological political shift with the end of war, there was soon to be another dramatic shift in the world of staged folk dance. In part, this shift can be delineated by the increasingly theatrical nature of staged performances, and the importance of individual personalities, both of which helped usher in the era of professional folk dance ensembles.

One of the important figures in this shift was Elemér Muharay. Having followed the professional theatrical life in France and Paris while abroad for 2 years in 1926, he became very interested in the folk arts movement in connection the theater profession. In 1936, he founded the *Művész Studio*, which professed its goal of using Hungarian dramatized customs and dance as the basis for a renewal of Hungarian theater, in the spirit of Kodály, and when that was disbanded for political reasons two years later, he founded the *Vasas Együttes* (Ironworkers Ensemble), which was again quickly disbanded by the government. He eventually founded the *Népi, Ének, és Tánc Együttes* (Folk, Song, and Dance Ensemble) in 1945, which lives on today as the Muharay Ensemble. Another important figure during this time was István Molnár. A professional

dancer from Transylvania, Molnár had studied modern dance and ballet in Paris for several years, and as Sándor Timár, his pupil, recalls:

When he went back to his village to visit and attended a wedding there, people knew he was a professional dancer, and so they asked him to dance the *csárdás*, since as a professional he must surely be a good dancer. But Molnár eventually had to admit that even though he was from the village, he had no idea how to dance the *csárdás*. [my translation].⁸

Molnár eventually aligned himself with the Folk Arts Movement as well, and even did some collection of folk dances in Transylvania. Because of his modern and professional dance background, he had the specialized knowledge to develop movement systems and exercises based on folk dance for the use of folk dancers (the Molnár technique, as it is called, is used as one warm-up technique for the dancers of the Hungarian State Ensemble). Among the many amateur ensembles he directed, he also directed the Budapest *Együttes*, one of the handful of first-generation professional ensembles established in the 1950s. The Budapest Ensemble continues to function as one of the main professional ensembles in Hungary today.

3.2 The State Folk Ensemble

But it was Miklós Rábai who was asked and appointed by the government to become the choreographer of the first

8 From an interview with Timár Sándor, Feb. 2, 2005.

professional State Folklore Ensemble, the *Magyar Állami Népi Együttes*, in 1951. Having been involved in the youth Scout movement as a child, where he learned an appreciation of folk genres, Rábai was also very interested in sports and physical activity, including folk dance. After a short job as a security guard at the Ethnographic Museum in Szeged where he attended university, he began to recognize the value of ethnographic collecting, and often went by bicycle to neighboring villages around Szeged to document folk dances. He formed an amateur ensemble, the *Bátságnyi Együttes*, while in Szeged, and from there was invited to Budapest to head the folk dance department of the *Testnevelési Főiskola* (Physical Education College), where he formed another amateur Ensemble for students at the college. When the Hungarian Council of Ministers ordered the establishment of a representative State Folk Ensemble, they asked Rábai to be the choreographer, perhaps based on his success with the amateur folk dance groups he organized and directed.

The State Ensemble gave its premiere in conjunction with the Moiseyev Ensemble, the famous Soviet Ensemble, to a protocol audience on April 3, 1951, occasioned by the anniversary celebration of the “liberation” of Budapest. It premiered to the general public on May 6. With this premiere, the die had been cast for what a professional State Folk Ensemble should look like and what form it should take. The Ensemble consisted not only of a dance corps, but a full gypsy orchestra and chorus as well, to accompany the

staged games and dances. As for the choreography of the dances, Rábai specifically wanted to create something completely new, something “népi” or folk, but at a very high artistic level, and did not claim the Moiseyev as his model. His philosophy was that to create a new Hungarian dance art, in the same way that Bartók and Kodály created a new Hungarian art music, three steps were needed.⁹ First was the choreography of folk-tale plays, or dance plays, built in the frame of folk tales. Secondly was the development of historical-themed pieces. This would finally lead to the ultimate goal of choreographed folk dance, which was the creation of dance drama. In this genre, a general national quality was favored over the approach generally taken until then, which focused on emphasizing the local traditions and the fine distinctions that made each locality unique.

These first approaches in the State Ensemble are significant, even if there were many who criticized what many perceived to be the highly staged and theatrical quality of the performances. After Rábai's death, a drastic change in approach took place with the appointment of Sándor Timár as the artistic director. Having traveled with György Martin on his many field-collecting expeditions, Timár ushered in an era of choreographed folk dance based on the principle of dance as an “*anyanyelv*”, or mother language. This principle held that as long as the dancers know the basic “language” of the

⁹ Tibor Vadasi, “‘Szálljatok Fiókáim...’: Rábai Miklós portré”: 59-60.

dances, then they have the ability to dance “authentically”, since it approximates the way that villagers learn the dances. It is the same way that a child learns to speak by first learning the alphabet and then putting words and sentences together. The highly spontaneous nature of Hungarian folk dance, as opposed to the more rigidly established forms of neighboring peoples, particularly Balkan dances, is highly conducive to such an approach. This concept revolutionized staged folk dance, with dancers on stage now dancing in a free, improvised manner within only a very general set frame, as opposed to twenty or thirty dancers on stage routinely all doing the same step, for example.

The State Ensemble today, with Gábor Mihályi as the artistic director and Ferenc Sebő as the ethnographic advisor, acknowledges and builds on both of these approaches. As Sebő explains, the structure and work of the Ensemble today could only happen in the present historical circumstances, given the history of the Ensemble, as well as the history of dance ethnography.¹⁰ Housed in the *Hagyományok Háza*, or the Heritage House, the Ensemble shares institutional space with the Martin György collection of folk dance materials, the Lajtha László collection of folk music, a library devoted to ethnographic and folklore reference works, a Dancehouse Association, the Muharay Elemér Society, and a Folk Arts Department, among other things. As a result, their choreographic work

is institutionally situated and framed as an ethnographic resource, provided to educate, inform, and provoke thought, as well as to provide a creatively and aesthetically stimulating way to structure the ethnographic material contained within it. Additionally, their present choreographies include genres that refer back to the Ensemble's previous work. They categorize their choreographies according to historically-themed works and works based on folk tales, genres used in the Rábai era, as well as “authentic” presentations of traditions and specific regions or localities, the styles revolutionized by Timár. The philosophy behind reviving these genres is that now that audiences and the public are sufficiently versed in the “*anyanyelv*” of Hungarian folk dance – thanks to having seen them, for example, on stage in Timár's choreographies – and having a rich source of documentation to rely upon, the time is ripe for developing the language of staged folk dance as established by Rábai, in the same way that literary genres like poetry, novels, novellas, and short stories, and so on develop any language from its most basic, elementary foundation.

4. Hungarian Dance Folklorism in Other Contexts

There are many other contexts in which folk dance or dance folklorism may be found in Hungary. Based on my observations over the past several months and on conversations with members of

¹⁰ Interview with Ferenc Sebő, Jan. 31, 2005.

various dancing communities, I would like to conclude by comparing these contexts and suggesting some of the meaningful ways in which staged folk dance differs from them. The other contexts include the presence of folk dance in its “original” context, such as the social dancing that happens at village weddings, for example; and the *táncbáz*, or dancehouse, context.

4.1 The “original” context

The “original” dancing that happens in villages and the dancing that occurs on stage is, of course, a primary relationship, one that usually centers on the problematic concept of authenticity. Folk dances from the villages are not only the source of choreographic works, and therefore seen as the “real thing”, but the faithful, “authentic” representation of them is also routinely cited as the ultimate goal of Ensembles.¹¹ Critics, the public and even Ensemble members themselves regularly judge their work and the work of other ensembles by how “authentic” their choreographies are. In the history of staged folk dance, different eras are also often defined by their authenticity; a primary example is how the Rábai and the Timár eras of the State Folk Ensemble were defined and compared.

The problem with the concept of authenticity is that no matter what an Ensemble does to faithfully recreate the dances, they are still only recreations of the (supposed) original. There is a fundamental, qualitative difference

between these two contexts. Yet the language of authenticity is so prevalent in writings and discussions about the work of professional ensembles, it suggests that although this gap seems unbridgeable (and it really is), there are things Ensembles do to bridge this gap, in an attempt to authenticate their work. One of these authenticating strategies involves the use of video recordings to learn dances. Aided by the wealth of folk dance documentation, these video and audio recordings are used by Ensembles to learn the “correct”, “authentic” steps, clothing, and behavior of the original participants. That in itself does not guarantee authenticity, however. There is an acknowledgement by several Ensembles that one must watch the video documents in the correct way, that one must actually be able to replicate the same kind of knowledge about the dance that the villagers themselves have. In the State Ensemble, the person or persons learning the dance from video, who will help in teach the dance to the others, are entrusted to know the dance and the tradition behind it so well, that they are able to answer any question put forth to them. The attempt, then, is to provide the new community of professional dancers with a “tradition bearer”, a social role commonly found in the original community.

It is worthwhile to consider the different qualities of the selection process in these two contexts as well. Contrary to the idea that selection involves conscious thought and is therefore not “natural” or “organic”, selection is not outside of tradition. Outside influences, necessity, changes in

condition, or even changes in taste dictate what cultural traditions remain active in a society over time, and which ones are eventually lost and forgotten. When a choreographer chooses to perform one type of dance over another, the fact still remains that selection is the result, even if this process of selection is more conscious and deliberate.

In Hungary today, staged presentations of folk dance can be highly valued specifically for their conscious selective quality. Were it not for their work, in addition to the wealth of ethnographic documentation that remains, many folk dance forms might be totally forgotten, as has already happened, according to many, in the villages from where these forms came. An important exception to this is the presence of the *táncbáz*, or dancehouse, where folk dances and folk dance culture are also passed on, and so I now turn to this subject.

4.2 The *táncbáz*

The *táncbáz* is a complex, involved socio-cultural phenomenon that would require a much more detailed investigation than what I can provide here. Yet there are important reasons to consider how *táncbáz* relates to these other contexts, even if only briefly.

Comparing the *táncbáz* to staged presentations, the *táncbáz* is generally considered to be more authentic, primarily because it is interactive, participatory, and not staged, characteristics of dances in the “original” context. In addition, though formal teaching is an important element in the dancehouse environment,

*táncbáz*es are for the most part social occasions. In fact, the social nature is not to be underestimated, since it was partly for this reason that dancehouses became such an effective component of the folk revival movement in the 60s and 70s. Additionally, there have even been choreographies based on dancehouses, perhaps lending dancehouses an even greater air of authenticity since source material for choreographed works are usually reserved for the most “authentic” forms in a culture.

Yet while *táncbáz* is regarded to be authentic presentation of folk dance, and while it is celebrated by many as an interactive, participatory way to preserve and “experience” culture, rather than just seeing it on stage, it is also highly selective. Based on my experiences and observations, certain genres of folk dance, like women’s circle dances, or men’s stick dances, are hardly ever performed at *táncbáz*. Once again, it is mostly through the very conscious decision to present these dances on stage (which provides some of the most visually beautiful choreography) that these forms, some of the oldest and most archaic of the entire Hungarian folk dance stock, even still exist at all.

What has survived through the process of selection in the dancehouses (the “Hungarian” dancehouses, at least) are the very popular couple dances, particularly the couple dances from Transylvania. In the dancehouse context, these dances are popular partly because they are compatible with the social function that dancehouse fulfills, even in

¹¹ Based on my formal interviews and informal discussions with many Ensemble artistic directors, dancers, and choreographers.

the present day. In contemporary staged performances, these couple dances are also quite popular and staged frequently, not to fulfill a contemporary social function, but to refer to this function. In other words, the social nature of couple dancing, which is “experienced” in a dancehouse context, is instead referred to on stage in order to make the association with social relationships, especially between man and woman, and the narrative qualities therein. Because of this, couple dances are especially suitable in the process of story-telling. The frame of the stage, which is the very thing that highlights the “inauthenticity” of folk dances in this context, is also an ideal place to explore and experiment with other dimensions of cultural forms presented on it. A favored technique, for example, of many contemporary choreographies is to play with the elements of time – suspending time, creating a type of fantasy space where time does not exist, or even suggesting the future. This is one reason why folk forms, which have such a strong association with the past, present many creative possibilities to a choreographer. It is even possible that the very presence and popularity of the dancehouse in Hungarian social and cultural life provides a stronger association for audience members with the social qualities of the dance form seen on stage.

Finally, staged presentations of folk dance provide an excellent opportunity to experiment with “otherness” as well. Dances from different villages, different regions, and even entirely different dance cultures can be brought together in

harmony or pitted against each other on stage. The ability to represent “East” and “West” in this way, and orienting Hungary in relation to one of these, provides enormous possibilities for commentary that have a lot of resonance for Hungary, as the eastern/western orientation has been a constant in Hungarian discourse. While “otherness” is certainly present in a dancehouse context – whether through the presence of foreigners, to provide one example – it is formulated in a very different way. One of the most striking observations of the current dancehouse scene, in fact, is the physical separation of dancehouses devoted to specific regions or dance cultures. For example, different dancehouses exist for Gyimesi csángó dances, for Balkan dances, for Scottish dances, and often, even for the many different types of Hungarian dances (Széki, Mezöségi, etc.).

5. Conclusion

Staged folk dance performances have a great deal of potential to comment and reflect upon contemporary life in Hungary. Using folk forms as their basis, professional folklore Ensembles are both limited and creatively stimulated by the source material. The discipline of ethnology and folk dance scholarship, the historical precedents of professional ensembles, and the presence of other dance folklorism in Hungary have all shaped the creative course of staged folk dance. The work of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble provides a good lens through

which to understand how folk forms can be used to provide contemporary meanings for contemporary audiences. With the framework I have suggested, I hope to continue on this path of research, in the hopes that the work of this Ensemble will be better understood and appreciated by all.

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Global Initiatives in End-of-Life Care: A Project Description in Hungary¹

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“Modern hospice”, the specialized care of terminally ill patients, began in the 1960’s in Britain and has proliferated throughout many areas around the globe ever since. Although the philosophy of care is nearly universal, variations in program development exist and are related to several factors including cultural, epidemiological, political, and resource issues. This paper will illustrate the recent development of end-of-life care in post-communist Hungary and will address the challenges associated with its implementation in a dynamic and changing environment. The paper describes the stages of a project in Pécs to assist in the development of hospice care and concludes with reflections on the experience and recommendations regarding the future of end-of-life care in Hungary.

¹ This paper is dedicated to my dear friend and professional colleague, Dr. Agnes Csikos, as a tribute to her commitment to hospice care in Hungary.