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Foreword

This thematic issue of *Musicological Annual* features a series of scholarly papers that examine the revival movements of folk-music and dance culture through a variety of methodological approaches and research perspectives. The impetus for these studies stems from the joint bilateral research project 'In New Disguise: Changes in Traditional Music and Dance Culture in Hungary, Slovenia and Around' (2022–2025), conducted in collaboration between the Institute for Musicology of the HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities and the Institute of Ethnomusicology at ZRC SAZU. As part of this project, Hungarian and Slovenian researchers employed interdisciplinary approaches and comparative analyses to explore revivalist practices as complex and multi-layered socio-cultural phenomena embedded in different historical contexts. Particular attention was devoted to the identity-related, historical, aesthetic and social dimensions of revival processes, with frequent references to the Hungarian *táncház* [dance house] movement. This movement – characterised by its distinctive approach to reviving folk music and dance through participatory, community-based practices rooted in rural traditions – has often served as a model for similar movements in many countries, including Slovenia.

In 2024, an international symposium was organised as part of the project, focusing on the revival of music and dance practices rooted in folk tradition. The symposium explored the transformation and migration of folk music and dance into new contexts and socio-cultural environments, while also addressing the broader socio-critical dimensions of contemporary heritage-making. It centred on various themes such as the motivations and strategies of urban musicians and dancers inspired by rural traditions, the emergence of new performative and aesthetic paradigms, the negotiation of authenticity in various public and stage presentations and the response of revival movements to political and social change.

The nine scholarly papers in this issue are based on the research conducted as part of the above-mentioned project, as well as selected symposium papers that have been revised and expanded into full academic studies. The contributions by scholars from different institutional and cultural backgrounds shed light on contemporary dimensions of the revitalisation of folk music and dance in a range of cultural and geographical settings.

Pál Richter examines how the Hungarian *táncház* movement transferred traditional village music and dance into the urban milieu over fifty years ago. Through a comparative aesthetic analysis, he illustrates the challenges that oral, community-based traditions must face if they are to maintain their continuity

under changing social conditions. Mojca Kovačič focuses on interpretations of Slovenian folk songs and examines how notions of authenticity are shaped and redefined within these practises. Her paper emphasises that authenticity is not a fixed attribute, but a rather relational category shaped by institutional norms, historically grounded aesthetics, performative practices and the performers' emotional engagement with the songs.

Anna Janku emphasises the crucial role of informants, master–disciple relationships and archived film recordings in the transmission and reconstruction of traditional dance forms within the Hungarian *táncház* movement. Maria Małanicz-Przybylska explores a contemporary debate in Poland triggered by the soundtrack of the film *The Peasants*. She foregrounds the tension between the *In Crudo* community, which favours reconstructed rural music, and those seeking a contemporary, intercultural expression in folk music. Her analysis reflects on what folk music is and who needs it in contemporary Polish society.

Drago Kunej analyses the formative role the *Trinajsto prase* ensemble played in the Slovenian folk revival movement. He highlights the ensemble's participatory approach to the presentation of folk music, its aesthetic orientation, its close involvement with folk music practices, and its inspiration drawn from related revival movements in other countries. He also discusses the ensemble's innovative approach to the presentation of tradition and its influence on subsequent generations of revival musicians in Slovenia. József Brauer-Benke examines the changes in the musical ensembles and instrumental choices of the Hungarian *Csángó* community in Moldova, placing them in a broader historical, social and ideological dynamic. He problematises the emergence of ideologically motivated, 'non-authentic' traditions that were constructed in the name of cultural preservation.

Veronika Pásku analyses the performance style of János Zerkula, a well-known violinist from Romania's Gyimes region, and emphasises how various documentary and recording contexts have influenced his musical expression. Her study provides insights into the interaction between researchers and tradition bearers within the *táncház* revival movement. Zhang Xiaoyu presents a Chinese perspective on the adaptation of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group to contemporary socio-cultural conditions. Her study examines the efforts of tradition bearers, academic institutions and the government to ensure a sustainable revitalisation of this vocal heritage. Finally, Henrik Kovács discusses pedagogical strategies for teaching Hungarian folk dance on the basis of a structural analysis. He demonstrates how method-guided teaching facilitates the preservation of dance traditions, encourages improvisation and promotes individual expression.

The papers in this issue address critical questions concerning the transmission and transformation of folk-music and dance practices into a contemporary context, and reveal the changing perceptions of authenticity, which plays

a central role in musical revival processes. Despite the diversity of cultural and social settings, they share a common analytical focus: the dynamic interplay between the preservation of tradition and its creative revival in response to the evolving needs, values, and aspirations of contemporary communities.

Drago Kunej

Predgovor

Pričujoča tematsko zasnovana številka *Muzikološkega zbornika* prinaša razprave, ki z različnih raziskovalnih vidikov in metodoloških pristopov preučujejo preporodna gibanja ljudskoglasbene in plesne kulture. Izhodišče za poglobljeno obravnavo teh pojavov je omogočil bilateralni slovensko-madžarski raziskovalni projekt »V novi preobleki: spremembe v ljudskoglasbeni in plesni kulturi na Madžarskem, v Sloveniji in drugod« ("In New Disguise: Changes in Traditional Music and Dance Culture in Hungary, Slovenia and Around"), ki je med letoma 2022 in 2025 potekal v sodelovanju Inštituta za muzikologijo pri HUN-REN Raziskovalnem centru za humanistiko in Glasbenonarodopisnega inštituta ZRC SAZU. V okviru projekta so madžarski in slovenski raziskovalci z interdisciplinarnim pristopom in primerjalno analizo preučevali preporodne prakse kot kompleksne in raznovrstne družbenokulturne pojave, značilne za različna zgodovinska obdobja. Pri tem so se osredotočali na zgodovinske, identitetne, estetske, socialne in druge vidike preporoda, pri čemer so se pogosto navezovali na gibanje *táncház* na Madžarskem. To gibanje je bilo s posebnim pristopom k oživljanju ljudske glasbe in plesa na podlagi t. i. plesnih hiš pogosto vzor tudi drugim preporodnim gibanjem, vključno s tistim na Slovenskem.

Leta 2024 je bil v okviru projekta organiziran mednarodni simpozij, posvečen poustvarjanju glasbenih in plesnih praks v povezavi z ljudsko tradicijo. Prizadeval si je osvetliti različne procese preoblikovanja ljudskih glasbenih in plesnih praks, njihovo migracijo v nova okolja in kulturne prakse ter ob tem razpirati tudi širše družbenokritične razsežnosti sodobnih praks dediščinjenja. Posebna pozornost je bila namenjena vprašanjem, zakaj in kako so glasbeniki in plesalci iz pretežno urbanega okolja iskali navdih v podeželskih glasbenoplesnih praksah, kakšni pojavi so iz tega izhajali, kako so se skozi prezentacije oblikovali koncepti avtentičnosti ter kako so se preporodna gibanja odzivala na politične kontekste in družbene spremembe.

Devet znanstvenih prispevkov, zbranih v tej številki *Muzikološkega zbornika*, temelji na raziskovalnem delu v okviru omenjenega projekta ter na izbranih prispevkih s simpozija, ki so bili naknadno razširjeni in dopolnjeni v znanstvene članke. V njih avtorji in avtorice z različnih raziskovalnih okolij osvetljujejo sodobne razsežnosti revitalizacije in poustvarjanja ljudskih glasbenih in plesnih praks v različnih kulturnih in geografskih kontekstih.

Pál Richter v svojem prispevku analizira, kako je madžarsko gibanje *táncház* že pred več kot petdesetimi leti preneslo ljudsko glasbo in ples iz podeželskega v urbano okolje, ter s primerjalno analizo estetskih in kontekstualnih

sprememb ugotavlja, kako se pretežno ustna in skupnostna tradicija sooča z novimi okoliščinami in kako lahko v njih dolgoročno preživi. Mojca Kovačič se osredotoča na interpretacije ljudskega petja na Slovenskem in preučuje, kako se v teh praksah oblikujejo in preoblikujejo predstave o avtentičnosti. Njen prispevek poudarja, da avtentičnost ni nespremenljiva lastnost, temveč relacijska kategorija, ki jo soustvarjajo institucionalni normativi, zgodovinsko zasnovana estetika, izvajalske prakse in čustveni odnos izvajalcev do pesmi.

Anna Janku izpostavlja ključno vlogo informatorjev, odnosov med mojstri in učenci ter arhivskih filmskih posnetkov pri prenosu, ohranjanju in rekonstrukciji tradicionalnih plesnih oblik v sodobno urbano okolje madžarskega gibanja *táncház*. Maria Małanicz-Przybylska predstavi razpravo, ki jo je sprožila glasba iz filma *Kmetje*. V ospredje postavi napetost med skupnostjo *In Crudo*, ki zagovarja rekonstruirano podeželsko glasbo, in tistimi, ki v ljudski glasbi iščejo sodoben, medkulturno zaznamovan izraz, ter razmišlja o pomenu ljudske glasbe v sodobni poljski družbi.

Drago Kunej analizira pomembno vlogo skupine *Trinajsto prase* v slovenskem preporodnem gibanju. Izpostavi participativni pristop skupine pri predstavljanju ljudske glasbe, njeno estetsko usmeritev, tesno povezanost z ljudskoglasbenimi praksami in zgledovanje po sorodnih preporodnih gibanjih v tujini. Hkrati opozori na njen svež pristop k poustvarjanju izročila in osvetli vpliv na poznejše generacije slovenskih preporodnih glasbenikov. József Brauer-Benke obravnava spremembe v glasbenih sestavih in izboru glasbil madžarske skupnosti *Csángó* v Moldaviji z vidika zgodovinskih, družbenih, političnih in ideoloških vplivov. Pri tem opozori na problematiko ustvarjanja »neavtentičnih« tradicij, ki so nastale pod vplivom ideološko pogojenih pristopov k ohranjanju kulturne identitete.

Veronika Pásku analizira, kako so različne okoliščine dokumentiranja in snemanja vplivale na izvajalski slog slovitega godca Jánosa Zerkule iz regije Gyimes. Študija nudi vpogled v interakcije med raziskovalci in izvajalci v okviru preporodnega gibanja *táncház*. Zhang Xiaoyu prinaša pogled iz Kitajske z analizo prilagajanja *velike pesmi* kot načina petja etnične skupine Dong sodobnim družbenokulturnim razmeram. Prispevek predstavi prizadevanja nosilcev tradicije, akademskih ustanov in vladnih politik za trajnostno revitalizacijo te vokalne dediščine. Henrik Kovács pa obravnava didaktične pristope poučevanja madžarskega ljudskega plesa na osnovi strukturalne analize plesnih motivov in pokaže, kako metodološko zasnovano poučevanje omogoča ohranjanje plesa, spodbuja improvizacijo in izražanje individualnosti.

V zborniku predstavljeni prispevki naslavljajo ključna vprašanja prenosa in transformacije ljudskih glasbenih in plesnih praks v nova, sodobna okolja ter razkrivajo spreminjajoča se razumevanja avtentičnosti, ki ima osrednjo vlogo v procesih glasbenega preporoda. Kljub različnim kulturnim in družbenim ozadjem prispevke povezuje skupno izhodišče: iskanje ravnotežja med ohranjanjem

tradicije in njenim ustvarjalnim preoblikovanjem v skladu z aktualnimi potrebami, vrednotami in pričakovanji sodobnih skupnosti.

Drago Kunej

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Traditional Village Music and Dance in Urban Milieu. Consequences and Aesthetic Aspects

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ABSTRACT

The Hungarian revival movement, *táncház* [dance house], transported rural traditional music and dance into urban milieu more than fifty years ago. A thorough comparative survey of aesthetical factors concerning content, performing style and circumstances of existence enables to determine whether cultures governed through oral and communal tradition can survive long term in a foreign environment.

Keywords: folklorism, Hungarian *táncház* [dance house] movement, folk music, folk dance, revival music

IZVLEČEK

Madžarsko preporodno gibanje, *táncház* [plesna hiša], je pred več kot petdesetimi leti preneslo tradicionalno glasbo in ples s podeželja v urbano okolje. S pomočjo temeljite primerjalne raziskave estetskih dejavnikov, ki zadevajo vsebino, izvedbeni slog in okoliščine obstoja, je mogoče ugotoviti, ali lahko kulture, ki jih oblikujeta ustna in skupnostna tradicija, dolgoročno preživijo v tujem okolju.

Ključne besede: folklorizem, madžarsko gibanje *táncház* [plesna hiša], ljudska glasba, ljudski ples, preporodna glasba

* This study was made possible through the support of the Hungarian–Slovenian project "In New Disguise: Changes in Traditional Music and Dance Culture in Hungary, Slovenia, and Around" (NKFIH SNN 139575 and N6-0231).

Preambulum

This study focuses on the changes in music and dance. It regards the traditional village (peasant) music and dance items as the initial, or standard version of these cultural products to which the changes caused by urban usage are compared. Accordingly, it uses adjectives (authentic, original, traditional etc.) to indicate this initial kind of performing style, or repertoire, and not to attribute value-laden differences between them. Concerning the terminology traditional village music, peasant music occurs usually as synonyms, and sometimes traditional music or folk music is also used in this manner turning out from context. However, the value-centered assessment of music, including folk music, can be observed throughout the twentieth century in the works of Hungarian folk music researchers.[1]

Introduction – Background, Antecedents, Problems to Be Solved

In 1972, more than half a century ago, the dance house [*táncház*][2] movement started in Hungary; and in 2007, almost two decades had passed since postsecondary folk music education began at the Liszt Academy Budapest.[3] The dance house movement radically changed the approach to folk music. Its creators, Ferenc Sebő and Béla Halmos,[4] no longer thought that folk music "must be dressed in fitting attire if they are to be brought from the fields to the city".[5] In-

1 During the twentieth century, Hungarian folk music research was mostly conducted by composers and musicians, which explains their primary concern with the essence, characteristics, and interrelationships of music. In addition, they made serious efforts during their fieldwork to observe and describe the function of music in the village community, the musical instruments, the customs, and emic concepts. Without a doubt, it was through systematizations based on musical criteria, comparative historical and ethnic studies that Hungarian research became one of the leading workshops of international ethnomusicology in the late 1950s and the 1960s. However, the same factors partly contributed to the decline in its significance and influence in the discipline's international forum during the last third of the century. As the dominant anthropological approach refused to deal with the content of music, any reference to quality, let alone artistic value, became obsolete, superfluous, and – in some situations – undesirable.

2 The name dance house [in Hungarian: *táncház*] refers both to the occasion of dancing and its location in the Transylvanian tradition.

3 Pál Richter, "New Channels for Renewal of Tradition – Folk Music in the University Education", in *Musical Traditions: Discovery, Inquiry, Interpretation and Application; Proceedings of the XXVI. European Seminar in Ethnomusicology*, ed. Pál Richter (Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont, 2012), 351–360.

4 Ferenc Sebő (b. 1947) and Béla Halmos (1946–2013) were the originators of the dance house movement. Both of them graduated from the Technical University Budapest with a MA degree in architecture, and were trained musicians at the same time, having experiences from different musical styles. Besides them two other persons played a decisive role in organizing the first dance house event in 1972: the choreographer of the Bartók Dance Ensemble Sándor Tímár, and the scholar of folk dance, György Martin.

5 "The finest must be selected and adapted to the public taste by some sort of musical arrangement. Folksongs must be dressed in fitting attire if they are to be brought from the fields to the city." Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, *Magyar népdalok: Énekhangra, zongorakísérettel* (Budapest: Rozsnyai Károly, 1906), 3.

stead, they believed that folk music was to be preserved and passed on to future generations in its original form, intrinsically connected to its original function of dance accompaniment. Following their example, enthusiastic young people[6] have been immersing themselves in the study of instrumental folk music and folk dance since the early 1970s. They were able to rely on more than 120 years of research in Hungarian folk music, and the more recent discipline of folk dance, which emerged several decades later. These young people were supervised by legendary folk music researchers, like Lajos Vargyas, Imre Olsvai, and György Martin, or later Bálint Sárosi.[7] Initially, in the 1970s and '80s the study of folk music and folk dance took place outside the formal educational framework, in various organized training courses. Decades later, it became crucial for the participants of the established movement, *táncház* musicians and dancers to also gain access to a wide range of professional educational opportunities within the formal education system.[8] Folk dance and instrumental music, i.e. mainly Hungarian folk music for stringed instruments, emerged from the archives and research workshops, and evolved into contemporary genres, while singing folk songs – instead of the earlier drill which was compulsory in the schools – became a popular choice of genuine entertainment among young people, albeit not in itself, but in connection with dance. It should be emphasized that the musicians of the dance houses that became popular in the cities tried to present the same aesthetics of folk music to society as Bartók and Kodály did in their art: by the restoration and re-learning of village folklore, they primarily aimed to establish the idea (and they based their entire lifework on it) that folk music offers an aesthetic experience to modern audiences. These aesthetic qualities represented by folk music[9] have always been fundamentally different from those inherent in popular art songs, the *magyarnóta*-repertoire

6 E.g. the singer Márta Sebestyén, the Muzsikás ensemble, Zoltán Juhász bagpipe and flute player, Márta Virágvölgyi violinist, Vujicsics ensemble etc. For further details see: Béla Szilárd Jávorszky, *A magyar FOLK története: Népzene, táncház, világzene* (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, Hagyományok Háza, 2013); László Siklós, *Táncház* (Budapest: Hagyományok Háza, Timp kiadó, 2006).

7 György Martin (1932–1983) ethnochoreologist, folklorist; Imre Olsvai (1931–2014) ethnomusicologist; Bálint Sárosi (1925–2022) ethnomusicologist; Lajos Vargyas (1914–2007) ethnomusicologist, folklorist.

8 The first educational program in a public music school started in 1975/76. Today, traditional village folk singing or instrumental music performance is taught in many music schools (over 80 institutions) throughout the country and in the last two decades, training courses have also been launched in several secondary music schools. See: Richter, "New Channels for Renewal", 351–360.

9 According to the views of Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, at the beginning of the twentieth century folk music was mostly the orally transmitted musical tradition of the village communities. Bartók was quite consistent in talking about "peasant music", which differed in many musical features from nineteenth-century Hungarian compositions – Romantic in style and essentially modelled on German patterns – and from urban folk-like songs, or *magyarnóta*-melodies that became known primarily as 'Hungarian Gipsy music' and formed the basis for the *style hongrois*-trend and intonation of Western music.

(i.e. Hungarian *nóta*s), urban Gipsy music,[10] or from today's fashionable world music, or global music products. For Bartók and Kodály, that short, almost epigram-like conciseness and simplicity of folk music provided an aesthetic of the musical expression that starkly contrasted with that of the Romantic era. The absence of the non-essential in folk music is, of course, somewhat contradicted by its embellished nature and rich ornamentation distinctive of the individual region of origin. However, when compared to the expansive musical forms characteristic of Romanticism, the generally four-line melodic stanza structures can indeed be considered as miniatures. In any case, Hungarian folk music was so markedly different from both popular art music – folk-like songs employed as urban entertainment – and Western music that Bartók and Kodály initially, in 1906, believed it should only be performed in concert hall settings if the songs were "dressed in fitting attire",[11] that is, with the addition of piano accompaniment.

65 years later, Sebő and Halmos believed the contrary, maintaining that folk music should be preserved in its original form, serving its function as dance music. They argued that traditional village music repertoire and performing routine should be preserved not only in archives but in everyday musical practice.

The conclusions drawn by the researchers, through their sociological, aesthetic, and expert analyses[12] were entirely consistent with the statements made by the musicians, dancers, and participants of the urban dance houses, whether during the period or in retrospect: they turned towards this particular musical culture because they found its soundscape and rhythmic quality, as well as the dances themselves fascinating, dynamic, powerful, and 'archaic', yet novel, previously unknown to them. Moreover, they were able to find this culture not only among Hungarians in Transylvania, but also, for example, among Romanians, and Southern Slavs living in Hungary.[13] Audiences of the dance houses were

10 *Nóta* meant exclusively "vocal song" in Hungarian, which in most cases was not accompanied by dance: it was sung at the table [in Hungarian: *asztali*]. In other words, it clearly referred to a vocal melody with text.
Magyar nóta [Hungarian nóta] referred to a separate category of popular art songs in nineteenth and twentieth-century, the most dedicated performers of which were the city Gypsy ensembles. For differences between rural and urban Gypsy bands and their performing style, see: Bálint Sárosi, *Gypsy Music* (Budapest: Corvina, 1978); István Pávai, *Hungarian Folk Dance Music of Transylvania* (Budapest: Hagyományok Háza, MMA Kiadó, 2020), 79–80; Pál Richter, "Between Folk and Urban Culture: The Dance Music Traditions of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Hungary", in *The Element of Dance in Music of the First Half of the Nineteenth Century,* ed. Grzegorz Zieziula (Warsaw: The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 2023) 287–301.

11 See footnote 5.

12 László Kósa, "A népi kultúra új hulláma", *Tiszatáj* 28, no. 9 (1974): 38–45; Lajos Vargyas, "A népdal helye a közművelődésünkben", *Tiszatáj* 28, no. 9 (1974): 46–51.

13 The Hungarian dance cycle from the Transylvanian village of Szék (Sic, Romania) and the Romanian dance cycle from Méhkerék (Hungary) were the first two cycles initially played by the Sebő ensemble. In the Danube Bend, where the young people of Pomáz (a village 15 km from

equally open to Hungarian traditions and the cultural heritage of neighboring or more distant peoples. The dance houses emerged not as the nucleus of a national conspiracy directed against the State Party dictatorship of the time, nor were they created out of disrespect against other peoples: Operating in a manner devoid of ideology, the dance houses thrived on the wonder inspired by the cultural heritage of Hungarians and neighboring peoples, and by the desire to take possession of this heritage in a modern, urban environment. As a result, a few years following their inception in Hungary, the dance houses began to emerge first within the Hungarian communities in adjacent countries, subsequently spreading to majority societies, and other European nations. The year 2011 marked a pivotal moment when the *táncház* method was recognized internationally, earning a place on the UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices as a Hungarian model for the transmission of intangible cultural heritage.

Actual Issues, Hypothesis, Main Objective

The emergence of dance houses led to a paradigm shift. On the one hand, the academic position that village folk music could only be researched, and that while it was possible to acquire the skills to play it, an authentic performance[14] remained out of reach, had to be abandoned. On the other hand, it became clear that urban audiences that lack socialization in traditional peasant culture, can only engage with village folk music and dance through their adaptations and arrangements, making them the only viable way to convey the values of this culture.[15] At the same time, it is evident that the creative milieu that shaped folk music for many generations and centuries, serving as the authentic

Budapest), lacking a recognizable Hungarian tradition in their region, turned to the music of the Serbs living in the area. This is how the Vujicsics ensemble, which cultivates Hungary's South Slavic folk music traditions and still exists today, was formed.

14 In this context, authentic performance refers both to the authenticity of the musical material performed, and its performing practice showing the instrumental practice of traditional village ways. See: Pávai, *Hungarian Folk Dance Music of Transylvania*, 322–332.

15 "As far as it is possible to know, the educated segments of European societies have always used elements of folk art in their culture, transforming them according to their tastes, and similarly, peasant art borrowed elements of art music. Moreover, since the Romantic era, peasant music was looked upon as the music of the 'folk', that is, the music of the entire nation, and thus was regarded somewhat as a common cultural heritage. However, the Hungarian revival movement belongs to neither of the above categories of musical interchanges. In this case, there is no question of the use or the integration of the peasant tradition into some essentially different cultural product. In the Hungarian revival movement, genres of peasant music have been taken over in their entirety, preserving the traditional framework of forms and performing styles and much of the context as well. Hence a new category of music has been created. This 'folk music of the intelligentsia' is not really peasant music, but it is not art music or popular music either. Nor can it be regarded as a form of national music; it is not the music of the 'folk', at least not in the way the word 'folk' is traditionally used." Judit Frigyesi, "The Aesthetic of the Hungarian Revival Movement", in *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Mark Slobin (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 54–55.

communal workshop for this traditional music and dance culture, has disappeared or is in the process of disappearing in Hungarian-speaking territories. The environment in which it thrived has undergone significant change, bringing its active, vibrant era to an end, or in a handful of places, nearing that end. Thankfully, our rich archival collections provide us with a detailed understanding of how this music sounded, and was performed (unlike many of our other musical treasures!). In other words, as traditional music, this repertoire and performance practice can be effectively taught and learned similarly to other musical phenomena – and the same is true for dances.

Moreover, the early members of the revival movement acquired their knowledge of the music and the dance in the traditional way, through direct engagement with local village people, spending extensive periods on the ground (mainly in Transylvania) where folk music and folk dance were still in use. Thus, in addition to the vast body of recorded material preserved in the collections, and the remaining active traditional village musicians, singers and dancers (the interlocutors or collaborators, to use the technical term of our discipline), it was their expertise that became the driving force behind the movement.

However, the first generation of dance-house musicians has now grown old, quite a few prominent representatives have died,[16] and in most places there is a lack of interlocutors who were born into and grown up in the tradition. Moreover, self-organizing village communities, a key factor in the operation of traditional culture through generations, have also disappeared. Their members were simultaneously creators, users, recipients and shapers of this culture, ensuring that collective preferences, the taste expressing the community's social and cultural organization, prevailed. In other words, they controlled their culture on the basis of internal social and spiritual cultural relations, as part of their self-identity and the image reflected toward the outside world. Once the traditional village music and dance cultures bearing local characteristics were introduced to the cities, this kind of community control and self-regulatory feedback ceased to exist. Although the dance house movement was fundamentally brought to life by the desire to revive both dance and music in their traditional function, over time, stage productions using dance and popular music based on folk music gained more and more ground, resulting in a shift away from their original functions. The emphasis on individualism, driven by the global marketplace and the self-expression of the individual artists and authors have prevailed over the strengthening shared communal spaces for creativity and reception.

Today, researchers are able to utilize scientific methods from fields like traditional comparative ethnomusicology, sociology and cultural anthropology, to examine how traditional music and dance cultures respond when faced with

16 E.g. Béla Halmos (1946–2013), Tamás Kobzos Kiss (1950–2015), Péter Éri (1953–2023), Ferenc Kiss (1954–2024), Csaba Ökrös (1960–2019).

new conditions, functions and usages, and to assess the extent of changes, delineate their direction and, with comparative studies, data, and conclusions, facilitate the active and long-term survival of their spiritual and cultural legacy and centuries-old values.

Based on the results of Hungarian folk music research, Zoltán Kodály coined the concept of 'musical mother tongue' by analogy with the spoken language, the acquisition of which he considered to be as important a pillar of Hungarian identity and expression as the Hungarian language itself.[17] If we accept Kodály's concept as a point of departure, then – based on the results of folk music and folk dance research achieved so far, the experience of the 53-year-old dance house movement, and the curricula of folk music and folk dance university courses – we must assume that traditional music and dance cultures removed from their original environment, but retaining their basic functions can be sustained not only as cultural monuments, but also as living practices over the long term. Some of the key questions to consider in this respect include: What is the degree of changes affecting these traditional cultures? Which elements belonging to these cultures are affected? Do the changes pose a real risk to their integrity? A further inquiry pertains to whether it is possible to counterbalance the loss of community control and self-regulatory feedback in autochthonous village societies, and if so, how?

The overall objective of the research is to better understand the consequences of the introduction of traditional cultures into a foreign medium; to elucidate the effects of the dance house, and other folkloric, and revival movements, as well as the impacts of the stage and the cultural and entertainment market on these cultures in the present-day social context; and to identify the changes that have taken place so far or are expected to occur, by utilizing scientific methodology. A further goal is to deepen our knowledge of the integrity of these traditional cultures, as well as the limits of that integrity in relation to the extent and nature of the changes they undergo. When the changes go beyond those limits, the studied genres lose the defining features of their identity, transforming into commodities of the global marketplace, and often imbued with the political narratives of a specific sphere of power.

The main objective of the three-year research project with Slovenian researchers ("In New Disguise: Changes in the Traditional Music and Dance Culture in Hungary, Slovenia, and Around") was to assess the impact of the divergent, foreign milieu on the two segments of traditional culture (dance and music) in terms of genre changes generated by both social and external factors. The anticipated outcome is that the process of formation and deformation is interpretable and describable in detail, revealing which elements of traditional

17 Among many other places in writings, speeches: Zoltán Kodály, "Gyermekdalaink magyarságáról [1943]", in *Visszatekintés: Összegyűjtött írások, beszédek, nyilatkozatok* vol. I, ed. Ferenc Bónis (Budapest: Argumentum, 2007), 124–126.

music and dance cultures are most sensitive to change. In addition, an international perspective allows us to pinpoint the ways in which the erosion of distinctive traits leads to the transformation of these genres into commodities shaped by market dynamics and political agendas.

Traditional Village Music and Dance Emancipated

At the beginning of the dance house movement, young enthusiasts, in collaboration with ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists, aimed to bring folk music into an urban environment, while retaining its original function, i.e., musical accompaniment for improvised dancing.

> *Young people suddenly realized what attracted them to modern dances: the elemental power of the rhythmic movement, which in this virtuosic form was to be performed alone, releasing and 'showing off" to each other; the very same elemental power of rhythmic movements could be found in folk dance, but in aesthetically superior and refined forms. In other words, it has become obvious that folk music and folk dance is 'modern', and can successfully express the feelings of today's youth.*[18]

Rooted in civic initiative, the movement began as an experiment, as a private event of a group of friends who attempted to evoke and revive the patterns of peasant dance and music culture of local communities, while preserving its aesthetic values.[19] Later it developed into a public cultural program and rapidly spread in Budapest, the province towns, and beyond Hungary's borders. As an urban subculture rooted in traditional peasant culture, the dance house movement expanded independently of the centralized cultural oversight imposed by the communist regime, free from the control of the Communist Party. From an ideological point of view, it seemed dangerous, as it could evoke ideas of nationalism, liberty, and self-organized communities.[20] Since the movement embraced not only the traditional dances of Hungarians but also of other peoples (among them Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Croatians, and Romanians), accusations of excessive nationalism became pointless by the second half of the 1970s. So, the authorities sought to steer the initiative into an official channel,

18 Vargyas, "A népdal helye a közművelődésünkben", 46.

19 "Recognition that the movement belongs to the educated classes is important rather for its aesthetic implications: the musical and cultural 'rules' of revival music are determined more by the aesthetic awareness of the educated middle class than by the taste of today's Hungarian peasantry or by any kind of state ideology. This aesthetic consciousness is apparent in decisions directly relevant to musical practice, like the choice of performing style and repertoire. But it signifies also a cultural awareness, a special attention on the part of its creators with regard to its function in a broader social and cultural context. The revival movement brought something new to Hungarian cultural life that was difficult to interpret in terms of existing musical categories." Frigyesi, "The Aesthetic of the Hungarian Revival Movement", 55.

20 Pál Richter, "Dance House under the Socialist Regime in Hungary", *Studia Musicologica* 56, no. 4 (2015): 407–416.

integrate it into the establishment of the period's cultural life, and exercise control over it. In many places, dance houses were opened in the community cultural centers operated by the communist state. Events took place – especially in the dance houses of Budapest – on a weekly or fortnightly basis, providing opportunity and employment for a large group of teachers who taught this traditional culture and grew out of the movement, so to speak. At the same time, these dance houses offered urban youth alternative entertainment, differing from the musical trends coming from the West (Hard Rock, Punk, and nascent Disco scene).[21]

The movement's influence was also evident in professional artistic circles. Similarly to the so-called State Folk Ensembles, founded during the early 1950s in the countries of the Eastern bloc, the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble was established in 1951. As Hungary's representative and professional artistic ensemble, consisting of choir, band, and dance ensemble, its main task was to nurture Hungarian folk traditions and mold them into modern stage art. Modernity at that time was represented by the philosophy and method of Igor Moiseyev and his ensemble; it primarily consisted of combining folk dance with the elements of classical ballet, and putting a strong emphasis on the action, on a story line in the choreographies. This meant that neither the dance nor the accompanying music was taken and *could not* be taken purely from rural tradition; arrangements were produced instead. This Soviet-type 'folk' stage art provided a living for generations of choreographers and composers.[22] By comparison, the appointment of Sándor Tímár[23] as the new leader of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble in 1981 marked a paradigm shift. An early member of the dance house movement himself and enjoying the full support of folk dance researcher György Martin, Tímár, was convinced that the mastery of peasant dances and illuminating their diversity, beauty, and uniqueness constituted an essential criteria of expertise.[24] This, of course, required a musical accompaniment with traditional village music that was already widely known thanks to the dance house movement. Such was situation in which the

21 "Some considered it a kind of light popular music, a type of dance-cafe music which in Hungary is called diszkó (from the word disc, referring to the fact that the music for dancing came from records in these cafes). Others saw in the revival movement the great opportunity to reestablish a Hungarian popular music and expel from the market foreign popular musics like rock'n'roll. This hope was the more naive because several of the revival groups experimented at some point with the inclusion of rock and various other foreign popular styles." Frigyesi, "The Aesthetic of the Hungarian Revival Movement", 55–56.

22 One of the first productions of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble was the *Wedding from Ecser* (1952), (accessed on August 30, 2024) https://owncloud.abtk.hu/index.php/s/cdoSct2nBY5NHbS.

23 Sándor Tímár (b. 1930) dancer, master of folk dance, leader of dance ensembles, collector of folk dances, 1981–1998 leader of the Hungarian Folk State Ensemble.

24 One of the productions of the Hungarian Folk State Ensemble from Tímár's period: *Dance with bottle from Tolna region* (1987), (accessed on August 30, 2024), https://owncloud.abtk.hu/index.php/s/jTbQ8ZS4N8qoPTy.

official, folk dance stage art found itself as the major political changes swept through Hungary in 1989–90 and the country abandoned Soviet-type dictatorship and joined the community of the Western democracies.

Democratic transformations also led to radical changes in Hungarian-speaking village communities, which affected their traditional cultural life.[25] However, the first members of the dance house movement learned the music and dance in the traditional way. In parallel, they cultivated an active professional dialogue with the research community; that is, they worked under scientific management and control.

As the movement's first generations gave way to younger members, its reliance on the results of folk music and dance research diminished. The rapidly declining number of those with knowledge of the peasant village tradition no longer ensured firsthand learning, while community control of these traditional cultures was no longer in practice. The key issue at hand now is whether cultures that depend on oral communication and communal use of traditional practices in village societies can survive long term in a foreign environment where they risk losing, partially or entirely, their essentially oral ways of transmission and community control. If so, to what extent have the various elements changed, shaped, or deformed? Is it possible to model the process of change, or the expected transformations?

If we consider village community control one of the basic conditions for the existence of folk music, folk music will, in fact, cease to exist the moment this control ceases to exist. More precisely, folk music will cease to exist as a living tradition in the sense that it will no longer evolve, form new periods, or undergo transformations in its repertoire. It will become a set of songs and instrumental pieces, similar to any other composed musical works, which can be learned and performed with the appropriate professional preparation and qualifications. At the same time, oral tradition will also come to an end; only the previously collected and recorded repertoire will survive in the long term. The same applies to folk dances, with one key difference, however: given the crucial role of rhythm and meter in the musical accompaniment of the dances, once the living phase of the tradition comes to an end, alternative musical accompaniments with the same rhythm and meter may be paired with any given dance.

Conflicts of Interest

The dance house movement appeared not only as a new entertainment option for urban public spaces but also had an impact on dance stages, and, in turn, on

25 Borders strictly closed earlier suddenly opened, and the Hungarians of the neighboring countries, first of all in Romania, could travel to Hungary and other parts of Europe as well. As they (mainly males) also began to work in Hungary and other countries, the former symbiosis of village communities fragmented.

the use and performance practices of traditional village music. As dance houses multiplied, so did stage performances conceived in the new spirit, and soon, this genre of revival folk music became part of the world music market. Market laws placed an ever-increasing importance on the individual, showcasing the performer's personality. Popular music, under which traditional village music labelled as world music has also been classified, focuses on the performer's individuality, at the same time stimulating a continuous renewal of genre and style to align with current trends. The requirements imposed by both the market and the stage are mostly in contrast – or at least incompatible – with the basic laws and operating conditions of traditional dance and music. Of course, individuality did play a role within traditional village communities, but only within certain limits. In the village tradition, dance and music were not performed as stage productions aimed at an audience; transformations occurred more gradually, requiring an extended period of time for new elements to be integrated.

It is interesting to observe how the programs of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble evolved in the wake of the political changes of 1989. During the 1980s, thanks to the work of Sándor Tímár, stage performances of folklore underwent a renewal oriented towards village tradition, underpinned by the thorough knowledge of the peasant dances. Then, in 1998, revival musician and performer Ferenc Sebő, one of the initiators and leading figures of the dance house movement, became the artistic director of the ensemble. He engaged Gábor Mihályi, a former student of Tímár, as choirmaster. In their program, they announced the creation of a new image and the development of new perspectives in the artistic undertakings of the State Folk Ensemble. In the beginning, they presented Hungarian folk dances in genre scenes and according to regions. Subsequently, the programs were enriched with dances of Western origin from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries. In the end, however, they created productions that placed the traditional rural dance, the dance 'mother tongue' in what they called 'a new context', usually by highlighting and combining mosaics drawn from the traditions of different peoples. Dances were occasionally accompanied by popular music composed using elements from traditional village music, in the manner of the genre previously known as world music but more recently called global music. This music was supplemented with increasingly spectacular stage imagery, striving for modernity and up-to-dateness.[26] Albeit undoubtedly in a different way, as was characteristic of the time, dance productions that for a short period aimed to remain faithful to village traditions, soon began to once again obey the laws of the stage, and reverted to adaptions and individual choreographies using only elements of peasant dances.

26 Folk dance and folk music in 'a new context', in the stage production of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble: *Naplegenda* [*Sunlegend*] by Nikola Parov (2000), https://owncloud.abtk.hu/index.php/s/CSkpWbdgJbTXbZT (accessed on August 30, 2024).

Meanwhile, the performance and execution of the dances also changed, which also affected their aesthetic: the steps and motifs remained, but the dancers' traditional posture, dignity, restrained use of space, and the economy of movements[27] became less prominent or disappeared almost entirely. Instead, productions were distinguished by sweeping motions of the hands and feet, which exhibited far greater dynamics and demanded much more space. In addition, the original tempi became quicker, leading to a predominance of acrobatic and virtuosic elements, especially in male dances.[28] The character and aesthetic of the dances changed, and the integrity of the dance processes collapsed. The components of the dances were now used in entirely different contexts, combining elements with different origins, and the dancers' mental and spiritual approach to dances seem to have also changed radically.

Furthermore, the dancing habits of urban youth participating in dance houses have undergone transformations as well. At the beginning of the dance house movement, there were weekly opportunities, for a modest entrance fee, designed to attract a wider, non-professional audience to learn the dances of each region. In addition to learning the dances, during the breaks, they learned folk songs from the given region.[29] The percentage of stage productions was much smaller at that time; however, dance house courses were held in a large number of urban cultural centers. Nowadays, despite the far greater government funding, the majority of courses are no longer held on a regular basis, and even these are mostly attended by the middle generation and older people, while youth participation is uncommon. Young people, instead, are either involved in the revival movement, or frequent what are known as 'folk pubs', where the focus is less on learning the dances and more on enjoying free, informal entertainment. There is no organized, 'institutionalized' dance learning; everyone can dance or move to music as they like.[30] Those young people who know folk dances typically learned them in official or semi-official folk dance ensembles. Generally, in the Hungarian folk genre, it is slowly becoming rare to find a program based solely on traditional village music sources. Various musical bands (using different kinds of instrument combinations that often diverge from traditional ones) play, usually starting with a concert, followed by

27 Traditional dance (man dance *legényes*) from Transylvania: https://neptanctudastar.abtk.hu/hu/dances?ItemId=%22Ft.637.2%22 (accessed on June 30, 2024).

28 Example of folk dance performance in a virtuosic manner: https://owncloud.abtk.hu/index.php/s/YdWCW7tje7kM4ya (02:45–03:50), https://owncloud.abtk.hu/index.php/s/e2qtqPMXis966BW (accessed on August 30, 2024).

29 Recordings in dance houses: documentary film about the Sebő–Halmos dance house (1974) https://owncloud.abtk.hu/index.php/s/HwzccPxTgkS87DN (accessed on August 30, 2024); Táncház-panorama Budapest (2013) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UeEcPj9_OpA (accessed on August 30, 2024).

30 Folk pub in Budapest https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cdzitFszmI (00:30–01:30) (accessed on August 30, 2024).

the free program. Musicians perform different kinds of pieces freely, usually not adhering to traditional dance cycles. Moreover, ensembles are not *táncház* bands mimicking traditional village instrumental ensembles; rather, they are formations that create very dynamic and loud popular world music flavored by Balkan rhythms. The meaning of traditional village music changed for these bands, and their approach to this genre also differs from that of earlier generations of revival musicians. Generally, they trained on the revived traditional village music performed in the dance house movement; however, they are open to the musical heritage of a wide range of ethnic groups, and play an amalgam of these musical worlds filled with many improvisations. As they explain, they are not bound by the 'caste system rules' of the dance house movement; they use traditional village music as raw material and source of inspiration, embellishing it according to their imagination and musical taste.[31] This contradicts the fact that at the dawn of the dance house movement, the basic idea and primary aim was to present the effect that peasant music would have on us as an aesthetic experience, as it had on Béla Bartók's and Zoltán Kodály's art earlier. Nevertheless, the recent mainstream ideological approach concerning traditional village music advocates for modernization, including the adoption of new instruments, rhythm patterns, and harmonization etc., to create one's own image in the relentless pursuit of identity. The latest efforts are geared towards individual fulfilment under the guise of catchy and fashionable slogans. They do not take into account that traditional village music is similar to the phenomenon of biodiversity and that, in this sense, any kind of uniform music making based on identical templates and clichéd stylistic features (often amateurish solutions), trying to catch up with rapidly changing fashions and corresponding requirements of the pop music market, will necessarily result in a monoculture.[32] The same applies partly to what is called world/global music, which, in some cases, does not even attempt to combine the various musical aesthetics in order to create a style, but simply throws them on top of each other and places them in a stereotyped musical environment.[33]

31 Promotional film (2016) of a Hungarian *nufolk* ensemble established in 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1ahErAVjhQ (accessed on June 30, 2024); promotional film (2024) of a quite new ensemble established in 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fvwKPntS-IY (accessed on June 30, 2024).

32 The market's pop-folk music products display stereotypical characteristics that are closely linked to the fashion trends of their respective time periods. The Balkan rhythms, saxophone, drum, and accordion as almost obligatory elements can be mentioned from the last two decades as an example. The influential power and impact of these elements are so vigorous, that they overwhelm the peculiarities of music with different origins.

33 "In conclusion, let me add that internationalism is not only unthinkable, but also detrimental to music and all other arts. Music and its sister arts must always reflect the character of their respective regions and environments. This is the source of diversity, both in art and in life." (Béla Bartók, "Magyar népzene és új magyar zene [1928]", in *Bartók Béla Írásai* vol. 1, ed. Tibor Tallián (Budapest: Editio Musica, 1989), English transl. by István Csaba Németh, based on the critical notes of the volume, 137.)

In addition to the accurate description of the social and sociological transformations, including the exact data connected to these processes, the changes taking place in traditional village music and dance culture can also be demonstrated by the exploration of aesthetic values, the quality of productions, which in music fundamentally requires the consideration of three factors:

1. the musical content, including comparative analyses of musical characteristics and styles that make differentiation possible,
2. the manner of the performance, including the role of the performer's individuality, and
3. the nature, quality, relational framework, essential connections defining the existence, and the social context of the musical product itself.

Musicians and composers who conducted folk music research, along with ethnographers and sociologists working in the rising *táncház* movement, evaluated these three factors that also formed the intellectual foundation for the dance house movement. Regarding musical content (1.), they discussed the rural-urban dichotomy, the relationship between music and society, and, as the most important issue, the aesthetic peculiarities and values of folk (i.e. village, peasant) music.[34] One typical example reflecting the discussion on this topic comes from Béla Bartók:

> *According to the way I feel, a genuine peasant melody of our land is a musical example of a perfected art. I consider it quite as much a masterpiece, for instance, in miniature, as a Bach fugue or a Mozart sonata movement is a masterpiece in larger form. A melody of this kind is a classic example of the expression of a musical thought in its most conceivably concise form, with the avoidance of all that is superfluous* […].[35]

Melodies originating in Western art music also found their way and took root in village tradition. Some appear in the repertoire of both urban Romani orchestras and village bands. The musical content of these melodies fundamentally differs from that of traditional village music; consequently, their aesthetic evaluation should be informed by the specific period of art music from which they originated. Of course, we must bear in mind that these tunes were 'folklorized'; they had been transmitted orally within a given community for a sufficiently long

34 Pál Richter, "Gondolatok a népzene esztétikumáról", *Magyar Zene* 61, no. 4 (2023): 365; Pál Richter, "Scholarly and Artistic Discourse on the Values and Aesthetics of Folk Music in 20th-century Hungary", in *Táncház 50: Half a Century of the Hungarian Táncház Movement*, eds. Pál Richter, Dániel Lipták (Budapest: HUN-REN BTK Zenetudományi Intézet), in print.

35 Béla Bartók, "Magyar Népzene és új magyar zene [1928]", in *Bartók Béla Írásai* vol. 1, ed. Tibor Tallián (Budapest: Editio Musica, 1989), 129–137; Eng. transl. quoted from Béla Bartók, "The Folk Songs of Hungary [1928]", in *Béla Bartók: Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (London: Faber & Faber, 1976), 333.

period of time (at least two or three generations) and had thus adapted to the musical tradition of the peasant community. In the process of organic integration into folk music tradition, the melodies inevitably undergo some changes as compared to their original form. In most cases, the outcome, the folklorized version will exhibit a level of enrichment that can be described using aesthetic criteria.[36]

The performance style (2.) plays a crucial role in the aesthetic perception of folk music. This aspect was also emphasized by Hungarian researchers of folk music tradition. By the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, in addition to the musically based systematization of stylistic layers and types of Hungarian folk music, a comprehensive overview of the performance styles had also been finalized. The latter was significantly facilitated and inspired by the dance house movement.[37]

Kodály emphasizes the richness of timbre, the specificity of the vocal technique, and the use of ornaments preserved in the traditional Transylvanian singing manner. Subsequent research has localized similar phenomena in all parts of the Hungarian language area.[38] Concerning instrumental village band music, Bartók and Kodály were familiar with the performance styles of both urban and rural Romani bands. The direct experience of these performance styles proved decisive for the composition of their works based on folk songs and popular art songs. The performance style of traditional village music is a fundamental component of the aesthetic of traditional music because of its gestures, accents, breaths, and moods, which has also been confirmed by research on the performance of folk songs and instrumental village music. It was no coincidence that, at the beginning of the dance house movement, it was precisely the performance style that sparked skepticism among renowned folk music researchers: Are performers who were not born into this tradition and who do not live in it able to perform village music in an authentic manner?

Regarding the essential connections defining the existence and the social context of village music (3.),[39] researchers, including Bartók and Kodály, repeatedly emphasized that they considered the personal experience in the country to be equally indispensable for assessing the artistic values of the folk songs, composing folk song arrangements, and conducting scholarship.

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36 For further details see: Pál Richter, "Style hongrois és magyar zenei hagyomány: A népies zene és a népzene kölcsönhatásai", *Zenetudományi dolgozatok 2017–2018, Tallián Tibor tiszteletére* (Budapest: MTA BTK Zenetudományi Intézet, 2020) 43–56; Pál Richter, "Értelmezések és félreértelmezések a népzenekutatásban", *Magyar Zene* 56, no. 4 (2018): 373–384.

37 Richter, "Gondolatok a népzene esztétikumáról", 373–376; Richter, "Scholarly and Artistic Discourse on the Values and Aesthetics of Folk Music in 20th-century Hungary", in print.

38 Katalin Paksa, *"Énekeltem én…": Kiváló népi énekesek antológiája* (Gödöllő: Premontrei Szent Norbert Gimnázium, Egyházzenei Szakközépiskola és Diákotthon, 2014).

39 For further details see: Richter, "Gondolatok a népzene esztétikumáról", 376–380; Richter, "Scholarly and Artistic Discourse on the Values and Aesthetics of Folk Music in 20th-century Hungary", in print.

> […] *the effects of peasant music cannot be deep and permanent unless this music is studied in the country as part of a life shared with the peasants.*[40]
>
> *It is not enough to 'folk get to know' the material by collecting it in a way a scholar would do.* [...] *One must be personally involved with the tradition and thus with the spiritual life of a group of people. It is only in this way that we can gain access to what cannot be transmitted in any other way than the face-to-face encounter of living beings.* [...] *the Hungarian music historian must first be a folklorist. He cannot examine our written sources, if he does not know the folk music tradition from personal experience. One cannot acquire such knowledge without living in a village for a shorter or longer period.*[41]

Living in the country for a shorter or longer period gave researchers the spiritual and artistic experience that revealed the spontaneous and instinctive expression of the individuals in the local community creation process. Representatives of the dance house movement in the first period trained in the same practice: They learned village music and dance in the traditional way from local musicians, singers and dancers while living in their communities for an extended time. Already in 1974, cultural historian László Kósa accurately observed the innovative approach and fresh energy of revival musicians and singers associated with the dance house movement, which highlighted the essence of folk art and the aesthetic values of peasant music and dance.

> [The dance house movement] *has undoubtedly revitalized our folk singing with its fashion for the archaic dialects of Hungarian folk music from Transdanubia, the Transylvanian Plain, and the Csángó region, which were hitherto little known to wider audiences. With its young performers, the movement promises the emergence of a new performing style. In contrast to the traditional endeavors, it adheres more to folkloric patterns, though not in a rigid manner. It strives for a naturalistic performance, but without the inclination to conserve, and views folklore not as museological but as living material that can be made to blossom according to its own laws. The movement seeks to focus on the important original characteristic of oral tradition, which is that it lives in variants; it is not a closed entity but an open one, capable of further development. For example, the peasant dance is not staged with strict choreography and precisely determined steps but more loosely, leaving room for variation and improvisation.* [...] *These avant-garde initiatives mark a radical departure not only from past efforts in the 1930s or 1950s to preserve folk culture by adhering to traditional frameworks and forms but also from the present-day* [1970s!] *interpretation of folklore we might describe as traditional, which presents folk art as a* [stage] *production for a passive audience. They aim to develop a new, interactive form of public culture in music, dance, song, and crafts, encouraging people to participate. Having been established as a form of entertainment for young people, the dance house movement has already successfully achieved its goal.*[42]

40 Béla Bartók, "The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music [1931]", in *Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (London: Faber & Faber, 1976), 341.

41 Zoltán Kodály, "Néprajz és zenetörténet [1933]", in Zoltán Kodály, *Visszatekintés: Összegyűjtött írások, beszédek, nyilatkozatok* 1–3, ed. Ferenc Bónis (Budapest: Argumentum, 2007) vol. 2, 231.

42 László Kósa, "A népi kultúra új hulláma", *Tiszatáj* 28, no. 9 (1974): 41–42.

Notwithstanding, a few years after the movement began, no data or knowledge was yet available about the long-term application and use of traditional village culture in a context other than its own.

Conclusion

In summary, we must acknowledge that following the dance house movement's heroic age and its first generations' efforts, the newer members of the movement have relied less and less on the results of folk music and dance research and their enthusiasm – sometimes combined with a lack of professional training, or even of elementary skills – was less and less able to assimilate reliable data and traditional performance manners of village music, let alone recognize and evaluate the processes characteristic of a tradition disappearing at an increasingly fast pace.

From an aesthetic point of view, traditional music – its mode of existence and role in the village community – represents an extremely complex issue; so much so that even today we cannot accurately and responsibly formulate a model for it. What we can confidently state is that both the creation and practice of this culture occurred under the 'supervision' of the village community concerned. It is true that the existence of variations and constant changes were the essence of this culture; however, the approval and constant confirmation of the socio-cultural community, of traditional peasant society is equally important. In urban settings, changes in the elements of this culture, innovations, and often even variants, come from particular individuals, and the validation of a traditional village community is naturally absent. The reason for this is that the kind of homogenous community, the symbiosis that existed in the autochthonous village environment, cannot develop in urban contexts characterized by diversity in the shadow of the fluctuating trends of modern culture. In other words, we know and possess a culture of peasant origin; however, without the existence of oral tradition and symbiosis, the kind of village communal quality that is a necessary condition for its functioning, we are unable to carry it forward or ensure its organic survival at its previous level. Likely, the only means to keep it alive is akin to the manner in which we look after the composed art music of previous eras, which is also a difficult creative task. As Sárosi put it:

> […] *it is only through a creative approach that one can properly reproduce – perform – the sounds of music, the words of a poem or a dramatic work. The performer must have a talent similar to that of the composer in order to make the work sound as the composer intended.*[43]

43 Bálint Sárosi, *A cigányzenekar múltja az egykorú sajtó tükrében* vol. II: *1904–1944* (Budapest: Nap Kiadó, 2012), 8.

After five decades, the effect of the foreign medium (distinct from the original village, peasant environment) and its influences on the elements, repertoire, and performance of traditional village music and dance culture are increasing and significant. A conflict is already apparent between the conscious preservation of traditions and commercially driven urban entertainment, between true functions and stage productions. There are also contradictions between the desire for self-realization of young musicians and dancers and the need to preserve traditional practices. In general, two branches of the revival practice originated in the dance house movement have emerged in a distinct form recently. Following the path set by predecessors, the first seeks to preserve and restore village music and dance culture in its traditional form, according to its own laws, while allowing for individuality of execution within this framework. The second takes inspiration from the musical and dance content of traditional village culture creating new, composed musical and cultural products that fulfill the demand for self-realization, align with ever-changing trends, and cater to pop-folk markets. In light of contemporary trends we can anticipate that in 20–25 years, the Hungarian *táncház* as a method will remain a vital means of preserving traditional peasant culture with its distinct elements, rather than merely offering arranged versions, in sometimes distorted, monotonous, and stereotypical performing styles that arise from urban use and business conditions. Regarding the musical aspect of the movement, it is clear that one cannot raise objections to dispute the value of individual musical creation and composition, but there are valid concerns about the underlying confused ideology and the lack of the professional knowledge and skills. The final product in the second approach, like all compositions in general, is, of course, highly dependent on musical talent. The traditional village music material provides only a possibility for performance and composition. It is not a registered trademark, whether the piece is labeled as world/global music, fusion music, Balkan magic, and so forth. Here, again, we must rely on Bartók's wisdom:

> *In the hands of incompetent composers neither folk music nor any other musical material will ever attain significance. If a composer has no talent, it will be of no use to him to base his music on folk music or any other music. The result will in every case be nothing.*[44]

In other words, musicians, whether they play serious or light music, must remain within the prevailing boundaries of musical good taste, bearing in mind the aesthetics of traditional village music. Understanding and appreciating what constitutes good musical taste in a given context depends in part on education, but more on innate talent.

44 Béla Bartók, "A népi zene hatása a mai műzenére [1931]", in *Bartók Béla Írásai* vol. 1, ed. Tibor Tallián (Budapest: Editio Musica, 1989), 138–147; Eng. transl. quoted from Béla Bartók, "On the Significance of Folk Music [1931]", in *Béla Bartók: Essays*, ed. Benjamin Suchoff (London: Faber & Faber, 1976), 347.

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SUMMARY

Exploring the aesthetic qualities and values represented inherent in traditional music requires examining three basic factors: (1) the musical content, including musical characteristics, styles, etc.; (2) the performance style; (3) the fundamental nature of folk music, its interconnectedness, community character, its role and essential relationships. There is no doubt that earlier comments and assessments on these factors by musicians and composers who conducted folk music research and later by ethnographers and sociologists formed the intellectual backdrop for the development of the *táncház* [dance house] movement in urban milieu. This also explains why, at the beginning of the movement young advocates sought to present the very same aesthetic ideals of traditional village music to society as Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály did in their own art by reviving and re-learning rural folklore. A thorough comparative survey of autochthon, traditional folk music and its reflection in urban revivalism on aesthetical factors, including content, performing style and context of cultural and social existence, enables us to answer the key issue of the research: whether cultures maintained through oral communication and communal use can survive long term in a foreign environment when losing, partly or entirely, the essentially oral way of their transmission and the village community control that had been so vibrant for many generations. If so, to what extent have the various elements changed, shaped or deformed? The process of change reveals the differences, new tendencies, as well as distortions, which lead to trends that validate or invalidate the aesthetics and artistic value of folk (village) music and dance as traditional cultures.

POVZETEK

Tradicionalna vaška glasba in ples v urbanem okolju. Posledice in estetski vidiki

Raziskovanje estetskih lastnosti in vrednosti, ki so neločljivo povezane s tradicionalno glasbo, zahteva preučitev treh osnovnih dejavnikov: (1) glasbena vsebina, vključno z glasbenimi značilnostmi, slogi itn.; (2) izvedbeni slog; (3) temeljna narava ljudske glasbe, njena medsebojna povezanost, skupnostni značaj, vloga in bistveni odnosi. Ni dvoma, da so zgodnejše pripombe

in ocene teh dejavnikov, ki so jih najprej ustvarili glasbeniki in skladatelji, raziskovalci ljudske glasbe, kasneje pa etnografi in sociologi, tvorile intelektualno ozadje za razvoj gibanja *táncház* [plesna hiša] v urbanem okolju. To pojasnjuje tudi, zakaj so mladi zagovorniki na začetku gibanja želeli družbi predstaviti iste estetske ideale tradicionalne vaške glasbe, kot sta jih Béla Bartók in Zoltán Kodály v svoji umetnosti, z oživljanjem in ponovnim učenjem podeželske folklore. Temeljita primerjalna raziskava avtohtone, tradicionalne ljudske glasbe in njenega odseva v mestnem oživljanju z vidika estetskih dejavnikov, vključno z vsebino, izvedbenim slogom in kontekstom kulturne in družbene eksistence, nam omogoča odgovoriti na ključno vprašanje raziskave: ali lahko kulture, ki se ohranjajo z ustnim prenašanjem in skupnostno rabo, dolgoročno preživijo v tujem okolju, ko delno ali v celoti izgubijo svoj nepogrešljiv ustni način prenašanja in nadzor vaške skupnosti, ki je bil toliko generacij izjemno živ. Če je tako, v kakšnem obsegu so se različni elementi spremenili, izoblikovali ali deformirali? Proces sprememb razkriva razlike, nove tendence, pa tudi izkrivljanja, ki vodijo do trendov, ki potrjujejo ali ovržejo estetiko in umetniško vrednost ljudske (vaške) glasbe in plesa kot tradicionalnih kultur.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PÁL RICHTER (richter.pal@abtk.hu) was born in Budapest, graduated from the Liszt Ferenc University of Music as a musicologist in 1995, and obtained a PhD degree in 2004. His special field of research is seventeenth century music of Hungary, and he conducted his PhD research in the same subject. His other main fields of interest are Hungarian folk music, classical and 19th century music theory and multimedia in music education. Since 1990 he has been involved in the computerized cataloguing of the folk music collection of the Institute for Musicology and has also participated in ethnographic field research. From 2005 he was the head of Folk Music Archives, and recently has become the director of the Institute of Musicology, Research Centre for the Humanities HAS. He regularly delivers papers at conferences abroad, publishes articles and studies and teaches music theory and the study of musical forms at the Liszt Ferenc University of Music in Budapest. From 2007 till 2021 he directed the new folk music training, and is the founding head of the Folk Music Department.

O AVTORJU

PÁL RICHTER (richter.pal@abtk.hu) je bil rojen v Budimpešti, leta 1995 je diplomiral iz muzikologije na Univerzi za glasbo Liszt Ferenc, leta 2004 pa je pridobil doktorat. Njegovo posebno področje raziskovanja je madžarska glasba 17. stoletja, na tem področju je tudi opravil doktorski študij. Druga področja, ki ga zanimajo, so madžarska ljudska glasba, klasična glasba in glasbena teorija 19. stoletja ter uporaba multimedije v glasbenem izobraževanju. Od leta 1990 sodeluje pri računalniškem katalogiziranju zbirke ljudske glasbe Inštituta za muzikologijo in sodeluje tudi pri etnografskih terenskih raziskavah. Od leta 2005 je bil vodja Arhiva ljudske glasbe, nedavno pa je postal direktor Inštituta za muzikologijo, Raziskovalnega centra za humanistične vede HAS. Redno predava na konferencah v tujini, objavlja članke in študije ter poučuje glasbeno teorijo in študij glasbenih oblik na Univerzi za glasbo Liszt Ferenc v Budimpešti. Od leta 2007 do 2021 je vodil novo izobraževanje na področju ljudske glasbe in je ustanovni vodja Oddelka za ljudsko glasbo.

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Negotiating Authenticity through Folk Singing Interpretations

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how interpretations of folk singing in Slovenia reflect shifting concepts of authenticity within heritage processes. Drawing on historical analysis and ethnographic interviews, it argues that authenticity is not a fixed trait but a relational category shaped by institutional norms, historically informed aesthetics, embodied performance, and performers' emotional connection to songs.

Keywords: authenticity, folk singing, interpretation, heritagisation, folk music revival

IZVLEČEK

Članek raziskuje, kako interpretacije ljudskega petja v Sloveniji odražajo spreminjajoče se pojmovanje avtentičnosti v procesih ohranjanja dediščine. Na podlagi zgodovinske analize in etnografskih intervjujev prikaže, da avtentičnost ni fiksna lastnost, ampak relacijska kategorija, ki jo oblikujejo institucionalne norme, zgodovinsko utemeljena estetika, utelešeno izvajanje in čustvena povezanost izvajalcev s pesmimi.

Ključne besede: avtentičnost, ljudsko petje, interpretacija, dediščinjenje, ljudskoglasbeni preporod

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Introduction

The article focuses on contemporary interpretations of folk songs in Slovenia in the context of heritagisation, exploring how notions of authenticity are shaped among folk revival performers. These notions are always constructed in relation to selected traditional forms, which are perceived by the performers as the foundation of their interpretation. Although the distinction between traditional and revival singing is theoretically and empirically complex – and in some respects a slippery one – I nevertheless apply it here, as it enables a clearer analysis of the relational positioning that revival performers assume toward traditional singing practices. Accordingly, the article first outlines two modes of folk song performance. The first form is traditional folk singing, performed by singers understood in the discourse of Slovenian ethnomusicology and music folkloristics as traditional folk singers. It entails musical expressivity that is embedded in the local cultural setting and is "passed down within a community as part of its living culture".[1] Traditional singing is most frequently an intergenerational process, where the repertoire, the way of singing and the context of performing are preserved within family, village or other community frameworks. Over the past century, traditional singing has undergone continuous change, shaped by shifting aesthetic norms and influenced mainly by mass media, other musical genres, and cultural and pedagogical institutions.

The second phenomenon this article focuses on is revitalisation singing of folk songs, which is usually associated with performative folk music practices. The performers are individuals or groups who typically re-create folk music on the basis of audio and written sources, and sometimes oral sources. They adapt the music to contemporary aesthetic preferences and needs, and place it in the context of a stage performance before an audience. In contrast to the gradual and often implicit changes characteristic of traditional singing, the transformation of folk songs in revitalisation contexts is typically a conscious and intentional process, informed by artistic choices, conceptual frameworks, and the demands of public presentation. This phenomenon is part of a wider folk revival movement situated in Slovenia since approximately the 1980s that is also taking place in other cultural settings outside Slovenia. Characteristically, it "involves the deliberate selection, adaptation, and sometimes invention of musical elements to fit contemporary needs and contexts".[2] In discussing this phenomenon, I will primarily use the term folk revival singers, along with the term interpretation, to highlight their deliberate and reflective approach to re-creating tradition – specifically, in the case of folk song.[3]

1 Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 17.

2 Ibid., 17.

3 Sundin, in the context of Western art music, understands an "interpretative act" as a "cognitive modus whereby the mind is attuned to surrounding objects in the world", Nils-Göran Sundin,

When a certain expression or practice begins to be valued as highly significant and worthy of preservation and promotion at the local, national or international level, it passes into the sphere of cultural heritage. This transition does not occur as a matter of course; it involves processes that attribute new value to a tradition. In such contexts, heritage functions as a mode of cultural production in the present, drawing selectively on elements of the past. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett thus defines heritage as a "value-added industry"[4] that creates new meanings from existing or past cultural forms through various means (musealisation, institutional support, tourist promotion). However, the evaluation and selection of what is preserved as heritage is often "in the hands of specially approved professional experts who select what is to be preserved according to certain approved criteria".[5]

In this process, folk revivalists often play the role of intermediaries between (living or past) traditions and the official heritage sphere. They act as external players who reinterpret tradition and adapt it to contemporary aesthetic norms and institutional frameworks. In doing so, they often come under the scrutiny of institutions that use their own set of norms and selection mechanisms to determine which musical renditions are to be considered 'appropriate' or 'inappropriate' in terms of officially recognised heritage. Such institutional legitimations are also sometimes critical of contemporary interpretations, as these may deviate from the established canons of authenticity that apply to folk musical expression.

Therefore, this paper also focuses on the concept of authenticity, which pervades the sphere of traditional, heritage and revivalist practices. Authenticity is not a static characteristic of musical expression, but a dynamic and contextual concept that is constantly being redefined. In the process of heritagisation, authenticity becomes an evaluation tool – for example, it validates some forms of expression as legitimate while rejecting others, usually as excessively adapted to contemporary aesthetic and commercial influences.

Accordingly, this paper starts from the assumption that authenticity in the context of folk song interpretations is always the product of discursive, affective and institutional practices rather than a pre-given attribute. Over the last hundred years, heritagisation has produced various norms of how to perform folk songs 'correctly' and 'authentically', from scientifically reconstructed archival versions, through institutional regulations (e.g. those introduced by the Public Fund for Cultural Activities of the Republic of Slovenia; hereinafter

"Aesthetic Criteria for Musical Interpretation: A Study of the Contemporary Performance of Western Notated Instrumental Music after 1750", *Jyväskylä Studies in the Arts* 45 (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 1994): 9.

4 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Theorizing Heritage", *Ethnomusicology* 39, no. 3 (1995): 370.

5 Owe Ronström, "Traditional Music, Heritage Music", in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*, eds. Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 53.

Public Fund), to contemporary, sometimes affectively based, revivalist practices. Based on interviews conducted with performers and an analysis of their performances, this paper shows how contemporary folk song interpretation takes place in a dynamic sphere where historical definitions, embodied performance practices, emotional resonance and (critical) responses to heritage institutions intersect. Thus, by focusing on the conceptualisation of the 'authenticity of performance' of folk music, this research will also contribute to a better understanding of heritagisation, since public performances play a key role in shaping the perception, placement and evaluation of folk music in a contemporary context.

Methodologically, the research is based on the analysis of musical performances and interviews with performers, and it partly involves a self-reflexive perspective, as I am actively engaged in the structures related to the topic of this article. Having long served as vice-president of the Folk Slovenia Cultural and Ethnomusicological Society,[6] which brings together contemporary performers and interpreters of folk music, and as a former expert advisor at the Public Fund, where I was involved in developing evaluative criteria for staged folk singing, I am not merely an outside observer. My position is shaped by long-term participation in the very structures I am analysing. This insider perspective enables a deep understanding of institutional and cultural dynamics, while at the same time requiring a self-reflexive and critical approach to my own role within them. This dual perspective allows me to analyse the processes of heritagisation, revivalist practices and the concept of authenticity in contemporary folk music in a more holistic way.

The introductory theoretical chapter sets forth a few conceptual approaches that define the authentication relationship between musical practices, traditions and interpretations in different ways. Next, a historical overview sheds light on how processes of scientific codification and institutionalisation have influenced the understanding and practice of authenticity in folk music in Slovenia. Here, special attention is given to the attitude of collectors, researchers and composers towards folk song representations from the late nineteenth century onwards as well as to the norms in stage representations of folk music to the present day. This historical introduction is followed by the empirical part of my research, which centres on the perception of authenticity through the interpretations of folk songs in some folk revival singers. In the conclusion,

6 The Folk Slovenia Cultural and Ethnomusicological Society [Kulturno in etnomuzikološko društvo Folk Slovenija], established in 1996, has for decades served as an umbrella organisation for folk revival musicians as well as for scholars in the fields of ethnomusicology, ethnochoreology, ethnology, and cultural anthropology. For more detailed insight into the organisation and ideology of this society, see Mojca Kovačič, "The Folk Music Revival in Slovenia: Conceptual Frameworks of the Folk Slovenia Cultural and Ethnomusicological Society", in *Táncház 50: Half a Century of the Hungarian Táncház Movement*, eds. Richter Pál and Lipták Dániel (Budapest: HUN-REN BTK Zenetudományi Intézet, in print).

theoretical concepts are brought into dialogue with the empirical material, critically examining their relevance and manifestation in folk revival musical practices. These conclusions are not meant to be generalized to all Slovenian regions or folk revival music practices. Instead, they aim to highlight contrasting perspectives and interpretive strategies within this field.

Theoretical Considerations of Authenticity

As early as the nineteenth century, the idea of authenticity began to be legitimised through science and its methodologies, which, as Regina Bendix points out, reflected the Romantic "moral and emotional conceptualization of authenticity".[7] The emerging discipline of *Volkskunde* gave rise to essentialist perspectives in which folk creativity was conceptualised as a direct and organic expression of national identity. Although romantic nationalism had ebbed by the end of the century, these views were preserved in the work of institutions such as museums and conservation organisations, which sought legitimation and direction in folkloristics. At the same time, folklorists often saw cooperation with institutions as a means of realizing their scientific ambitions.[8] This reinforced the tendency to materialise authenticity in the form of supposedly 'proper' versions of folk songs, reconstructed by using ethnographic notes, archival sources and phonetic precision. Bendix points out that such an approach reproduces the logic of colonial epistemologies, in which musical expressions are considered as static, ethnically restricted and unchanging entities.

For a broader understanding of the authenticity discourse, it is also relevant to consider theoretical perspectives from tourism. In her study, Ning Wang presents a typology of authenticity, which offers useful tools for the analysis of cultural practices.[9] She distinguishes between objective, constructive and existential authenticity. The first is based on museum logic, according to which authenticity is an inherent characteristic of objects or practices, measurable through historical and formal criteria. Constructive authenticity is based on the societal notions and expectations projected by the cultural industry or the audience onto cultural phenomena. Finally, existential authenticity refers to an individual's experience and sense of genuineness, linked to the intrapersonal (sensory, emotional) and interpersonal (communal) dimensions. Wang thus suggests that authenticity is not inherent to the object but emerges through subjective experience, which opens analytical space for understanding authenticity in contemporary musical practices as well.

7 Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 46.

8 Ibid., 105.

9 Ning Wang, "Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience", in *The Political Nature of Cultural Heritage and Tourism*, ed. D. J. Timothy (London: Routledge, 2017), 469–490.

Similar shifts can also be observed in ethnomusicology. For example, the participants of ethno camps often understand music as 'authentic' if they connect emotionally with it, which implies a link between personal experience and the representation of national identity. Researchers argue that participants' choice of repertoire at an ethno camp may occur through a framework of personal authenticity, "wherein music that feels authentic to a person is by extension authentic to their nation".[10] These notions also reveal a conceptual shift from objectivist understandings of authenticity to more subjective, experiential ones. However, while the turn to personal authenticity may appear to move beyond essentialist definitions, it may still remain entangled in them. Such subjective perceptions can still be shaped by broader cultural narratives about what is considered authentic. As Simone Krüger argues in her critique of early world music pedagogy, authenticity has often been constructed through the essentialisation of the Other, relying on stereotypical visual and sonic markers of race, ethnicity and traditionality. The juxtaposition of these perspectives suggests that personal authenticity, though seemingly subjective and emotionally grounded, may still draw from shared cultural imaginaries and inherited scripts about what 'authentic' music is supposed to sound or look like.[11] As Sarah Weiss also notes, students often judge authenticity not by the acoustic qualities of music, but in accordance with their own cultural expectations. She describes authenticity as 'malleable', flexible, and politically contingent – often entangled with ideals of purity, locality, and resistance to globalisation. At the same time, she stresses that hybridity and authenticity are not mutually exclusive; rather, hybrid musical expressions can, over time, be perceived as authentic, which reveals the processual, negotiated nature of the authentic.[12]

In the context of musical revivals in the second half of the twentieth century, Bithell and Hill define authenticity as a key ideological element. For some performers, it is expressed as accurate reproduction of musical patterns, while others have an approach based on experiencing music and its interpretation.[13] In line with Henry Feintuch's idea that tradition is a place of imagination, not a measure of reality, a different understanding of authenticity emerges – the "authenticity of the consumer"[14] or the "authenticity of experience".[15] This is

10 Lee Higgins and Sarah-Jane Gibson, *Ethno Music Gatherings: Pedagogy, Experience, Impact* (Bristol: Intellect, 2024), xxxi.

11 Simone Krüger, "Undoing Authenticity as a Discursive Construct: A Critical Pedagogy of Ethnomusicology and 'World Music'", in *Beyond Borders: Welt-Musik-Pädagogik: Musikpädagogik und Ethnomusikologie im Diskurs*, eds. Barbara Alge and Oliver Kraemer (Augsburg: Wissner Verlag, 2013), 93–114.

12 Sarah Weiss, "Listening to the World but Hearing Ourselves: Hybridity and Perceptions of Authenticity in World Music", *Ethnomusicology* 58, no. 3 (2014): 506–525.

13 Bithell and Hill, "An Introduction to Music Revival", 14.

14 Ronström, "Traditional Music, Heritage Music", 47.

15 Bithell and Hill, "An Introduction to Music Revival", 24.

a dimension where the audience perceives something as authentic because it triggers identification, emotional resonance or reflection. This layer is often not linked to the performer's intention, but to the expectations of the audience, which may be "ill-informed, based on mythology, inherited prejudice, or manipulated by market forces".[16]

Similarly, Ronström emphasises that authenticity is not an inherent characteristic, but the result of legitimation.[17] Performers often need the validation of institutions (researchers, media, festivals) that shape and distribute knowledge. The key mechanisms of legitimation identified by Ronström include historicization (as a reference the past), aestheticization (as a mechanism for linking the past to universal values of beauty and humanity) and authenticity (as the attribution of "factuality, truth, and also affect").[18] Within this logic, it is not historical accuracy that is decisive, but the effect of reality: "What is true is what feels true."[19]

However, the sense of authenticity is not the exclusive domain of the audience; the performer's emotive experience also contributes to the legitimation of authenticity and is in continuous dialogue with the audience's response. Musical revival thus manifests as a dynamic relationship between the past and the present, where the past is consciously invoked to replace or make sense of the present,[20] or as Ronström puts it, "to create symbolic ties to the past, for reasons of the future".[21] Livingston describes this process as a search for personal authenticity in historical forms.[22] In this framework, some performers establish authenticity through fidelity to their artistic vision or engagement in the current context, which means that authenticity goes beyond mere reproduction of the past. The process of authentication also involves the creation of symbolic ties with ancestral heritage, communities or specific social roles. In this respect, too, authenticity is not an absolute, but an interpretive and emotionally coloured act that draws its meaning from culturally relevant forms of heritage.

In the context of performative conceptualisation of authenticity, it is particularly interesting to note papers which address affective authenticity as a

16 The authors highlight the gap between audience expectations and the artistic intentions of performers, particularly in the context of world music. For example, African artists are often accused of inauthenticity if they do not fit into Western colonial notions of Africa as 'primitive' and 'natural'. Such perceptions are reinforced through visual symbols (e.g. drums, grass skirts) which are meant to signal authenticity. Ibid., 24.

17 Ronström, "Traditional Music, Heritage Music", 45.

18 Ibid., 46.

19 Ibid., 47.

20 Philip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 130.

21 Owe Ronström, "Revival Reconsidered", *The World of Music* 38, no. 3 (1996), 18.

22 Tamara E. Livingston, "Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory", *Ethnomusicology* 43, no. 1 (1999), 74.

concept that foregrounds perceived reality, emotional resonance and inner belonging as the foundation for music interpretation, as opposed to normative or historical criteria of 'correct' performance. A study in art psychology finds that "people's beliefs about authentic music are influenced by the emotionality of the music more than by the proficiency of the music", and that "authentic music is related to feelings of emotional connectedness".[23] A similar shift can be seen in the paper by Gazit and Belkind (2024), who conceptualise affective authenticity as an alternative to so-called scientific authenticity, which denies musicians "the creative right to their musical histories",[24] which refers to Western domination over African musical heritage. The focus of affective authenticity is the meaning ascribed to music by performer and listener, with an emphasis on the emotional togetherness of a community and its members through sound expressions. This concept situates authenticity within a relational and affective framework, where it is enacted as an experience that generates symbolic, identificatory, and emotional connections, often exceeding genre, ethnic, or historical expectations.

In this context, it is also relevant to draw a comparison with conceptions of authenticity in contemporary spiritual music as presented by Ruah-Midbar Shapiro and Ruah Midbar in their article "Outdoing Authenticity".[25] Unlike Gazit and Belkind, who understand affective authenticity as an internalised and politically informed experience grounded in the acoustic practice and historical preoccupations of Afro-diasporic artists, Ruah-Midbar Shapiro and Ruah Midbar see affect as a tool of Western appropriation. In the second of the three models analysed by these authors, Western performers and listeners reach for elements of 'other' cultures, which they understand as symbols of authentic spirituality – not out of respect for tradition, but as a result of their emotional impact. In this model, affective authenticity functions primarily as a mechanism of self-affirmation for the dominant culture.[26] Interestingly, their

23 Tara Venkatesan, George Newman, and Joshua Knobe, "Beliefs about Authentic Music" (undergraduate thesis, Yale University, 2018), https://cogsci.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Thesis-2018Venkatesan.pdf.

24 Nir Gazit and Ori Belkind, "Affective Authenticity: South African Singer Letta Mbulu and the Black Protest Tradition", *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 36, no. 1 (2024): 76, https://doi.org/10.1525/jpms.2024.36.1.51. Affective authenticity is strongly tied to identifications within the Afro-diasporic world in the USA. It denotes a form of representation that emphasises the multifaceted, shifting and temporary nature of black subjectivities and the connections made through cultural production. It is based on the resonances between displaced, reconnected and reinterpreted black cultures, developing under the influence of enduring colonial conditions, and expresses fractured and non-linear historical narratives, often through vocal techniques and sound expressivity.

25 Marianna Ruah-Midbar Shapiro and Omri Ruah Midbar, "Outdoing Authenticity: Three Postmodern Models of Adapting Folkloric Materials in Current Spiritual Music", *Journal of Folklore Research* 54, no. 3 (2017): 199–231.

26 The first model is characterized by a nostalgic return to one's own tradition, aiming to re-create a sense of authenticity through restoration rather than preservation, Ruah-Midbar Shapiro and Ruah Midbar, "Outdoing Authenticity", 200.

third model, termed 'remix spirituality', shares a common aspect with affective authenticity, i.e. the understanding that emotional impact is the key criterion of authenticity. In postmodern spiritual practices (e.g. in the context of trance parties and DJ sets), authenticity is not tied to origin or meaning, but to the ability of sound to evoke a sense of mystical or identity fulfilment. "Namely, the experiential effect of authenticity is authenticity",[27] the authors stress, giving legitimacy also to artificial or constructed spiritual experiences. However, it should be once again noted that the epistemological framework here is different: for the African diaspora, affective authenticity means the affirmation of a complex identity within historically informed and politically intertwined spaces, whereas in the 'remix model', affect functions as an aesthetic tool, divorced from content, origin or history.

Heritage Authentication through the Institutionalisation of Slovenian Folk Song

Conceptual views of folk song in the nineteenth century Europe were rooted in the romantic notion that folk song was an expression of national identity, neglecting individuals as the bearers of tradition, while the belief strengthened that it was an aspect of spontaneously emerging nationhood. This was the foundation for the development of the first institutional processes of heritagisation, where the intellectual elite selectively determined which elements of local folk culture would be included in national identity representations involving folk songs and how they would be presented to the general public. In Slovenian context, the selection process took place at various levels, including selective transcription of songs in the field, simplification of musical notations and their adaptation to Western art music concepts, selection of songs for collections, arrangements for vocal ensembles, and the selection of repertoire for public events, schools, radio broadcasts and gramophone records. In this period, the term *narodna pesem* [national song] was more common than *ljudska pesem* [folk song]. 'National songs' were mainly published as well as represented on stage as choral arrangements. Many collectors of folk songs in this period (Oskar Dev, Janko Žirovnik, Matej Hubad etc.) published them in collections, arranged for male or mixed choral ensembles. Such publications incorporated the aesthetics of choral interpretation, with added tempo, dynamic, and agogic markings, and the positioning of voices in polyphony followed the principles of the four-part choral form.[28]

27 Ibid., 220.

28 With regard to compositional approach, these compositions are designated in studies and subsequent discussions as harmonisations, arrangements or reworkings of folk songs, where such terms describe "the degree to which the arrangement departs from the model". Urša Šivic, "Ljudska pesem in njena priredba za zbor", in *So ptičice še snivale: ljudske pesmi slovenskih pokrajin / Čarnice* 1-5 (Ljubljana: Založba kaset in plošč RTV Slovenija, 2007), 1.

As choirs spread to the countryside in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century as the result of the increasing activities of cultural societies, the choral aesthetic began to influence folk singing as practised in people's everyday lives. As Kumer notes, the advent of choral singing in rural areas changed the aesthetic values of singing in local settings.[29] Nevertheless, it is not possible to conduct a detailed analysis of how folk songs were sung in everyday life during this period, as very few audio recordings were made in the field at that time.[30] Scarse examples can offer fragmentary assessments on the way of singing in Slovenian context of that period. For example, when I analysed the polyphonic singing recorded on wax cylinders, I observed that in some cases the manner of singing tends to be closer to a choral aesthetic, whereas in others it is more folk-like (as described later in the article).[31] The most distinctive traditional folk singing element that I identified was the manner of voice leading (e.g. with the use of vocal parts such as *naprej* or *tretka*[32]).

Although these rare sound recordings give some insight into the sound of traditional singing, the conceptual baseline of the first publications in the second half of the nineteenth century were mostly not tied to the empirical documentation, but to the cultural perceptions and nationalist Romantic ideas of the time.[33] In the spirit of that period, they perceived folk song as a heritage artefact that should be preserved both in materialised form (e.g. publications of folk songs) and intangible form (e.g. on the stage), albeit in adapted form. The Song was therefore treated primarily as raw material for heritagisation, whereas the manner of singing in a traditional setting was not important, and if songs were re-created from such records, they were adapted for the purpose of cultural representation to the aesthetic expression of the contemporary intellectual milieu. Authentication during this process was aimed at standardisation and canonisation, not at preserving specific performing practices of communities.

29 Zmaga Kumer, "Ljudska pesem v sodobnosti", in *Pogledi na etnologijo*, eds. Stanko Kremenšek and Angelos Baš (Kranj: Partizanska knjiga, 1978), 335–364.

30 For more information about the first sound recordings see: Drago Kunej, *Fonograf je dospel! Prvi zvočni zapisi slovenske ljudske glasbe* (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2008).

31 The folkloristic view of folk singing was formed on the basis of extensive field recordings of folk singing made after 1955, when the Institute of Ethnomusicology acquired a magnetic tape recorder and began to systematically collect, transcribe, analyze, and systematize the recorded material.

32 *Naprej* is the lead voice that starts the song on its own. *Tretka* is the third voice above the bass line. This type of voice leading is specific to folk polyphonic singing in Slovenia.

33 The collection of folk songs conducted under the leadership of Karel Štrekelj (1859–1912) – a Slavist, linguist, ethnographer, and editor of the monumental collection *Slovenske narodne pesmi* [*Slovenian Folk Songs*], as well as the head of the Slovenian committee within the campaign of the *Odbor za nabiranje slovenskih narodnih pesmi* [Committee for the Collection of Slovenian FolkSongs; OSNP] under the auspices of the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Public Worship and Education – did establish a folkloristic scholarly apparatus. However, in Štrekelj's case, it resulted in the publication of song texts only, while the OSNP collection contains mostly modestly notated, monophonic versions of folk melodies. Neither collection includes information about the manner of singing.

This understanding of song as a cultural artefact subsequently had a significant impact on the work of the leading musical heritage institution in Slovenia.

The Folklore Institute, which is now called the Institute of Ethnomusicology and is attached to the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (henceforth also referred to as the Institute), was founded in 1934. With the primary aim of collecting, archiving, systematising and analysing folk song, instrumental and dance material from the field, it was headed by France Marolt (1891–1951) as the only employee until 1941. However, in Marolt's time the Institute did not possess a sound recorder, so the sources available from that period are mainly written. An exception is a small number of sound documents recorded by Marolt in cooperation with Radio Ljubljana produced for the purposes of academic lectures and during a public demonstration of some folk customs in an urban setting, in Ljubljana.[34] These sound documents prove that, even in the period of Marolt's work up to the Second World War, heritagisation still treated folk song chiefly as an artefact worthy of study and, especially in his time, of establishing the historical and national significance of Slovenian songs. Namely, the socio-political situation still encouraged the idea of equating the concept of 'folk' with 'national', where textual or musical artefacts of the past in Slovenian songs legitimised the existence of the Slovenian nation long before the emergence of Slovenian political statehood. France Marolt collected, analysed, presented, and sometimes also falsified folk songs and wrote studies about folk songs with this aim.[35] Furthermore, the rare sound recordings preserved from this period and produced by Marolt show that he used Western art aesthetic interpretive criteria to provide sound illustrations of the material. This is evident from the fact that the folk songs on these recordings are performed by trained singers in the manner of choral singing, even though its aim was to show the richness of the rural musical tradition of the time.[36]

Following advancements in both music folklore scholarship and audio recording technologies, the Institute acquired a tape recorder and started conducting field recording after 1955. The ensuing period of intensive recording and analysis of those recordings brought new insights into folk song, especially into certain peculiarities that had not been noted in previously available written sources. For example, detailed annotation of the metrics of sung songs allowed researchers to establish frequent variation within a particular song type, discover some of the rhythmic specifics and explore previously overlooked ways of forming polyphony. In terms of singing style, they found that folk songs are usually sung without agogic and dynamic changes, and when present,

34 For more information see Drago Kunej, "France Marolt's Endeavours to Sound Document Folk Music", *Musicological Annual* 56, no. 2 (2020): 107–135, doi: 10.432/mz.56.2.107-135.

35 Zmaga Kumer, "France Marolt (1891–1951)", *Traditiones* 20 (1991): 9–28.

36 These recordings are kept at the Archives of the Institute of Ethnomusicology.

they are usually the result of the singers' engagement in choral activities. The question of singing technique was largely overlooked in the research, with only occasional general remarks characterising folk singing as free, loud, and confident. Only Robert Vrčon, a trained opera soloist and former collaborator of the Institute, offered a more detailed observation, describing traditional singing as resonant, robust, and powerful, yet appearing natural and physically unforced.[37]

Interest in public folklore representations for folk singing grew in early 1970s,[38] during the period of economic reforms and with the emergence of tourism.[39] This period saw the establishment of the cultural political associations, which played an important role in unifying the guidelines of folklore activities on republic and federal levels.[40] During this period, Mirko Ramovš, Julijan Strajnar, and Zmaga Kumer – researchers at the Institute – as well as Bruno Ravnikar, a university professor of acoustics, leader and mentor of folk-dance ensembles, and long-time head of the professional board for folklore activities within the cultural-political association, made important contributions to the development of guidelines for public presentations of folk music. In the 1970s, annual public concerts of folk music were launched. Initially, traditional singers were invited to perform by experts, but by the 1980s, singers were applying to perform. At these events, performers began to receive first recommendations and guidelines from experts for 'quality' performance, which for a long time was a label mainly for preserving or imitating selected past folk songs and musical practices in stage form.

From 1996, the role of main influence on the cultural policy of folklore activities has passed to the Public Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Cultural Activities (hereafter referred to The Public Fund).[41] Under its auspices, there have evolved, from initially more free advice based on the personal beliefs of the evaluators about the 'authenticity' of folk singing, increasingly stringent and united criteria for determining the representative form of 'authentic' Slovene folk music. Expert evaluators gradually set down criteria that were mainly

37 Robert Vrčon, "O nekaterih avtohtonih značilnostih slovenske ljudske vokalne glasbe", *Traditiones* 29, no. 1 (2000): 23–24.

38 The history of folklore festivals goes further back to the 1930s. In 1960, the first Yugoslav Folklore Festival was organised in Koper. Since 1969, this festival and its successor, a major international folklore festival, have been held in Beltinci. The festivals demonstrate a strong involvement of the profession in the programming direction of folklore shows.

39 At the time of these economic reforms, Slovenia was part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, consisting of several republics. Yugoslavia had a distinct model of socialist self-management and a relatively open economy compared to other socialist countries.

40 For more detailed historical overview see Mojca Kovačič, "In Search of the 'Folk Character' We Would Like to Hear: The Dichotomy Between Folk, the Profession, and Scholarship", *Traditiones* 41, no. 1 (2012): 78–80.

41 For a description of a similar cultural-political and evaluative system in the Czech Republic, see Zita Skořepová, "'Zpěváček' Folk Singing Competition: Regional Identity and Heritage Performance in the Czech Republic", *Traditiones* 52, no. 2 (2023): 105-124.

based on historical notion of 'proper' folk singing, as they advised group leaders how to come as close as possible to past folk musical expressions. Institutional criteria, applied mainly through gatherings of folk singers and musicians, thus had a strong influence on the presentation of folk singing on stage.

The singing of folk songs was also disappearing from people's everyday social life, which was reflected in the fact that individual singers, who used to be part of spontaneous singing communities, became members of organised singing groups and thus harmonised their singing styles, repertoire, dress and so on. These criteria influenced singing technique, song selection, ways of forming polyphony, tempo, intonation, the (non)use of instruments[42] and even behavioural mannerisms. Contemporary influences (e.g. pop-folk music or choral aesthetics) were rejected at stage folk music representations, which made some singers feel a sense of disparity between musical practices in own local settings and the expectations of institutions.[43] As a result, the professionally supervised stage revitalisation of folk song, the emphasis on certain aspects of past singing practices, and singing seminars all led to a considerable unification of musical and aesthetic norms for folk singing.[44] These criteria have influenced the contemporary performances of many music groups and individuals who re-create folk music, whether in the framework of the Public Fund for radio broadcasts or other public performances linked to heritage institutions and themes.

Since 2019, however, the criteria have changed again and emulation of past musical expressions is no longer a requirement for participation; folk song can be a source for new creations that are not limited by genre or style. However, as decades of guidance have shaped aesthetic norms and notions of 'true', 'authentic', and well-executed stage performance of folk song, the introduction of new criteria has provoked disagreement, generating resistance among some, while being welcomed by others as a reflection of changing needs and values within parts of the performing community. It should be mentioned that in the last decade, evaluators have also paid more attention to stage presentation and music and folk song text's interpretation that to the re-creation of the styles and repertoire of past singing practices.[45] It is noticeable that in the last few

42 In accordance with the predominant past practices (primarily those predating the Second World War), singers were discouraged from singing with instrumental accompaniment.

43 More about these cases: Kovačič, "In Search of the 'Folk Character' We Would Like to Hear", 77–90, and Urša Šivic, "The Double Identity of Traditional Musicians: The Case of Slovenian Vocal-Instrumental Group from Loka-Rošnja", in *Proceedings of the Second Symposium Held in İzmir, Turkey, 7–11 April 2010: Study Group on Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe*, eds. Elsie Ivancich Dunin and Mehmet Öcal Özbilgin (International Council for Traditional Music), 101–106.

44 Urša Šivic, "The Influence of Institutionalized Standards on the Transformation of Traditional Singing", *Translingual Discourse in Ethnomusicology* 2 (2016): 63–81.

45 For evaluation criteria see: *Napev - odsev, revija poustvarjalcev glasbenega izročila Slovenije 2025*, https://www.jskd.si/folklorna-dejavnost/prireditve/odrasle/poustvarjalci/majsperk_25/uvod_majsperk_25.htm.

years, the highest recognition has been given to singers with a considerably more Western art or popular musical style of interpreting folk songs, both in terms of song arrangement and vocal technique.

In the last decades, only certain aspects of folk music have been included in educational systems. In primary and secondary education, folk music is only marginally included in the curriculum, both in terms of content and repertoire; however, most teachers use a choral approach to teach singing, which often does not reflect the stylistic or vocal characteristics of traditional folk singing. At the tertiary education level, folk music is mostly taught as a theoretical subject, for example, as part of the Ethnomusicology and Folk and Pop Music course at the Department of Musicology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. For students of these departments, the theoretical programme is sometimes complemented by workshops in folk singing or dancing, offered in collaboration with other organisations. Students at the Academy of Music, University of Ljubljana, benefit from more extensive experience in folk singing, instrumental music, and dance within the study programme in music pedagogy. However, these activities are still offered within the framework of the predominantly theoretical course Introduction to Musical Folkloristics at the MA level.

In primary music education, folk music is mostly included through certain recognised folk instruments (tambura, zither and diatonic accordion), but the performing styles they are taught and the repertoire are not linked to past folk music practices; they are subject to formal music education systems that are based on Western art music norms. This gap in formal education has always been filled by the Public Fund (and its predecessors), which established training systems for amateur musicians (and dancers) in the form of seminars and workshops.[46] Over time, many of these students attended structured educational programmes, where they gained knowledge about Slovenian music (and dance) traditions and creative processes, transforming themselves from initial amateurs into seasoned experts in the field, with many of them working today as mentors to future generations. Some of these experts have subsequently become evaluators and heads of training seminars at the Public Fund.

Non-formal education thus played a crucial role in shaping the mindsets and aesthetic norms of professionals involved in implementing Public Fund's cultural policy. Through evaluation, educational programmes and selection procedures, it has defined the (changing) criteria of folk music authenticity and quality. In turn, this has guided the development and public image of folklore musical practices, and influenced the broader field of music aesthetics and the perception of folk music authenticity and value in contemporary times.

46 See also Drago Kunej, "The Changing Nature of Instrumental Music and Musicians in Folk Dance Ensembles", *Traditiones* 52, no. 2 (2023): 69–90.

Authenticity through Interpretations of Folk Song in the Context of Folk Revival

The historical overview of heritage processes is a framework that helps understand the empirical part of my research by shedding light on the influences that have shaped contemporary negotiations of authenticity. This section looks at contemporary interpreters of folk song, i.e. folk revival singers. The singers that I studied (all of them are women, which was not intentional)[47] mostly live and work in urban settings, consciously seek new repertoire for re-creation and present it on stage for audiences, but they also differ from each other in terms of how they represent and interpret folk songs. The central research questions that guided this study were: How do these singers conceptualise the 'proper' way of representing folk music? What kinds of freedoms and constraints do they recognise or adopt in their approaches, and how do they explain the origins of the representational norms they follow? These questions are closely linked to the discourse on the authenticity of representing folk traditions, which was set out in the introductory part of this article, whereas the results of the empirical work, along with theoretical considerations, provide a basis for the conclusion in this paper. The selection of singers was guided by my prior familiarity with the staged folk music scene, which allowed me to identify performers whose trajectories and practices appeared to represent a broad spectrum of interpretive approaches. The aim was not to construct a representative sample in a statistical sense, but to explore contrasting cases that could illuminate the diversity of ways in which folk song is approached, understood, and embodied in contemporary revival contexts.

My research focused on the views of four samples of interviewees: two singing groups and two individuals (not part of the singing groups under study).[48] The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, guided by a set of core questions posed to all interviewees, while allowing ample space for open-ended responses and the interviewees' own narrative trajectories.

All of the singers are or were members of the Folk Slovenia Ethnomusicological and Cultural Society, although the beginnings of their individual activities are not necessarily connected to the association itself. The following section summarises their history of singing folk songs, as interpreted through interviews, with a focus on their initial motivations for engaging in folk music,

47 This tendency may be partly attributed to the predominance of female singers and the still-persistent gendered division of musical roles, with women as vocalists and men as instrumentalists; yet perhaps more crucially, it reflects the ways in which women are often more deeply engaged with poetic and spiritual narratives, such as those found in folk song traditions, which are also central to identity formation in New Age and related movements, as later elaborated in the article.

48 The individual singers are or were also active in other contexts: they have either combined folk song with contemporary creative approaches and performers from different artistic fields (not music) or participated in musical projects outside the scope of folk music.

the figures or contexts that influenced their artistic development, their understanding of representational norms, and the ways in which they acquire and select their repertoire. To avoid revealing the identities of the singers, the names of the groups or individuals are not mentioned, but to help understand their diverse perspectives, I refer to the 'first' and 'second' singer when discussing the individual singers.[49] The analysis of transcribed interviews reveals diverse ways in which individual singers and singing groups engage in the practice of performing folk songs. Based on the findings, I structure the discussion by grouping the narratives of the two singing groups on one side and the two individual singers on the other. This division emerged organically from the results of the analysis and serves to highlight the distinct approaches and experiences within each category.

Sources of Repertoire and the Processes of Revival

Both singing groups originated within folk-dance ensembles, where their members initially participated as singers and dancers, before establishing their own independent singing groups in 1989 and 2006, respectively. Their initial participation in folk-dance ensembles and their later activities within folk-dance societies had a strong impact on their attitudes to folk song presentations. They often attended folklore training seminars organised by the Public Fund and participated in its public performances, where they acquired knowledge and developed norms on folklore heritage presentations in line with the institutional guidelines discussed in the previous chapter. Both groups sing songs from all the regions of Slovenia and its bordering regions with Slovene minorities, and plan their repertoire by listening to the Institute's audio publications. They also acquire material directly from the Institute, and they learnt some of the songs at singing seminars or from other singing groups. They also use printed (mainly the Institute's) publications of Slovene folk songs, and more recently, videos of certain singing groups, which are available on the YouTube channel.

Similarly, both interviewed individual singers, although they did not start out as members of folk-dance ensembles, also drew on institutional guidelines; the Institute and national radio played a key role in legitimising their singing. In 1978, the first singer was asked by Zmaga Kumer, a leading ethnomusicologist of the second half of the twentieth century, to illustrate her studies of narrative songs with her singing.[50] Kumer guided the singer

49 The sources are stored in the Archives of the Institute of Ethnomusicology ZRC SAZU in the form of sound recordings and transcripts: interview with the first singing group (30/5/2024), interview with the second singing group (22/5/2024), interview with the first singer (27/5/2024), interview with the second singer (17/6/2024).

50 Around this period, the singer also performed with a vocal-instrumental group dedicated to re-creating folk songs. Together with the group, she performed in its early years and participated in the recording of the two albums.

by having her listen to selected audio recordings from archival sources so that her interpretation would reflect the original version of folk singing. The singer says that before this, she sang with a strong vibrato that she had learnt in her childhood when singing with her grandmother, with a rich repertoire of folk songs. Her grandmother had never sung in choirs, so she did not adopt her style from choral aesthetics, but the interviewee and I were not able to identify any other influences that might have influenced her singing style. Thus, at the beginning of her vocal career, institutional guidance led the singer to abandon the local family tradition as regards the mode of song rendition and to adopt a way of singing that was adjusted to institutional notions of folk singing. She has relied on institutional sources for her repertoire, too, taking them directly from the archives or from various collections of folk songs. She has always preferred to sing narrative songs and pieces from the border regions, because, as she says, their melodic features differ from those of central Slovenia.

At the beginning of her singing career, in 1988, the second individual singer was invited to work for the national radio by one of the editors, who believed that the singer had 'something archaic in her voice' and suggested she should record some narrative songs, most of which were no longer included in contemporary folk singing repertoires.[51] The singer mentions that she initially accompanied her singing by guitar, but she abandoned this practice on the advice of one of the Institute's associate who believed that folk songs should not be performed with guitar accompaniment.[52] The singer acquired extensive knowledge of older singing practices through institutional sources and from (older) people in the field, both in her local area and beyond. She says that her own fieldwork practice was motivated by the fact that the Institute did not enable extensive listening to recordings of field material, and also that when comparing some of the available recordings with their notations, she found the transcripts of the sound recordings to be deficient, especially in a performative sense. In her words, "A book can't show you the voice, [...] it can't show you the way of singing, or breathing." She has always chosen her repertoire for public performances with great care, bearing in mind the context of a song, which she often explains to her audience. In the interview, she stated that she prefers to include narrative songs, especially those of older origin, because, in her words, they contain a 'primal, spiritual culture' and convey a 'universal' message. Many of the songs she selects are also linked to the local traditions of her native area, giving preference to pieces that express human connection with nature. She

51 A significant validation of her artistic direction came in 1989, when she received praise from participants at an academic symposium held at Snežnik Castle to mark the 300th anniversary of the publication of *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola* by Janez Vajkard Valvasor.

52 The perceived authorities at the time, whom she does not name explicitly, were also members of the Folk Slovenija society, and, according to her, they also publicly criticized her performances.

also associates the authenticity of singing with place and time, believing that one can only sing authentically in the place of birth. For her, a song is not just a historical artefact, but a living vibration that connects the past, present and future. Associating the past with the ecology of a place, she also likes to choose nature or churches as sites for singing.

Both singers were also encouraged to frequently interpret narrative songs due to the strong interest in this genre among researchers at the Institute, who had for many years been preparing and publishing folk songs, as well as supportive or independent studies on specific types or variants of narrative songs. Another important factor here is that these songs are also perceived as markers of the past and antiquity, with narrative songs acting as symbolic tools that help shape historical consciousness.[53]

Understanding Tradition and the Concepts of Authenticity through Interpretation

A strong emphasis on credibility that stems from institutional criteria is present in both singing groups. They both strive to emulate the sound of the audio recordings they acquire (field recordings from the institute or those received in seminars), which includes the way of singing, paying special attention to the pronunciation of dialect words and pitch accuracy. They have had contact with Institute employees, who had been actively involved in folklore activities (dance, instrumental music and singing) and the Public Fund. One of the key guidelines the singers have received on the performance of folk songs was the advocacy of interpretatively 'static' singing,[54] i.e. singing without dynamics and agogics, with relaxed voices, without the use of vocal technique and in an intonation framework that allows all members of the group to perform comfortably. The singing groups have weekly rehearsals. One group has a leader, who seeks new repertoire and leads the singing rehearsals. The other group has no designated leader, but its members say that: "sometimes we wish we had someone [...] to tell us things. Sometimes we can't get it right and we don't know what to do."

The first singer reports that, at the beginning of her career, she performed songs with pronounced emotional expressiveness. She shaped her vocal delivery according to the narrative content of the lyrics. Later, however, she made a conscious decision to reduce expressive elements in her singing: "I struggled with this for quite a while. Because I realised that I was taking interpretation too far [...] too much interpretation, too much drama. In the last few years,

53 Firat Karadas, "Historicity, Narrative and the Construction of Monstrosity in John Gardner's Grendel", in *Phenomenology/Ontopoiesis Retrieving Geo-cosmic Horizons of Antiquity*, eds. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, Analecta Husserliana, vol. 110 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1691-9_39.

54 Šivic, "The Influence of Institutionalized Standards on the Transformation of Traditional Singing", 73.

especially now, I've been going back to no interpretation. None at all." Although she does not explicitly refer to institutional norms, her choice of a more restrained vocal approach corresponds with the aesthetic ideals promoted by institutional authorities at the time, which often favoured emotionally neutral, 'static' interpretations of folk songs. She felt that this manner of singing allowed her to detach emotionally from the song and present it without personal imprint. Her goal became to present the life and voice of someone from the past without leaving a personal imprint – acting, in her words, as a medium between past and present. At the same time, this singer is also known for collaborating with musicians and sound artists who work outside the folk genre. In these projects, her interpretation refers to creative reworking of folk songs, often involving experimentation, genre crossover, and sound design, indicating a different kind of artistic freedom.

The second singer believes that authenticity cannot be achieved by simply imitating old singers or techniques, which she perceives as "identity theft". She stresses the importance of respecting tradition-bearers, whom she sees as the original community: "These are their songs, we are drawing from them." She believes that folk singing has a specific 'code' that belongs to the community from which the song originates, and that it is unethical to invade this space without respecting and understanding its meaning. As a singer, she thus has the freedom to interpret, but at the same time, she emphasises personal responsibility towards a song and its bearers.[55] For this reason, she is critical of some singers of folk song – either for departing from folk singing in terms of genre and style, or, as she understands it, for disrespecting the tradition-bearers by failing to indicate the sources of the songs in published works or stage performances. From the point of view of singing technique, she is thus critical of 'modern', 'technically polished' singing approaches, believing that a cultivated, trained throat, if not naturally shaped in the appropriate way, may take years to approach the 'rustic' and 'natural' sonority of a folk voice. She also voices concern over the lack of regulation and supervision of interpretations within the Folk Slovenia Cultural and Ethnomusicological Society and the Institute thus acknowledging the legitimacy of institutions in shaping and validating the notion of authenticity. Her overall understanding of authenticity, therefore, cannot be reduced to a single source. Rather, it emerges as a synthesis of her stage performance experience, her critical engagement with institutional frameworks, and her encounters with tradition-bearers in the field. This layered perspective reflects both her personal involvement and her ethical stance on the responsibilities of interpretation.

55 Some of her other statements in the interview also show that her freer expression is still framed by her own boundaries about the appropriateness of moving beyond the 'folk sphere'. More freedom in terms of crossing into other genres is seen in her two projects with authors of other musical genres or multimedia artists.

The Spiritual and Emotional Dimensions of Singing Folk Songs

The spiritual dimension of folk songs is another layer that became particularly apparent through conversation about the performer and audience relationship. Interestingly, the members of the singing groups did not address this aspect in our conversations. There could be several reasons for this: either they did not perceive or recognise these dimensions in their singing, or perhaps it was simply not mentioned because I did not ask them about it directly. Other possible explanations for these differing views on the interpretive relationship with folk song will be addressed in the concluding section.

With both individual singers, although also not explicitly asked about it, the conversation soon turned to different ways of understanding folk singing, some of which have been discussed in the analyses above. The first singer mentions that she feels herself to be a medium between the past and contemporary times, and during singing, she immerses herself in the place and time of the song's action: "If you're all in – I don't know how else to describe it – if you truly enter this ritual, if you truly step back in time, not so much the story, but time, a life that is not your own but someone else's that you're singing about, then the magic really starts to happen."

The second singer says that she does not discuss the spiritual dimensions of folk songs just anywhere because not everyone understands them. She believes in the spiritual power of song, occasionally also felt by the audience: "That's why I do this... the people in the audience begin to breathe, because they can simply be part of creation. That's the power of these songs." Often, a moved audience is proof for her that the songs carry something old, distant, but deeply present: "Ever since I started singing, many people would weep... they say they can feel the song is coming from far away, that it has a source. They make a connection. And it moves them." She also enjoys singing in churches, where the natural reverberation enhances the performance by eliciting sensory, emotional, and cognitive responses from the listeners. She also sees singing as a deeply personal and spiritual act that transcends mere public performance. In her opinion, a singer should not sing just for others, but should be in touch with the source of the song and sing to 'something higher', which then reaches the audience. This connection, she believes, is the foundation for authenticity, which is also felt by traditional folk singers.

In their accounts, both singers repeatedly stress the effect that singing has on the audience, often mentioning that listeners are spellbound, deeply moved or even weeping. As they understand it, performativity and embodied experience are vehicles of transmitting the ancestors' knowledge, wisdom or even way of being. Again, we can see that longing for authenticity is linked to longing for the imagined past, where the old or ancient is often understood as sacred, undefiled, even ecological – especially in relation to the contemporary

consumerist, non-ecological and globalised world.[56] Here, the singer is a mediator between the past and the present, between the ancient and the modern, between the protagonists of the song and the listeners, as the first singer explains: "Suddenly I see a tear, then another, from men, from women. The moment is here, the experience of the story is carried from the woman who lived it to these people. Through me. Mediation. True mediation."

This conception of folk song certainly goes beyond the frames of notions about the functions and uses of folk song as held by institutions or even demonstrated in stage practice. However, it points to the ways, in the last decade more frequently demonstrated in the Western world, of seeking new human connection with the ecology of being, which is often represented by the past, with pre-Christian symbolism, natural cycles and embodied experiences that cannot be fully interpreted with a rationalist or historical analytical approach. The search for a connection between the archaic and the modern, between mystical traditions and the search for the authentic, for a personal spirituality that transcends religious and cultural boundaries, also fits into the sphere of contemporary alternative spiritualities (e.g. New Age, ecofeminism), which draw on as well as reinterpret local traditions through the prism of a globalised search for meaning, healing and connecting with nature and cosmology. Spiritual interpretations are ways of making sense of one's existence and finding one's place in complex social realities.[57]

Conclusion: Perspectives on Contemporary Understandings of Authenticity in Folk Song Interpretations

Interviews with all the singers and their subsequent analysis suggest that the two individual singers offered more in-depth and reflective insights into their singing paths, their understanding of folk songs and singing practices, and their approaches to interpretation. This can be understood in several ways. First, one-on-one interviews tend to foster a more intimate and expressive

56 For example, Blain and Wallis (2008) describe a similar effect when writing about contemporary pagan rituals at archaeological sites, where the sense of site transformation, ancestral presence and the performers' bodily engagement evoke strong emotional responses in both performers and observers. In these situations, the site is not merely a stage, but an active agent that helps create the experience of 'living landscapes' in which modern man connects with an imagined but emotionally real past. Jenny Blain and Robert J. Wallis, "Sacred, Secular, or Sacrilegious? Prehistoric Sites, Pagans and the Sacred Sites Project in Britain", in *(Im)permanence: Cultures In/Out of Time*, eds. Judith Schachter and Stephen Brockmann (Pittsburgh: Penn State University Press, 2008), 212–223.

57 Even though the increase in magical, religious and spiritual practices in the Western world is dated to the period after the Second World War, this movement in post-socialist countries has "specific features, among other [things] due to the negative attitude to religions during the previous socialist era". The shift after 1990 opened the door not only to churches but to new spiritualities. Tatiana Bužeková, "Communication of Tradition(s): Narrative Templates of Magical Healing in Urban Shamanism", *Traditiones* 52, no. 1 (2023): 12–13.

form of conversation. Second, singers in singing groups are more likely to follow established conventions without incorporating individual perspectives into their vocal technique or broader interpretive approach. Third, the two individual singers have been engaged with folk song for a significantly longer time. Their involvement dates back to a period when institutionalised education for singers was not yet available and when the aesthetic and interpretive criteria promoted by cultural institutions were not yet (relatively) unified. In addition, unlike members of singing groups, these two singers do not come from the more hierarchical, top-down folklore environment that typically structures group-based folk singing performance.[58]

All the singers seem to aspire to the idea of conveying folk songs with authenticity, yet each group or individual does so in a slightly different way. Each of the interviewees began her singing career within institutional frameworks and these shaped or legitimised their approaches to interpreting folk music. Judging by the interviews, this institutional legitimisation was very important to them at the beginning of their careers.

In the groups, which evolved through their singing activities under the influence of Public Fund guidelines, no major deviations from the norms imposed by the profession could be detected in their interpretation of songs. The members of the singing groups show a strong trust in their leaders or in the guidelines received in the framework of folklore activities. As a rule, they do not question authorised knowledge, but consistently implement it in their interpretative and aesthetic frames of folk singing.

Unlike singers from singing groups, the individual singers do not take part in Public Fund stage representations of folk music, which allows them greater freedom in selecting repertoire and shaping their approach to performance. Although they initially sought institutional validation for their work, they later developed a more critical stance toward the evaluative criteria promoted by Public Fund frameworks. Neither of them has participated in official folklore stage productions, although one of them has led several vocal workshops within that system. Through years of their own research – both fieldwork and the study of scholarly literature, particularly that published by the Institute – they have cultivated a more personal and autonomous relationship with folk song and its interpretation. This independence is reflected in the gradual erasure of boundaries between what is institutionally considered 'appropriate' or 'authentic' and what lies outside such frameworks. These boundaries are also visibly blurred in their collaborations with artists from other disciplines, where folk song becomes a source of creative expression beyond conventional representations.

58 Of course, there may also be other here unidentified reasons, such as personality traits, general views, and understanding of the world, etc.

Building on this autonomy, the singing of individual singers transcends the intellectual transmission of knowledge and takes place at the level of embodied experience, which, following Csordas,[59] constitutes the existential basis of cultural exchange. The interviews suggest that these singers do not merely reproduce songs using technically or stylistically appropriate vocal approaches, but rather immerse themselves physically and emotionally in the symbolic space of the song. They describe entering the story, temporal framework and emotions of past voices. In this sense, singing becomes an embodied practice: the body acts as a central medium of meaning, memory, and affect.

The contemporary approaches to folk song within the studied cases reflect a combination of elements derived from past institutional norms and individual interpretive choices. The process of authenticity, as conceptualised by Bithell and Hill, is established through the analysis of contemporary singing practices in three key dimensions: historicization, aestheticization and legitimation.[60] Historicization is present in the efforts of all the singers, who draw on institutional sources in their search for old songs and ways of singing. It is more explicit in the individual singers, because they see the connections between the 'ancient past' and the present as an essential aspect of contemporary folk song re-creation. Aestheticization is expressed in the conscious shaping of the mode of performance, whether in terms of sound, performance setting, the way of communicating with the audience, or minimization of interpretive expression. Legitimation refers to the processes through which certain interpretations and practices are socially or institutionally validated as authentic. Throughout history, authorised authenticity of folk music has been established by institutions that defined the criteria for the performance, preservation and documentation of musical heritage. Historically, folkloristic and ethnomusicological institutions have reinforced essentialist notions of heritage-approved versions of folk song, reproducing the logic of isolated and supposedly immutable cultural expressions.[61] Today, this approach is being increasingly transformed: the institutions are reducing their direct normative influence over stage representations, opening a space and allowing recognition for diverse creative interpretations. Similarly, the question of the authenticity of interpretations and representations is being reopened, in the spirit of understanding heritage as a dynamic and context-dependent phenomenon. Consequently, the practices discussed are moving away from the interpretations presented in this paper as past practices of traditional singing.

Ning Wang's typology of authenticity[62] also proves relevant in the studied case of revival music practices: institutional guidelines can be understood as

59 Thomas J. Csordas, "Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology", *Ethos* 18, no. 1 (1990): 5–8.

60 Bithell and Hill, "An Introduction to Music Revival".

61 Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity*.

62 Wang, "Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience".

an attempt to establish an objective authenticity, while the individualised approaches of the individual singers are closer to the constructive dimension of authenticity, where personal feelings, bodily engagement and emotional resonance are key. Empirical analysis of the individual performers shows that the influence of institutions has remained significant, but authenticity is no longer understood as a fixed category. According to conceptualisations such as proposed by Wang and Rönström,[63] authenticity increasingly occurs as a process of negotiation between performers, audiences and cultural mediators, in which perceived experience plays a key role rather than merely the objective reproduction of tradition.

As Weiss and Krüger have shown,[64] perceptions of authenticity are often shaped more by emotional resonance and cultural expectation than by sonic or structural traits, a dynamic clearly reflected in the audience responses discussed in the empirical part of the study. This supports theoretical perspectives advanced by Venkatesan, Newman and Knobe,[65] as well as Gazit and Belkind,[66] who conceptualise authenticity as a relational and affective phenomenon, one that emerges not primarily from formal musical structures, but from emotional resonance, shared meaning, and the dynamics between performer, audience, and cultural context. These findings apply especially to the individual singers in this study, whose interpretations are strongly grounded in emotional connection and often transcend formal norms, reinforcing a sense of communal belonging and lived experience.

The interpretations of folk music examined in this study demonstrate that contemporary understandings of authenticity within folk singing in Slovenia are shaped by a multiplicity of perspectives, practices, and experiences. They reveal that authenticity is not a fixed attribute anchored in origin or tradition, but a dynamic outcome of several intertwined factors: historically conditioned institutional frameworks, emotional and bodily experience, ongoing negotiation among cultural actors, and individual creative agency. In this light, and as evidenced by the singers' narratives and practices, authenticity appears not as a measurable quality rooted in the past, but as a relational and processual category shaped in specific performative and social contexts.

63 Ronström, "Traditional Music, Heritage Music," 47.

64 Krüger, "Undoing Authenticity as a Discursive Construct", and Weiss, "Listening to the World but Hearing Ourselves".

65 Venkatesan, Newman, and Knobe, "Beliefs about Authentic Music".

66 Gazit and Belkind, "Affective Authenticity".

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SUMMARY

The article explores how contemporary interpreters of folk songs in Slovenia understand and perform folk singing through the lens of authenticity. The author departs from the premise that authenticity is not a fixed property but a result of discursive, affective, and institutional practices that are constantly negotiated and shifting. The research is based on a historical overview of institutional activities related to the collection, publication of folk song and evaluation of folk singing, and on the empirical analysis of four contemporary female performers: two vocal groups and two individual singers.

In the theoretical section, the author presents various conceptualizations of authenticity and highlights a shift in scholarly literature from essentialist notions toward relational and experiential understandings of authenticity. She emphasizes that even personal or affective authenticity is not neutral, as it is often imbued with institutionally shaped notions of what counts as 'authentic'.

The historical overview shows how Slovenian institutions have shaped the criteria for the 'proper' performance of folk songs since the late 19th century. Initially, the role of the individual as a bearer of tradition was marginalized, while folk song was treated primarily as a national symbol and artifact. Since the 1980s, with the rise of staged folkloric performances and educational seminars, there has been an increasing standardization of stage presentations, privileging certain historically grounded aesthetics, interpretations, and techniques.

The empirical part of the study draws on interviews and performance analyses. The two vocal groups originate from folk-dance ensembles and follow institutional guidelines, drawing their repertoire from archival sources and adhering to pedagogical instructions from seminars. Their singing style is shaped by criteria promoting interpretative 'staticity' and emotional neutrality. In contrast, the two individual singers, who have been active for a longer period and operate outside formal institutional frameworks, demonstrate greater autonomy and critical distance from such norms. Both perceive singing as a spiritual and embodied experience that transcends purely aesthetic or historical criteria, involving emotional resonance, personal connection to the origin of the song, and even a mystical dimension.

The study concludes that contemporary understandings of authenticity in folk song interpretation are not uniform but are shaped at the intersection of historically conditioned institutions, embodied and emotional experience, individual creativity, and negotiations with audiences. The findings support theories that conceptualize authenticity as a relational, processual, and contextual construct.

POVZETEK

Pogajanja o avtentičnosti v interpretacijah ljudskega petja

Članek raziskuje, kako sodobni poustvarjalci ljudske pesmi v Sloveniji razumejo in interpretirajo ljudske pesmi skozi koncept pristnosti oziroma avtentičnosti. Avtorica izhaja iz predpostavke, da avtentičnost ni statična lastnost, temveč rezultat diskurzivnih, afektivnih in institucionalnih praks, ki se nenehno pogajajo in spreminjajo. Raziskava temelji na zgodovinskem pregledu institucionalnega delovanja na področju zbiranja, objavljanja in ocenjevanja ljudske pesmi ter na empirični analizi štirih primerov sodobnih izvajalk: dveh pevskih skupin in dveh individualnih pevk.

V teoretskem delu avtorica predstavi različne koncepte avtentičnosti ter opozarja na premik v znanstveni literaturi od esencialističnih predstav k relacijskim in doživljajskim

razumevanjem avtentičnosti. Poudari, da tudi osebna ali afektivna avtentičnost ni nevtralna, saj je pogosto prežeta z institucionalno pogojenimi predstavami o tem, kaj šteje kot pristno.

Zgodovinski pregled pokaže, kako so slovenske institucije od konca 19. stoletja naprej oblikovale merila za 'pravilno' izvajanje ljudske pesmi. Sprva je bila vloga posameznika kot nosilca tradicije potisnjena v ozadje, ljudska pesem pa je bila obravnavana predvsem kot narodni simbol in artefakt. Od 1980-ih let naprej se je v okviru folklornih odrskih reprezentacij ljudske glasbe in izobraževalnih seminarjev krepilo normiranje odrske predstavitve, pri čemer so se uveljavila merila, ki so dajala prednost določenim zgodovinsko utemeljenim estetikam, interpretacijam in tehnikam.

Empirični del raziskave temelji na intervjujih in analizi interpretacij izvajalk. Pevski skupini izhajata iz folklornih skupin in sledita institucionalnim usmeritvam, saj črpata repertoar iz arhivskih virov, pri načinu petja pa sledita navodilom s seminarjev in se držita meril za interpretativno statično, čustveno nevtralno interpretacijo. Individualni pevki, ki delujeta daljše obdobje ter zunaj formalnih institucionalnih okvirov, kažeta večjo avtonomijo in kritičnost do teh norm. Obe razumeta petje kot duhovno in telesno izkušnjo, ki presega le estetske ali zgodovinske kriterije in vključuje čustveno resonanco, osebno povezanost z izvorom pesmi in celo mistično dimenzijo.

Zaključki raziskave kažejo, da sodobno razumevanje avtentičnosti v interpretacijah ljudske pesmi ni enoznačno, temveč nastaja na presečišču zgodovinsko pogojenih institucij, telesne in čustvene izkušnje, individualne ustvarjalnosti ter pogajanj z občinstvom. Ugotovitve te raziskave podpirajo teorije, ki avtentičnost razumejo kot relacijski, procesualni in kontekstualni konstrukt.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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O AVTORICI

MOJCA KOVAČIČ (mojca.kovacic@zrc-sazu.si) je etnomuzikologinja, zaposlena na Glasbenonarodopisnem inštitutu ZRC SAZU. V svojem raziskovalnem delu se osredotoča na ljudsko petje, ljudsko instrumentalno glasbo ter sodobne popularnoglasbene in zvočne prakse, ki jih analizira tako v njihovih zvočnih strukturah kot v širših družbenih in političnih kontekstih. Njene raziskave obravnavajo tematike, kot so razmerja med glasbo in spolom, nacionalizem, kulturne politike, glasba v migracijskih okoljih, jezikovne izbire v popularni glasbi, afektivnost v glasbenih izkušnjah ter procesi dediščinjenja in vrednotenja glasbenih izrazov.

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The Role of Informants and Archive Films in the Hungarian Folk Dance Revival Movement

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ABSTRACT

The Hungarian *táncház* [dance house] movement revolutionised the revival of traditional folk dances in urban contexts. This study examines the role of *adatközlők* [informants], master–disciple relationships, and archival film recordings as reference sources in the transmission and reconstruction of traditional dances within the Hungarian folk dance revival.

Keywords: *táncház*, informants, archive films, revival, transmission

IZVLEČEK

Madžarsko gibanje *táncház* [plesna hiša] je prineslo pomemben preobrat v prizadevanja za oživljanje tradicionalnih ljudskih plesov v urbanem okolju. Pričujoča študija preučuje vlogo *adatközlők* [informatorjev], odnosov med mojstrom in učenci ter arhivskih filmskih posnetkov kot referenčnih virov pri prenosu in rekonstrukciji tradicionalnih plesov v okviru preporoda madžarskega ljudskega plesa.

Ključne besede: *táncház* [plesna hiša], informatorji, arhivski filmi, preporod, prenos

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Introduction

The Hungarian *táncház* [dance house] movement emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s as part of a broader revival of folk music and dance across Europe.[1] The movement formally started in 1972 and contributed significantly to the revival of traditional folk dances in urban settings.[2] The pioneers of the movement were urban intellectuals, folk dance and music researchers, young members from Budapest-based folk dance ensembles, and musicians. They aimed to learn and perform traditional dances and music in their original social and entertainment function, emphasising improvisation rather than stage presentation.[3] The initiators' idea was to organise a dance event featuring only traditional music and dance in Budapest. The concept was inspired by a visit and encounter with living folk culture in the Transylvanian village of Szék (Sic, Romania), where the members of the Bihari Folk Dance Ensemble with their leader, choreographer, Ferenc Novák "Tata", attended a traditional dance event called *táncház*. This unique experience left a huge impact on the youngsters and made them reassess folk dancing as a social and participatory activity. The first urban *táncház* was organised by and to the members of Budapest folk dance ensembles, with Ferenc Sebő and Béla Halmos as the musicians. The initiative was also supported by prominent writers and poets of the era. Moreover, folk dance and music researchers provided both theoretical and practical guidance to the pioneers.[4]

Due to the political circumstances of the time, early *táncház* events were initially held in controlled settings. However, owing to the growing interest in the phenomenon, the *táncház* expanded to the amateur public in 1973 and

1 Owe Ronström, "Revival in Retrospect: The Folk Music and Folk Dance Revival", *ECTC Bulletin* (1998): 39–42, http://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?dswid=1085&pid=diva2%3A1267073.

2 In twentieth-century Hungary, social interest in folk dance intensified during three distinct periods. The first occurred in the 1930s with the *Gyöngyösbokréta* [Pearly Bouquet] movement, in which peasant folk dancers performed their traditions to the Budapest public. This was followed by the artistic and social folk dance movement of the 1950s, in which the choreographies of folk dance ensembles were influenced by the Soviet Moiseyev style. The third and most enduring wave began in 1972 with the emergence of the *táncház* movement. László Diószegi, "Historic Moments of Hungarian Folk Dance: From the *Gyöngyösbokréta* to the Dance House Movement", *Hungarian Studies* 22, nos. 1-2 (2008): 3–8, https://doi.org/10.1556/hstud.22.2008.1-2.1; Balázs Balogh and Ágnes Fülemile, "Cultural Alternatives, Youth and Grassroots Resistance in Socialist Hungary: The Folk Dance and Music Revival", *Hungarian Studies* nos. 22, 1-2 (2008): 43–62. https://doi.org/10.1556/hstud.22.2008.1-2.4. For the full history of the Hungarian folk dance movement from the nineteenth century see Mary N. Taylor, *Movement of the People: Hungarian Folk Dance, Populism, and Citizenship* (Bloomington, Indiana, USA: Indiana University Press, 2021).

3 Balogh and Fülemüle, "Cultural alternatives", 42. See also Ronström, "Revival in retrospect", 40–41.

4 See also Béla Szilárd Jávorszky's work on the beginnings of the urban *táncház* that includes personal stories from that time with a personal tone. Béla Szilárd Jávorszky, *The Story of Hungarian Folk* (Kossuth Publishing, 2015), 24–38.

soon spread across the country and beyond.[5] The *táncház* movement, as part of the broader revival began to develop. It gradually attracted individuals interested in reviving the folk dance traditions of the Alpine-Carpathian region. By today, the community of revival folk dance practitioners can be considered a subcultural group within Hungarian society.

Studies on revival movements primarily focus on various aspects of folk traditions, music, and dance.[6] Owe Ronstörm divides the literature on musical revivals into two main categories. One discusses the question of authenticity, focusing on the objects, their origin, and their author. The other approach deals with revival as a cultural expression and process, exploring function, meaning, and change.[7] Revival entails mobilising and revitalising the past through processes of transmission, preservation, transformation, aestheticisation, and the renegotiation of heritage and authenticity. The past is applied and adapted to the needs of today through selective processes. In this way, selected appropriation of the past and history is manifested through musical and dance practices, defined by the experiences of the past and contemporary perceptions of the past.[8] According to Tamara Livingston, revival movements are characterised by their reliance on 'informants', historical sources, recordings, and traditions to formulate their repertoire, stylistic features, and history.[9]

Based on these perspectives, I examine the Hungarian folk dance revival movement, its operations, and the sources upon which it relies.[10] This study analyses two key determining aspects of the Hungarian folk dance revival movement: the role of *adatközlők*[11] [informants, peasant dancers] and the significance of archival film recordings.

Since the 1970s, urban *táncház* events have strengthened the relationship between tradition-bearers (elder peasant dancers and musicians) and urban folk dance practitioners. In addition to these occasions, personal visits to village communities provided further opportunities for interaction and learning from experienced peasant tradition-bearers to the revival folk dancers. The

5 Eszter Csonka-Takács and Viktória Havay, *The Táncház Method: A Hungarian Model for the Transmission of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Hungarian Open Air Museum, 2011), 13.

6 Owe Ronström, "Revival Reconsidered", *The World of Music* 38, no. 3 (1996): 6.

7 Ibid.

8 Daniela Stavělová and Theresa Jill Buckland, "Preface", in *Folklore Revival Movements in Europe Post 1950: Shifting Contexts and Perspectives*, eds. D. Stavělová and T. J. Buckland (Prague: Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, 2018), 9.

9 Tamara Livingston, "Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory", *Ethnomusicology* 43, no. 1 (1999): 71. See also: Lynn Hooker, "Gypsiness and Gender in the Hungarian Folkdance Revival", *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 23, no. 2 (2011): 53; Taylor, *Movement of the People*, 159.

10 Anna Székely, "Közösség és autenticitás: a kortárs magyar néptáncos revival mozgalom vizsgálata" (PhD diss., University of Szeged, 2024), 10, https://doi.org/10.14232/phd.12261.

11 The *adatközlők* term is the plural form of the noun *adatközlő* [informant] expression. I use both forms in this article.

adatközlők became key agencies in transmitting traditional folk dance knowledge, serving as masters of folk dance. In connection with this approach, the study also analyses the 'masters and disciples' relation between village dancers and urban revival folk dancers, alongside the importance of folk dance collections and archival films in the revival movement. To study the role of *adatközlők* and archival recordings in the Hungarian folk dance revival movement, I first analysed descriptions and reminiscences of the revival movement available in publications, along with relevant academic literature. To further examine the revivalists' relationship with *adatközlők* and archival recordings, I conducted field research at folk dance competitions, camps, and *táncház* events in Budapest and Transylvania. For additional insigh, I supplemented the analysis with online data collection.[12]

The *Adatközlők* [Informants]

In social science research, the term 'informant' is a well-established and widely used concept. However, within the context of the Hungarian folk dance and *táncház* movement, which has adopted it in its terminology, the expression has acquired an expanded and more specialised meaning. The *adatközlők* are primarily elderly individuals of peasant origin who were raised and lived in a traditional lifestyle.[13] Village-born tradition-bearers may be specialists in dance, music, singing, storytelling, or other forms of folk art, possessing outstanding skills, knowledge, and performance abilities. They have acquired their expertise primarily from local traditions but also from external sources in informal settings, such as during military service or domestic work. The Hungarian term *adatközlő* refers to an individual who is well-versed in the traditions of their local community and who transmits this knowledge in a traditional manner.[14]

Based on my observations, the term endowed with additional meaning. It does not only refer to individuals who provide essential information for social science research or ethnographic collection but also to those who are regarded as role models, masters, and key figures in the transmission of traditional folk knowledge to the *táncház* movement. Revivalists can establish personal interactions with informants by meeting them at urban *táncház* events, festivals,

12 This article is a shortened and revised English version of several chapters from my PhD dissertation. Székely, "Közösség és autenticitás".

13 Revivalists consider also the younger generation of village origin as informants. As Péter Molnár described, "if one is from Szék (Sic, Romania), one immediately becomes someone in the eyes of the dance-house people by gaining the status of an *adatközlő*". Péter Molnár, "A táncház mítosza és valósága: amit a 21. század néprajzosa Széken talál", in *Erdély-(de)Konstrukciók*, ed. Margit Feischmidt (Budapest-Pécs: Néprajzi Múzeum – PTE Kommunikáció- és Médiatudományi Tanszék, 2005), 132, https://www.neprajz.hu/kiadvanyok/tabula-konyvek/erdely_de_konstrukciok.html.

14 Vilmos Keszeg, "Népi specialisták", in *Romániai Magyar Lexikon* (2010), https://lexikon.adatbank.ro/tematikus/szocikk.php?id=96.

and camps, such as the *Táncház Festival and Fair* or *Fonó Budai Zeneház* in Budapest, as well as the *International Folk Dance and Music Camp* in Válaszút (Răscruci, Romania). Additionally, revival folk dancers often travel to specific villages to visit elder people in their homes or seek to participate in local dance events such as weddings.[15] These visits may take place during folk dance camps, festivals, or private trips. The *adatközlők* are often invited to revival events to perform their local dances for an interested audience.

Figure 1: Transylvanian dancers performing for a camp audience. 2015, Válaszút (Răscruci, Romania).[16]

By observing *adatközlő* dancers, revivalists can study movements, posture, technique, gestures, couple dynamics, and other aspects of dance behaviour, including new figures. Revival folk dancers are driven by curiosity, a desire to learn, and the opportunity to meet 'unknown acquaintances', role models, and renowned informants.[17] Revivalists strive to establish close friendships or even kinship-like relationships with informants. In some cases, according to Péter Molnár's article, this practice has become institutionalised, for example,

15 This phenomenon is part of the dance-house-related tourism concept. On this topic, see: Sándor Varga, "The Influence of Dance-House Tourism on the Social Relationships and Traditions of a Village in Transylvania", *Ethnomusicology Translations* 4 (2016), http://real.mtak.hu/74831/1/The_Influence_of_Dance_House_Tourism_on_the_Social_Relationships_and_Traditions_of_a_Village_in_Transylvania_u.pdf.

16 Photo by the author.

17 Anna Székely, "Erdélyi táncos-zenész adatközlők 'testközelből'", in *DiákKörKép 3. Tudományos Diákköri Írások a Néprajz Szegedi Műhelyéből*, eds. Norbert Glässer and Gergely Takács (Szeged, 2017), 51–74, https://acta.bibl.u-szeged.hu/70504/.

in Szék, where some Hungarian folk dancers have godchildren, thereby maintaining godparent relationships with members of the local community.[18]

As mentioned earlier, the *adatközlők* also appear in archival films from twentieth-century ethnographic research collections. Despite this, while the term *adatközlő* may include individuals who have passed away, it is primarily used to refer to living and active informants from rural communities. Some informants have achieved celebrity status within the revival movement and are regarded as exemplars of specific regional folk dance styles. The *adatközlők* are well-known and highly respected among revivalists for their expertise in dance, music, singing, and other traditional practices, as well as their lived experiences connected to these traditions.

'Masters and Disciples'

The *adatközlők* are regarded as masters and role models within the revival folk dance community. The term 'master' has been a recurring concept in the history of the folk dance movement. In 1953, a ministerial decree established the Master of Folk Art Award, which is granted to folk artists who have made outstanding contributions to the development of folk art. This includes exceptional dancers, singers, storytellers, and artisans. Legal organisations working in the field of folk arts can nominate candidates for this award, which is presented annually on August 20th, Hungary's State Foundation Day.[19] The award includes a cash prize, which may influence how recipients are perceived within their local communities (though this aspect warrants further investigation). Another example is Sándor Timár (1930–), choreographer, folklorist, and folk dance pedagogue, who was referred to as 'mester' [master in Hungarian] within the *táncház* movement, and affectionately called 'mesti' (short form of *mester*) by his students at the State Ballet Institute. Additionally, the term 'mester' is commonly used as an informal designation among revival folk dancers.

The early generation of dance house-goers, including urban folk musicians and folk dancers, had several opportunities to meet village informants, allowing them to get to know these informants personally, gain experiences and learn dancing and playing music directly from the villagers. According to Judit Frigyesi, young urban musicians who wished to learn about music and its performance sought to do so through direct practice with those who still played it and knew it intimately.[20] For these revival musicians, village musicians were not

18 Hajnalka Fülöp, "Autentikus paraszti öltözetek néptáncosok ruhatárában", *Korall* 15, no. 55. (2014): 101–122; Molnár, "A táncház mítosza", 129.

19 The Young Master of Folk Art Prize may be awarded to folk art creators and performers aged between 15 and 35 in recognition of outstanding creative or performing artistic achievements in a particular branch of folk art. The award has been presented since 1971.

20 Judit Frigyesi, "The Aesthetic of the Hungarian Revival Movement", in *Retuning Culture: Musical*

merely informants from whom they could collect melodies for archiving; they were regarded as partners and masters. Revivalists approached the *adatközlők* with respect and a genuine desire to learn. This vivid and direct connection with the folk music 'source' represented a new approach to acquisition compared to the practices of earlier folklore movements, which were primarily focused on stage representation.[21] Revival musicians, during their field trips in villages, particularly in Transylvania (Romania), emphasised the importance of playing alongside local musicians to learn the repertoire and musical style 'authentically'.[22]

The same interest can be observed among dancers. Hajnalka Fülöp describes how and for what purpose members of the first and second generation of dance houses tried to connect with representatives of traditional folk culture:

> *All of them agree that personal acquaintance with village dancers, frequent meetings and interaction are indispensable for authentic dance. They believe that it is not enough to learn and 'copy' the dance movements, it is also important to get to know and understand the values, thinking and everyday life of the dancers.*[23]

In order to understand the master-disciple relationship, I classify three sections based on age group and status within the folk dance revival movement.[24] The first category is the *adatközlők*, village dancers of peasant origin who were born into tradition. The second group consists of revival folk dancers, pioneers, and the early, determinative and leader cohort of the *táncház* movement. Today, they work as professional folk dance performers, choreographers, and pedagogues. This generation gained practical experience and embodied knowledge through visits to villages, participation in traditional dance events, and personal connections with village performers. Finally, the third category consists of young, emerging revival folk dancers who either pursue a professional career as performers, teachers or engage in folk dance as a hobby.[25]

Changes in Central and Eastern Europe (Durham, London: Duke Universtiy Press, 1996), 54–75.

21 Frigyesi, "The Aesthetic of the Hungarian Revival Movement", 69–70; Taylor, *Movement of the People*, 127.

22 Lynn Hooker, "Transylvania and the Politics of Musical Imagination", *European Meetings in Ethnomusicology* 9 (2002): 57.

23 Fülöp, "Autentikus paraszti öltözetek", 108. Translation by the author. The term 'authentic' in this context refers to being true, genuine, and faithful to the original form or tradition.

24 The following categories can be further subdivided into more groups, especially regarding the fifty years of the movement and the increasing number of folk dance practitioners due to the institutions of the revival. I distinguish these three types in order to examine the research phenomena.

25 Anna Székely, "Dance Knowledge in the Current Hungarian Folk Dance Revival", in *Dance, Age and Politics: Proceedings of the 30th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology*, ed. Vivien Apjok et al. (Szeged, Budapest: SZTE BTK Néprajzi és Kulturális Antropológiai Tanszék, BTK Zenetudományi Intézet, Magyar Etnokoreológiai Társaság, 2021), 431–436.

Professional revival folk dancers (the second category) regard several individuals as their masters: their former dance teachers, ensemble leaders, and, most importantly, village dancers and *adatközlők* with whom they have personal relationships. In addition to imparting mastery of movement material, professional folk dance tutors also guide the younger (third) generation on how to approach, preserve, and transmit folk (dance) culture. Revival folk dancers with more experience share their knowledge with students, who today have fewer opportunities to meet the informants. As a result, the second category, the professional revival folk dancers, becomes a transmitter of culture through practical knowledge and lived engagement with tradition. Experienced urban folk dancers, dance artists, and choreographers have become prominent figures due to their professional expertise and their familiarity with the traditions of dance, regional culture, and folk practices. They provide guidance and 'spiritual nourishment' to the younger generation by passing on their experiences and stories from the villages. Certain revival dancers adopt the dance and performance style of a particular *adatközlő* to so closely that they are regarded as secondary sources of that dance. Therefore, amateur folk dance ensembles often require them to teach dances. Consequently, highly skilled revival dancers are also referred to as 'revival *adatközlők*', as they represent and transmit particular folk dance styles associated with specific regions or villages. 'Revival informants' are well-trained and conscious teachers of folk dances. While they are also experienced performers, they act as mentors for the young generation in representing and staging traditional dances. Therefore, young revivalists may have two role models: informants (whether from archival films or still living) and professional folk dance tutors, choreographers, or ensemble leaders.[26]

Folk Dance Collections and their Presence in the Revival

Systematic research on Hungarian folk dance began and flourished between the 1950s to 1980s.[27] The archival films and collected materials from this period are primarily utilised by the revival movement of the seventies since György Martin and his collegues were assisted the dancers with their foundings.[28]

26 Székely, "Közösség és autenticitás", 130.

27 This study does not aim to present the history of Hungarian folk dance research. For an overview of twentieth century developments, particularly the work of György Martin, see: Sándor Varga, "The Scientific Legacy of György Martin", in *Foundations of Hungarian Ethnochoreology: Selected Papers of György Martin*, ed. János Fügedi et al. (Budapest: Research Centre for the Humanities Institute for Musicology, Hungarian Heritage House, 2020), 86–97. https://db.zti.hu/neptanc_tudastar/pdf/biblio/l01928.pdf#page=86.

28 Martin and the revival relationship with regards to film collection is also elaborated in Csilla Könczei's work. Csilla Könczei, "How to Protect Dancing from the Grizzle Boredom of Mechanical Stiffness? A Historical Contextualization of György Martin's Theoretical Framework and the Impact of the Popular Dissemination of the Scientific Knowledge He Produced on Dance Transmission", in *Dance and Economy, Dance Transmission: Proceedings of the 31st Symposium of the ICTM*

Instructors teach folk dances, and choreographers create dance pieces based on these recordings.

The films recorded during this intensive period of field research can be divided into two groups according to how they were collected.[29] One took place in staged circumstances, meaning the collection was organised in advance and, in some cases, conducted under controlled conditions. The other category, which was less common during that era due to the technical equipments, consists of recordings captured during actual dance events.

The former approach allows for the study of the structural and motivic characteristics of dance, as well as the examination of formal elements, rules of coupling, and the recording of dance through kinetography. Filming actual dance events was rarely possible during this period, as the technical equipment of the time was not suited to recording dances at small-scale parties in poor lighting conditions. The collections of that era were primarily for scientific research, so the film-making methods were adapted to this purpose. Due to the technical conditions of the time, the performer was placed in a well-lit area facing a camera during the collection process, ensuring that the movements could be seen.[30] However, the recording equipment and the collection setting impacted various aspects of the performance, such as the dancer's use of space, their execution of movements, and the process of dance creation.[31]

From the very beginning, audio and video recordings of peasant dancers whether captured on-site or during organised ethnochoreological collections, have played a significant role in the *táncház* and folk dance movement since the 1970s. Although access to these materials was previously limited, only choreographers, professional folk dancers, teachers, and folklorists could reach them. Today, due to digitalisation and internet, archive recordings are available to the revivalists and the public through online databases. The *Knowledge Base of Traditional Dance*s publishes research data, documents, and sources preserved in the Traditional Dance Archives of the Research Centre for the Humanities Institute for Musicology in Budapest.[32] Additionally, the Hungarian Herit-

Study Group on Ethnochoreology, eds. Anne von Bibra Wharton and Dalia Urbanavičienė (Klaipėda, Lithuania: ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology; Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, 2021), 168–177, https://www.academia.edu/89094152/_HOW_TO_PROTECT_DANCING_FROM_THE_GRIZZLE_BOREDOM_OF_MECHANICAL_STIFFNESS_.

29 Székely, "Közösség és autenticitás", 93–94.

30 György Martin, "Táncrögzítés, tánclejegyzés", in *A magyar folklór*, ed. Vilmos Voigt (Budapest: Osiris, 1998), 593.

31 Sándor Varga, "A hagyományőrző munka folyamatai: Tervezés, módszerek, források, gyakorlatok", in *Táncos Örökségünk: A Hagyományőrző Munka Folyamatai; Tervezés, Módszerek, Források, Gyakorlatok*, eds. András Gombos and Sándor Varga (Budapest: Muharay Elemér Népművészeti Szövetség, 2010), 28–51, http://real.mtak.hu/80621/1/Varga%20S_A%20hagyom%2B%C3%ADny%2B%C4%B9rz%2B%C4%B9%20munka%20folyamatai.pdf.

32 "Knowledge Base of Traditional Dances", HUN-REN RCH Institute for Musicology (accessed on 4 March, 2025), https://neptanctudastar.abtk.hu/en.

age House provides an online database with audio and video materials called *Folklore Database*.[33] The recordings, dating from the 1970s to the early 2000s, primarily consists of collections made by ethnochoreologists and amateur researchers, many of whom were revivalists themselves.

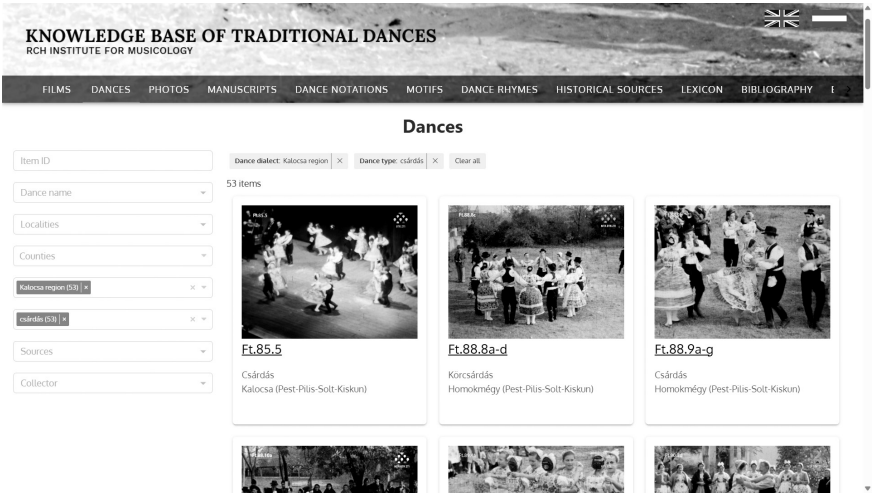

Figure 2: *Knowledge Base of Traditional Dances* online database on Hungarian traditional dances. Example on filtered search for the *csárdás* dance in Kalocsa region (Hungary). [34]

Folk dance collections have been and continue to be utilised for acquiring movement material, understanding the repertoire, studying dancers' personalities and styles of dancing, and identifying structural characteristics. These elements serve as the foundation for choreographic, artistic, and ensemble work while also providing the means for the further development of folk dance. The aim of using recordings made during research collections is to learn 'authentic' performance which serve as a tool for shaping and improving individual dance creation. However, interpreting archival films and learning the movements depicted in them requires a certain level of professional training and proficiency.[35]

33 "Folklore Database", Hungarian Heritage House (accessed on 24 June, 2024), www.folkloradatbazis.hu.

34 Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute for Musicology, https://neptanctudastar.abtk.hu/en/dances?T2=%5B%22cs%C3%A1rd%C3%A1s__l1%22%5D&T1=%5B%22Kalocsa+region__l1%22%5D (accessed on 6 February, 2025).

35 Csongor Könczei, "A táncház kulturális paradoxonjai", in *Táncház: Írások Az Erdélyi Táncház Vonzásköréből*, eds. Ádám Könczei and Csongor Könczei (Kolozsvár: Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság, 2002), 161–165, http://kjnt.ro/szovegtar/pdf/KKonyvek_44_2018_KCs_szerk_A-40-eves_50_KonczeiCs; Ildikó Sándor, "'Zene és tánc úgy, mint Széken'", in *A Betonon Is Kinő a Fű: Tanulmányok a Táncházmozgalomról*, ed. Ildikó Sándor (Budapest: Hagyományok Háza, 2006), 23–41.

Adaptation of these recordings often focuses on recreating the formal appearance and performance style of the dances and peasant dancers. This involves various elements of dance formulation, including the physical expression, rhythmic and dynamic features, variation of motifs, and structuring techniques, which can be recorded in dance notation. However, the performance style itself encompasses more than just the technical aspects captured in recordings. It includes broader stylistic features, often referred to as the dancer's habitus, which shape their movement character and aesthetics. These factors cannot be fully conveyed through kinetographic notation alone, as they involve embodied qualities, cultural nuances, and personal interpretations that dancers bring to their performances.[36]

Among the revival folk dance community, certain recordings and the peasant dancers featured in them have attained the status of being an 'etalon' or exemplary representation of movement material for an entire dance type or style.[37] The repertoire of a particular locality becomes closely associated with the performances of outstanding dancers captured in these films, often captured in just a few minutes of footage. These recordings serve as essential reference points for dancers, instructors, and choreographers, guiding them in learning and interpreting different dances. For example, in folk dance competitions, contestants are often required to perform a specific dance sequence from a field recording.[38] They not only need to represent the movements but also have to dress, replicate the apperiance and attire appropriate to the particular era that is captured on the film.[39] To deepen their understanding of the dances, performers, the era and (dance) life of the village, the revivalists often read ethnographic studies and seek the opportunities to visit the specific village to meet locals or participate in traditional dance events. The primary agents in transmitting an embodied knowledge on a specific folk dance to younger dancers are the professional folk dance intructors, choreographers, members of the intermediate generation within the folk dance revival movement.

36 Lujza Ratkó, "Stílusismeret", in *A Népi Előadó-Művészeti Alkotások Minősítésének Zsűrizési Szempontrendszere*, ed. Anna Székely (Budapest: Hagyományok Háza, 2019), 59–62, https://hagyomanyokhaza.hu/sites/default/files/2019-09/A%20n%C3%A9pi%20el%C5%91ad%C3%B3-m%C5%B1v%C3%A9szeti%20alkot%C3%A1sok%20min%C5%91s%C3%ADt%C3%A9s%C3%A9nek%20zs%C5%B1riz%C3%A9si%20szempontrendszere.pdf.

37 As Csilla Könczei also noted, images of István Mátyás "Mundruc" the main informant of György Martin, "symbolizes the Transylvanian lad dances." Könczei, "How to Protect", 171.

38 An earlier study of mine discusses the transmission of dance through archive film; see Anna Székely, "Dance Transmission through an Archive Film in the Hungarian Folk Dance Revival Movement", in *Dance and Economy, Dance Transmission. Proceedings of the 31st Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology*, eds. Anne von Bibra Wharton and Dalia Urbanavičienė (Vilnius, Lithuania: ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, 2022), 298–309.

39 Ibid.

Another example of using archive films as inspiration and learning material is the initiative *Akkor és most – Élő hagyományok* [*Then and Now – Living Heritage*], launched by dancers of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble in 2020. The project's aim is to showcase the dancers' favourite archive recordings and sources they rely on. In the video, the left-hand side features the original footage with the *adatközlők* dancing, while on the right-hand side, revival folk dance artists replicate the informants' movements, dressed in traditional clothing appropriate to the period to be represented (even though the village dancers are not in folk costume in the original recording). The past appears on the left, while the present is shown on the right.[40]

Figure 3: *Then and Now*. Feketelak (Lacu, Romania), 1969 and Budapest, 2020.[41]

Conclusions

This study explored the Hungarian revival movement by examining two key characteristics upon which it relies: the role of *adatközlők* and the importance of archival recordings of traditional dances. The findings highlight that revivalists utilise direct and indirect sources to learn, master, and adapt specific folk dances. In addition to the new functions of representation and urban social entertainment, a particular interpretation is associated with the recorded practice.

The study examined the role of informants in the transmission of traditional knowledge within the revival movement. The investigation further discussed the dynamics among three groups: the informants, the revival informants, and the younger generation, with a focus on the master-apprentice relationship

40 See also on this issue Könczei, "How to Protect", 172–174.

41 https://youtu.be/s2GC4c6FAhQ (accessed on 7 February, 2025).

within the revival movement. Among the actors, an observable phenomenon is that an intimate, almost grandparent-grandchild-like relationship has developed between individuals of village origin and the revivalists. This relationship reinforces the perception that tradition is transmitted from generation to generation, maintaining historical continuity. However, it also reflects the selective, shaped, and consciously maintained practices established by the revivalists. According to Mary Taylor, engaging with folk dance and folk culture, the community practice of dances represents an uninterrupted continuation of traditions based on improvisation.[42] The 'masters of the folk dance revival' transmit their knowledge to the new generation, focusing on the individual style of specialist dancers, and regional variations, thereby contributing to the preservation of both the selected 'tradition' and the underlying ideology of the *táncház* movement.

Archive films are viewed by the carriers of the revival as reference points for acquiring knowledge about traditions. The ethnographic collections serve as benchmarks not only for learning dances but also for understanding traditional clothing and male-female relations. The archive recordings play a vital role in documenting and revitalising folk dance traditions. Consequently, the role of film collections and the *adatközlők* is to bridge the gap between past and present while fostering appreciation, engagement with cultural heritage, and continuity of traditions within a specialised community, the folk dance revival movement. Further investigation is needed on the status of elder *adatközlők*, who will replace them if they are gone, or what will happen in their absence. How do revivalists consider the younger villagers, dancers and musicians?? What role do they play in the present day? How will the 'revival informants' influence the future of the movement? How does the digitisation of more film footage affect the *táncház* repertoire? Will technological innovations be involved in the process of learning traditional dances? Addressing these questions would provide further understanding of the Hungarian revival movement's future.

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42 Taylor, *Movement of the People*, 159.

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SUMMARY

The Hungarian *táncház* [dance house] movement, which began in 1972, revolutionised the revival of traditional folk dances in urban settings. Pioneers of the movement encountered the living folk culture through a traditional dance event called *táncház* in a Transylvanian village. This experience influenced them to recreate a similar event adapting the social function of folk dance. The *táncház* movement developed in the 1970s, with participants forming a cultural subgroup within the Hungarian society dedicated to reviving traditions. Like other revival movements, the Hungarian *táncház* relies on historical sources, informants, and recordings to shape its repertoire, dance style and operation. Since the inception, the *adatközlők* [informants] have played an essential role in the revival movement. The relationship between tradition bearers, such as elder peasant dancers, musicians, and urban folk dance practitioners, was strengthened through personal contacts at village sites and Hungarian

*táncház event*s. Additionally, mid-twentieth century field recordings considered as reference points for learning traditional dances. The study examines the *adatközlők* presence and their contribution to transmission, exploring the'master and disciples' relation from three perspectives: informants, professional revivalists, and the younger generation of revivalists. The article also discusses the role folk dance collections in acquiring traditional dances. The examination draws on theoretical frameworks, especially Tamara Livingston's work on describing revival movements. The exploration is based on descriptions and reminiscences of the revival movement available in publications, along with relevant academic literature. The research involved anthropological fieldwork conducted at *táncház* events, folk dance competitions and camps, supplemented by online data collection.

POVZETEK

Vloga informatorjev in arhivskih filmov v preporodnem gibanju madžarskega ljudskega plesa

Madžarsko gibanje *táncház* [plesna hiša], ki se je začelo leta 1972, je prineslo preobrat v prizadevanja za oživitev tradicionalnih ljudskih plesov v urbanem okolju. Pionirji gibanja so se z živo ljudsko kulturo srečali na tradicionalnem plesnem dogodku imenovanem *táncház* v transilvanski vasi. Po tej izkušnji so ustvarili podoben dogodek, pri čemer so prilagodili družbeno vlogo ljudskega plesa. Gibanje *táncház* se je razvilo v 70. letih 20. stoletja, udeleženci pa so znotraj madžarske družbe oblikovali kulturno podskupino, ki se je posvetila oživljanju tradicij. Podobno kot druga preporodna gibanja se tudi madžarski *táncház* pri oblikovanju repertoarja, plesnega sloga in delovanja opira na zgodovinske vire, informatorje in posnetke. Od samega začetka so *adatközlők* [informatorji] igrali pomembno vlogo v gibanju. Odnosi med nosilci tradicije, kot so starejši kmečki plesalci, glasbeniki in mestni izvajalci ljudskih plesov, so se okrepili prek osebnih stikov v vaseh in na madžarskih *táncház* dogodkih. Poleg tega so bili pomemben vir za učenje tradicionalnih plesov tudi terenski posnetki iz sredine 20. stoletja. Študija proučuje prisotnost *adatközlők* in njihov prispevek k prenosu, pri čemer raziskuje odnos med 'mojstrom in učenci' iz treh perspektiv: informatorjev, profesionalnih obuditeljev in mlajše generacije obuditeljev. Članek obravnava tudi vlogo zbirk ljudskih plesov pri pridobivanju tradicionalnih plesov. Raziskava temelji na teoretičnih okvirih, zlasti na delu Tamare Livingston o opisovanju preporodnih gibanj. Prav tako temelji na opisih in spominih na preporodno gibanje, ki so na voljo v publikacijah, ter na ustrezni strokovni literaturi. Raziskava je vključevala antropološko terensko delo na dogodkih *táncház*, tekmovanjih in taborih ljudskih plesov, dopolnjeno z zbiranjem podatkov na spletu.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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O AVTORICI

ANNA JANKU (ajankuanna@gmail.com) je antropologinja in etnokoreologinja. Ima diplomo iz etnologije in kulturne antropologije, dve magistrski diplomi iz etnokoreologije in plesne antropologije ter doktorat iz plesnih študij. Njeno razskovanje se osredotoča na madžarsko preporodno gibanje, tradicionalne ljudske plese, antropološke teorije in metode v plesnih raziskavah. Njeno terensko delo vključuje lokacije v transilvanskih in madžarskih vaseh, mednarodne folklorne plesne in glasbene tabore, mestne festivale, plesne hiše in folklorna plesna tekmovanja. Je predsednica Madžarskega združenja za etnokoreologijo, članica Madžarskega združenja za kulturno antropologijo, Madžarskega plesnega društva, študijske skupine ICTMD za etnokoreologijo in združenja Choreomundus Alumni. Trenutno dela kot neodvisna raziskovalka in raziskovalna sodelavka v skupini HH-SZTE Revival Research Group.

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Slavic Music or *In Crudo* Village Tradition? Who Needs Folk Music in Poland Nowadays?

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the debate sparked by the soundtrack to the film *The Peasants*. It presents two opposing points of view: that of the *In Crudo* community, dedicated to reconstructing 'authentic' Polish village music, and that of enthusiasts of the world music scene, interested in the broader, intercultural, Slavic music idiom. Drawing on these perspectives, the author reflects on what traditional music is and who needs it in Poland today.

Keywords: traditional music, Polish folk music, authenticity, community, anthropology of music

IZVLEČEK

Članek analizira razpravo, ki jo je sprožila glasba iz filma *Kmetje*. Predstavlja dve nasprotujoči si stališči: stališče skupnosti *In Crudo*, ki se posveča obnovi 'avtentične' poljske vaške glasbe, in stališče navdušencev svetovne glasbene scene, ki jih zanima širši, medkulturni, slovanski glasbeni izraz. Na podlagi teh perspektiv avtorica razmišlja o tem, kaj je tradicionalna glasba in kdo jo danes v Poljski potrebuje.

Ključne besede: tradicijska glasba, poljska ljudska glasba, avtentičnost, skupnost, antropologija glasbe

For the past six years, while conducting ethnographic research among those who love and advocate for Polish traditional music, I have been exploring a series of questions: What is traditional music? How should it be defined? Whose heritage does it represent? Who needs it, and why? These questions are difficult to answer because the concepts of tradition and heritage are fluid. Today, we see these two categories as dynamic, evolving processes rather than fixed containers for specific content.[1] To further complicate the matter, any attempt to identify and define traditional or folk music must navigate several overlapping contexts – not only political, cultural, and historical,[2] but also artistic and personal.

Last autumn, while I was reflecting on these questions, the release of the film *The Peasants* unexpectedly revealed new insights to me. Why? Because this film's soundtrack, created by L.U.C. Rostowski,[3] sparked outrage and controversy in the *In Crudo*[4] community, a group dedicated to traditional, 'authentic' Polish village music. This compelled me to take a closer look at the dispute, the group in which it manifested, and the implications it has for the role, function, and state of traditional music in Poland today.

The purpose of my paper is to share the insights I gathered from this inquiry and the broader research apparatus of which it is part, as well as to examine what traditional music is, how it is used, and who needs it in Poland today. To better understand the matter at hand, I will provide two introductory backgrounds. First, I will introduce my fieldwork research group – the *In Crudo* community – and outline the research questions that guide my engagement with this group. Second, I will discuss the film *The Peasant*.

The *In Crudo* Community

In Warsaw, as well as in other cities in Poland, there is a rapidly growing community interested in traditional Polish music and dances of village origin. This group identifies as the *In Crudo* community.[5] The term 'In Crudo', from Latin,

1 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "From Ethnology to Heritage: The Role of Museum", *Etnografia Nowa* 3 (2011): 125–136; Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (Routledge, 2006).

2 Rebeka Kunej and Marjeta Pisk, "Folklore: Memories, Politics, Heritagisation", *Traditiones* 52, no. 2 (2023): 7–19.

3 Łukasz L.U.C. Rostowski, born 1981, is a Polish composer, performer, rapper and songwriter. He also calls himself a multimedia artist. As it is written on his website: "Since 2002 he has recorded 16 LP albums and many soundtracks (Netflix, TVN, TVP), spectacles and video's which combines nu jazz, trip-hop, reggae, hip-hop with the classical music, folk and electronica. Merging music with the picture is his great passion. His music was selected to Oscar winning VR project Carne Y Arena made by Alejandro Inarritu and Emmanuel Lubezk". For more information: https://lukaszrostkowski.com/.

4 I define this term in detail in the next part of the paper.

5 The term *In Crudo* is used by members of the community, so it's considered an emic term. Recently it has also appeared in literature, for example, in articles by Weronika Grozdew-Kołacińska or Remigiusz Mazur Hanaj, who I will quote frequently in this chapter. It was also defined by the Polish musicologist, musician and arranger Antoni Beksiak in a podcast produced by the portal muzykatradycyjna.pl: https://muzykatradycyjna.pl/do-sluchania/in-crudo-pojecia/. He defines In

means 'raw', and is sometimes associated with the culinary term 'raw' suggesting the group's commitment to preserving and promoting traditional musical practices in their original, unaltered state. The *In Crudo* community brings together people interested in the traditional music of the Polish countryside and rural dances in their un-stylized forms. This music, and the dances that are inseparably from it, are not meant for the stage, but for everyday use. Members of this group are characterized by gathering repertoire from rural masters, either directly, during 'fieldwork research' trips to the countryside, or indirectly, through archival recordings. Through this, they aim to re-create the music in a way that resembles as closely as possible its original, imagined form.

Members of the *In Crudo* community believe that they are preserving a 'real' and 'authentic' folk music tradition, thus setting themselves apart from the many other folk song and dance ensembles in Poland – both professional groups, such as *Mazowsze*[6] or *Śląsk*,[7] and regional-amateur ones. By this, *In Crudo* places itself also in opposition to the world music ensembles, which use Polish traditional music as a source of inspiration and artistic impulse.

As we know, authenticity can be a highly problematic term, often overused and applied to countless things and situations. Regina Bendix argues that the use of the term authenticity says more about the person or group using it than about the phenomenon being identified.[8] Calling something authentic or inauthentic can be both a gesture of valuation and a means of devaluation, making it, in essence, an expression of one's worldview.[9]

Tom Selwyn says that even more important than identifying something as authentic or inauthentic are the arguments we use to support such claims. He identified two main patterns of justification – one based on academic knowledge, hard data, and the support of institutional experts, and the other based on emotions, experiences, and beliefs. He refers to these two forms of authenticity as 'cool' and 'hot'.[10] In relation to music, Martin Stokes writes that "'authenticity' is a discursive trope of great persuasive power. It focuses a way of talking about music, a way of saying to outsiders and insiders alike 'this is what is really significant about music', 'this is the music that makes us different from other people'."[11]

Crudo in relation to the music itself. For him, In Crudo means music played according to the principles of the original style, played 'as in a village', played authentically.

6 https://mazowsze.waw.pl/en.

7 https://zespolslask.pl/us.

8 Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1997).

9 Erick Cohen and Scott Cohen stated that even more meaningful is the social process by which the authenticity is confirmed. They call it "authentication". Eric Cohen and Scott Cohen, "Authentication: Hot and Cool", *Annals of Tourism Research* 39, no. 3 (2012): 1295-1314.

10 Tom Selwyn, *The Tourist Image: Myths and Myth Making in Tourism* (John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 1996).

11 Martin Stokes, "Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music", in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. Martin Stokes (Berg Publishers, 1997), 7.

Members of the *In Crudo* movement believe that musical traditions in the Polish countryside have either already become extinct or are in the process of extinction. The group thus finds its purpose in reviving these traditions and keeping them alive. It strives to popularize the idea of non-staged, genuine, and social musical interactions, which it believes were once essential to Polish village life. In doing so, the group organizes a variety of music festivals, dance parties, and workshops aimed at promoting the endangered tradition. Participation rather than the separation of stage and audience, naturalness over professionalism, and the collective joy of shared musical experience are the main ideas that unite the *In Crudo* community. All of these efforts, however, must be rooted in a commitment to authenticity and a respect for the tradition's original form. My research thus aims to answer the following question: Why is this so? Why do people living in cities, who have no village roots, want to practice and popularize this village musical heritage? And whose heritage is it?

Let me now provide the readers with a brief historical sketch. The revival movement of village musical practices in Poland began in the early-1990s. Initially, it was a niche activity led by a group of young people rebelling against the dominant culture and politics of the time – a group looking for new ways of cultural expression. This movement collaborated with alternative theater groups like *Gardzienice* and *Węgajty*, eventually creating their own association and a band named *Brotherhood of the Poor*.[12] One of the founders of the movement, Remigiusz Mazur-Hanaj,[13] wrote:

> *The movement has always been informal – a bit countercultural, a bit alternative, in blue jeans, bypassing the big stages and the mainstream. It was not oriented to the production of culture and its consumption, but to participation. It was a cultural process, practicing 'active culture', to recall the term coined by Jerzy Grotowski in the 1970s. This is its pedigree and is still an important part of its identity.*[14]

Another important inspiration and contributor to these countercultural activities was the visual artist Andrzej Bieńkowski[15] (born 1946), who, since the

12 The original name is *Bractwo ubogich*. The band was founded in 1992. It was the first group in Poland to play Polish folk music *in crudo*, directly from village musicians. It was active until the end of 1994, making recording sessions for the Polish Radio, learning and doing fieldwork in the countryside, and giving concerts.

13 Remigiusz Mazur-Hanaj, born in 1966, is a musician, ethnographer, cultural animator and publicist. He is a co-founder of the Dance House movement and of educational and artistic projects related to traditional and avant-garde music. He is also the founder of 'In Crudo', the first independent label dedicated to un-stylized traditional music, founded in 1999.

14 Remigiusz Mazur-Hanaj, "Polskie odżycie", *Radiowe Centrum Kultury Ludowej* (June 6, 2020), https://www.polskieradio.pl/377/7415/Artykul/2524976,Polskie-odzycie.

15 Andrzej Bieńkowski born 1946, is a Polish painter, ethnographer, writer and professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Polish traditional music and musicians are the greatest inspirations in his entire artistic life and work.

1980s traveled through the Mazovian countryside in search of subjects for his paintings. During this time, he became captivated by the village musicians he encountered, whom he called 'the last ones'.[16] These people fascinated him not only as characters for rural portraits, but as musicians in their own right. Motivated by this interest, Bieńkowski began recording their music and documenting their unique ways of playing, creating an expansive archive entitled *Re-found Music*.[17] His recordings have since become iconic within the *In Crudo* movement. In addition to these recordings, Bieńkowski published a book entitled *Last Village Musicians*,[18] in which he described the rural music of central Poland in truly exoticized terms, as wild and uncultured, drawing comparisons to jazz and portraying the musicians as rough improvisers. These descriptions proved influential and fueled the imagination of members of the revival movement in Poland, who idealized village music, tradition, and life in its most 'authentic' form.

The next step in the movement was inspired by the Hungarian dance houses.[19] First in Warsaw, and then in other cities, this growing group of traditional music revivalists began to organize gatherings that brought together urban adepts and village masters alike. The first dance house association was established in Warsaw in 1995. Drawing on the Hungarian model, summer camps (called *tabor*) were also organized. These week-long intensive workshops focused on playing instruments, singing, and dancing, and included various dance games and activities for children.

Those were the beginnings. Today, however, the movement is becoming increasingly popular, visible, diverse, heterogeneous, progressive, and decidedly less rebellious. Though at first glance it may appear more egalitarian and open for all participants, my observations indicate that this is not necessarily the case.

Based on my ethnographic research, which consisted of participant observation at various concerts, festivals, and workshops, ethnographic interviews, and media discourse analysis, I have drawn several conclusions about the movement. First, I find it interesting that both those who created the movement and those who today participate in it are overwhelmingly not of rural origin.[20] Rather, the vast majority were born, raised, and educated in the city, making their desires to revitalize the original village tradition chosen, rather

16 Andrzej Bieńkowski, *Ostatni wiejscy muzykanci* (Prószyński i ska, 2001).

17 https://www.muzykaodnaleziona.pl/.

18 Bieńkowski, *Ostatni wiejscy muzykanci*.

19 Colin Quigley, "The Hungarian Dance House Movement and Revival of Transylvanian String Band Music", in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*, eds. Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill (Oxford University Press, 2014), 182–202.

20 I conclude this from my interviews and observations.

than given or inherited.[21] In addition, most of them are well-educated, fully aware of the history of Polish traditional music, and engaged with current ethnomusicological discourses.

What was formerly a small and homogeneous revival movement has thus grown and diversified since the 2010s, and continues to into the 2020s. As a result, the community has developed its own internal hierarchical structure. At the top of its hierarchical ladder are its founding 'fathers' (and 'mothers') – people in their fifties who established the *In Crudo* community in the 1990s.[22] These individuals are regarded as wise mentors and custodians of 'authentic' traditional knowledge. They are responsible for shaping the movement today and overseeing many of its activities. Some of them lead non-governmental foundations and associations and utilize publics funds to promote the movement. Others run private companies or work as freelancers, contributing towards their shared community goals through different means. All, however, could reasonably be considered professionals within the *In Crudo* community, as they perform and teach village music and organize community life as their main occupation and source of income.

These leaders are also in charge of popularizing the idea of 'raw' village music among Poles who are potentially interested in the music tradition but currently uninvolved. Their authority to do so comes from the fact that they are believed to have directly learned and inherited their traditional musical skills and knowledge from the last remaining village musicians (who are most likely no longer alive). The leaders are respected by the community as successors to the tradition, obliged to transmit and preserve its sensory heritage.[23] These beliefs give rise to the argument of authenticity, understood here in Stoke's sense as a discursive tool to prove that what one does is original, worthy, better, and different from others.[24] This group also includes very young people, typically around 20 years old, who have grown up in the *In Crudo* community. Often the children of the founding fathers and mothers, they enter adulthood with a sense that they are the true heirs to the *In Crudo* tradition, although most

21 Anthony Giddens, "Living in a Post-Traditional Society", in *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, eds. Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash (Polity, 1994), 56–109.

22 Some of them are: Janusz Prusinowski, Kaja Prusinowska, Remigiusz Mazur-Hanaj, Agata Harz, Piotr Piszczatowski, Piotr Zgorzelski, Bogumiła Zgorzelska, Jacek Hałas, Ewa Grochowska, Adam Strug, among others.

23 This appears to have much in common with the concept of sensory heritage proposed by Regina Bendix. She claimed that "[s]ensory heritage can be seen as a rapprochement between excessively enlightened and excessively capitalistic humans, their everyday life, and the debris of their history. After having undergone all the steps of heritagization with its 'slow self-estrangement' […] the path may be open to reacquainting with habitus, that is, with simply internalizing the practices of everyday life within and beyond human relations." Regina Bendix, "Life Itself: An Essay on the Sensory and the (Potential) End of Heritage Making", *Traditiones* 50, no. 1 (2022): 48.

24 Stokes, "Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music".

learn from their parents and archival recordings, rather than from the village masters themselves.

On the lower rung of the *In Crudo* hierarchical ladder are individuals I would describe as 'insiders'. These people have learned traditional music from a variety of sources: village musicians, summer camps (*tabor*), the older *In Crudo* practitioners (founding fathers and their followers), and from archival recordings. They are also often professionals, as many teach traditional music, organize workshops and events, and play concerts for money. For them, participation in the *In Crudo* community is a way of life or, to call on Anthony Giddens' theory, a chosen "lifestyle",[25] that influences their day-to-day existence. Following Robert Stebbins,[26] such participation may also be considered 'serious leisure', blurring the line between leisure and work. Though still influenced by the founders and leaders, these insiders often find fresh and creative ways to contribute to the community.

At the bottom of the hierarchy are those who engage with the *In Crudo* community only occasionally, participating in workshops and courses or attending festivals and dance parties infrequently. Drawing on Giddens once more, for this group, traditional music acts as a "lifestyle sector",[27] appearing and disappearing depending on one's needs and desires. While for most of these individuals their involvement in the community remains a leisure activity, some treat it as a 'serious leisure', investing more time, effort, and money to improve their community knowledge and skills. By and large, however, most individuals occupying this bottom rung engage with the *In Crudo* community as sporadic participants, sometimes only encountering the tradition as passers-by at local festivals and concerts.

The *In Crudo* community strives to present itself as open and accessible to all. However, as I infer from my ethnographic observations, its hierarchy is quite rigid. It is not all that difficult to take the first step onto the *In Crudo* ladder, as many events, workshops, and festivals are open to the general public. An example of this is the well-known *Mazurkas of the World*[28] event, which attracts many people and is open to anyone willing to buy a ticket. At this event, those who are not proficient dancers can participate on their own terms. There

25 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in The Late Modern Age* (Stanford University Press, 1991).

26 In Stebbins definition 'serious leisure' is a hobby that involves a high level of commitment, effort and dedication. It differs from non-serious leisure in that participants derive long-term benefits such as self-realization, self-improvement, a sense of fulfilment and an improvement in their self-image. It often involves the development of specialized knowledge, skills and experience. Participants in 'serious leisure' often form subcultures that share common beliefs, values and norms. Robert Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time* (Transaction Publishers, 2007), 251–254.

27 Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 81.

28 https://www.festivalmazurki.pl/en/home/.

are also more exclusive events such as dance parties held at the *Traditional Music Embassy*.[29] These events are dedicated mostly to leaders and insiders, as though in theory anyone can join, participation is often limited to those who really know how to dance, play, or sing, and who are recognized for such skills. From my observations and fieldwork experiences, it appears rather difficult to become a true insider within the *In Crudo* community.

The most intriguing question, however, is what motivates people to engage with a village music heritage that is not necessarily 'their' heritage – or is it? Surely, the answer depends on how 'heritage' is defined. To be concise, I propose rejecting UNESCO's definition of the term – which adopts the philosophy and practice of listing and grouping objects[30] – and instead suggest looking at heritage as a process and discourse in which values and meanings are continuously negotiated. Such an understanding is proposed by Laurajane Smith who, in her seminal work, writes: "heritage is […] ultimately a cultural practice, involved in the construction and regulation of a range of values and understandings."[31] To Smith, heritage refers to the past, but its goal is to "construct, reconstruct and negotiate a range of identities and social and cultural values and meanings in the present".[32] David Lowenthal argues that heritage intentionally distorts the past as it "clarifies pasts so as to infuse them with present purposes".[33] Smith adds that "heritage is a multi-layered performance […] that embodies acts of remembrance and commemoration while negotiating and constructing a sense of place, belonging and understanding in the present".[34]

If this is the case, it is worth considering which values and meanings from past rural life and tradition the members of the *In Crudo* community choose to embrace and how they use them in the present. To approach this, let me introduce a few quotations from my research interviews.

One young woman said, "in my case, there is also maybe such a worldview, such a general one. I somehow reject the modern world, and I had felt the desire to do so much earlier than when I took up traditional music, with all the

29 https://www.facebook.com/ambasadamuzykitradycyjnej.

30 "The 'intangible cultural heritage' means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity." Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage from 29 September to 17 October 2003, https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention.

31 Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 4.

32 Ibid., 3.

33 David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), xi.

34 Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 6.

nightmares of capitalism, globalization, destruction of the environment, and so on".[35] Another person stated that traditional "music should accompany life, and create and strengthen the community of people with whom I would live".[36] The social aspect of the movement appeared often: "This is a concept that involves resurrecting communities and such close relationships – a different connection than what you can experience at such a dance party or *tabor* with the people you dance and play with. And this is one of those very attractive elements. On the other hand, this style of music is a little closer to nature, I think."[37]

Of course, people involved in the *In Crudo* movement are often fully aware of the utopian nature of their vision of returning to natural relationships: "This is such a longing for a certain idyll, which I guess is typical for humans in general. Here the fields, forests, tiny cottages and so on […] but something like that doesn't really exist and probably never did."[38] One young woman, however, stressed the real, tangible aspect of her interactions: "This is interesting. Well, because you don't know someone, and immediately you have some kind of […] you interact physically […] there's no barrier of touch for me."[39]

After analyzing these and other statements, I came to the conclusion that what the members of the *In Crudo* community are looking for is a sense of closeness, community, and belonging – a sense of connection to each other, to nature, and to the world. They also seek real, embodied relationships with music, with each other, with sound, with their own bodies, and with the spaces they occupy. What is important to them is the holistic, total experience of music, one that creates complex relationships and unites people. This idea aligns well with Christopher Small's understanding of music as a process and ritual, which he proposed through his concept of "musicking".[40] In his ethnography, Small claimed that the "essence of music lies not in musical works but in taking part in performance, in social action. Music is thus not so much a noun as a verb, 'to music' […] The meaning of musicking lies in the relationships that are established between the participants by the performance."[41]

Members of the *In Crudo* community believe that these total musical experiences are realized most authentically when they invoke a sense of shared tradition, calling on Polish traditional music, meaning old village music. They claim that this music belongs to Poles, traditionally and genetically, and by this unites people as Poles and distinguishes their heritage from others. Poles can

35 Woman, ca. 30 years old, singer and instrumentalist.

36 Man, ca. 28 years old, dancer.

37 Man, ca. 40 years old, instrumentalist.

38 Man, ca. 28 years old, dancer.

39 Woman, ca. 25 years old, dancer.

40 Christopher Small, "Musicking – the Meanings of Performing and Listening: A Lecture", *Music Education Research* 1, no. 1 (1999): 9–22.

41 Ibid., 9.

understand it and feel it naturally, even if they have, to a certain extent, already forgotten it. In this sense, the understanding of the *In Crudo* community resembles the genealogical model of heritage described by Tim Ingold and Terhi Kurtilla, a model rooted in

> *the idea that the rudiments of make-up and identity that go together to constitute a person are received, along one or several lines of descendants. It is commonly supposed that these attributes are of two kinds, biogenetic and cultural, the former carried across the generations long with components of bodily substance, such as 'blood' or 'genes', the latter passed on through a somewhat analogous transmission of rules and representations, coded in speech or other symbolic media. These rules and representations add up to what is known, in the language of the genealogical model, as the 'cultural heritage'.* [42]

Polish folklorist Piotr Kowalski[43] wrote that, nowadays, "folklore is already dead", but no one wants to admit this, because such tales still benefit many people. Folk culture, argued Kowalski, acts today as a symbol of local identity and a conservative worldview, promoting values such as healthy eating and an ecological lifestyle. I believe, however, that members of the folk music revival movements in Poland refer to traditional village culture not only in Kowalski's terms, but by creating their own. Of course, those in the *In Crudo* community benefit from the growing popularity of traditional music as they teach it, play it, organize events around it, and earn money from doing so. Many also link their tradition with an ecological worldview. However, after analyzing the *In Crudo* way of using traditional folk music, I have concluded that their traditional folk music culture may be better understood as a distinct, anti-modern, and anti-industrial way to re-create 'real' meaning and 'authentic'[44] social relations. I believe that embodiment plays a significant role in this re-creation; this means physically experiencing the music through dance, physically creating the music through instruments and, through all of this, bringing to life the complex relationships between all of the participants, sounds, places, and social imaginaries.

This hypothesis corresponds with Rodney Harrison's thoughts on heritage, who writes that heritage is an embodied and experienced process in which we "establish a sense of belonging to a community and to a place through cultural practices that create this sense of locality. Humans use heritage to produce the local by rooting particular practices, which they use to help link

42 Tim Ingold and Terhi Kurtilla, "Perceiving the Environment in Finnish Lapland", *Body and Society* 6, nos. 3-4. (2006): 185, emphasis in original.

43 Piotr Kowalski, "O kulturze ludowej i tym, co z nią się robi", in *Popkultura i humaniści: Daleki od kompletności remanent spraw, poglądów i mistyfikacji*, ed. Piotr Kowalski (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2004), 145–168.

44 Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity*.

them to a particular community or to a particular place in the past."[45] In the *In Crudo* community, this 'place in the past' is an imagined village life, an imagined locality.

The Peasants and Its Music

Having described the *In Crudo* community and their main ideas, values, and assumptions in detail, we are now in a better position to understand the controversy that arose around the film *The Peasants*, to which I now turn.

The Peasants[46] is a high-budget production that premiered in September 2023. The film is based on the Nobel Prize-winning novel by Władysław Reymont (1867–1925). Published at the beginning of the twentieth century with its plot set at the end of the nineteenth century, the novel is a revealing study of peasant life in the Polish countryside at that time, shortly after the enfranchisement of peasants in Russian partition.[47] The story follows the fate of the Boryna family and their rural community over the course of a year – depicting a natural, social, and religious cycle. The novel is a detailed study of social relations, the role of community, and the challenges of cultivating land in those times.

The Polish-British filmmaking duo, Dorota and Hugh Welchman, narrowed the story's scope by focusing on a single character: the young girl, Jagna. In doing so, they crafted an alternative 'herstory', an approach popular nowadays. Jagna is an extremely beautiful young woman and, because of this, finds herself as an object of both male desire and female hatred within her village community. She has an artistic soul, creates paper cutouts, is sensitive to the beauty of nature, and does not like to work in the field. Forced into a loveless marriage with an older, wealthy widower, Jagna's heart wanders towards her husband's son, who is himself married. This sets the stage for a dramatic love story shaped by the customs and morality of rural village life, as the two men fight not just for Jagna, but for their shared land and the right to manage the farm. In the end, Jagna becomes both a victim and a scapegoat within this battle, caught between two men: one, her husband, the other, her love.

Remarkable here is the fact that *The Peasants* was made using an entirely unique technique, filmed initially with actors but, over the course of three years, transformed into oil-painted scenes by 100 painters from Poland, Serbia, Ukraine, and Lithuania. The main inspiration for this artistic decision

45 Rodney Harrison, "Heritage as Social Action", in *Understanding Heritage in Practice*, ed. Susie West, (Manchester University Press 2010), 243.

46 Original Polish title is *Chłopi*.

47 Poland lost its independence in 1795. Its territory was divided among three partitioners: The Habsburg Monarchy, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Russian Empire. Until 1918, when Poland regained its independence, each partition of Polish territory was subject to different foreign powers and laws.

came from the paintings of the so-called 'Young Poland' period of art history, particularly the works of Józef Chełmonski (1849–1914) such as *Storks*, *Storm*, and *Indian Summer*, as well as from Ferdinand Ruszczyc's (1870–1936) *Earth*.[48] The production consisted of 40,000 individually painted film frames created in four studios. This approach resonated strongly with the film's Polish audience, making the film highly successful, garnering over 2 million viewers within the first two months of its release. To date, the film – which was a Polish Oscar candidate in 2023 – has earned over $10 million.[49]

But why should an ethnomusicologist care about this film? Well, among members of the *In Crudo* community, the film – particularly its soundtrack – sparked significant controversy. Its music was composed by L.U.C. (Łukasz Rostkowski), a Polish music producer, rapper, composer, and director of music videos. L.U.C. collaborated with leading performers of world, pop, and folk music to create a soundtrack inspired by a mixture of various elements of the Slavic music tradition in the broadest sense. In it, there are references to traditional Polish music, of course, but also to Balkan rhythms and Ukrainian polyphonic songs. A striking feature of the soundtrack is its dominant use of pulsating percussion, which encourages dancing. The music is undeniably engaging, moving, catchy, and full of expression. Even those who were not interested in folk music at the time of the soundtrack's release seemed to be captivated by it. Several songs became absolute hits, being broadcast regularly on the radio and topping music charts. Others remain staples in Polish discos. Last summer, I heard L.U.C. tracks played at two weddings. Today, even when the film is no longer being shown in cinemas, L.U.C.'s music continues to thrive, with the artist consistently on tour, performing both domestically, across Poland, and internationally.

Let's explore a specific track from the soundtrack to illustrate the general character of its music. *Let's dance – autumn* appears in the movie during a wedding party scene. The lyrics were written by L.U.C. and sung by one the most popular Polish pop singers, Kayah (born 1967), who is well-known for her previous collaboration with Goran Bregović (born 1950), and for this is often associated with Balkan music. The music for this song was performed by the Rebel Babel Film Orchestra, created specifically for the project, alongside Dagadana (a Polish-Ukrainian pop-folk group), the Laboratory of Song (a female folk song ensemble), and Tęgie Chłopy [The Thick Peasants], a brass band that reconstructs Polish traditional wedding music. The track features polyphonic singing, a technique not generally found in the traditional village music of central Poland. With the track set in a double meter rhythm and a 4/4 time signature, with an emphasis on the third beat and dominant percussion,

48 For further information on the painting inspiration see: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aHWVUKbEAp0z0uechx0XrTxAXT6CTYQT/view.

49 https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt10651230/.

it creates a trance-like effect. Its instrumentation combines brass and string elements also foreign to central Poland village music of the nineteenth century. The composition is also very similar to the popular hit recorded by Kayah and Bregović in 1999, which remains a timeless dance favorite.[50] The official description of *Let's dance – autumn* states:

> *The wedding of Boryna and Jagna took place in the fall, and the dancing song, created in the spirit of combining generations and musical genres, refers to this event. Hypnotic voices* […] *were combined with the blast of the traditional band Tęgie Chłopy as part of the international Rebel Babel Film Orchestra. Just as Reymont built a baroque linguistic cathedral from peasant words and sayings, L.U.C. created rich and colorful film music, using only authentic and acoustic historical instruments. Rostkowski created the text for the song based on hundreds of words and quotations from the Nobel Prize-winning novel 'Chłopi'. The single, like the entire project, also has many impressionistic elements, combining traditional melodies with a modern production form, based on looping and modern sound articulations of double-membrane drums or a tuba, which plays here like a bass synthesizer.*[51]

The composer himself explains his concept as follows: "We wanted to show Polish folk, Slavic music, but filtered through an Anglo-Saxon sound. I grew up on Massive Attack, Tricky, Portishead, and Welchman [the director] is British. The idea was to make this music interesting for other cultures as well, to export it to the world."[52] In addition, L.U.C. stresses that his work was not about adding hip-hop beats to folk music, "because it's completely not at that level", going on to say that, "[t]his film is so classic in its formula that we had to find a more sublime form. We traveled around Poland, recorded in open-air museums, recorded folk bands playing historical instruments. We were looking for authenticity. Modernity manifests itself in the form of production."[53]

The film's choreography – the creation of Daniela Komędera – is similarly eclectic, drawing on a variety of dance idioms. Dance plays an important role in the film. As Remigiusz Mazur-Hanaj writes, "its performativity appeals to the viewer even more than that of the music, because it does so visibly and suggestively, through the body and carnality. Daniela Komędera, responsible for the choreography, goes as far as L.U.C. when it comes to the degree of conventionality in dealing with the historical-ethnographic costume."[54] The film's dancing is highly evocative, stirring the emotions of the viewer. The

50 "Right to Left" ("Prawy do lewego" is the original title): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lPzdD2Cw8J4.

51 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amHCTTvWP4o.

52 https://jedynka.polskieradio.pl/artykul/3257296,Muzyka-z-filmu-Ch%C5%82opi-LUC-szukali%C5%9Bmy-autentyczno%C5%9Bci.

53 https://jedynka.polskieradio.pl/artykul/3257296,Muzyka-z-filmu-Ch%C5%82opi-LUC-szukali%C5%9Bmy-autentyczno%C5%9Bci.

54 Remigiusz Mazur-Hanaj, "Piękna i bestie, czyli 'Chłopi'", *Pismo Folkowe* 169, no. 6 (2023): 38–39.

choreography blends elements of specific Polish dances – such as *chodzony*, *krzyżok*, *oberek*, and *kujon/kujawiak* – and non-Polish dances, including Swedish folk dances, which fascinate Komędera, as she claimed. This rich mixture is further enhanced by aspects of contemporary dance theater and dance art-pop culture, as seen on TV shows and competitions.[55]

It should be noted that L.U.C.'s main goal was to make the soundtrack attractive to and engaging for a wide audience, not only for those interested in traditional Polish music. In addition, the artist took into account the fact that the film would be seen by a wide variety of Poles, including many high school students, as the novel is required reading in state schools. Anticipating the film's appeal to international audiences, he also incorporated elements of foreign music into the soundtrack. His approach to the Polish village music and dance tradition was thus undoubtedly unorthodox and eclectic. As a result, it led to very harsh criticism from the *In Crudo* community.

Music Quarrel

The *In Crudo* community, and others involved in the revival of traditional village music, lamented that L.U.C.'s soundtrack did not accurately reflect the musical style and tradition one would have heard at a nineteenth century village wedding. Even more, they argued that music from the Łowicz region – and specifically from the village of Lipce, where the story is based – is among the best documented in Polish archives, and could have been authentically recreated without great trouble. Indeed, Oskar Kolberg (1814–1890), Poland's first true ethnographer and folklorist, conducted his research in this region in the mid-nineteenth century, notating melodies, transcribing song lyrics, and producing detailed ethnographic descriptions of the music's social and cultural context.[56] As such, many accused L.U.C. of ignorance, characterizing his work as a missed opportunity to popularize 'authentic' Polish traditional music and "to show how Polish music stands out from Slavic music".[57] A young man had this to say about *The Peasants*:

> *This is an outstanding film for deaf audiences. What is due for L.U.C. is a two-year rehabilitation camp in the basement of the phonographic archive of the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences. By what miracle was the esteemed gentleman allowed to do this? And by what miracle did they let this soundtrack through to him? I can't quite imagine. There is nothing but lousy stuff there, either tragic or extremely cringe, often completely*

55 One example of the dance can be see here – "Love Possesed" ["Miłosny opętaniec"], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7P0HYe5PgY.

56 Oskar Kolberg, *Dzieła Wszystkie* T. 20. *Radomskie* I (1964 - Photo-offset re-edition, first printing: Kraków 1887); Oskar Kolberg, *Dzieła Wszystkie*, T. 21. *Radomskie* II (1964 Photo-offset re-edition, first printing: Kraków 1888).

57 Man, ca 35 years old, musician and singer.

> *demolishing the effects achieved on screen. Numbers that by ear I identified as sung by the Song Laboratory – below criticism. Church singing – abysmal. What's the purpose of knocking out the entire ethnography (one of the most thoroughly researched folklore sites in the country!) and radically boosting the neo-folk aesthetic?*[58]

A young woman expressed a similar sentiment, through more briefly: "Auntie Kayah and this whole kitschy Balkan beat are unbearable."[59]

I can recall many similar statements. However, what interested me most was the actively musical reaction to the soundtrack. "Instead of complaining, we decided to do something positive – to show that this topic can be approached differently," said Piotr Baczewski, the chairman of the Rooted Music Association.[60] As a gesture of protest, people associated with this organization invited traditional music artists to record a response album titled *Boryna's Wedding*.[61] This album conveyed 'authentic' music based on ethnographic archives, performed on 'authentic' instruments – such as the violin, basolia (in Polish *basy*), baraban,[62] hoop drum, and historic clarinet – and sung in an 'authentic' vocal manner always in one voice, or unisono. Joanna Skowrońska, a singer and ethnographer involved in the project, explained:

> *We tried to show every element of the rite of passage, although we ran out of space for many things, as the wedding once lasted three days. It is joyful and sad at the same time, as it is at a wedding. There are mazurkas, chants, and ritual songs commenting on the transition from maiden and bachelor status to marriage and the creation of a new family. The songs are based on archival recordings of local musicians from the villages of Lipce, Mszadeł, Chąśna and Łowicz.*[63]

Throughout, the project placed an emphasis on authenticity, credibility, and consistency in relation to rural musical traditions and their emotional contexts.

In April 2024, during the largest Polish festival devoted to traditional music in its non-staged form, *Mazurkas of the World*, a group of musicians, singers, and dancers from the *In Crudo* community[64] performed an accurate re-creation

58 Man, ca 30 years old, musician, cultural animator.

59 Woman, ca 35 years old, singer.

60 Michał Wieczorek, "Chłopi sieją ferment", *Dwutygodnik* 372 (November 2023), https://www.dwutygodnik.com/artykul/10967-chlopi-sieja-ferment.html.

61 https://muzykazakorzeniona.pl/kopia-radomska-szkola-improwizacji.

62 "Baraban is a large drum with a deep loud sound, with bilateral tension. Musical instrument from membranephones group. It consists of a cylindrical resonator body and one or two membranes. The sound of baraban is varied with a metallic plate, or a triangle. It is played with both hands and was one of instruments of folk band" (http://www.instrumentyludowe.pl/en/baraban.html).

63 Wieczorek, "Chłopi sieją ferment".

64 Performers and creators: Natalia Kaja Chmielewska – bride, Piotr Zgorzelski – the groom, Bogusława Drzewiecka – the old woman, Joanna Skowrońska – chief of bridesmaids, Patryk Petersson – chief of best man Anna Żermena Jakowska – mother, Róża Martyna Grabowska, Joanna Gancarczyk, Maria Nizik, Maria Stępień – bridesmaids, Zoja Bugno – bridesmaids, Jan

of a nineteenth century wedding from the Łowicz region. The concert announcement described it as "a musical spectacle full of traditional music and wedding rituals from the Łowicz region," one in which "[t]he audience will be able to follow the bride and groom from the moment of the bride's strenuous preparations, through the songs accompanying the undressing and dressing of the bridal gown, to the exuberant dancing and wedding rituals."[65] So it was. The response to the show was spontaneous and enthusiastic. The audience reacted vividly, at times joining in the action, shouting, singing, and dancing with the characters of the show.[66]

On the website of the Rooted Music Association, they explain the idea of the album as follows: "What might the music of a Łowicz village have sounded like in the times described by Władysław Reymont in his novel 'The Peasants'? Using our knowledge, experience and archival recordings, we decided to re-create fragments of Boryna's wedding and illustrate Reymont's narrative. Can music translated into modern language, faithful to the old sounds, be of interest to today's listeners?"[67] In my opinion, the latter question is crucial to this debate. What kind of music can still be interesting today, to whom are they interesting, and why?

I present these two points of view in the debate over the soundtrack of *The Peasants* not to convince readers that one side is entirely right or that traditional music, as understood in a conservative *In Crudo* way, is better and more valuable than when it is transformed and mixed with other musical idioms. Rather, I aim to highlight that these viewpoints represent just two extremes on a continuum of opinions. Many people simply liked the soundtrack and didn't think twice about its authenticity. For example, one listener said: "These songs are catchy. A big plus is that people who don't listen to folk music every day will get interested in it."[68] Another remarked that he was "skeptical that the music was done by L.U.C., but in the end the effect stands up for itself," continuing by noting that *The Peasants* is "a nice Hollywood production, set for the Oscars" regardless of "the intention of the filmmakers not to make it a kosher reconstruction."[69]

As an anthropologist, I do not intend to judge which music is better or more 'authentic'. Instead, I am interested in comparing the two idioms and

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Szymański Band, Sławomir Czekalski, Kożuch band, Napięcie band, Diabubu, script concert: Patryk Petersson, Joanna Skowronska, concert curator/director of the film and performance: Patryk Petersson, cinematography: Cyprian Śliskowski, sound: Paweł Rymuza, editing: Aniela Andrejczyk.

65 https://www.festivalmazurki.pl/en/events/concert-the-peasants-borynas-wedding/.

66 It was recorded and was premiered online on 30 October 2024 on the Youtube site of the Rooted Music Association: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mY7sciso1-M.

67 https://muzykazakorzeniona.pl/kopia-radomska-szkola-improwizacji.

68 Man, ca. 40 years old, musician.

69 Man, ca 40 years old, dancer.

trying to find out what is behind them. What does this dispute reveal about traditional music in the modern world – who needs it, who values it, and why?

Who Needs Folk Music, and Which One?

The two points of view presented here can be understood as sites of production of specific musical communities, drawing on Thomas Turino's[70] categories of cultural formations and cultural cohorts. Turino suggests that in every society, individuals share both similarities and differences, shaped by a habitus derived from their experiences, social positions, and various aspects of their personalities. The key, though often implicit, elements of social identities include class, gender, occupation, age, interests, hobbies, religion, and political views. From these specific elements, cultural cohorts arise – groups of people who think and act in similar ways. Of course, individuals can belong to different cultural cohorts. Simultaneously, within a given society, and even across societies, there are shared constellations of habits that influence our identities. When there are many of these constellations, they become the basis for cultural formations. Cultural formations, then, are groups of people who share many of the habits that make up the identities of their fellow members. The cultural formation is thus a broader category which refers to "a group of people who have in common a majority of habits that constitute most parts of each individual member's self".[71] This is a base, and within this base one may belong to many different cohorts, emphasizing the habits they have chosen. As Turino writes: "It is the *pervasiveness* and often the time-depth of habits influencing individual thought, practice, and decision making that distinguish *cultural formation* from *cultural cohorts*."[72] Cohorts thus appear within formations, though the two are interdependent. As Turino illustrates, the cohort of professors cannot exist without the formation of the university.

I argue that there exists a musical-cultural formation of people who connect with, enjoy, and even need folk music. And they have a lot in common: a longing for 'authenticity', in Martin Stoke's sense,[73] a need to construct their identity in part through musical traditions, and a belief that Polish/Slavic music represents a unique and distinct musical heritage. Within this formation, distinct musical-cultural cohorts emerge, each with their own habits and ways of thinking. I have identified two of them in Poland. The first cohort is the *In Crudo* community. The second is the community of world music lovers.

70 Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

71 Ibid., 112.

72 Ibid., 112, emphasis in original.

73 Stokes, "Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music".

The *In Crudo* cohort is more limited and inward-looking, built on close personal relationships. The group attracts specialists and people deeply interested in the village music tradition movement. As I have discussed, members of this cohort are especially interested in preserving and re-creating Polish village music in its 'authentic', 'raw' form. Regional diversity in music and tradition is also very important for the *In Crudo*, as they strive to safeguard what they understand as the 'purity' and historical truth of distinct regional musical differences. As such, the *In Crudo* cohort is prone to examine and judge music and dance through the lens of authenticity, understood in a 'cool' sense, per Tom Selwyn's theory.[74]

Selwyn, though primarily known for his work in the anthropology of tourism, developed a theory of authenticity that applies well to other topics, including heritage studies. He proposed a distinction between 'hot' and 'cool' authenticity based on the different arguments and criteria people use to prove the authenticity of certain things, places, and events. 'Hot authenticity' refers to the way in which we experience the world through emotional and affective experiences. In this concept, feelings and subjective feedback play a dominant role. 'Cool authenticity', on the other hand, requires institutional and scientific validation, calling for hard data, clear evidence, and expert approval. The *In Crudo* community aligns with the principles of 'cool authenticity', favoring hard data and expert voices and relying on actual archives, archival recordings, and old, traditional instruments, or their modern replicas. The community also places significance on the authority of old village musicians and those who spend years learning raw music directly from these authorities.

The second cohort, which I refer to as the community of world music lovers in Poland, contrasts sharply with the *In Crudo* cohort, and is much more open and flexible. This group is not bound to any specific place, knowledge, or level of engagement, allowing individuals to join and leave freely. It is primarily interested in exploring "Slavicness" – a Slavic musical idiom that links music cultures in East and South Europe, rather than dividing them. For this community, mixing Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Serbian and Polish traditional music with any other sort of music is entirely acceptable so long as the music resonates with people, brings joy, fulfills needs, and is embraced as its own. It seems that world music lovers also search for authenticity, but rather in Selwyn's 'hot' sense.[75] They desire authentic emotions and feelings, valuing music that is attractive, catchy, and immersive. In this context, Slavic music operates as an imagined concept, one that embodies everything that is considered wild, spontaneous, vigorous, and that distinguishes 'us' from civilized, Western Europe.

74 Selwyn, *The Tourist Image*.

75 Ibid.

Slavicness in this sense is similar neither to Orientalism[76] nor to Balkanism.[77] It does not belong to any particular discourse of power, nor can it be described as a "specter haunting Western culture",[78] an accusation, or an exotic image of others. It should rather be understood as an imagined, sometimes desired, and mostly repressed identity that grew out of opposition to the dominant state-Christian narrative, the likes of which forms the basis of official Polish historical discourse. Without going deeper into this complicated historical thread, it is worth noting that Maria Janion has offered valuable insights about this imagined Slavicness. Janion writes about how modern Poles grapple with their complex relationship to Old Western Europe, from which they are supposed to be separated by Slavic, Eastern, and Northern 'otherness'. Though as she illustrates with clarity, us Poles are still "east of the West and west of the East".[79] We are and want to be different; and this wild, untamed, spontaneous, Slavic music indicates this.

In summary, the cohort of world music lovers is an imagined community[80] that functions primarily at the emotional, ephemeral level. It can appear suddenly, during a party or in the cinema, and can disappear just as quickly. Meanwhile, the *In Crudo* community operates as a closed, tight knit community almost resembling a sort of modern tribe. Paradoxically, this modern tribe arises from the longing for what is old, natural, direct, and close.

Weronika Grozdew-Kołacińska,[81] in her comparison of the *In Crudo* community and world folk music artists in Poland, observed that the two groups differ mainly in their willingness and ability to engage in dialogue with others.

76 Orientalism is a critical term used to describe the Western world's contemptuous representation of the Eastern world (the Orient). Said argues that Orientalism, in the sense of Western knowledge of the Eastern world, is inextricably linked to the imperialist societies that produced it. Orientalism is therefore inherently political and belongs to the order of power. Orientalism is "the corporate institution for dealing with Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient". Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Pantheon Books, 1978), 3.

77 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford University Press, 2010). Balkanism is not a form of Orientalism, although Said's inspiration is obvious. It does, however, refer to internal colonialism. In this sense, the Balkans appear as Europe's 'other within'. Not quite exotic, but not quite its own. The Balkans thus occupy an intermediate position between here and there. The difference also lies in the fact that, for Said, the Orient is not a clearly defined space or place. Todorova's Balkans, on the other hand, are located in the south of Europe.

78 Ibid., 3

79 Maria Janion, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna* (Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2007).

80 "It is imagined because the members […] will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. […] Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined." Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 1991), 6.

81 Weronika Grozdew-Kołacińska, "Muzyka tradycyjna i folkowa w Polsce: dialog międzykulturowy vs. Hermetyzacja swojskości", *Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne* 57, (2018): 29–40.

She argued that the *In Crudo* community embodies a sense of homeliness, while world folk musicians strive to foster intercultural dialogue. The *In Crudo*, lovers of traditional Polish music, thus form a hermetic community that attempts to monopolize the knowledge of Polish traditional music and its performance within its own group. The group views other traditions through the lens of its own familiar practices and values, often dismissing other groups because they possess characteristics that deviate from what the *In Crudo* deem to be 'correct'.

World musicians, on the other hand, are open to intercultural dialogue but often lack a knowledge and awareness of established musical conventions and nuance. They mix musical traditions without regard for historical accuracy, archival data, or musical specifics. For them, authenticity is rooted in expression. In this sense, L.U.C.'s soundtrack to *The Peasants* can be understood as an example of world music, open to Slavic, intercultural, and international dialogue. As such, it is not surprising that this approach drew criticism from members of the *In Crudo* community. Tomasz Janas, one of *In Crudo*'s founding fathers, wrote that this soundtrack "is a free conglomerate of various associations and inspirations – perhaps least of all the local ones". He next asks: "Where does the conviction come from that Balkan rhythms have a better chance with the so-called broad cinema audience than traditional Polish music? Has anyone done any research? And does less attractive music have no right to exist?"[82]

I am sure that both have a right to exist. Moreover, each holds significance for specific musical cohorts, playing a vital role in shaping modern identities and lifestyles rooted in these traditions.

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82 Tomasz Janas, "Kultura ludowa albo biesiadna", *Pismo Folklowe* 169, no. 6 (2023): 25.

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SUMMARY

The Polish film *The Peasants*, which premiered in September 2023, is based on the Nobel Prize-winning novel by Władysław Reymont. The novel is a revealing study of peasant life in the Polish countryside at the turn of the nineteenth century. In it, we follow the fate of the Boryna family and their rural community over the course of a year - a natural, social, and religious cycle. This film is interesting to music anthropologists because its soundtrack sparked significant controversy in the *In Crudo* community - a group dedicated to preserving traditional Polish music in its authentic form. The soundtrack was created by L.U.C - a Polish music producer, rapper, composer, and music video director. In it, he offers a mixture of various elements from the broader Slavic music idiom, inspired by Polish, Balkan, and Ukrainian influences and featuring dominant percussion and active dance rhythms.

Those involved in the revival of traditional village music in Poland, the *In Crudo* community, criticized the film's soundtrack, claiming that such music could not have been played at a village wedding in the nineteenth century. As a gesture of protest, they produced their own album, *Boryna's Wedding*, featuring what they believed to be more authentic music. The whole discussion based around this controversy and the actual, musical reaction it provoked led the author to consider what traditional music is today, what it is for, and who needs it. How important is 'authenticity' in folk music and in what ways can 'authenticity' be defined? Here, the author used the theoretical proposal of Thomas Turino to show how cultural formations and cultural cohorts can, today, still arise from the concept of traditional music.

POVZETEK

Slovanska glasba ali *In Crudo* vaška glasbena tradicija? Kdo na Poljskem danes potrebuje ljudsko glasbo?

Poljski film *Kmetje*, ki je bil premierno prikazan septembra 2023, temelji na romanu Nobelovega nagrajenca Władysława Reymonta. Roman je izpovedna študija kmečkega življenja na poljskem podeželju na prelomu v 20. stoletje. V njem spremljamo usodo družine Boryna in njene podeželske skupnosti v teku enega leta – v njegovem naravnem, družbenem in verskem ciklu. Film je za antropologe glasbe zanimiv zato, ker je njegova glasbena podlaga sprožila precejšnjo polemiko v skupnosti *In Crudo*, ki se posveča ohranjanju poljske ljudske glasbe v njeni 'avtentični' obliki. Glasbeno podlago je ustvaril L.U.C., poljski glasbeni producent, raper, skladatelj in režiser glasbenih videospotov. V njej ponuja mešanico različnih elementov širšega slovanskega glasbenega izraza, navdihnjenega s poljskimi, balkanskimi in ukrajinskimi vplivi, v kateri prevladujejo tolkala in aktivni plesni ritmi.

Člani skupine *In Crudo*, ki se ukvarjajo z oživljanjem vaške ljudske glasbe na Poljskem, so kritizirali glasbeno podlago filma in trdili, da takšne glasbe v 19. stoletju niso igrali na vaških porokah. V znak protesta so izdali svoj album *Boryna's Wedding*, na katerem je glasba, za katero verjamejo, da je bolj avtentična. Celotna razprava o tem vprašanju in dejanski glasbeni odziv, ki ga je sprožila, sta avtorico pripeljala do razmišljanja o tem, kaj je danes ljudska glasba, kakšen je njen namen in kdo jo potrebuje. Kako pomembna je avtentičnost v ljudski glasbi in na kakšne načine jo je mogoče opredeliti? Avtorica je uporabila teoretično izhodišče Thomasa Turina, da bi pokazala, kako lahko kulturne formacije in kulturni kohorti danes še vedno izhajajo iz koncepta ljudske glasbe.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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O AVTORICI

MARIA MAŁANICZ-PRZYBYLSKA (maria.malanicz-przybylska@uw.edu.pl) dela kot docentka na Inštitutu za etnologijo in kulturno antropologijo na Univerzi v Varšavi. Diplomirala je iz antropologije in muzikologije. Trenutno raziskuje na področju antropologije glasbe, s poudarkom na kulturnih, političnih in družbenih pomenih glasbe, zanima pa jo tudi metodologija, zlasti razvoj kulturnih raziskav prek sodelovanja v glasbenih in plesnih dogodkih. Med druga področja njenega zanimanja spadajo študije dediščine in prehodi tradicij v modernost. Raziskovala je na Poljskem, v Srbiji in Ukrajini. Objavila je številne članke, je urednica treh zbornikov in avtorica dveh monografij: *Między dźwiękami Skalnego Podhala: Współczesna góralszczyzna* [*Med zvoki Skalnega Podhala: Sodobna kultura gorjanov*] iz leta 2018 in *Bez muzyki, bez śpiewu nie ma świata: Muzyka w Wilamowicach* [*Brez glasbe, brez pesmi ni sveta: Glasba v Wilamowicach*] iz leta 2019.

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UDK: 39(497.4):78.071.2Trinajsto prase

The *Trinajsto prase* Ensemble and the Folk Music Revival in Slovenia

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents the *Trinajsto prase* ensemble and its formative role in the Slovenian folk music revival movement of the late twentieth century. It examines the ensemble's repertoire, performance aesthetics, participatory ethos, direct engagement with folk music practices, and diverse influences, as well as its legacy among Slovenian revival musicians.

Keywords: *Trinajsto prase* ensemble, revival movement, aesthetics, participatory engagement, folk music practice

IZVLEČEK

Prispevek obravnava skupino *Trinajsto prase* in njeno ključno vlogo v slovenskem preporodnem gibanju ljudske glasbe v zadnjih desetletjih 20. stoletja. Preučuje repertoar skupine, estetiko izvajanja, participativni etos, neposreden stik z ljudskimi glasbenimi praksami in različne vplive ter njeno zapuščino med slovenskimi preporodnimi glasbeniki.

Ključne besede: skupina *Trinajsto prase*, preporodno gibanje, estetika, participativno udejstvovanje, ljudska glasbena praksa

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Introduction

In the late 1960s and 1970s, there was a (renewed) interest in folk music and dance in many European countries. This revival was mainly driven by young intellectuals in urban areas, who started to actively revive and perform these elements of folk culture in new and changed social contexts. In Slovenia, the first such folk music revival movement emerged in the late 1970s, with a significant increase in the number of performers in the early 1990s. Most musicians either based their respective repertoires primarily on traditional Slovenian folk music and its practices or were inspired by them. Many members of these ensembles already had experience with folk dance ensembles and were often involved in collecting or researching folk music traditions and incorporating their findings into their performances. A significant number of these musicians had also received formal musical education and had extensive experience in other musical genres. Their activities were often inspired by foreign revival ensembles, with Hungary and its *táncház* [dance house] movement serving as a particularly important role model.

The folk revival activities in Slovenia have not yet been the subject of a comprehensive and systematic academic study. Research on this topic is largely fragmentary and usually deals with individual performers, concert and performance reports, audio publications and commemorations of various jubilees and other anniversaries. More in-depth studies have been undertaken only in rare cases.[1] A significant contribution to this topic has been made by the bilateral research project "In New Disguise: Changes in Traditional Music and Dance Culture in Hungary, Slovenia and Beyond", as part of which Hungarian and Slovenian scholars pursue interdisciplinary approaches to the study of revival movements. The Slovenian part of the project focuses on contemporary revivals and representations of Slovenian folk music, especially in comparison to developments in the Hungarian context. It examines how local and imported folk musical forms interacted, underwent internal transformations and jointly fostered new conditions for their (re)production during a particular historical period.

Prior to 1990, there were three main folk revival ensembles active in Slovenia: the ensemble led by Mira Omerzel-Terlep and Matija Terlep, which was later renamed *Trutamora Slovenica*, the *Istranova* ensemble and the *Trinajsto prase* ensemble. The activities of and, to a lesser extent, *Trutamora Slovenica* have already attracted some scholarly attention and have been partially

1 E.g. Katarina Juvančič, *Kje so tiste stezice? Poskusi revitalizacije tradicionalnih godb v Veliki Britaniji in Sloveniji od 19. do 21. stoletja* (diploma thesis, University of Ljubljana, 2002); Katarina Juvančič, "The Popularization of Slovenian Folk Music between the Local and Global: Redemption or Downfall of National Heritage", *Traditiones* 44, no. 1 (2005): 209–219.

researched, documented and presented to the public.[2] In contrast, much less is known about the activities of *Trinajsto prase* and the ensemble remains largely unexplored. Founded at the end of 1987 and disbanded in 1993, *Trinajsto prase* represents a transitional phase between the initial revival period and the more mature and, in terms of the number of performers, richer revival period in Slovenia. *Trinajsto prase* was very active both nationally and internationally, releasing two audio cassettes and producing numerous recordings for radio and television programmes.

This paper examines the late 1980s and early 1990s as a formative period in the development of the folk music revival movement in Slovenia, arguing that this era represented a turning point that redefined the development of folk music practice in the country. At the centre of this change was *Trinajsto prase*, one of the most popular folk music revival ensembles of its time. Building on existing literature and a variety of primary sources – including archival documents, magazine and newspaper articles, and digital ethnographic material – this study also includes a wealth of information from interviews with *Trinajsto prase*'s members.[3] The analysis is further informed by the author's personal engagement with the movement as an active participant and musician within the revival scene.

The *Trinajsto prase* ensemble has had a significant influence – both direct and indirect – on numerous interpreters of the Slovenian folk music revival and inspired revival musicians through its repertoire and, above all, through the way it presented folk music. This paper analyses the ensemble's role within the Slovenian revival movement by examining the musical and generally creative work of the ensemble's members, the circumstances of its founding and its approach to the interpretation and presentation of folk traditions. Particular

2 Mira Omerzel-Mirit, "O štirih desetletjih raziskovalnega in ansambelskega dela dr. Mire Omerzel-Mirit ter ansamblov Trutamora Slovenica in Vedun" (accessed October 28, 2024), https://www.trutamora-slovenica.si/Library/O_stirih_desetletjih.pdf; "O ansamblu Vedun", *Vedun* (accessed October 28, 2024), https://www.vedun.si/Vedun-predstavitev.htm; Marino Kranjac, "Preporod ali oživljanje ljudskega glasbenega izročila na Slovenskem (1. del)", *Godibodi* (accessed September 10, 2024), http://www.godibodi.si/blog/2014/05/04/preporod-ali-ozivljanje-ljuskega-glasbenega-izrocila-na-slovenskem; Juvančič, "The Popularization of Slovenian Folk Music", 213; Katarina Juvančič, "Istranova skozi zgodbe in godbe", *Sigic* (accessed November 15, 2024), http://www.sigic.si/istranova-skozi-zgodbe-in-godbe.html; Teja Klobčar, "Tomaž Pengov: Sedem desetletij od rojstva samospevca", *Sigic* (accessed October 15, 2024), https://www.sigic.si/tomaz-pengov-sedem-desetletij-od-rojstva-samospevca.html; Roman Ravnič, "Istranova", *GM* 17, no. 5 (1987): 16–17; Miloš Bašin, "Istranova/RTV Ljubljana", *GM* 13, no. 3 (1982): 22; Drago Kunej, "The Early Period of the Folk Music Revival in Slovenia", in *Táncház 50: Half a Century of the Hungarian Táncház Movement*, eds. Richter Pál and Lipták Dániel (Budapest: HUN-REN BTK Zenetudományi Intézet, in print).

3 Tomaž Rauch, interview by author, in person (Beltinci, July 20, 2020); Roman Ravnič, interview by Mojca Kovačič, in person (St. Jurij, October 26, 2023); Roman Ravnič, interview by author, in person (Ljubljana, March 6, 2025); Igor Cvetko, interview by author, in person (Ljubljana, March 11, 2025).

attention is paid to the interplay of various influences, from the ensemble's own fieldwork to the influence of other ensembles and international models. Thus, the study aims to shed light on *Trinajsto prase*'s legacy, its contribution to the folk music revival in Slovenia and its lasting influence on the later revival music and musicians.

Formation and Membership of *Trinajsto prase*

In both Western countries and the socialist countries of Eastern and Central Europe, the folk revival movement was predominantly initiated by urban, musically trained and academy-educated individuals whose repertoires and performance styles were rooted in local, often older musical traditions[4]. The Slovenian ensemble *Trinajsto prase* fits clearly within this broader revivalist paradigm. The founding members – Roman Ravnič, Tomaž Rauch, and Karlo Ahačič – combined formal musical education, teaching experience and personal engagement with folk traditions to create an ensemble that would significantly shape the Slovenian folk revival scene. In the ensemble's final year, Karlo Ahačič was replaced by Igor Cvetko. Each member contributed to the ensemble's distinct character and remained active in musical and cultural life beyond its breakup.

Roman Ravnič[5] was the principal initiator of the ensemble. His early musical training began with violin lessons at the lower-level music school in Murska Sobota, supplemented by participation in school choirs and orchestras. Although surrounded by a living folk tradition in his native Prekmurje region and influenced by his father's Istrian dance traditions and his mother's love of music, Ravnič initially gravitated towards contemporary popular and rock music. The Beatles' global success during his adolescence inspired him to teach himself guitar and form his first band during secondary school[6]. He soon started playing the guitar with other bands that primarily performed popular dance music in hotels across Slovenia and Yugoslavia, making a living from this for a period, including during his studies. After graduating in music education and choral conducting from the Faculty of Education in Maribor, Ravnič began his professional career in 1974 as a music teacher in Jesenice. His move to Ljubljana in 1984 marked a pivotal shift: as the programme director of *Glasbena*

4 Cf. Ulrich Morgenstern, "Imagining Social Space and History in European Folk Music Revivals and Volksmusikpflege: The Politics of Instrumentation", in *European Voices III*, ed. Ardian Ahmedaja (Vienna: Böhlau, 2017), 274.

5 The paragraph is based mostly on Ravnič, interview (October 26, 2023) and Ravnič, interview (March 6, 2025).

6 Ravnič was the first to establish a beat ensemble in Murska Sobota, i.e. first the ensemble *Plum Brendis* and later *Beat Pirati* (PIŠK Murska Sobota, "Začeli so na doma narejenih instrumentih – danes delujejo že več kot 50 let", *Pomurec* (accessed December 10, 2024), https://www.pomurec.com/vsebina/63985/).

mladina Slovenije[7] [the GMS, Jeunesses Musicales Slovenia – Musical Youth of Slovenia], he became increasingly involved with organising concerts, workshops and educational programmes. Particularly influential was his work with the Druga Godba festival,[8] where he played a key role in the festival's organisation and programme, primarily the performances by both Slovenian and international folk and revival musicians. These experiences profoundly deepened his interest in Slovenian folk music and inspired his vision of establishing a revival ensemble rooted in traditional Slovenian musical practices, particularly those from peripheral regions and less impacted by modernised folk trends.

Much like Ravnič, Tomaž Rauch[9] was also exposed to music and folk traditions from an early age, influenced by parents who regularly sang folk songs and instilled in him a lasting appreciation for this repertoire. Growing up in the town of Tolmin (Primorska region), he studied accordion at the local music school, participated in choirs and, as an accordion player, regularly participated in local folk dance ensembles and community events. Through these early experiences, he developed an appreciation for the social function of live dance music. In 1986, he collaborated with the soprano Majda Luznik on a series of concerts focused on Slovenian folk songs, for which he composed new instrumental accompaniments. Rauch pursued formal training in music education at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana, graduating in 1990. His professional career included work as a chamber music editor at Radio Slovenia and, after 1992, as an independent cultural professional. Simultaneously, Rauch was active as a music critic and essayist from 1984 onwards, publishing contributions in various newspapers and magazines. His wide-ranging interests included early music, folk traditions and performative practice, and he developed a remarkable private collection of traditional, historical and other music recordings. His work with traditional dance melodies and his music talent provided a solid foundation for his contributions to *Trinajsto prase*.

The early musical biography of *Trinajsto prase*'s third founding member, Karlo Ahačič, is documented to a lesser degree, however, his contemporaries

7 The Musical Youth of Slovenia is part of Jeunesses Musicales International, an organisation dedicated to introducing young people to the world of music through concerts, workshops and educational initiatives.

8 Druga Godba – whose intriguing name could be translated as "that other music" – was established in 1984 as an alternative and complement to other Ljubljana-based music festivals that did not present more radical and 'different' music practices. At the outset, its programme was primarily concerned with different kinds of 'otherness in music', i.e. alternative rock, 'rock in opposition', adventurous new jazz, improvised music and experimental music, as well as rediscovered Slovenian (and other) folk music and folk music revival.

9 The paragraph is based on Slavica Mlakar, "Rauch, Tomaž (1946–)", *Slovenska biografija* (accessed October 7, 2024), https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi945020/; Rauch, interview, and Občina Komen, "Tomaž Rauch – dobitnik Štrekljeve nagrade 2016", *Občina Komen* (last modified July 14, 2022), https://www.komen.si/obcina/strekljeva-nagrada/2022071407101737/tomaz-rauch-dobitnik-strekljeve-nagrade-2016/.

have described him as a "person who lives and breath music"[10] and has strong instincts for folk aesthetics. He graduated in music education from the Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana and specialised in double bass, which he had studied at a secondary music school level.[11] His experience with the acoustic ensemble *Sedmina* in the late 1970s is particularly noteworthy. As a member of this ensemble, Ahačič played the double bass and contributed to musical arrangements that blended folk traditions with contemporary acoustic elements, contributing to the ensemble's distinctive poetic and folkloric aesthetic.[12]

In late 1992, following Ahačič's departure, Igor Cvetko joined *Trinajsto prase*. A trained violinist, chemist and musicologist, Cvetko began his ethnomusicological career at the Institute of Ethnomusicology ZRC SAZU in 1982. He fully embraced the ensemble's established musical ethos and contributed to its activities until its breakup in autumn 1993.[13]

The musical and teaching experiences gained by Ravnič, Rauch and Ahačič were instrumental in shaping *Trinajsto prase*'s direction. All three had substantial backgrounds in music and folk music, either through familial connections, participation in folk ensembles or professional engagements. Ravnič's early exposure to the traditions of Prekmurje and Istria combined with his work at the GMS, shaped the ensemble's first focus on reviving musical traditions from the peripheral areas of Slovenia. Rauch's childhood experiences with dance music in folk dance ensembles and early attempts to arrange folk songs, combined with a wide-ranging interest in historical music practices and recordings, brought depth to the ensemble's understanding of performative practice. Ahačič's experiences in acoustic music he had gained as a member of the *Sedmina* ensemble further enriched the ensemble's aesthetic. Their collaboration at the GMS, where Ravnič was employed and Rauch and Ahačič served as external contributors, formed the social and professional network from which *Trinajsto prase* emerged.

The inspiration to establish *Trinajsto prase* undoubtedly came from the success of the *Istranova* ensemble. Ravnič, who possessed considerable familiarity with the revival music scenes both nationally and internationally, was particularly impressed by *Istranova*'s second album, released in 1985. This album marked a significant shift in the ensemble's musical approach – from the acoustic ensemble style typical of their earlier work towards a more distinct folk revival orientation. This new direction emphasised an informed engagement with local musical characteristics and traditional performative practices.

10 Rauch, interview.

11 Ravnič, interview (March 6, 2025).

12 "Sedmina – Delavski Dom, Kranj, 24. Februar 1978", *IZK CD034* (Ljubljana: Klopotec, January 2016).

13 Cvetko, interview.

Motivated by their example, Ravnič aspired to found an ensemble that would draw from the folk traditions of the entire Slovenian territory, with a particular focus on its peripheral regions. These regions preserved vibrant folk traditions with more archaic and distinctive sonic traits, markedly different from the stylised forms of the folk music commonly promoted by the media. His vision, which he shared with Rauch and Ahačič, was to establish a revival ensemble grounded in the soundscape of the nineteenth century, a period prior to the widespread dominance of the diatonic accordion in Slovenian folk music. Furthermore, he sought to avoid the influence of the modernised playing techniques that emerged after the Second World War, which had profoundly transformed the pre-war folk music practices. *Trinajsto prase*'s formation and early evolution were shaped by social and artistic collaboration with *Istranova* and Dario Marušić, the ensemble's principal driving force, particularly following the disbandment of *Istranova* in 1988.

The specific details regarding the ensemble's initial activities in late 1987 remain somewhat unclear, as even the ensemble members themselves have only fragmentary recollections of this period.[14] During this time, the members began to meet up and engage in experimental sessions, motivated primarily by the enjoyment and pleasure derived from playing music together. Their focus was on emphasising the entertaining and joyful aspects of instrumental folk music, encapsulated in the following recollection: "three friends joined in 1987 to enjoy playing folk music the 'old way'".[15] The repertoire was initially constructed around three or four dance melodies from Prekmurje, the region that Ravnič was from and whose musical traditions he knew most intimately. During this early phase, they made several visits to Prekmurje, where they encountered local musicians, familiarised themselves with their playing styles and even performed alongside them. Within a few months, the ensemble shaped its core repertoire, selected its instrumental configuration and forged a distinctive performance style and ensemble sound.

The ensemble's distinctive name, *Trinajsto prase* [The Thirteenth Pig], proposed by Ravnič, derives from rural vernacular. The name offers a stark yet evocative metaphor for the marginalisation of traditional folk music within contemporary consumer culture: the thirteenth piglet who finds it difficult to get to food and survive as there are usually only twelve teats.[16]

14 Cf. Rauch, interview; Ravnič, interview (October 26, 2023); Ravnič, interview (March 6, 2025).

15 Tomaž Rauch, "Homepage", *Tomaž Rauch* (accessed November 19, 2024), http://home.amis.net/rauchto/english.htm.

16 This was noted also in various press reports (e.g. Jani Kovačič, "S skupino Trinajsto prase", *GM* 21, no. 1 (1990): 14; Mojca Molan, "Trinajsto prase hoče živeti: ansambel, ki išče stare ljudske godce in viže", *Dolenjski list* (January 9, 1992): 24; Milovan Dimitrič, "Trinajsto prase gode na stare inštrumente", *Delo* (March 4, 1992): 10).

Constructing a Revival Aesthetic – Repertoire and Sound

As highlighted in major theoretical studies on revival movements and music,[17] revival is a distinct socio-cultural and artistic phenomenon characterised by considerable complexity, often involving deliberate reinterpretations of tradition shaped by contemporary values and performative choices. It usually involves the revival of rural musical practices that are seen as endangered or extinct, while at the same time forming an integral part of a contemporary, predominantly urban cultural environment. Some revival musicians use only selected expressive elements of a past culture that have a symbolic meaning, while others strive for what they perceive the highest degree of historical accuracy and authenticity in musical expression. As a result, revival ensembles can differ significantly both from the historical musical practices they seek to revive and from one another.

When it came to its musical expression, the *Trinajsto prase* ensemble strove to make it similar to traditional folk music practices in many respects. In shaping its repertoire, choice of instruments and performative style, however, it did not strictly adhere to archival records, scholarly publications or other source materials. Their guiding perspective in presenting traditional musical culture is best summarised by the following statement by Roman Ravnič:

> *Folk music may be 'old stuff', but I feel deep respect for it and I take tradition very seriously – I don't dress it up in a modern, trendy guise. I don't change anything I hear or read – neither melodically, rhythmically nor lyrically – because that would rob folk music of its core, its essence and its meaning.*[18]

Trinajsto prase's repertoire consisted largely of reconstructed instrumental folk dance music, as was frequently emphasised in interviews and media reports.[19] "The aim of this ensemble is primarily to play and cultivate dance music, rather than vocal music. The instrumental part of folk music is much more appealing area, but also a less represented one."[20] For this reason, the ensemble's members

17 E.g. Owe Ronström, "Revival Reconsidered", *The World of Music* 38, no. 3 (1996): 5–20; Owe Ronström, "Revival in Retrospect: The Folk Music and Folk Dance Revival", *Bulletin from the European Center for Traditional Culture* (Budapest, 1998); Tamara E. Livingston, "Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory", *Ethnomusicology* 43, no. 1 (1999): 66–85; Andriy Nahachewsky, *Ukrainian Dance: A Cross-Cultural Approach* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2011); Juniper Hill and Caroline Bithell, "An Introduction to Music Revival as Concept, Cultural Process, and Medium of Change", in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*, eds. Juniper Hill and Caroline Bithell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3–42.

18 "Tolovajska ljudska glasba", *MMC RTV SLO* (accessed November 20, 2024), https://www.rtvslo.si/kultura/glasba/tolovajska-ljudska-glasba/135757.

19 Cf. Kovačič, "S skupino Trinajsto prase", 14; Molan, "Trinajsto prase hoče živeti"; Dimitrič, "Trinajsto prase", 10; "Trinajsto prase", *DG010*, Ljubljana: Druga godba, 1991, audio cassette.

20 Rajko Muršič, "13. Prase: Predstavitev slovenske ljudske godbe v belgijskih šolah", *GM* 23, no. 6 (1993): 10.

had to search for various sources of the repertoire, mainly archival materials kept by the Institute of Ethnomusicology ZRC SAZU in Ljubljana, as well as various printed and published materials, ranging from written sources to audio releases (LPs and audio cassettes). Moreover, they sourced some dance tunes from direct contact with the living tradition and musicians.

An important characteristic of the ensemble is that its music and the associated sound are formed and reconstructed on the basis of the performative experience gained in the field, i.e. not only in Slovenia, but in a wider area, where the performative practice itself does not differ significantly from that of Slovenia. The ensemble's arrangements were based on a thorough study of sources, which also makes them reconstructions made in line with the ensemble's own sense of music[21] and the wish not to "ruin this increasingly vanishing music".[22] With regard to their arrangements of folk music, the way they performed and the way their repertoire was created, the ensemble's members pointed out the following:

> *Here we rely on feeling. We hang out with folk musicians, talk to people and play. This is how our repertoire is developed; we make sure to constantly review and expand it. However, we don't play the tunes in exactly the same way as described in ethnomusicological writings. In fact, we adapt them to ourselves and to the audience* […]. *When it comes to performing, we are often distracted by our musical knowledge, which otherwise usually simplifies things. So we try to replicate that authentic feeling of why to play and who to play for as closely as possible, that very thing that we admire so much in all traditional folk musicians.*[23]

When it came to this, the ensemble's members set themselves certain frameworks and limitations. Most importantly, they did not want to adopt (newer) musical elements that they felt had largely been incorporated in music after the Second World War under the influence of the media. Therefore, they made sure to learn as much as possible from older folk musicians. They also adapted their choice of instruments accordingly, using mainly older instruments that were common in folk tradition (a violin, a simple home-made clarinet, a bassett, a bourdon zither etc.).[24] This made it even easier for them to follow one of their fundamental aims: to try to preserve the traditional ways of performing and not to incorporate "influences that were not from their local cultural environment".[25] Basically, this is dictated by the very instruments they used.

On the other hand, they were well aware that the Slovenian cultural area had never been isolated and completely self-contained, but also that it had certain aesthetic characteristics of its own:

21 Cf. "Druga godba '90", *Tribuna*, no. 9 (May 28, 1990).

22 Dimitrič, "Trinajsto prase", 10.

23 Kovačič, "S skupino Trinajsto prase", 14.

24 Muršič, "13. Prase", 11.

25 Ibid.

> *Even if a certain environment is constantly in contact with neighbouring cultures or traditions, it always chooses for itself the one that has always been part of the canons of things considered beautiful, part of its ethical and aesthetic principles. Selection does indeed pass through the human psyche and the ears. Both of the person performing the music and of the audience receiving it. You can play completely different music with one and the same ensemble.*[26]

Therefore, over time, the ensemble started incorporating other instruments to make its sound more interesting; initially, its sound had been based mainly on the use of two violins and a small string bass. To start with, they added a home-made clarinet, and then somewhat by accident, a concertina, which – due to its distinctive sound – fitted in very well with the ensemble:

> *For instance, the concertina played by Tomaž is not a Slovenian folk instrument, and yet it sounds very traditional and Slovenian when used in the tunes we play. It fits right in with our set of instruments; the diatonic button accordion would be too loud for our ensemble.*[27]

Later they also added a whistle – one that they had made themselves and whose sound met their sound criteria.

As Morgenstern noted, music is often multifunctional, which is particularly true of folk music[28]. In the context of popular and revival music, he identifies two main functions: the social function of bringing people together and, even more importantly, the aesthetic function. Ronström similarly states: "For most musicians, the main motive is simply to make music."[29] In line with this view, the members of *Trinajsto prase* have emphasised that their 'live' performances are by no means a 'science' or a scientific reconstruction[30] of the music itself: "Folk music has always had a function, a reason to exists. And a part of this folk music, which we play ourselves, is intended for entertainment, dancing and 'partying'. […] We play for ourselves and for the people."[31]

Trinajsto prase's repertoire was influenced by several factors. First of all, the ensemble's members wanted their repertoire to include the dance tunes that were suitable for performance on the instruments they owned, and they looked for tunes that were not widely known. At the time, the repertoires of folk dance ensembles were rather uniform and similar, and the way folk music

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ulrich Morgenstern, "The Role and Development of Musical Instruments in European Folk Music Revival and Revitalization Movements", in *Traditional Music and Dance in Contemporary Culture(s)*, eds. Jana Ambrózová and Bernard Garaj (Nitra: Constantine the Philosopher University, 2019), 20.

29 Ronström, "Revival Reconsidered," 6.

30 Cf. Rajko Muršič and Milko Poštrak, "Nova Druga godba", *Nedeljski dnevnik* (June 10, 1990).

31 Kovačič, "S skupino Trinajsto prase", 14.

was presented in the media was also quite stereotyped and unvarying. For this reason, *Trinajsto prase* aspired to introduce something different and less well-known. They wanted to include music from different regions of Slovenia and to prepare enough material for a stand-alone concert. They focused on fine performances of their tunes rather than on a large repertoire, as there was no real need for that. At that time, i.e. in the pre-digitisation era, it was also much more difficult to get access to archival materials. In the Slovenian market, the amount of published and accessible materials – especially sound recordings of Slovenian and foreign folk music, as well as folk revival music – was very limited.[32]

The ensemble did not have a formal leader, with all three members contributing to the development of the repertoire and performative practices. Typically, one member would introduce a dance melody and a preliminary interpretative concept, which was then collaboratively refined.[33] Ravnič initially assumed a more prominent role in this process, soon joined by Rauch, and occasionally by Ahačič. As a trained double bass player, Ahačič most often performed on the bassett and quickly adapted to the traditional bassett-playing style, particularly after performing with local musicians in Istria, where such two-string bassetts had remained in use. Ravnič primarily played the fiddle, occasionally switching to the zither, while Rauch – driven by a passion for exploring different instruments – alternated among the clarinet, the fiddle, the whistle and the accordion. Instrumental roles occasionally shifted, i.e. Ahačič at times played the fiddle, while Ravnič and Rauch alternated on the bassett. Although the ensemble's orientation was primarily instrumental, vocal elements were occasionally incorporated into specific pieces.

When it came to *Trinajsto prase*'s musical creation, the aesthetic aspect was one of the most important elements. From the very beginning, they paid a lot of attention to shaping the sound they wanted to re-create. In this context, Ronström repeatedly emphasised the importance of aesthetics as a driving force in many revivalist music activities: "For many participants in revival movements, aesthetics is the most important element."[34] The ensemble endeavoured to create something of their own – innovative and fresh, yet closely connected to tradition and folk aesthetics. They did have an initial idea, however, at the beginning they did a lot of experimenting and tried to find a rich ensemble sound. With this in mind, they enriched the sound harmonically and often used open violin strings to add a drone effect. They searched and experimented for a long time, and in the end they created a distinctive sound, which they themselves,

32 Cf. Rauch, interview; Ravnič, interview (March 6, 2025).

33 Occasionally, all three of them are listed as the authors of the ensemble's arrangements on the audio cassettes, most often, however, they are mentioned in pairs or individually, Roman Ravnič and Tomaž Rauch in particular ("Trinajsto prase", *DG010*).

34 Ronström, "Revival Reconsidered", 6.

and some of the connoisseurs, were delighted with.[35] As an analysis of the early repertoire and the choice of instruments shows, the ensemble, which initially consisted of two violins (one of which was later occasionally replaced by a clarinet) and a basset, produced a sound that came closest to the folk traditions of the Prekmurje and Primorska regions. These musical traditions formed the basis of their initial repertoire. They also consciously distanced themselves from the so-called Alpine sound, characterised by the accordion as the central instrument, which dominated both media representation and in people's consciousness. They endeavoured to distinguish themselves from the general public and stereotypical perceptions, particularly in terms of their sound.

Role Models, Inspirations and Interwoven Influences

Slovenian revivalist ensembles were significantly influenced by international folk revival movements. They were often inspired by musicians performing the so-called 'acoustic music' that became popular in Slovenia in the second half of the 1970s.[36] This genre was mainly practised by students who could not identify with the electrified, often rebellious ethos of punk rock and mainstream rock music, nor with the prevailing Slovenian pop and folk-pop genres that had long enjoyed great popularity. The acoustic music of this era was mainly based on newly composed songs and lyrics. The aesthetic inspiration came from traditional ballad singing and the genre was characterised by a fusion of Anglo-American folk music traditions, Slovenian folk music and selected stylistic elements of Western art music from different historical periods.[37] Over time, several musicians who had initially been active in those acoustic ensembles moved on to more committed participation in the folk revival movement.[38]

In addition, many folk revival musicians had been exposed to folk music traditions before, often as part of early childhood experiences or independent field research. These musicians were often in direct contact with tradition bearers and, in some cases, they were actively involved in folk dance ensembles. It is noteworthy that Slovenian folk dance ensembles – both during and after the Yugoslav era – did not strictly adhere to the Soviet model of stylised and theatrical presentation of folk traditions. In fact, they maintained a certain level of commitment to rural folk culture, which remained partially alive in some rural areas of Slovenia well into the 1970s and 1980s.

35 Rauch, interview; Ravnič, interview (October 26, 2023); Ravnič, interview (March 6, 2025).

36 One of the first ensembles to appear in the mid-1970s was the experimental acoustic music ensemble Salamander, which was soon followed by the ensembles Sedmina (1977), *Kladivo, konj in voda* (1978), *Slovenska gruda* (late 1970s) and many others.

37 Katarina Juvančič, "Sedmina po osemintridesetih letih", *Sigic* (accessed October 20, 2024), https://www.sigic.si/sedmina-po-osemintridesetih-letih.htm.

38 For more on the connections of revival musicians with acoustic music and folk dance ensembles, see Kunej, "The Early Period of the Folk Music Revival in Slovenia".

The *Trinajsto prase* ensemble embodied a synthesis of various national and international models, as well as diverse encounters and personal experiences with Slovenian folk music traditions. The ensemble's members were well acquainted with the Slovenian pioneering folk revival ensembles such as *Istranova* and the Mira Omerzel-Terlep and Matija Terlep duo (and later *Trutamora Slovenica*), as well as with the wider acoustic music scene. While *Trinajsto prase* drew inspiration from these ensembles, it simultaneously sought to cultivate its own way of musical expression and presentation of folk material.

Hill and Bithell emphasise the complex and intertwined processes inherent in folk music revival movements.[39] They argue that one of the main motivations for such endeavours often lies in dissatisfaction with aspects of the present and a desire to instigate cultural change. This in turn leads to a selective reinterpretation of history, with musical practices and elements being presented as ancient, historical or 'authentic' traditions.

For *Trinajsto prase*, critical perceptions of and reactions to the practice of folk dance ensembles and the broader performative forms of folk music were of central importance at the time. In Slovenia – similar to a broader European context observed by Ronström[40] – the 'national tradition' was preserved and protected in conservative institutional settings (e.g. museums, research institutes), and folk music was presented in various forms of its public representation. A predominant form of this public presentation was the stage adaptation of folk music and dance, which was often interwoven with a performative aesthetic derived from art music and popular music. Although these performances were often categorised as 'folklore', they largely deviated from folk music practises. *Narodnozabavna glasba* [Slovenian folk-pop], which emerged after the Second World War, was also initially rooted in folk music, but quickly developed into a popular and commercially orientated genre. The strong support from the media contributed to its dominance and displacement of folk music.

Trinajsto prase's members, especially Tomaž Rauch, were well familiar with the workings of folk dance ensembles. Rauch's early musical engagements included working with such ensembles and while doing so, he gained first-hand experience of the dance repertoire and practical knowledge of playing music for dancers. While this collaboration had positive effects, the ensemble also took a critical view of aspects of folk dance ensembles' performances. They regarded the "systematised" and "institutionalised folk dance movement" as "harmful to traditional practices",[41] criticising its rigid choreographic standardisation

39 Hill and Bithell, "Introduction to Music Revival".

40 Ronström, "Revival in Retrospect".

41 Muršič, "13. Prase", 11.

and dependence on formulaic performances shaped by the ensemble leaders.[42] In such contexts, the music is rigid and inflexible, lacking in spontaneity and responsiveness: "You always have to play the same piece in exactly the same way, which leaves no room for what our ensemble strives for – spontaneous, traditional playing and an equally spontaneous reaction from the audience."[43]

Such a view is consistent with a broader impulse within the folk music revival to remove tradition from institutional control. For examples, as Weaver and colleagues have noted, much of the alienation from tradition in Latvia has come about through the state-sponsored staged performance of folklore, which often relies on a stylised and overly processed performance approach. This aesthetic has been critically compared to "food heated up four times",[44] and stage folklore has even been labelled "the surest way to kill tradition".[45]

The ensemble also took a highly critical stance towards *narodnozabavna glasba* – its members regarded it as a significant deviation from the folk traditions from which it originated. They condemned its rhythmic reductionism (which was limited to polka and waltz) and accused the genre of conveying a sense of rigidity and artificiality which, in their opinion, was fundamentally incompatible with the spontaneity and creativity of traditional folk music. They were particularly critical of the genre's heavy reliance on mass media support, which favoured its rapid spread and popularity among the general public. In their view, this close involvement with commercial interests prioritised marketability over cultural integrity. They further noted that *narodnozabavna glasba* was plagued by a number of other shortcomings, including "bland and saccharine lyrics … they are not even worth talking about".[46]

Consequently, *Trinajsto prase* based its work not only on archival material, but also on field research and living traditions. It actively sought out older local musicians in remote rural areas, viewing folk culture not just as a static tradition, but as an inherently creative and evolving process – a process that can be meaningfully continued and recontextualised in contemporary cultural settings. The ensemble's encounters with tradition emphasised the improvisational nature of folk creativity. In studying these practices, it sought to understand not only the "vocabulary of folk music and folk dance" but also, as

42 This understanding aligns with theoretical perspectives on dance and music practices, particularly within folk dance ensembles, which emphasise the symbolic rather than the functional role of revived traditions in modern contexts. See Nahachewsky, *Ukrainian Dance*.

43 Muršič, "13. Prase", 11.

44 Vilis Bendorfs, *Vārds un Darbs*, nos. 3-4 (1978): 28, quoted in Ieva Weaver et al., "The Power of Authorities, Interpretations, and Songs: The Discourse of Authenticity in the Latvian Folklore Revival", *Traditiones* 52, no. 2 (2023): 53, https://doi.org/10.3986/Traditio2023520203.

45 Vilis Bendorfs, "Drusciņ skarbāks stāstījums par trim braucieniem", *Vārds un Darbs* 2 (1978): 24–28, quoted in Ieva Weaver et al., "The Power of Authorities", 53.

46 Kovačič, "S skupino Trinajsto prase", 14.

pointed out by Ronström,[47] its "grammar and syntax". This realisation contributed significantly to the ensemble's creation of their music in 'traditional' styles under contemporary conditions.

In its founding phase, *Trinajsto prase* made several visits to the Prekmurje region in order to make direct contact with the local tradition bearers through participatory music-making. This connection was strongly encouraged by Ravnič, who comes from this region and has been immersed in the music of this region from an early age. At the time of the ensemble's visits, folk music was still very much alive in Prekmurje, and numerous dance tunes were still actively performed at local gatherings. Consequently, the ensemble's early repertoire was rooted in the region's tradition.[48] Later, the ensemble pursued a similar approach to researching and revitalising the folk traditions of the Primorska region and worked closely with Dario Marušič, a former member of *Istranova*.

Trinajsto prase was also strongly influenced and fascinated by folk revival movements from other countries. Before and during the initial phase of the Slovenian revival, public interest in the musical traditions of other cultures increased significantly through various concerts and articles. The latter were often authored by musicians who later played an active role in the acoustic music scene and the revival of folk music. Ravnič, for example, wrote about folk traditions in Hungary and Sweden,[49] while Rauch contributed his reflections on foreign folk festivals and music[50].

As the programme director of the GMS and through his work with the Druga Godba festival, Ravnič soon started collecting information about Hungarian folk music and the *táncház* movement. In the autumn of 1987, when *Trinajsto prase* was being formed, he translated and adapted a Hungarian article for the magazine *Glasbena mladina*,[51] which mainly dealt with the *táncház* phenomenon.[52] In the final part of the article, however, Ravnič

47 Ronström, "Revival in Retrospect", 40.

48 Rauch, interview; Ravnič, interview (March 6, 2025).

49 Roman Ravnič, "Ljudska glasba v izdajah Hungarotona", *GM* 18, no. 1 (1987): 18–19; Roman Ravnič, "Ljudska glasba na Švedskem", *GM* 18, no. 4 (1988): 18–19; Roman Ravnič, "Ljudska glasba na Švedskem II", *GM* 18, no. 5 (1988): 20–21.

50 Tomaž Rauch, "Kaj 'folk' dela s 'folkom'", *GM* 19, no. 1 (1988): 15; Tomaž Rauch, "Keltsko glasbeno srečanje", *GM* 20, no. 1 (1989): 8–9; Tomaž Rauch, "MUSITA 90", *GM* 20, nos. 7-8 (1990): 5.

51 Ravnič, "Ljudska glasba v izdajah Hungarotona".

52 According to Ravnič, the movement is understood as a particular variant of folk music revival, characterised by the performance of "authentic rural music" by "young, educated urbanites". It began with the work of Béla Halmos and Ferenc Sebő in the 1970s and soon merged with a parallel revival of traditional dance, contributing to its broader cultural impact. By the mid-1980s, there were around 100 such ensembles in Hungary – both amateur and professional ones – including such well-known ensembles as *Muzsikás*, *Mákvirág*, *Jánosi*, *Vízöntő*, *Zsarátnok*, *Téka*, *Újstilus* and *Vujicsics*. As a coordinated movement, it organised training courses, workshops and festivals, attracting 32,000 participants to the central festival held in Budapest in 1986. Its growth was supported by important institutions, especially Hungarian Radio and the Hungaroton record label, which played an important role in spreading the movement.

raised the question of how the revival movement manifested itself in the Slovenian context.

Roman Ravnič also showed a keen interest in the activities of Slovenian folk revival ensembles. In 1987, he conducted an interview with members of *Istranova*, discussing their views on the preservation, performance and presentation of folk music.[53] His professional role at the GMS allowed him direct contact with the revival musicians both in Slovenia and abroad, giving him the opportunity to closely follow festival activities on the ground. His position enabled *Trinajsto prase* to stay well informed and actively participate in the promotion of the Slovenian folk revival through GMS's programmes.

The ensemble remained in constant contact with the international folk revival movement, especially through Roman Ravnič's role as the curator of the Druga Godba festival, where Hungarian revival ensembles performed on a regular basis. Performances by various Hungarian ensembles, such as *Muzsikás*, also took place at other Slovenian venues, including Murska Sobota in 1988 and Ljubljana in 1990, often facilitated and coordinated by the members of *Trinajsto prase*, who also reported on these events.[54] In reports written for the Slovenian public about festivals held elsewhere in Europe, the success of the Hungarian folk music revival ensembles is praised.[55] This reflects, among other things, their strong influence on Slovenian revival musicians.

Trinajsto prase's members maintained close personal and musical relations with Hungarian revival ensembles, including informal exchanges through joint music-making. One notable instance occurred in 1988 when they organised a joint barbecue with *Muzsikás* during their visit to Slovenia for the Druga Godba festival. As Rauch recalled, *Trinajsto prase* had spontaneous musical sessions together with *Muzsikás*, playing melodies unknown to them and thus gaining a direct insight into the performative revival practice.[56] The ensemble's admiration for *Muzsikás* stemmed from its commitment to perform 'authentic folk music' as opposed to the composed and commercially orientated genre of *narodnozabavna glasba*, which is widespread in Slovenia – a genre that has comparable counterparts in other countries, including Hungary.

Ultimately, *Trinajsto prase* found deep inspiration in the Hungarian folk music revival ensembles. By participating in various festivals (such as the Folkfest in Italy) they got to know the members of other Hungarian revival ensembles and often saw them as role models, especially in terms of their approach to reviving folk music.

53 Ravnič, "Istranova".

54 E.g. Roman Ravnič, "Iz Murske Sobote", *GM* 19, no. 2 (1988): 10; Tomaž Rauch, "Skupina Muzsikás", *Delo* (December 17, 1990).

55 E.g. "Folkest 88", *GM* 19, no. 1 (1988): 18.

56 Rauch, interview.

Performance Ethos and Discography

The members of *Trinajsto prase* repeatedly emphasised that their main motivation for making music was to have fun and to enjoy making music together. First and foremost, they wanted to entertain themselves, but they also hoped that their audience would be carried away by the music they played. Their approach to the folk music revival was based on direct interaction with the audience. They shared the conviction that their music was essentially characterised by continuous communication with audience during performances and that sound recordings could never fully capture or replace this experience.

> *It is primarily a matter of communication – spontaneous communication. In modern times, this connection is burdened and distorted, leading to misunderstandings. Through this music, we hope to re-establish spontaneous communication.* […].[57]

This emphasis on live, participatory engagement was particularly important to the ensemble because they understood – or at least aspired to understand – their musical practice as "functional music" intended primarily for entertainment, dancing and festive gatherings. Seen as a social phenomenon, *Trinajsto prase*'s music aligns with what Turino[58] classifies as *participatory music*,[59] where the aim is the maximum sonic and kinetic participation of all those present. Such music presupposes music-making as a social activity among co-present individuals, minimising or even erasing the divide between performers and the audience. Turino defines this practice by the absence of physical or symbolic boundaries among participants and the emphasis on shared musical and bodily engagement.

Nevertheless, *Trinajsto prase*'s actual performances generally conformed to the revivalist practices established in Slovenia, which – unlike the Hungarian model – had not yet developed regular *táncház*-style dance events. As a result, their musical activities often took the form of stage performances, characterised by a more conventional division between performer and audience. In this respect, their public appearances aligned more closely with the framework of Turino's *presentational music*.

The ensemble's conceptualisation of their musical practice as both functional and participatory is further evident in their approach to public performances

57 Kovačič, "S skupino Trinajsto prase", 14.

58 Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

59 Thomas Turino makes a distinction between four types of musical practices according to their social and artistic functions: *participatory music*, which emphasises collective engagement with minimal separation between performers and the audience; *presentational music*, where performances are delivered to a clearly defined audience; *high-fidelity music*, which aims to reproduce live sound recordings with accuracy; and *studio audio art music*, created specifically for the recording medium using studio-based techniques. This typology frames music as a socially embedded practice rather than solely an acoustic phenomenon.

and sound recordings, which they regarded primarily as a means of documenting live performance[60]. This orientation corresponds to Thomas Turino's concept of *high-fidelity* music.

> *For now, we play for ourselves and for the people. We recognise the documentary value of recordings, however, we are not interested in them at this stage. If we were to present ourselves in this way, it would be through a live recording in front of an audience – capturing precisely what makes this practice meaningful to us.*[61]

A variety of concerts and public live performances formed the core of the ensemble's activities. The ensemble's first public performances took place in the summer of 1988, and by the time the ensemble ceased its activities in 1993, there had already been over 200 such events. This is a relatively high number for an ensemble that consisted of non-professional musicians who held regular jobs alongside their musical commitments. Although they usually received some form of payment for their performances, financial gain was by no means the main motivation. Rather, the motivation was to make music together, in a positive atmosphere and with a lot of fun. Similar motivations could also be observed among most of the other musicians of the folk music revival in Slovenia.

The basic information about the number, circumstances and purpose of these performances is preserved in a typewritten list of performances.[62] The ensemble's first public appearances included educational school concerts with commentaries. These events were organised by GMS and featured a number of Slovenian musicians and ensembles, including folk music revival ensembles such as *Trutamora Slovenica* and *Istranova*. For this purpose, *Trinajsto prase* prepared a specially conceived concert programme entitled *Godčevske viže* [Musicians' Tunes], in which they combined live music with spoken explanations. The ensemble introduced the audience to traditional Slovenian instruments and characteristics of Slovenian dance music–melodies that also form the core of their regular repertoire. These concerts were well received by the young audience, as the members of the ensemble recall:

> *Everywhere we have performed so far, we have been met with interest, even at our first concert. This first concert was aimed at high school students in the centre of Ljubljana, and despite our initial fears about how it would be received, we ended up playing for an hour and a half!*[63]

The school concerts account for almost half of the ensemble's total performances. In 1993, the ensemble undertook a two-week tour of Belgium at the

60 This was mentioned on several occasions during various interviews with the ensemble's members.

61 Kovačič, "S skupino Trinajsto prase", 14.

62 *Trinajsto prase – nastopi*, folder Trinajsto prase, typescript (personal archive of Roman Ravnič).

63 Muršič, "13. Prase", 10.

invitation of Jeunesses Musicales Belgium, during which it presented its educational concert programme *Godčevske viže* in twenty Belgian schools. In addition to the school performances, they also gave two public evening concerts.

According to the list of performances,[64] the ensemble performed in a variety of contexts: from international festival appearances and tours abroad – including in Austria, Italy, Belgium, Great Britain and Argentina – to formal concerts and public events throughout Slovenia, as well as informal gatherings, often in private settings. The members of the ensemble especially remember the more prominent concerts at home and abroad, as well as the informal musical gatherings and social occasions, which often involved spontaneous parties, interaction with the audience and dancing. In these performances – which are often labelled in the list with notes such as *ples* [dance], *koncert/ples*, *pustni ples* [carnival dance] or even *ohcet* [wedding][65] – the music of the ensemble most clearly fulfilled its functional and participatory role. These occasions embodied the ensembles' central ethos: the restoration of joy, functionality and the communal dimension of folk music. The members themselves recalled such events as the most enjoyable and personally fulfilling in their entire performance history.[66]

There is little information about the full extent and detailed content of the ensemble's repertoire. Even the members themselves remember it only vaguely. In interviews, they stated that they had prepared around thirty melodies for performances, most of which were also recorded on two audio cassettes.[67] The typewritten list of performances contains only sporadic and inconsistent references to a specific repertoire, although it suggests that the largest and longest performances contained up to 40 tunes.[68] A comprehensive list of all the melodies played by the ensemble has not been preserved. This makes it all the more important to analyse the discography, as the recordings – also according to the ensemble's own statements – have considerable "documentary value".[69] They not only offer insights into the repertoire and its sources, but also into the ensemble's approach to the folk music revival and the shaping of their distinctive sound.

The ensemble's discography is closely intertwined with the activities of the GMS and the Druga Godba festival. Their first recorded release consisted of a selection of recordings from their debut concert appearance at Druga Godba. In its early years, the festival featured a mix of active traditional musicians and local folk ensembles. However, its focus soon shifted toward folk revival

64 *Trinajsto prase – nastopi* (personal archive of Roman Ravnič).

65 Ibid.

66 Cf. Rauch, interview; Ravnič, interview (March 6, 2025); Cvetko, interview.

67 Cf. Ravnič, interview (March 6, 2025); Cvetko, interview.

68 *Trinajsto prase – nastopi* (personal archive of Roman Ravnič).

69 Kovačič, "S skupino Trinajsto prase", 14.

performers, with *Trinajsto prase* being the first revival ensemble to perform at the festival in 1990.

Their first audio release, *Trinajsto prase – Live in Ljubljana*, came out shortly after the 1990 Druga Godba performance as part of the festival's publishing activity.[70] This demo cassette, intended mainly for promotional purposes, was not distributed commercially. It featured 19 tracks and included a detailed J-card listing the repertoire, the names of the musicians and the instruments used. It explicitly stated that the recordings were made "live at the concert in Križanke, Ljubljana, 1 June 1990", including the name of the sound engineer. Although this was a promotional release, the cassette's careful documentation of the repertoire, personnel, instrumentation and recording context demonstrates the ensemble's deliberate and systematic approach to archiving their work.

Figure 1: The J-card of a demo audio cassette from 1990.

Although the cassette was of high technical quality and well-recorded, the ensemble expressed dissatisfaction with certain aspects of their musical performance. The recordings conveyed a degree of restraint, which they attributed to the pressure of performing at their first major concert as part of a prominent festival. As a result, the ensemble resolved to produce a new cassette featuring fresh recordings.

In line with their ethos of maintaining direct engagement and communication with the audience, the ensemble organised a dedicated live concert with

70 As part of Druga Godba, and in cooperation with the GMS, a music publishing company was founded in 1987. Its focus was on publishing recordings of performances from the festival. The majority of released materials featured performers of Slovenian folk music and folk music revival ensembles. These audio releases made it possible for this genre to reach the widest circle of listeners and were very well received by the general public and experts alike (cf. Matjaž Barbo, "Beltinska banda, Ljudska glasba iz Prekmurja", *GM* 18, no. 1 (1987): 23).

recording in mind. This event took place on 1 March 1991 at the KUD France Prešeren cultural centre. The recording process was largely self-managed and relied heavily on personal connections, including borrowed technical equipment and the participation of two sound engineers. Tomaž Rauch, at the time employed at Radio Ljubljana, acted as the producer. The project was supported by the GMS and the Druga Godba festival, under whose label the cassette was eventually released.

The atmosphere during the recording was reportedly vibrant and relaxed, and the audience was enthusiastic. While the original plan involved organising two live concerts for recording purposes, the ensemble opted to conduct the second session in the same venue without an audience (on 24 November 1991). This allowed them to focus more precisely on the pieces for which the previous live takes had been deemed unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, in curating the final track selection, they prioritised including as many live concert recordings as possible – even those with minor performance flaws – due to their greater energy and expressive intensity.[71]

This second cassette release also featured 19 tunes, selected from both recording sessions held at the KUD France Prešeren cultural centre, with one track originating from the ensemble's 1990 performance at the Druga Godba festival. The cassette J-card was even more extensive and information-rich than that of the previous release. In addition to detailing the full repertoire, performers, instruments and precise recording circumstances, it included detailed source attributions for each tune – specifying how the ensemble acquired the material and who was responsible for its adaptation or arrangement. The documentation was markedly more meticulous than in the previous release, reflecting the ensemble's continued commitment to systematic and accurate attribution of tune origins and its transformation in performance. A substantial bilingual text by Igor Cvetko was also included, providing an introduction to the ensemble, its repertoire and its approach to folk music within the Slovenian folk revival movement.

The audio cassette titled *Trinajsto prase* was released under the publishing programme of the Druga Godba festival. It was formally presented to the public on 13 December 1991 during a press conference organised by the GMS in Ljubljana. It was extensively featured in the GMS journal shortly thereafter[72] and reported on by other press outlets.[73] The ensemble's modest discography – limited to this cassette and the earlier demo – is likely a consequence of its relatively short period of activity and, more fundamentally, its orientation towards live performance and direct audience interaction: "This kind of music

71 Rauch, interview; Ravnič, interview (March 6, 2025).

72 "Trinajsto prase: izdala Glasbena mladina Slovenije", *GM* 22, no. 2 (1991): 22.

73 Cf. Molan, "Trinajsto prase hoče živeti".

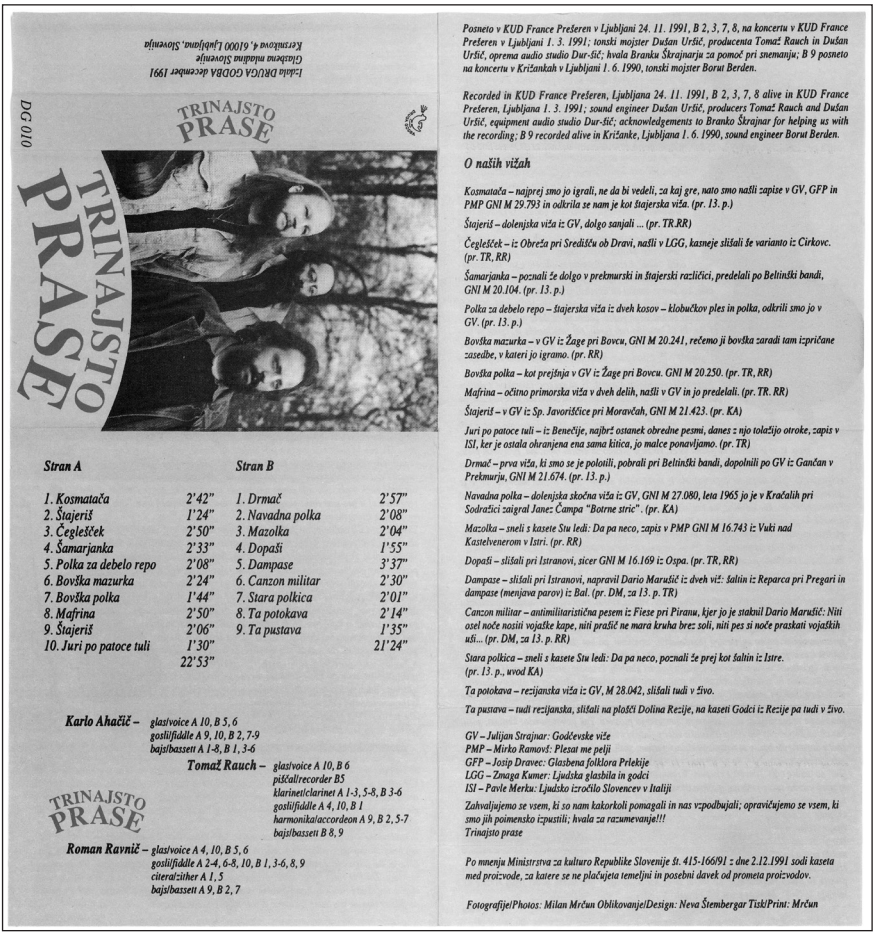

Figure 2: The J-card of the 1991 audio cassette with a foldout panel detailing the sources on the recorded tunes, the authors of the arrangements and information on how, when and where the recordings were made.

cannot be adequately represented through recordings; live performances are irreplaceable."[74]

Ultimately, what distinguished *Trinajsto prase*'s musical practice from others revival musicians in Slovenia was the atmosphere, energy, audience response and relaxed interpersonal interaction that accompanied their live performances.

74 Muršič, "13. Prase", 11; see also Rauch, interview; Cvetko, interview.

Conclusion

The *Trinajsto prase* ensemble holds a foundational place in the history of the Slovenian folk music revival. As the first revival ensemble in Slovenia to engage with folk music practices in a systematic and holistic way – not only through repertoire but also through the reconstruction of playing techniques, sound aesthetics and social function – it marked a turning point in how folk music was understood, performed and experienced in the late twentieth century. Their approach differed markedly from the stylised performances of folk dance ensembles and their theatrical representations of tradition, as well as from other stage-oriented or mass media-supported presentations, favouring instead an ethos based on sincerity, spontaneity and community engagement. Their performances emphasised communication, shared joy and interaction over technical perfection or formal presentation.

Influenced by international revival movements – particularly the Hungarian *táncház* model – *Trinajsto prase* embraced the principle of folk music and functional music-making. The ensemble conducted fieldwork to identify 'living traditions' and engaged directly with local musicians, grounding their interpretations in both traditional and contemporary practices. Expanding on the legacy of *Istranova*, they broadened their focus to encompass folk traditions from other Slovenian regions, thereby crafting a regionally diverse and stylistically nuanced performative practice.

Although their renown has faded, *Trinajsto prase*'s influence remains significant. Their work inspired a new generation of revivalist ensembles – including *Tolovaj Mataj*, *Marko banda*, *Kurja koža* and *Volkfolk* – who similarly embraced a down-to-earth approach based on folk musical values and regional specificity.

The post-ensemble careers of *Trinajsto prase*'s members further illustrate the ensemble's enduring legacy. Roman Ravnič founded the ensemble *Tolovaj Mataj*, through which he extended the pioneering work initiated with *Trinajsto prase*. His long-standing commitment to youth education, cultural programmes through the GMS and promotion of folk music was formally recognised in 2025, when he was named an honorary member of the GMS on the occasion of its 55th anniversary.[75] Tomaž Rauch remained very involved in the field of folk music and contributed to it as a performer, composer, critic and a promoter of culture. He played an important role in shaping the critical discourse on folk music and its revival. His later involvement with the ensembles *Marko banda* and *Črnobela muzika* reflects his ongoing commitment to historically informed, folk-oriented performance practices. His great influence on

75 Glasbena mladina SLO, "Slavnostna akademija ob 55-letnici Zveze Glasbene mladine Slovenije", *Glasna* (accessed Marc 14, 2025), https://www.revijaglasna.si/novice/slavnostna-akademija-ob-55-letnici-zveze-glasbene-mladine-slovenije/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

the Slovenian folk music landscape was recognised in 2016 with the Štrekelj Award for his extraordinary contribution to the preservation and promotion of Slovenian folk tradition.[76] Karlo Ahačič, a long-time music teacher and choir conductor, has also had a significant influence on Slovenian musical culture. In 1995, he founded the Ljubljana-based Florence Women's Choir, which gave numerous performances and released a studio album in 2002.[77] Ahačič passed away in 2022, leaving behind a lasting legacy in both choral and folk music scenes. Igor Cvetko, who joined the ensemble in its final year, later played an important role in Slovenian ethnomusicology. He was an ethnomusicology lecturer and a curator at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, where he received the Murko Award for the acclaimed Sounds of Slovenia exhibition. His wide-ranging interdisciplinary work, which includes music research, education, illustration, puppetry and children's folklore, has earned him numerous awards, including the Štrekelj Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2014 and his appointment as Slovenian Ambassador for Cultural Education in 2018.[78]

Combined, these trajectories underscore the profound impact *Trinajsto prase* had not only on the revivalist field but also across broader domains of Slovenian musical, cultural and educational lives. More than merely performers, the members of *Trinajsto prase* acted as cultural mediators – scholars, musicians and advocates – who redefined folk music not as a relic of the past but as a vibrant, evolving practice capable of meaningful presence in contemporary contexts. Central to their ethos – to play "for ourselves and for the people", and to restore the joy, function and communal dimension of folk music – was a redefinition of how Slovenian musical tradition could be understood and performed.

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76 Občina Komen, "Tomaž Rauch – dobitnik Štrekljeve nagrade 2016".

77 "Ženski pevski zbor Florence", *ZKDL Slovenije* (accessed October 30, 2024), https://www.zkdl.si/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=107.

78 Jelena Sitar, "Cvetko, Igor (1949–)", *Slovenska biografija* (accessed November 21, 2024), http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi1021990/#novi-slovenski-biografski-leksikon; Cvetko, interview (March 11, 2025).

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SUMMARY

The article examines the role of the *Trinajsto prase* ensemble in the broader context of the folk music revival movement in Slovenia in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This period witnessed a renewed interest in folk music practices, especially among younger urban intellectuals, who began to actively explore and recontextualise folk music in a contemporary social environment. The *Trinajsto prase* ensemble, founded at the end of 1987 by Roman Ravnič, Tomaž Rauch and Karlo Ahačič (later joined by Igor Cvetko), represented an important turning point in the Slovenian revival movement. It was the first ensemble in the country to develop an innovative approach to the performance and presentation of folk music.

The ensemble based its repertoire mainly on lesser-known traditional dance melodies from various Slovenian regions, with a focus on Prekmurje and Primorska. The aim of the ensemble was to recreate the distinctive sound of historical folk music while creating a new aesthetic that is clearly different from the prevailing forms of presentation of folk dance ensembles and commercialised folk-pop groups. To this end, the musicians used traditional folk instruments such as the violin, a simple homemade clarinet, a bassett, Bourdon zithers, and others. They also encouraged an interactive and spontaneous relationship with the audience, viewing folk music as a functional, participatory form that serves entertainment, dance and community experience. In shaping their musical vision, the members drew inspiration from folk revival movements in other countries, especially the Hungarian *táncház* movement.

The ensemble's sound and repertoire are based on the study of archival material as well as their own field research, including encounters with older folk musicians. These interactions have significantly influenced their interpretation of folk music as a living and creative process. While they emphasised the historical authenticity and traditional origin of the melodies in their performances, they consciously avoided rigid reconstructions in favour of spontaneous and lively musical expression. *Trinajsto prase* performed frequently and released two audio cassettes – mostly live recordings – that documented both their approach to folk music and the ensemble's distinctive sound and energy.

Although the ensemble was only active for a few years, it had a lasting influence on the Slovenian folk revival movement and served as an inspiration for later ensembles such as *Tolovaj Mataj*, *Marko banda* and *Kurja koža*. In addition, all members remained active as musicians, educators, researchers and cultural mediators and continued to shape the Slovenian cultural landscape, especially in the field of folk music. Through its direct, open and

participatory approach to the presentation and revitalisation of instrumental folk music, *Trinajsto prase* has highlighted a previously overlooked perspective on folk music — as a music for creative practise that can thrive beyond its original cultural context.

POVZETEK

Skupina *Trinajsto prase* in preporodna glasba v Sloveniji

Članek obravnava vlogo skupine *Trinajsto prase* v okviru preporodnega gibanja ljudske glasbe v Sloveniji v poznih osemdesetih in zgodnjih devetdesetih letih 20. stoletja. V tem času je predvsem med mlajšimi izobraženci v urbanih okoljih prišlo do (ponovnega) zanimanja za ljudskoglasbene prakse, ki so jih aktivno raziskovali in oživljali v novih družbenih kontekstih. Skupina *Trinajsto prase*, ustanovljena konec leta 1987 (v zasedbi Roman Ravnič, Tomaž Rauch, Karlo Ahačič, pozneje Igor Cvetko), je predstavljala pomembno prelomnico v preporodnem gibanju. Kot prva v slovenskem prostoru je namreč razvila svež pristop k poustvarjanju ter javni predstavitvi ljudske glasbe.

Člani skupine so svoj repertoar zasnovali predvsem na manj znani plesni ljudski glasbi iz različnih slovenskih pokrajin, s poudarkom na Prekmurju in Primorski. Njihov cilj je bil poustvariti značilen zvočni izraz ljudske glasbe preteklih obdobij, vendar na svež, sodoben način, ki bi se jasno ločil od uveljavljenih predstavitvenih praks v okviru folklornih skupin in narodnozabavnih ansamblov. V ta namen so posegali po tradicionalnih ljudskih glasbilih (violini, malem dvostrunskem basu, doma izdelanem klarinetu, piščalih, bordunskih citrah in drugih). Glasbo so razumeli kot funkcionalno, živo in participativno obliko izražanja, namenjeno predvsem zabavi, plesu ter skupnostnemu doživljanju. Pri svojem delu so se zgledovali tudi po sorodnih preporodnih gibanjih v tujini, zlasti po madžarskem gibanju *táncház*.

Zvočno podobo in repertoar so člani skupine gradili na podlagi študija arhivskega gradiva ter lastnega terenskega raziskovanja, v okviru katerega so se srečevali s starejšimi ljudskimi godci. Ta neposredna izkušnja je pomembno vplivala na njihovo interpretacijo in razumevanje glasbene tradicije kot živega in ustvarjalnega procesa. Čeprav so v svojih glasbenih poustvarjanjih poudarjali pomen zgodovinske pristnosti in izvora melodij, so se zavestno izogibali togim rekonstrukcijam ter si prizadevali za spontan, živ glasbeni izraz. Veliko so nastopali, izdali pa so tudi dve avdiokaseti, ki sta bili v večji meri posneti v živo ter tako obenem dokumentirali pristop k predstavljanju ljudske glasbene tradicije in svojstveno energijo nastopov.

Čeprav je skupina delovala le nekaj let, je pomembno zaznamovala preporodno gibanje ljudske glasbe v Sloveniji ter navdihnila nekatere poznejše izvajalce, kot so *Tolovaj Mataj*, *Marko banda* in *Kurja koža*. Vsi člani so tudi po razpadu skupine ostali dejavni kot ugledni glasbeniki, pedagogi, raziskovalci in kulturni posredniki, ki so pustili pomemben pečat v slovenskem kulturnem prostoru, zlasti v povezavi z ljudsko glasbo. Predvsem pa je skupina *Trinajsto prase* s svojim neposrednim, odprtim in participativnim pristopom k predstavljanju in oživljanju ljudske inštrumentalne glasbe opozorila na do dotlej pogosto prezrto razumevanja ljudske glasbe kot ustvarjalne dejavnosti, ki lahko ohranja svojo vitalnost tudi zunaj izvornega okolja in v sodobnih kulturnih kontekstih.

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O AVTORJU

DRAGO KUNEJ (drago.kunej@zrc-sazu.si) je višji znanstveni sodelavec na Glasbenonarodopisnem inštitutu Znanstvenoraziskovalnega centra Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti, kjer je dolga leta vodil Zvočni arhiv. Na Akademiji za glasbo in Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Ljubljani je izredni profesor in predavatelj predmetov s področja etnomuzikologije in glasbene akustike. Preučuje tehnične in metodološke postopke zvočnega snemanja za raziskovalne namene in se ukvarja s problematiko zaščite, restavriranja, presnemavanja, digitaliziranja, dolgoročne hrambe in arhiviranja zvočnega gradiva. Raziskovalno se posveča predvsem zgodovini zvočnih snemanj in prvim etnomuzikološkim zvočnim posnetkov (s poudarkom na slovenskem gradivu), uporabnosti zvočnih dokumentov za etnomuzikološke raziskave, ljudskim glasbilom, delovanju folklornih skupin, glasbi izseljencev in preporodni ljudski glasbi.

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Moldavian Csángó Folk Musical Instruments and Ensembles Changes through Temporal, Social, and Political Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

After the change of regime, from the 1990s onwards, a number of Hungarian ethnographers started fieldwork in the Moldovan Csángó settlements, but alongside scientific research, an ideological trend emerged, which was concerned with the preservation of the identity, language and culture of the Moldovan Hungarians, while generating 'non-authentic' traditions.

Keywords: tradition, authenticity, folk musical instruments, folk musical ensembles

IZVLEČEK

Po spremembi oblasti v devetdesetih letih, je več madžarskih etnografov začelo s terenskim delom v moldavskih naseljih madžarske skupnosti Csángó. Ob znanstvenem raziskovanju pa so se pojavila tudi ideološko pogojena prizadevanja za ohranjanje identitete, jezika in kulture moldavskih Madžarov, ki so ustvarjala 'neavtentične' tradicije.

Ključne besede: izročilo, avtentičnost, ljudski glasbeni inštrumenti, ljudski glasbeni sestavi

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Transformation of Rural Culture

The transformation of rural culture in Hungary began at the end of the nineteenth century, when the rapid development of manufacturing industry displaced the old crafts with its mass-produced, cheap products. Additionally, the expansion of road and railway networks facilitated the spread of urban and popular culture, leading to significant changes in the previously self-contained rural communities. As a consequence, from the 1960s and 1970s onwards, the villages of a modernising society no longer had any need for either local peasant bands or Romani bands. During this period, the *táncházas* [dance hause movement] emerged, drawing inspiration from the traditional dance culture of the village of Szék [Romanian Sic] in Transylvania. The *táncház* at its core was known by various names in different regions, including *batyubál*, *csűrdöngölő*, *fonóbál*, and *taposóbál*. The idea of the first Budapest dance hause came from the Bihar ensemble, who believed that dancers would enjoy performing unstaged dances much more than choreographed, stylised stage productions. For this reason, they organised a dance evening with the *Vasas Művészegyüttes* [Art Ensemble], accompanied by live music, which took place on 6 May 1972 in the Liszt Ferenc Könyvklub [Book Club], where the famous Budapest bookshop Írók Boltja [Writers' Shop] is located today. As the dance party began attracting interest from passersby, a disagreement emerged. While the Bihar ensemble preferred to maintain it as a private event exclusively for experienced dancers, many organizers believed it would be beneficial to welcome anyone who wished to participate. As a result, the Bartók ensemble took over the organization of the dance parties, including the dance lessons. In the second half of the 1980s, at the University of Horticultural Science, the Táltos ensemble was the first to perform Moldavian folk dance music.[1]

Authenticity

The concept of authenticity, understood as genuineness or validity was significantly developed by McCannel in 1976 in the context of tourism.[2] He argues that tourists seek places that exist in a different time from their own for the sake of exoticism, but that they can only find them at the level of a staged realitydesigned for external observers.[3] The notion of authenticity has since been applied to the musical and instrumental heritage of traditional or folk cultures, often positioning itself in contrast to world music. However, the main characteristic of folk music – the 'natural filter of the community' – can no longer operate effectively in the absence of its original rural societal context. Folk music

1 József Kozák, "A moldvai csángómagyarok zenéjéről", *Folk Magazin* 3, (2008): 36.

2 Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 589–602.

3 John Urry, "Mobility and proximity", *Sociology* 36, no. 2 (2002): 259.

historically thrived within rural communities, which, in contrast to urban societies, were characterized by self-contained, localized ways of life.[4] However, due to the urbanisation of the post-World War II period, rural society ceased to exist in its former form, and therefore the use of the terms revival and survival became widespread in ethnography.[5] Folk music research has also applied this distinction to the study of surviving and revived folk music traditions.[6]

Survival traditions are typically found in regions where traditional village communities have experienced less exposure to modernization and industrialization, allowing for the preservation of historical practices within their cultural context. Since the Hungarians living between the Eastern Carpathians and the Prut, also known as the Moldavian Csángó, became isolated from Hungary and the rest of the language area in the Middle Ages, and lived as an ethnic group in isolation among Romanians, a people with a different language and culture, many archaic features of their culture, both spiritual and material, have survived. It should be noted that this archaism has only recently acquired value, because previously, due to notable differences in the respective regions' historical development, the neighbouring Szeklers considered the Csángó to be Romanised. Therefore looked down upon them because of the different nature of their traditional costume and dialect, and regarded their own more modern dance and music culture, which they ironically considered 'primeval', as *the* typically Hungarian tradition.[7] Before the Romanian regime change, research in Moldova was difficult, but from the 1990s onwards, a large number of ethnographers began to do fieldwork in Moldovan Csángó settlements, focusing mainly on the collection of religious data and folk songs, folk instrumental music and folk dance.[8]

Csángó Research and Csángó Rescue

At the same time, in addition to the scholarly investigation of the culture of the Moldavian Hungarians, an ideological trend also emerged, the essence of which was the wish to preserve the identity, language and culture of the Moldavian Csángó in the period after the Romanian regime change,

4 "Falu", in *Hungarian Ethnographic Dictionary*, MNL 2 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó: 1979): 23–29.

5 Károly Marót, "Survival és revival", *Ethnographia* 56. nos. 1-4. (1945): 4.

6 László Lajtha, *Lajtha László összegyűjtött írásai* I, ed. MelindaBerlász (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó 1992), 149.

7 István Pávai, "A népi és a nemzeti kultúra viszonyának néhány zenei vetülete Erdélyben", in *Népzenei Tanulmányok*, ed. Ferenc Pozsony (Kolzsvár: Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság 1999), 144.

8 Anikó Péterbencze, "Adatok a moldvai csángók folklórjához-Táncok és táncos szokások a Bákó környéki falvakban", in *"Moldovának szíp táiaind születtem…": Magyarországi Csángó Fesztivál és Konferencia*, ed. Péterbencze, Anikó (Jászberény: Magyarországi Csángó Fesztivál és Konferencia, 1993), 68–69.

a concerted effort that came to be known in Hungary and Transylvania as "Csángó rescue".[9] While authenticity is often emphasized as a key principle in the 'Csángó rescue' project, its socially constructed nature means that determining what is 'authentic' is shaped more by political and cultural-historical contexts than by objective or scientific criteria. Authenticity is often treated as a universally recognized category; however, in practice, it is constructed and legitimized through the influence of external, powerful actors or practices, rather than arising inherently within the cultural element itself.[10] Related to the authenticity conceptualised as inhereted feature, a fetishisation of difference typically comes to the fore, with the expectation that those living in a given culture remain 'pure and uncorrupted' in relation to those who just visit it.[11] As a result, lay people interested in the subject have typically grounded and disseminated their views not in a scientific but rather in a subjective and speculative way, with a 'romantic-idealising approach'.[12]

Since the 1990s, it has been noted that the dance houses, dance camps and guest performances that started after the change of the Romanian regime resulted in significant functional and formal/stylistic changes in Moldavian Csángó dances.[13] Overall, in the last two to three decades, we can speak of a fashionable folklorism of Moldavian folk dance and folk music, which is being jointly promoted by local specialists and domestic cultural organisers.[14] In this context, we can also observe a change in the composition of the orchestras accompanying Moldavian dances, which largely determines the style and performance of dance music. Only since the 1990s we have evidence of the combination of flute, violin, cobza and drum as components of the 'Moldavian Orchestra Model', a composition which did not exist in the spontaneously organised traditional music of the Csángó communities.[15]

9 Lehel Peti, "A csángómentés szerkezete és hatásai az identitásépítési stratégiákra", in *Lenyomatok 5. Fiatal kutatók a népi kultúráról*, eds. Jakab Albert Zsolt and Szabó Á. Töhötöm (Kolozsvár: Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság 2006), 129–155.

10 Emese Batizán, "Áruba bocsátott etnicitás-turizmusra vállalkozva", in *Sztereotipiák, választások, túlélések, kisebbségi léthelyzetekben*: *Határhelyzetek* V, ed. Szilvi Szoták (Budapest: Balassi Intézet Márton Áron Szakkollégium, 2013), 399.

11 Krüger, "Undoing Authenticity as a Discursive Construct", 95.

12 Pál Hatos, "Szempontok a csángókutatás kulturális kontextusainak értelmezéséhez", *Pro Minoritate* 22. no. 4. (2002): 5.

13 Vivien Szőnyi, "A moldvai csángó magyar táncok funkcionális és formai-stiláris változásai", in *Alkotás – befogadás – kritika a táncművészetben, a táncpedagógiában és a tánckutatásban: IV. Tánctudományi Konferencia a Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskolán*, 2013. november 8–9. Budapest, eds. Gábor Bolvári-Takács, János Fügedi, Katalin Mizerák, and András Németh (Magyarország, Budapest: Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskola 2014), 180–188.

14 Peti, "A csángómentés szerkezete és hatásai", 149–150.

15 László Németh, "A hagyományos moldvai kobozkíséret rekonstrukciójának lehetőségei" (thesis, LFZE Zenetudományi Tanszék 2021): 31.

The Question of the Use of Drums in the Traditional Dance Music of the Moldavian Csángó

Related to this is the phenomenon that, despite the use of the *tapan* drum type being universal among all of today's Moldavian traditional dance bands playing in dance halls, this drum type, which is widespread in the Balkans and the Middle East, was originally not used by the Moldavian Csángó.[16] In the second half of the 1980s, the Táltos ensemble, which was the first to perform Moldavian folk dance music at the University of Horticultural Science in Budapest, and which was primarily concerned with entertainment rather than authentic traditions, used the flute, cobza and drum trio as a basis for later bands.[17] Following the example of the Táltos ensemble's use of the drum in 'Moldavian music', a former member of the Tatros ensemble dance band brought a *davul* (mostly called *tapan* in the Balkans) drum from Turkey in 1989, which later revival bands took over and adopted as a 'traditional' instrument.[18] In traditional Moldavian folk dance music, the use of drums is not recorded from the period before World War II (Pávai, 1993, p. 37). For example, in Pusztina (Romanian Pustiana), the use of drums was introduced by Romani musicians after World War II, in the period 1945–50, and its use was justified by the expansion of the orchestra and the use of brass instruments.[19]

Furthermore, the use of different types of drums, such as the *buhay*-type friction drum and the various types of framed drums, has been preserved in the musical accompaniment of dramatic folk customs such as the Farewell to the Old Year chanting ceremony *urálás*.[20] In this context, the Moldavian Csángó music of Mária Petrás, who performed on the stage of the 2018 Kurultaj (Tribal Assembly) in Hungary, accompanied by a frame drum, is described in its accompanying text in the following words: "At the same time, a significant part of their culture: their songs – dances, costumes, beliefs and customs – preserve elements of the early shamanistic culture, which leads us back to the time of our ancient religion."[21] This statement is based on the fact that the Moldavian Csángó do indeed mostly use a framed drum (but also

16 Ildikó Sándor, "A hangszerkészlet és a táncélet változásai Klézsén", *Ethnographia* 106. no. 2 (1995): 933.

17 Kozák, "A moldvai csángómagyarok zenéjéről", 36.

18 Léna Tekauer, "A moldvai autentikus kobzolás szerepe a táncházmozgalomban: A koboz tanítása az alapfokú művészetoktatási intézményekben" (thesis NYF-BTMK, Ének-zene Tanszék 2010): 25.

19 Krisztián Feraru, "A moldvai csángó tánczene hangszerei" (thesis, LFZE Népzene Tanszék 2018): 17.

20 József Brauer-Benke, *A History and Typology of Folk Instruments of Music* (Budapest: HAS Research Centre for the Humanities Institute for Musicology 2018): 62–63, 71.

21 http://kurultaj.hu/2018/07/a-2018-as-kurultaj-szinpadan-petras-maria-moldvai-csango-zeneje/, last viewed 16 June, 2023.

other types of drum) to accompany their dramatic folk custom of seeing off the Old Year, formerly called *hejgetés* and, since the 1970s, increasingly *urálás*.[22] It should be noted, however, that the Romanian term *urare* [well-wishing] may have become widespread, on the one hand because the Csángó used the Romanian term known to all collectors, rather than the little-known Hungarian term *hejgetés*, and on the other hand, the language of the folk custom itself gradually changed, and the Hungarian text of the greeting poem gradually became faded and obscured, the Romanian version becoming more and more dominant.[23] However, the Romanian *urare* or greeting is part of several different dramatic folk customs, and therefore it cannot be considered as a custom analogous to the Csángó *hejgetés*, and therefore the latter is not the equivalent of the Romanian *colindă* but a Hungarian analogue of the Romanian tradition called *pluguşor* [the little plough].[24]

Ethnographic Analysis of the Drum Types Used in the Traditional New Year Customs of the Moldavian Csángó

The typical instrument of the magical healing rituals of Siberian shamanism is the frame drum with a stick. The *colindă*, which is related to the Csángó *urálás*, is also found among the Romanians, but they use a friction drum as an accompanying instrument of the custom. Therefore, according to Vilmos Diószegi, the frame drum type with rattles that participants in the *urálás* ceremony use cannot originate from the neighbouring peoples, and he believes that it can be regarded as a vestige of the shaman drum.[25] It is questionable, however, whether the use of frame drums for *hejgetés* can really be historically related to the frame drums of the shamans, because the data indicate that the custom of *hejgetés* has been enriched with constantly expanding elements, while at the same time it has continuously abandoned earlier elements, and by analogy the instruments used at this folk custom may also show constant changes.[26] Further, the frame drums at the *urálás* are related not only to shamans' drums, because in large parts of the Balkans, frame drums with disc bells but beaten by hand are also widespread, their common name being the Arabic-derived *dayre*, which was used in the fourteenth century. Its first known representation is known from a fresco in the Zemen monastery in western Bulgaria.[27]

22 Ferenc Pozsony, "Újesztendőhöz kapcsolódó szokások a moldvai csángóknál", *Néprajzi Látóhatár* 3, nos. 1-2 (1994): 151.

23 Pozsony, "Újesztendőhöz kapcsolódó szokások a moldvai csángóknál", 152.

24 József Faragó, "Újév a moldvai Gyoszényban", in *Dolgozatok a moldvai csángók népi kultúrájáról*, ed. Ferenc Pozsony (Kolozsvár: Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság Évkönyve 5, 1997), 288.

25 Vilmos Diószegi, *A sámánhit emlékei a magyar népi műveltségben* (Budapest: Akadémiai 1958): 177–209.

26 Brauer-Benke, "A History and Typology of Folk Instruments of Music", 72–73.

27 Roksanda Pejović, "Balkanski narodni instrumenti", *Musicological Annual* 25 (1989): 82.

The rattle-frame drum type is also known in the Eastern Carpathians among Poles and Ukrainians, and in northern Moldavia the masked performers of the Romanian *jocul ursului* [bear dance] also accompany their performances with rattle-frame drums played by one-handed percussion.[28] In addition, the Csángó participants in the *urálás* ceremony in Gyoszény (Romanian Gioseni) call the drum beaters *masuka/másuka*, which is related to the Romanian *maciuc*.[29] The frame drums known as *búbny/buben/bubón*, which are also widespread among Russians, Belorussians and Ukrainians, also have models with noise-making devices attached to the rim, similar to the iron rattles used on the drums of Siberian shamans, or with a handle attachment, single-handed percussion and thin, cross-shaped, bell-armed types, which are morphologically related to the types of frame drums used by the Csángó masked performers at the *hejgetés/urálás* ceremony.[30]

As a more distant ethnographic analogy, Zimbabwe and the Republic of South Africa also have cross-bar, single-membrane-framed drums similar to Siberian shaman drums, which are similarly played with a one-handed mallet. In addition, among the Tonga people, the single-drum, cross-handled frame drums called *matshomane* are used to accompany exorcism ceremonies of the *gongondjela*.[31] Among the Pedi people, the same type of drum is used by local healer-magicians to cure headaches. Since comparative studies have shown structural and typological similarities that are not genetically related, it is likely that the need for single-headed, single-membrane-framed drums may have been generated by the way the drum was struck with a single mallet, because in its absence it would be very difficult to keep the drum from being struck hard with the mallet. Therefore, the morphological similarities between the types of frame drum with a lever handle can be explained not only by geographical and historical relationships, but also by the theory of *Elementargedanken*. Indeed, the single-drum, cross-bar frame drum type of the Csángó masked performers at the *hejgetés/urálás* is related in its construction to the shaman drums of the Inner Asian, Siberian and Arctic peoples, but it is also related to the cross-bar, single-drum frame drum types of the sorcerers of the South African peoples. Since the cross-stick, single-diaphragm frame drum type is also found in neighbouring Ukrainian and Belarussian ethnic groups, the presence of this drum type alone does not provide sufficient evidence to establish a historical link between the frame drum of the Csángó and the shaman drums used by related peoples in Siberia.

28 Tiberiu Alexandru, *Instrumentele muzicale ale poporului Romin* (Bukarest: ESPLA 1956): 34.

29 Faragó, "Újév a moldvai Gyoszényban", 302.

30 Brauer-Benke, "A History and Typology of Folk Instruments of Music", 73.

31 Percival Robson Kirby, *The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press 1968), 42.

Traditional Musical Ensembles of the Moldavian Csángó

The drums outfitted with cymbals that spread among the Moldavian Csángó after World War II may have been the forerunners of the brass drum types of military or fire-brigade bands, but we must also take into account the spread of the drum type among the neighbouring Moldovans and Hutsuls, which they began to use as a supplement to their small ensembles combining flute and *cimbalom* [hammered dulcimer] with violin, a combination originally consisting of three parts (*troitsa muzyka*). The origins of the *troitsa muzyka* as an orchestral form date from the eighteenth century, when ensembles of violin-cello (or double bass), and *cimbalom* became widespread in Red Ruthenia [Red Russia], Volhynia, Podolia and Galicia.[32] This suggests that the instrumental music of the Moldavian Hungarians until the period of Turkish dependence, i.e. until the mid-eighteenth century, was probably played with *tapan* drums, which can be found in the eastern part of the Hungarian-speaking region.[33] Then, after the partition of Poland in 1772, when the northern part of Moldavia became a province of the Habsburg Empire as Bukovina (Duchy of Bukovina), Jewish klezmer music ensembles of southern German origin specialised in providing complex accompaniment, and later Romani bands modelled on them began to spread, which could meet the requirements of complex dance accompaniment without percussion instruments.[34]

Their antecedents, based on historical research, are the stringed duet, a common instrument in the sixteenth to eighteenth century, which consists of *sotar* and *dutar* in much of the Middle East and throughout Inner Asia.[35] This string-playing duet, based on Bardun musical thinking and widespread during the Turkish occupation, may have been widespread in the areas occupied by the Turks, because the Pashas and the Beys took their Romani musicians with them everywhere to recite songs of valiant warriors and the Surah of Victory.[36] These Romani musicians were often taken prisoners and they also learned the Hungarian heroic songs. Although they were Romani musicians, they did not belong to the category of Gypsy Bands, which only later became widespread, because it already meant string ensembles with at least three members, complete with *cimbalom*.[37] The Gyimes (Romanian Ghimeș) and Csík (Romanian Ciuc) violin-*ütőgardon* duos belong to this oriental bordun-based small

32 Paul M. Gifford, *The Hammered Dulcimer: A History* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 118.

33 Brauer-Benke, "A History and Typology of Folk Instruments of Music", 67.

34 József Brauer-Benke, *Hangszerek és ideológiák* (Budapest: BTK Zenetudományi Intézet 2023), 157-158.

35 Jean During, "Power, Authority and Music in the Cultures of Inner Asia", *Ethnomusicology Forum* 14, no. 2 (2005):, 157.

36 Sándor Takáts, *Török–magyar énekesek és muzsikások: Rajzok a török világból*, vol. I (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia 1915), 420.

37 Bálint Sárosi, *Hangszerek a magyar néphagyományban* (Budapest: Planétás Kiadó 1998), 131.

ensemble, just as the Middle Eastern and Inner Asian fidula and lute duo may have been a precursor of the violin-and-cobza duo typical of the authentic folk music of the Moldavian Csángós. This may also be confirmed by the fact that there are descriptions of violin-cobza (or lute) ensembles from Transylvania as early as the end of the sixteenth century.[38] Indeed as early as 1905 it was believed that the violin-cobza pair could representa kind of ancient Hungarian dance accompaniment ensemble.[39]

Like the flute, *cimbalom* [hammered dulcimer] and violin trios of the neighbouring Hutsuls and the panpipe, violin and cobza trios of the Romanians, the Moldavian Csángó sometimes added some type of wind instrument, because in the 1930s the most frequently invited musicians at weddings were still violinists and cobza players, sometimes accompanied by a clarinetist, and in 1935 the young people of Pusztina (Romanian Pustiana) were still learning to dance to the sound of a flute and cobza.[40] Therefore, as can still be observed in rural Romani bands today, for whom urban experts on 'tradition' cannot define what is 'authentic', Romani bands are organised for complex dance accompaniment in such a way that there should be both melody-making and accompanying instruments and, what is more, within the traditional milieu there is no issue of 'authentic' versus 'non-authentic' instruments. For as early as the 1930s, it was observed that wealthier families would welcome a brass band accompanied by a drum.[41]

Then, after World War II, it became a widespread fashion to invite more musicians to weddings, ensembles that included violin, flute, cobza and, in the late 1950s, hammered dulcimer, double bass, drums and brass.[42] By the 1960s, the *cimbalom* and the keyboard harmonica had increasingly replaced the cobza, and changing musical tastes meant that it was no longer only the well-to-do who demanded the musical performance style provided by the brass band. The spread of the hammered dulcimer (now often the concert *cimbalom*) and the disappearance of the cobza can also be explained by the fact that the hammered dulcimer in Moldavian Csángó music played the same accompanying role as the cobza, similar to the role of the hammered dulcimer in the Romanian music of the Western Wallachia, in which the hammered dulcimer began to replace the cobza in the former violin-cobza instrumental pair.[43] This points to the fact that the accompanying instruments of dance music were constantly changing in the light of current fashion trends, since they are products of material culture,

38 István Pávai, *Az erdélyi és a moldvai magyarság népi tánczenéje* (Budapest: Teleki László Alalpítvány 1993), 71.

39 Marián Réthei Prikkel, "A hajdútáncz", *Ethnographia* 16 (1905), 225–361.

40 Gyula Hankóczi, "Egy kelet-európai lantféle – a koboz", *Ethnographia* 99, nos. 3-4 (1988): 312.

41 Hankóczi, "Egy kelet-európai lantféle – a koboz", 320.

42 Feraru, "A moldvai csángó tánczene hangszerei", 3.

43 István Pávai, *Az erdélyi magyar népi tánczene* (Kolozsvár: Kriza János Néprajzi Társaságm 2012), 228.

unlike the more durable elements of intellectual culture, and thus less constant and therefore more responsive to changes in the environment.[44]

'Moldavian Orchestra Model' in Dance House in Budapest

The romantic ideology of the urban intellectuals in Budapest and the subculture of the defenders of heritage in Szeklerland, who are committed to 'Csángó rescue', is based on the assumption that the people living in a traditional culture have passed on their instruments to their descendants in unchanged form for centuries, following the traditions of their ancestors, and therefore only those from 'ancient and pure sources' are of real value.[45] For this reason, when the Budapest dance-house enthusiasts spread and 're-educate' the Moldavian dance orchestra model consisting of the flute (or *kaval*), violin, cobza, and drum – "a form of Budapest dance-hall ensemble" which they consider traditional – back to the Moldavian Csángó, they are in fact creating a pseudo-tradition. The creation of pseudo-traditions can also be observed in the case of the Szekler 'Csángó rescuers' based in Sepsiszentgyörgy (Romanian Sfântu Gheorghe) and organised by the Association of Moldavian Csángos, who try to banish the drum from the 'authentic' dance music of the Moldavian Csángos, but in their lessons based on flute music they also 're-teach' melodies that were not known at all in the village.[46] In Moldavia, as in other parts of the Hungarian-speaking region, the use of the flute was linked to pastoralism. Children who were in charge of guarding sheep or cattle were given a flute to keep them awake. The older shepherds played mostly for their own amusement, while the younger ones played dance tunes in the so-called *guzsalyas* and in the girls' spinning and sewing workshops at night. In some poorer villages or hamlets, flute-players were hired for the smaller dance parties if there was not enough money to hire Romani musicians. At folk music camps and festivals, organisers often include fiddlers and flutistsin combination, although they would never have played together on traditional occasions, because the two functionally different primary instruments greatly reduce each other's possibilities of variation. Furthermore, in the context of 'Csángó rescue' melodies are 're-taught' that were not known at all in the village.

The Case of the Female Flutist

The teaching of female flutists has also become a widespread practice, even though the flute, as a pastoral instrument, was considered a distinctly male instrument in traditional cultures, and thus closely gender deterimned. This is probably the reason why, although a large number of female flute players are

44 Jenő Barabás, *Kartográfiai módszer a néprajzban* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó 1963), 107.

45 Anca Giurchescu and Lisbet Torp, "Theory and Methods in Dance Research: A European Approach to the Holistic Study of Dance", *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 23 (1991): 2.

46 Feraru, "A moldvai csángó tánczene hangszerei", 14.

now able to join folk music courses or study folk music in higher education institutions, teachers are discouraged from teaching them to play the long flute, which is a highly controversial form of gender discrimination. However, this gender segregation is known worldwide, since, as Curt Sachs points out:

> *The gender of the player and the form of his instrument, or at least the interpretation of it, are interdependent. Since the magical function of more or less all primitive musical instruments is life, procreation, fertility, it is obvious that the life-giving role of either sex is manifested or reproduced in their shape or playing movement. The male instrument takes the form of the male sex organ, and the female instrument of the female sex organ. In the latter case, the addition of a fertilizing object is not far off.*[47]

The Case of Cobza Instrument

There is also a revived tradition observable in the spread of the cobza among the Moldavian Csángó, although the use of the instrument among the surrounding Romanians and Romanian Gypsies never completely disappeared, and the Romanians had already established folk-instrument schools in the 1950s to teach the playing of this instrument.[48] It was still popular among Hungarians living in Moldavia in the 1930s, but after the Second World War, in the 1960s and 1970s, for example, in Pusztina (Romanian Pustiana) the cobza was completely replaced by modern ensemble instruments.[49] Historical research shows that, despite the fact that the *koboz* was already in use in Hungary in the thirteenth century, it went out of use by the nineteenth century. However, the cobza in its present form is not related to the Turkish instruments of Inner Asia, because their bodies and necks are carved from the same block of wood, and therefore the Moldavian cobza is related to the Persian *barbat* and the Arabic *ʿoūd* and could only have spread in the region sometime after the eighteenth century.[50]

The cobza evolved from a melody-playing instrument to a rhythmic accompaniment instrument, and the violin-cobza duo may have developed in a similar way to the violin and accordion pair sometime during the eighteenth century. Further, just like pairs of musicians playing the violin and accordion, most of whom were of Romani origin, there are records of pairs composed of a male violinist and a female cobza player. Since the cobza's sectioned body, consisting of 5–7 wooden staves, and the curved neck, which is attached to the body of the instrument by tapping, is rather complicated, most of the instruments were made in small instrument-making workshops.[51] Such an in-

47 Curt Sachs, *The history of musical instruments* (New York: W.W. Norton 1940), 51.

48 Hankóczi, "Egy kelet-európai lantféle – a koboz", 324.

49 Feraru, "A moldvai csángó tánczene hangszerei", 3.

50 Brauer-Benke, "A History and Typology of Folk Instruments of Music", 335–336.

51 Hankóczi, "Egy kelet-európai lantféle – a koboz", 307.

strument-making workshop operated in the village of Szásznádas (Romanian Nadeș), where local craftsmen had been making cobzas on an industrial scale since 1862.[52] In addition, rural instrument-makers also made cobzas, and there are also scattered oral records of some cobzas having their bodies made by hollowing out a block of wood. Although no such old instruments have survived, a folk musician and folk instrument maker who took an active part in 'Csángó rescue' produced a number of such instruments which at first did not live up to expectations (the sound was not louder), but when fitted with gut strings they produced a good sound quality, and he then made several such carved-body cobzas for students at the Hungarian House in Pusztina (Romanian Pustiana).[53] It is important to stress, however, that the use of hollowed instrument bodies and gut strings is not a revival of an old tradition, but rather a sign of the musician's experimenting spirit. In a related context, the idea for the lid of a carved instrument body was inspired by a Romanian cobza from Bukovina, which, as far as we know, was not widespread in the region.[54]

Revival, Survival and Authenticity

Overall, as research in the 1980s shows, village instrument-makers of earlier periods also experimented with similar solutions, and some of them modified mandolins or tried to change the acoustic properties and appearance of their instruments by omitting the sound hole.[55] However, unlike in earlier periods, the adoption of these innovations no longer passes the 'test of community control', and on the whole the "Csángó rescue" activists disseminated instruments or melodies that had not existed in these forms in the localities concerned. A related source of much controversy is the traditional Moldavian cobza, because at the time of the instrument's spread to the dance halls in the late 1980s, no collections of original Moldavian cobzas were available. Therefore, musicians who became acquainted with the instrument often picked it up and played it using their musical skills based on other instruments that they had previously learned to play, and disseminated tuning and playing techniques that had not existed in traditional Moldavian cobza playing.[56] As a consequence, there are also opinions that, despite the fact that there are now a larger number of

52 Feodosia Rotaru, "Date istorice privind dezvoltarea meşteşugurilor din județul Bacău (sec. XVI-II-XX)", *Carpica* 41 (2012): 310.

53 Feraru "A moldvai csángó tánczene hangszerei", 17.

54 The original cobza is now in the instrument collection of the Horniman Museum in London (ref: M1.1.57/2), and according to the information given there, it was made by Dumitru Clipit in Sucava County, Bukovina, around 1946.

55 Hankóczi, "Egy kelet-európai lantféle – a koboz", 308.

56 Mátyás Bolya, "Kobozjáték a mai táncházas gyakorlatban: Gyakorlati és elméleti útmutató", in *Moldvai hangszeres dallamok sültün, kobzon, hegedűn*, ed. Balogh Sándor (Budapest: Etnofon Kiadó 2001), 124.

Moldavian cobza collections available, mastering earlier playing styles is no longer considered essential due to their perceived simplicity.[57] Therefore, they are not considered as a basic principle to be followed even at the level of stage performances or even in education.

Because the folk musicians performing on stage are working to earn a living, they are no longer trying to satisfy the musical tastes of a small, traditional, local communities, but rather the needs of a much larger and perhaps less demanding audience. This broader audience typically values novelty over the preservation of traditional cultural expressions. However, these changes are less troubling for Moldovan Hungarians, who generally view the learning of instruments such as the flute and cobza, alongside Hungarian language lessons, as a way to reconnect with their nearly forgotten culture and resist the pressures of assimilation.whose main demand is for novelty, as opposed to the musical needs of those in traditional culture. [58] On the other hand, the attitude towards dances is much more critical, as both the older and younger generations say that the dances taught in the educational programme are often not authentic and therefore do not feel like their own.[59] The negative effects of the 'Moldovan' dance festivals in Budapest, which are uniform, have reached the Moldovan Csángó themselves and attracted the attention of folk dance research. The research line proposed by the folk dance researchers thus aims to study the composition of the dance repertoire and changes in dance life, taking into account economic, cultural and social changes at the level of each region and village.[60] In connection with this, a unifying process, viewed as a generally negative development, can also be observed in the field of the use of 'authentic' instruments. Local studies reveal that, there was no uniform instrumental tradition in Pusztina (Romanian Pustiana), for example, as the richer and poorer parts of the village show different traditions in instrument use and, not unrelated to this, in dances as well, showing both chronological and spatial variation.[61]

Overall, the review of the instrumental traditions suggests that the ambivalent process of 'Csángó rescue'. On the one handlocals view it as a way to preserve their Hungarian identity through the relearning of traditional culture. On the other hand, they neither claim nor recall with precision the specific instruments historically used in their village. With external support from Hungary and Szeklerland, locals are also adopting a unified instrumental culture that previously did not exist, reflecting trends similar to those in dance culture-trends that have no conection with historically localized traditions. In fact, the Romani musicians, often central to local musical traditions, were significantly

57 Tekauer, "A moldvai autentikus kobzolás szerepe a táncházmozgalomban", 32–34.

58 Feraru, "A moldvai csángó tánczene hangszerei", 14.

59 Ibid., 24.

60 Szőnyi, "A moldvai csángó magyar táncok funkcionális és formai-stiláris változásai", 186–187.

61 Feraru, "A moldvai csángó tánczene hangszerei", 5.

affected by these changes, as their use of the accordion was considered as non-authentic and led to their exclusion from events for a time.

The Impact of Multiculturalism and World Music

As a counterpoint, there is a new development: young musicians from Budapest, who play 'folk and world music' with a multicultural rather than national inspiration, regularly visit Moldova to collect, play and teach. Thanks to these mixed bands, which include locals and Budapesters alike, the traditional dance music is accompanied by flute, violin and cobza, but also by instruments such as double bass, saxophone and electric guitar, as in the 1960s and 1980s, and accordion is making a comeback.

Conclusion

In general, unlike their approach to dances, the Moldovan Csángó do not place much emphasis on using the exact instruments their grandparents played. Instead, they seek to educate young people through organized programs, encouraging them to play not the modern instruments of the 1980s and 1990s, but rather the instrumental ensembles of Budapest dance bands, which are regarded as 'Moldavian', to provide dance music. In this way, they want to contribute to the preservation of their Hungarian identity and serve the nascent desire to make a living from it by staying in their homeland, becoming a tourist destination, and preserving their culture. However, the difficulty of access to the region is still a major problem, and if this obstacle is removed by the development of highways and air travel, it is doubtful whether the need for a staged 'authentic culture' for tourism, which has created other problems in other parts of the world where this has been achieved, will remain a preferred demand in the future.[62] The question therefore remains whether later generations of a more modernized and prosperous Moldovan Csango culture will not feel humiliated by the need to dress in folk costumes and sing and dance to the accompaniment of 'authentic' instruments for the entertainment of tourists.

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62 Hiwasaki, Lisa (2000). "Ethnic Tourism in Hokkaido and the Shaping of Ainu Identity." *Pacific Affairs* 73, no. 3 (2000): 401.

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SUMMARY

As a rule, survival traditions can be documented in such parts of a language area where traditional village communities are least exposed to modernisation. Since the Hungarians between the Eastern Carpathians and the Prut River, or Moldavian Csángós, were separated from Hungary and the rest of the Hungarian language area already during the Middle Ages and had lived among Romanians of a different language and culture as an isolated ethnic group, many archaic features survived in their folklore and material culture. Prior to the end of communist rule in Romania, research in Moldavia was difficult. However, from the 1990s onwards, many Hungarian ethnographers started fieldwork in the Moldavian Csángó settlements, mainly focusing on the religious life, the music, and the dances. In addition to the scientific research, an ideological trend also emerged, concerned with preserving the identity, language, and culture of Moldavia's Hungarians. Scholarly discourse designated this intervention coming from Hungary and Transylvania as 'Csángó rescue.' One might expect authenticity to be the priority of such a rescue operation. However, the definition of authenticity in the actual practice tends to become a political and cultural-historical issue rather than a scientific one. As can be documented from the 1990s onwards, dance houses, dance camps, and guest performances initiated after the regime change in the Romania have led to significant functional and formal-stylistic changes in Moldavian Csángó dances. Looking at the last two to three decades, we get the overall impression of a 'fashion folklorism' of Moldavian folk dance and folk music, which has been fostered by both local specialists and cultural organizers in Hungary. In this context, one can observe changes in the composition of the bands accompanying Moldavian dances that have largely determined the style and performance manner of dance music. In my article, I reviewed these changes concerning both the instruments and the ensembles. I also examined the reflexive effects of the Budapest dance houses on contemporary Moldavian dance music culture.

POVZETEK

Moldavski ljudski glasbeni instrumenti in ansambli skupnosti Csángó ter njihove spremembe s časovne, družbene in politične perspektive

Praviloma je mogoče preživetje tradicije dokumentirati v tistih delih jezikovnega območja, kjer so tradicionalne vaške skupnosti najmanj izpostavljene modernizaciji. Ker so bili Madžari med vzhodnimi Karpati in reko Prut, ali moldavski Csángós, že v srednjem veku ločeni od Madžarske in preostalega madžarskega jezikovnega območja ter so živeli kot izolirana etnična skupina med Romuni, ki so govorili drug jezik in imeli drugačno kulturo, se je v njihovi folklori in materialni kulturi ohranilo veliko arhaičnih značilnosti. Pred koncem komunističnega režima v Romuniji je bilo raziskovanje v Moldaviji težavno. Od 90. let 20. stoletja naprej, pa so mnogi madžarski etnografi lahko začeli s terenskim delom v moldavskih čangoških naseljih, kjer so se osredotočili predvsem na versko življenje, glasbo in plese. Ob znanstvenem raziskovanju se je pojavilo tudi ideološko motivirno prizadevanje za ohranjanje identitete, jezika in kulture moldavskih Madžarov. Znanstveni diskurz je to posredovanje iz Madžarske in Transilvanije poimenoval 'reševanje Csánga'. Pri takšni reševalni akciji bi pričakovali, da bo avtentičnost na prvem mestu. Vendar pa opredelitev avtentičnosti v praksi pogosto postane politično in kulturno-zgodovinsko vprašanje, ne pa znanstveno. Kot je

mogoče dokumentirati od devetdesetih let naprej, so plesne hiše, plesni tabori in gostovanja, ki so se začeli po spremembi oblasti v Romuniji, privedli do pomembnih funkcionalnih in formalno-stilističnih sprememb v moldavskih csángó plesih. Če pogledamo zadnji dve do tri desetletja, dobimo vtis 'modnega folklorizma' moldavskega ljudskega plesa in ljudske glasbe, ki so ga spodbujali tako lokalni strokovnjaki kot kulturni organizatorji na Madžarskem. V tem kontekstu lahko opazimo spremembe v sestavi glasbenih skupin, ki spremljajo moldavske plese in so v veliki meri določile slog in način izvajanja plesne glasbe. V svojem prispevku predstavljam te spremembe tako v zvezi z instrumenti kot z ansambli. Raziskujem tudi refleksivne učinke budimpeških plesnih hiš na sodobno moldavsko plesno glasbeno kulturo.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JÓZSEF BRAUER-BENKE (Brauer-Benke.Jozsef@abtk.hu) studied ethnography, folklore, cultural anthropology, and African studies at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest from 1995–2000, and from 2001–2004 he completed the Doctoral Programme in European Ethnology at the same institution. His doctoral dissertation examined the history of Hungarian folk musical instruments. He has been a lecturer in the African Studies Programme at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest from 2003–2008, and has lectured at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music from 2008–2022. He currently holds an appointment as ethno-organologist and museologist at the Institute for Musicology in the Research Centre for the Humanities at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. His book about by a typology and historical overview of the musical instruments of the Carpathian basin that was published in English translation in 2018. He is currently involved in comparative research into the history of European, Asian and African folk musical instruments.

O AVTORJU

JÓZSEF BRAUER-BENKE (Brauer-Benke.Jozsef@abtk.hu) je med letoma 1995 in 2000 študiral etnografijo, folkloristiko, kulturno antropologijo in afriške študije na Univerzi Eötvös Loránd v Budimpešti, med letoma 2001 in 2004 pa je na isti ustanovi zaključil doktorski študij evropske etnologije. V doktorski disertaciji je raziskoval zgodovino madžarskih ljudskih glasbil. Od leta 2003 do 2008 je bil predavatelj na programu afriških študij na Univerzi Eötvös Loránd v Budimpešti, od leta 2008 do 2022 pa je predaval na Akademiji za glasbo Franza Liszta. Trenutno je zaposlen kot etnoorganolog in muzeolog na Inštitutu za muzikologijo v Raziskovalnem centru za humanistične vede Madžarske akademije znanosti. Leta 2018 je izšel angleški prevod njegove knjige o tipologiji in zgodovinskem pregledu glasbil na območju Karpatov. Trenutno se ukvarja s primerjalnimi raziskavami zgodovine evropskih, azijskih in afriških ljudskih glasbil.

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The Change of the Performance Style of a Fiddler from the Gyimes Region Depending on the Collecting Situations

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ABSTRACT

János Zerkula (1927–2008) was an unavoidable figure of the folk music of the Gyimes region and the Hungarian dance house movement. Since the 1960s, numerous folk music researchers, and enthusiastic folk music lovers recorded him. The study examines how different collection situations have influenced his performance style.

Keywords: hungarian folk music, performance style, fiddler, traditional music, dance house movement

IZVLEČEK

János Zerkula (1927–2008) je bil nepogrešljiva osebnost ljudske glasbe v regiji Gyimes in madžarskega gibanja *plesna hiša*. Od 60. let 20. stoletja so ga snemali številni raziskovalci ljudske glasbe in navdušeni ljubitelji ljudske glasbe. Študija preučuje, kako so različne situacije zbiranja vplivale na njegov slog izvajanja.

Ključne besede: madžarska ljudska glasba, slog izvajanja, godec, tradicijska glasba, gibanje *plesna hiša*

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Introduction

The analysis of folk music performance practices and the exploration of individuality represent an intriguing yet somewhat underexplored area within the field of Hungarian folk music research. By analyzing the life paths, repertoires, and performance styles of frequently interviewed informants, we can gain insight into not just the individual artistic expression, but also the surrounding folk music traditions, associated customs, and their musical and ethnographic interconnections.

Since the beginning of Hungarian folk music research, not only has audiovisual technology developed significantly, but recording contexts have also shifted away from traditional rural settings. The dance house movement, which began to develop in the 1970s, has greatly contributed in the field, as collections were often made with informants in studios, dance halls, and during stage performances. In this study, I aim to highlight that the analysis of a collection should not be limited to the independent interpretation of the musical material. The broader context in which the collection was madecan also provides valuable, often subtle, information, particularly when examining the informant's traditional playing style, which is not influenced by external factors. To illustrate the impact of collection contexts on performance style, I examined the performance style of the renowned violinist-singer János Zerkula. In addition to folk music researchers, many passionate folk music enthusiasts, thanks to the folk dance movement, became familiar with him. Moreover, he traveled to many places far from his traditional environment. Despite his recognition, systematic and in-depth studies of the collections made with him and his performance style are still lacking.

In my study, following a review of the literature on folk music research from the Gyimes region, the methodology of fieldwork, and the background of folk music performance styles, I conducted a detailed analysis of János Zerkula's performance style. To process the material, I drew on collections available in the databases of the HUN-REN Institute for Musicology (Budapest) and the Hungarian Heritage House. To explore Zerkula's ornamentation style, I relied on Bálint Sárosi's study "The Violin Style of the Gyimes Csángós",[1] which provided the conceptual framework. I adapted this framework to the specific characteristics of Gyimes violin playing and expanded it according to my own analytical approach. In this research, I applied an interdisciplinary approach, combining folk music research and environmental psychology, which emphasizes the importance of examining social and physical environmental variables in close correlation. Its concepts and approach strongly supported the phenomena observed during earlier fieldwork. In examining specific collecting situations, I analyzed in detail the social and physical environmental factors

1 Bálint Sárosi, "A gyimesi csángó hegedűstílus", *Magyar Zene* 17, no. 2 (1977), 176–183.

that could have influenced the informant's playing style and substantiated the changes in performance style with clear, measurable results. Throughout my work, I aimed to fully utilize the documentation provided by the collection process and thoroughly evaluate the individual collecting situations.

Previous Research and Conceptual Framework

The History of Research on Folk Music in Gyimes

Research on the folk music of Gyimes began alongside the collection of folk music in Hungarian-speaking areas. According to the HUN-REN Institute for Musicology's database, a total of 64 recordings were made in the region prior to 1912: Béla Vikár recorded 27 pieces in Nagygyimes between 1903 and 1904, while László Lajtha collected material in 1912 both in Nagygyimes and in Gyimesközéplok. In addition to vocal material, Vikár's recordings feature whistled instrumental dance tunes and melodies played on the shepherd's pipe, while Lajtha's recordings include instrumental dance melodies played on the pipe. The first written reference to the *gardon*, the region's characteristic accompanying instrument, was made by Pál Péter Domokos in 1934.[2]

In 1943, Oszkár Dincsér published the first comprehensive work on the musical culture of Csík County, titled *Két csíki hangszer: Mozsika és gardon* [*Two Instruments from Csík:* Mozsika *and* Gardon].[3] In this study, he examined the fiddle, locally known as *mozsika*, and the *gardon*, and uniquely addressed folk harmonization within the field of instrumental music research, which was unprecedented at the time. In addition to transcribing the bass lines, he also recorded the violin finger positions. His research employed methods that would later become standard in American ethnomusicology.[4]

A key milestone in the research of Gyimes folk music was the work of Zoltán Kallós, whose collecting methods differed from the prevailing practices of the time. He did not simply stay in the region for a few days or weeks but spent several years observing the local community, learning when to ask questions and what to listen for in different situations. From 1958 to 1966, he lived in Gyimes, and in 1960, he published a study on the Gyimes plaintive song (*keserves*), discussing its function in detail, the variation of melodies and lyrics associated with the genre, and nearly sixty transcriptions of melodies. [5]

Research on instrumental music was significantly influenced by the rise of folk dance studies. György Martin advanced the field not only by expanding

2 Pál Péter Domokos, "A tekenyőgordon", *Ethnographia* 45 (1934), 184–185.

3 Oszkár Dincsér, *Két csíki hangszer: Mozsika és gardon*, A Néprajzi Múzeum füzetei 7 (Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum, 1943).

4 Dániel Lipták, "Dincsér Oszkár 1942-es Csík megyei népzenei gyűjtése", *Ethnographia* 130, no. 2. (2019): 274–291.

5 Zoltán Kallós, "Gyimesvölgyi keservesek", *Néprajzi Közlemények* (1960).

collections but also by clarifying the role of instrumental music.[6] In 1961, Csaba Szabó and, in 1962, György Martin, along with Zoltán Kallós and Ferenc Pesovár, collected material in Gyimesközéplok. The study "A gyimesi csángók táncélete és táncai" ["The Dance Life and Dances of the Gyimes Csángós"], written by Zoltán Kallós and György Martin, is the first comprehensive work offering insight into the folk music and dance life of Gyimes. In addition to describing various dance occasions and types, the study also provides important musical details.[7] These include the introduction of the Gyimes ensemble, a mention of the active violinists, a description of dance cycles, the basic rhythm of the dances (which also represents the basic pulse of the music), and an explanation of the associated melodies.[8]

Starting in the 1970s, the number of folk music collections increased dramatically, driven not only by growing scientific interest but also by the rising popularity of folk music, fueled by the dance house movement. This attracted many urban youth with an interest in folk music and dance to the region. From the 1990s onward, the advent of digital audio and later video recording technologies reinvigorated collecting enthusiasm. On one hand, the ability to make recordings became accessible to almost anyone, while on the other hand, the political changes after the fall of communism opened opportunities to bring informants to Hungary and other countries. It is virtually impossible to document all the collections from this period, as many recordings remain in private hands.

During this period, Bálint Sárosi's study "The Violin Style of the Gyimes Csángó"[9] was published, in which he describes the characteristics of the Gyimes playing style, the instrumental phrasing – including the instrumental parlando performance of the plaintive songs (*keserves*) – and also categorizes the violin figurations and formulaic types.[10]

The first publication to thoroughly address the violin fingering, shifts, bowing technique, and bowing styles of Gyimes violin playing was published in 1989.[11] The volume analyzes the material from a collection made in 1987 with Mihály Halmágyi (violin) and his wife Gizella Ádám (*gardon*), covering the entire collection.[12] Although no video recording was made in parallel with this

6 Bálint Sárosi, *A hangszeres magyar népzene* (Budapest: Püski Kiadó Kft., 1996), 7.

7 Zoltán Kallós and György Martin, "A gyimesi csángók táncélete és táncai", *Tánctudományi tanulmányok* (1969–1970), 195–254.

8 Zoltán Kallós and György Martin, *A gyimesi csángók táncélete és táncai* [CD-melléklet] (Szentendre: D'sign Kereskedelmi és Szolgáltató Kft., 2005).

9 Sárosi, "A gyimesi csángó hegedűstílus".

10 Sárosi categorizes the ornamentation formulas of the violin into five groups, which are as follows: introductory, circumlocutory, highlighting, bridging, and closing formulas.

11 Márta Virágvölgyi, *Gyimesi népzene I–II* (Debrecen: Kölcsey Művelődési Központ, 1989).

12 Informants: Gizella Ádám Pulika "Halmágyi" Mihályné (Gyimesközéplok; humming, singing, *gardon*), Mihály "Halmágyi" Pulika (Gyimesközéplok; violin); collectors: László Porteleki, Márta Virágvölgyi, András Vavrinecz, Bálint Sárosi; 1987.06.01, Budapest, arranged collection.

audio recording, the study was reconstructed by Márta Virágvölgyi based on the analysis of the video recordings made with Halmágyi up to that point.

Regarding the rythm of the *lassú magyaros* [slow Hungarian] dance of Gyimes and its complex rhythm, István Pávai first writes about it in his book *The Folk Dance Music of the Hungarians in Transylvania and Moldavia* (1993), in which he offers a new perspective on the interpretation of rhythm.[13]

The Methodology of Collection and Its Significance

The recording situation is two-dimensional, involving communication between the informant and the collector. Its effectiveness depends not only on the informant's knowledge and performance skills, but also, or perhaps more importantly, on the recording situation. This includes the collector's preparation, background knowledge of folk music and ethnography, and the method of conducting the collection. At the same time, the circumstances of the collection cannot be overlooked, including whether the informant performs in a traditional folk-life setting or outside of it, and whether they are playing music with others – possibly musicians whose playing style differs from their traditional performance. A folk music collection can contain many elements: the knowledge of the individual, which we see and hear in a specific manifestation,[14] and it also includes both traditional and non-traditional elements. Considering all these aspects, the role of a third party evaluating the collection – beyond the informant and the collector – is of paramount importance. Only with the proper scientific background and thorough research can the collection undergo critical source evaluation.

In post-processing, certain signs may suggest external influences behind a changed performance compared to the informant's traditional style. These might include unusual dynamic or tempo variations, increased use of certain ornaments, or even the fixation of ornaments in the melody across multiple stanzas – in other words, a lack of variation. Beyond the performance style, the informant's repertoire can also reflect external influences, as the recorded material largely depends on the collector's questions. As early as the early twentieth century, János Seprődi wrote about this phenomenon, stating that

13 István Pávai, *Az erdélyi és moldvai magyarság népi tánczenéje* (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 1993), 89–90.

14 This is related to the concept pair of competence and performance. Competence refers to the rule-based code system present in the informant's mind, which contains the knowledge necessary for communicating folk music. Performance is the use of this competence, meaning the actual communication of a part of this competence. The linguistic concept pair is first used in a musical context by László Stachó and then by István Pávai. Noam Chomsky, "Curent Issues in Linguistic Theory", in *The Structure of Language: Readings in the Philosophy of Language*, eds. J. A. Fodor and J. J. Kratz (New Jersey, 1964), 50–108; László Stachó, "Zenetudomány és lélektan: egymásra tekintve", *Magyar Zene* 40, no. 3 (2002): 339–354; István Pávai, *Az erdélyi magyar népi tánczene* (Kolozsvár – Budapest: Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság – Hagyományok Háza, 2013).

> *the musician plays differently when in a good mood, differently when intimidated, differently when playing for skilled dancers, and again differently when treating it as just a day's work. Every person is subject to the effects of their emotional state, but the folk musician is affected to such an extent that they adjust the quantity and quality of ornamentations accordingly, noticeably slowing down or speeding up the tempo.*[15]

Béla Bartók, in his essay "Why and How to Collect Folk Music?", discusses how the location and circumstances of the collection can significantly affect the informants. He also elaborates on the qualities a folk music collector must possess:

> *The ideal folk music collector must be a true polymath. They need linguistic and phonetic knowledge to notice and transcribe the slightest nuances of regional accents; they must be a choreographer to accurately describe the relationships between folk music and dance; general folklore knowledge is necessary to establish the connection between folk music and folk customs in even the smallest details; they must be a sociologist to assess the impact of societal changes that disrupt village life on folk music. To draw final conclusions, historical, especially settlement history, knowledge is required; if they want to compare the folk music material of other linguistic groups with that of their own country, they must learn foreign languages. Above all, a good listener and a keen observer with musical skills are essential.*[16]

In the chapter "Aspects for the Research of Folk Polyphony" from István Pávai's book *Hungarian Folk Dance Music of Transylvania*, he discusses the factors influencing the authenticity of collections, which are informed not only by the experiences he gained during his many years of fieldwork but also by the observations of his predecessors.[17]

In his essay "Why and How to Collect Folk Music?", Béla Bartók also lays down the fundamentals of documenting the collection process. He describes how, alongside the collected music, the informant's details and the circumstances of the collection should be documented as thoroughly as possible – recording biographical data and education, asking where and from whom the informant learned a particular melody, and obtaining information about the role the melody plays in village life, when it is sung or played, and whether it is associated with any particular custom. In the case of dance music, it is also important to note the precise name of the dance and whether the melody is sung or played.[18]

At the beginning of folk music research, recording technology was costly and significantly limited, so greater emphasis was placed on notation during

15 Benkő András (ed.), *Seprődi János válogatott zenei írásai és népzenei gyűjtése* (Bukarest: Kriterion Könyvkiadó, 1974), 143; Pávai, *Az erdélyi magyar népi tánczene*, 98.

16 Béla Bartók, "Miért és hogyan gyűjtsünk népzenét?", in *Bartók Béla írásai 3*, eds. Vera Lampert and Dorrit Révész (Budapest: Editio Musica Budapest, 1999), 276.

17 Pávai, *Az erdélyi magyar népi tánczene*, 333. The volume has also been published in English: *Hungarian Folk Dance Music of Transylvania* (Budapest: Hagyományok Háza, 2020).

18 Bartók, "Miért és hogyan gyűjtsünk népzenét?", 275–290.

the collection process. Zoltán Kodály and Béla Bartók made numerous field notations to assess the melody repertoire of a given area, select melodies worthy of recording, and then analyze them in detail. By the time collectors reached the stage of making actual audio recordings, they had to be aware of who the best singers and musicians in the village were and whether previous collections had been made there. Based on this information, they decided which informants were considered 'worthy' of being audio recorded. Both Bartók and Kodály – after Béla Vikár, the first to use the phonograph on their collecting trips – considered it extremely important to publish the recordings alongside the notation, as they believed the musician could have sung or played incorrectly during the single phonograph recording.[19] What is certain is that recordings are essential for interpreting instrumental folk music, as even the most skilled collector cannot immediately transcribe intricate ornamentations or multi-part accompaniments.

The development of audiovisual tools marked a significant advancement in folk music research, particularly in the study of instrumental folk music, as they enable complex documentation on their own. While field notes complement audio recordings, certain aspects can only be captured through video recordings. A good example is the playing technique of individual instruments, such as violin fingering or bowing. Video recordings can also provide useful information from other perspectives, such as studying the informant's nonverbal communication, including when they signal a mistake through gestures or facial expressions.[20]

Thanks to technological advancements, the focus of documentation methods has shifted. Field notes and written dialogues have been replaced by recorded conversations during the collection process, while moving images have taken precedence over still photographs. The role of field notation has become much smaller, yet its significance remains. It provides a useful tool for practical folk music education when used alongside the field recordings and also offers the opportunity to analyze various folk music characteristics. Additionally, the regularities in rhythm and ornamentation patterns are easier to understand and review when observed visually.

Environmental Psychological Aspects in the Source-Critical Evaluation of a Folk Music Collection – the Importance of the Circumstances of a Collection

Environmental psychology is a relatively new branch of psychology that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States. Social and ecological-environmental problems played a major role in its development. Initially, the focus was on the physical

19 Pál Richter, "Értelmezések és félreértelmezések a népzenekutatásban", *Magyar Zene* 56, no. 4 (2018), 372.

20 István Pávai writes about the phenomenon in the chapter *Aspects for the Research of Folk Polyphony* in his book *Az erdélyi magyar népi tánczene* (Pávai, *Az erdélyi magyar népi tánczene*, 342).

> *characteristics of the environment, but it has since shifted to the interrelationship between the physical environment and human behavior and experience. It is defined as 'Environmental psychology is a multidisciplinary field that focuses on the study of the interaction and transaction between the sociophysical environment and human behavior and experience, using psychological and other scientific, quantitative and qualitative methods.*[21]

Due to its theoretical and methodological diversity, it is now often referred to as 'human environmental sciences' rather than environmental psychology. In Hungary, environmental psychology research began in the mid-1990s, led by Andrea Dúll, the country's most prominent representative in the field.[22] As human environmental sciences contribute to many non-psychological disciplines, such as architecture, geography, and sociology, they are often referred to as a transdisciplinary field. Due to the diversity of related disciplines, their representatives do not rely solely on psychological methods. Instead, each field, while maintaining its own regularities and specificities, shapes environmental psychology in its own way.

In psychology, the environment is both an inescapable and elusive factor. While it's clear that all human behavior studied in psychology is embedded in the environment, different fields have developed various definitions of the concept. The environment, in its simplest form, is what surrounds us. In the case of a collection, this includes the location, the objects familiar or unfamiliar to the informant, the collector(s), and the people present. Additionally, the environment encompasses everything we perceive through our senses, including temperature, sounds, and smells. In the early 'classical phase' of environmental psychology, it was assumed that there was a linear, one-way causal relationship between the individual and the environment. The environment was seen as affecting the individual, with changes in the individual often viewed as the result of environmental influence and interaction.[23] However, according to modern perspectives, humans and their environment are in a reciprocal, transactional relationship.

The concept of subjective environment first appears in the work of Kurt Lewin and Egon Brunswik. Lewin argues that the environment should not be observed in isolation but rather as interpreted by the individual in determining behavior. In other words, the concept of environmental perception and evaluation is crucial, as environmental perception is a highly subjective process.[24]

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21 Andrea Dúll, *Helyek, tárgyak, viselkedés: Környezetpszichológiai tanulmányok* (Budapest, 2010), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274699356_Dull_Andrea_Helyek_targyak_viselkedes_Kornyezetpszichologiai_tanulmanyok.

22 Ágnes Szokolszky and Andrea Dúll, "Környezet – pszichológia: Egy ökológiai rendszerszemléletű szintézis körvonalai", *Magyar Pszichológiai Szemle* 61, no. 1 (2006): 23.

23 Dúll, *Helyek, tárgyak, viselkedés*, 20.

24 Kurt Lewin, "Pszichológiai ökológia", in *A mezőelmélet a társadalomtudományban*, ed. Ferenc Mérei, trans. Péter Józsa (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1972), 327–350; cited in Dúll, *Helyek, tárgyak, viselkedés*, 14.

The concept of the so-called 'behavior setting' was coined by Roger Barker and Herbert Wright.[25] The main aim of their research was to investigate the influence of the physical environment on human behavior and development in everyday life. Their central idea was that, in order to predict people's behavior in a given situation, we must understand the characteristics of the environment in which that behavior occurs.[26] A behavior setting is a space where certain people engage in specific activities at certain times, meaning that activity occurs within defined spatial and temporal boundaries. Examples of such spaces include a church, a restaurant, or a pharmacy, or, in the context of our topic, even a village or the spaces (home, dance hall, stage) where a particular collection is recorded. Research on behavioral environments has shown that, despite potential differences in socialization and personality, two people will often behave in the same, or at least similar, ways in the same situation, demonstrating that behavior and the physical environment are inseparable. According to Barker's principles, the behavioral environment is not defined by the individuals who use it, but by the characteristic patterns of behavior in the environment, but Allan W. Wicker, developing the theory further, points out that the behavioral environment often depends on the so-called key people, whose replacement or substitution fundamentally changes the behavioral environment.[27]

Man is bound by emotional ties to the physical space he inhabits.[28] This attitude – place attachment – is especially powerful in the home, one of the most important territories of human existence. The home is a space where people accumulate and store their most cherished objects, which are an integral part of being human. These objects can serve as reminders of past habits and traditions, and like places, they facilitate interaction with both the environment and other people. This is significant because they offer a sense of control, security, and continuity across time and space.[29]

"The real function of music can only be observed in its traditional context, in its social use,"[30] writes Bartók. The 'sociophysical context' in which a recording is made, i.e. the physical and social circumstances that may have

25 The basic idea of the behavioral environment was further developed by Allan W. Wicker without departing from the Barker and Lewin traditions.

26 One of the main merits of Barker and Wright's behavioral environment theory is that they elevated real, non-laboratory research to the same scientific status as psychological laboratory experiments: their subjects were everyday people whose lives were observed as they became embedded in the life of the settlement. (Dúll, *Helyek, tárgyak, viselkedés*, 16.) This method is similar to the method used in ethnography and cultural anthropology, and it is important to note that Zoltán Kallós also collected in Gyimes in this way.

27 Dúll, *Helyek, tárgyak, viselkedés*, 17.

28 Ibid, 67.

29 The informant feels more secure in a traditional environment or home compared to a non-traditional situation, so there is less chance that their traditional way of performing will change.

30 Bartók, "Miért és hogyan gyűjtsünk népzenét?", 275–290.

influenced the individuals, cannot be ignored in terms of the authenticity of a collection. However, documenting the circumstances of the collection in detail presents challenges: it can only be thoroughly captured using modern audiovisual tools or by recording the field observer's impressions in written form.[31] The presence of audio and film recording devices as a physical condition can influence the informant, prompting them to be more reserved yet more conspicuous in their performance.

As for the collection situation, the most reliable are the so-called 'functional recordings', such as those made during a wedding, christening, or dance, since these occasions are not held for the collector's sake, but are conducted according to community traditions, with the collector having little influence over the events. Functional recordings are particularly important for dance tunes, as in these cases, the musician has much less freedom in choosing the tempo compared to a melody performed in parlando or rubato.[32]

It is fortunate if the collector spends several days, or even weeks, in the village, living with the people and trying to observe tradition in all aspects of life, as this minimizes the chance of musicians altering their behavior for the collector.[33] However, this method of collection has become increasingly difficult in recent decades due to the erosion of village traditions. From the perspective of collection authenticity, it may be beneficial that, although not in a functional context, the collector is able to interview the informant in their familiar, traditional environment. In both recording situations, the informant must not be removed from their familiar behavior setting, which is their everyday, regularly used habitat to which they have strong emotional ties.

Particular attention should be paid to collections where the informant is removed from their behavior setting and placed in an urban dance hall, stage, or performance, often alongside urban musicians. In these cases, the authenticity of the collection is enhanced if the informant is surrounded by familiar individuals with whom they feel comfortable, or if they perform with musicians whose traditional playing style aligns with their own. The informant's behavior can also be strongly influenced by the objects around them and the physical environment. Both the location of the recording – whether at home, in a studio, or on stage – and the technical equipment used may cause the informant to behave more restrained or, conversely, to exaggerate their performance. The determination of whether the informant behaves more restrained or exaggerated may depend on various factors, including whether they are a professional musician – accustomed to performing in front of an audience – or a singer for

31 Pávai, *Az erdélyi magyar népi tánczene*, 343.

32 László Lajtha mentions that in some of the studio recordings made with the musicians from Szék, the the tempo is twice as fast as the tempo of the village dance music. László Lajtha, *Széki gyűjtés* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó Vállalat, 1954), cited in Pávai, *Az erdélyi magyar népi tánczene*, 344.

33 Pávai, *Az erdélyi magyar népi tánczene*, 343.

whom performing is an atypical activity. In any case, a thorough analysis and understanding of the informant's melodic repertoire and performance style are essential for any study focused on performance practices.

The Importance of the Collector's Preparedness, the Relationship Between the Collector and the Informant

In the early stages of Hungarian folk music recording, the collector's expertise was of even greater significance, as the opportunities for making audio recordings were particularly limited. Still, under today's circumstances – i.e. the practically unlimited number of sound and video recordings that can be made – the collector's background knowledge is at least as important, or perhaps even more so, for different reasons. Above all, I consider it essential to define the cases in which I refer to a collection as successful and to define the notion of musical or ethnographic authenticity in connection with this. István Pávai addresses the issue of the authenticity of musical material in relation to folk harmonization as follows:

> *I regard material musically authentic if upon replaying, an experienced and talented village musician, who acquired his instrumental knowledge in traditional ways deems its harmonic solutions correct, and its variations allowable. On the other hand, he will identify the chords deviating from traditional harmonic practice as mistaken, remarking that 'for them' (for the dancers or participants at the event) they are just as good, justifying, as it were, the ethnographic authenticity of the musically mistaken solutions.*[34]

In the following section of this work, I will define successful collections as those in which the musical authenticity of the informant is maximized. A fundamental assumption is that the collector possesses the necessary musical knowledge and training. This includes not only good hearing and the ability to read and write music but also familiarity with the melodies and customs of the region, as well as an awareness of the existing material in the area. In addition to musical knowledge, an understanding of the local dance material is equally important, as music and dance are intricately linked, and a complete understanding of one is impossible without the other.

Engaging with musicians and recording their performances can yield a wealth of valuable information to complement the collected music. These conversations offer an opportunity to clarify numerous aspects that might not be comprehensible to mere observers. Therefore, it is crucial that the collector is well-acquainted with the local vernacular and expressions, as a lack of such knowledge can frequently result in misleading conclusions. The behavior and attire of an urban individual may also appear fundamentally foreign to rural

34 István Pávai, *Hungarian Folk Dance Music of Transylvania* (Budapest: Hungarian Heritage House, MMA Kiadó, 2020).

inhabitants, and coming from different social backgrounds, this can often lead to communication challenges between the two parties.

Less experienced collectors often struggle to assess the communication style within a traditional village community, including which concepts the locals are familiar with and which they are not. It is also common for villagers to misunderstand the questions being asked; however, in an attempt to avoid embarrassment, they may provide answers that they believe will satisfy the collector. Furthermore, among professional musicians, there exists an unwritten rule that they never refuse a request from a client.[35] There are several instances of creative and skilled musicians who, due to financial incentives, have invented new tunes and names, as they were paid by the collector per tune.[36] In many cases, informants learn folklore expressions from collectors from Budapest, or they are told that the name of a dance or instrument should not be pronounced in the way they are accustomed to.[37] Consequently, during the next recording, we may hear the informant from the village using the revised terms introduced by the collector.

The collector's requests can also directly impact the way the performance is presented. It is important to document how the collector interacted with the respondent: for instance, did the collector request a specific tune, or did they allow the respondent to play or sing whatever came to mind? Or did the collector instruct the informant to perform an entire dance cycle? Did the informant play the tune once, or multiple times in succession? In fact, in the latter case, if a melody is repeatedly requested from the informant, the intricate ornamentation – which had previously varied from verse to verse in other recordings – may become simplified and even recorded in a uniform manner.

In this context, it is crucial to note that the informant's perceived environment does not always align with the circumstances and intentions of the collector, as perception is a continuous probabilistic judgment, a cognitive representation. In this process, the informant constructs their 'own reality' and may not necessarily perceive the true intentions of the collector. Frequently, the informant receives the data from the collector with a number of assumptions. In many cases, they are accustomed to the tunes that the collector is interested in and, as skilled musicians, they immediately perform what they believe to be 'old.' At times, the informant may place unconditional trust in the collector, assuming that the collector is more knowledgeable and educated than they are.

35 Pávai, *Az erdélyi magyar népi tánczene*, 340–341.

36 Ferenc Sebő, "Buházi, az erdélyi 'levágásos' prímás", lecture, Memorial Day for László Lajtha (February 16, 2013), HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities, Budapest (accessed on February 15, 2025), http://zti.hu/files/mza/docs/Lajtha50/Lajtha50_SeboFerenc_Buhazi_az_erdelyi_levagasos_primas.pdf.

37 Pávai, *Az erdélyi magyar népi tánczene*, 341.

However, it can also occur that the informant, sensing the collector's possible lack of expertise, becomes the target of the musicians' playful tricks.[38]

At the same time, however, the informant also has an interest in ensuring successful communication, so they may convey what they believe the collector will understand, rather than fully imposing their own way of thinking and expressions. It is important to recognize that, in addition to the informants, collectors themselves are also subject to various influences that may affect their behavior, and consequently, the effectiveness of the collection. Csenge Keresztény's reflections on dance collection are closely connected to this issue:

> *These films are not free from the effects of researcher preconceptions and minor or major interventions. At the same time, the researchers were also influenced by preconceptions in the field. Their way of thinking was also influenced by various factors, such as the scientific-theoretical training they had received, their narrow field of interest, or the socio-political conditions surrounding them, the technology available to them, and even the weather. All these factors have influenced the collection in some way, so it is also worthwhile to focus on the impact on the researchers, avoiding generalizations and simplifications as far as possible.*[39]

The transactional approach explained above is perhaps best understood in this sequence: the informant plays the tune that corresponds to its presuppositions, and the collector responds, but the collector's response changes the informant's behavior again. There appears to be little difference between this and the interactionist approach, but it is important to note that the effects are not unilateral: the collector's reactions do not only influence the informant, but the informant's responses also alter the collector's behavior, thereby establishing a reciprocity between the individual and their environment. Therefore, it is crucial not to focus solely on the informant when interpreting a musical manifestation or behavior, as understanding it requires considering the interaction between individuals and accounting for the cognitive strategies of the respondent in addition to the collector's request.

János Zerkula

János Zerkula (1927–2008) was a pivotal figure in the folk music tradition of the Gyimes region and the Hungarian dance house movement. His virtuoso violin skills, expressive performance, and enormous and diverse repertoire contributed to this. He was a Romani musicia, and although most Romani musician in the twentieth century did not rely solely on music for their livelihood,

38 Ibid, 379.

39 Csenge Keresztény, "Egy néptáncgyűjtő körút adatainak értelmezése: Martin György 1969-es erdélyi gyűjtőútjának feldolgozási lehetőségei", in *DiákKörKép 5: Tudományos diákköri írások a néprajz szegedi műhelyéből*, eds. Norbert Glässer, Gergely Takács, and Hegedűs Domokosné (Szeged: Szegedi Tudományegyetem BTK, Néprajzi és Kulturális Antropológiai Tanszék, Solymossy Sándor Egyesület, 2023), 61–83.

he, due to his blindness and inability to engage in other physical labor, supported himself and his family through his musical practice.[40]

Since the 1960s, many folk music researchers, and enthusiastic folk music lovers recorded him.[41] From this period onward, the number of recordings increased significantly; however, their ethnographic authenticity became questionable in many instances, as they were made in various locations, far removed from the informant's traditional environment. János Zerkula was the subject of an immeasurable amount of footage during his lifetime. The majority of the collections can be found in the HUN-REN Institute of Musicology databases and the House of Heritage in Budapest. Still, there are probably also numerous recordings in private collections that have not been included in any database. Finding and organizing these recordings is practically impossible and not relevant to the present research. János Zerkula has played in many non-traditional venues during the five decades he has been recorded. The collectors included not only folk music researchers and trained musicians, but also a large number of amateurs. I have divided his collections into three periods, based on who collected from him and under what circumstances, which I describe below.

Between 1960 and 1980, traditional village life still provided an opportunity to explore music in its original function. At this time, the violinist was recorded only in its traditional setting and mostly by trained folk music researchers or by people who were well-versed in the folk music tradition. According to the recordings of the archive of the Institute for Musicology, Budapest, the first collections with Zerkula were made in 1962.[42] An important milestone in the recording of music of Gyimes was the so-called *Gyimes sound* film made in 1980, which represented a great step forward in both folk music and folk dance research.[43] The film was recorded in Sötétpatak, in the barn of a dancer from Gyimes, Károly 'Kicsi Kóta' Blága. It is certainly significant for Zerkula's musical performance that the recordings were made with musicians who used to play along with him and with whom he made music to dance.

Between 1981 and 1990, the production of audiovisual recordings became more accessible, while the mobility of informants remained significantly restricted. After the rise of the dance house movement, many amateur collectors, including those who were driven by enthusiasm but lacked musical and

40 Most of the violinists in Gyimes were of Romani origin, where the term Romani refers to both their origin and their profession. For generations they had lived in the area as respected members of the community, passing the musical vocation from father to son, as most of the professional musicians themselves came from a musical family. Bálint Sárosi, "Hivatásos és nemhivatásos népzenészek", *Zenetudományi dolgozatok* 76 (1980): 81.

41 During this period Zoltán Kallós, György Martin, Ferenc Pesovár, László Gurka and Lajos Újvári recorded him.

42 This was an arranged collection conducted at the fiddler's home.

43 First film with sound from Gyimes (August 2, 1980). Collectors: Zoltán Kallós, Ildikó Németh, Gyula Pálfy, István Pávai, Zoltán Zsuráfszky.

ethnographic training or collecting experience, recorded him, in addition to folk music researchers. As a result, for example, the data in many collections may be inaccurate, or the recorded music, influenced by the collector's questions, may give an untrue picture of the musician's or region's repertoire.

From the 1990s onwards, after the political situation allowed the informants to reach beyond the national borders, Zerkula was taken to many places in Hungary and abroad to perform. In addition to his frequent performances on stage, he has also been involved in 'gathering' or rather performing situations in urban dance halls – together with dance hall musicians – quite outside the tradition. Many recordings were made, where the musicians playing with him, their traditional playing style, orchestral line-up, and melodic repertoire differ significantly from the music of Gyimes, and are different in terms of the authenticity of the material collected.

The Characteristics of János Zerkula's Violin Playing

The left hand of the Gyimes musicians is generally positioned in the second position, and during playing, the wrist consistently rests against the neck of the violin. This posture allows the hand to move freely, enabling the player to easily reach the notes in the first position, which is achieved by shifting the palm backward. Most of the melodies are played on the A and E strings, and thus, their performance can be executed within the first and second position system. However, if the melody requires it, the leader [*prímás*] may also use higher positions.[44] Differences can be observed among the Gyimes violinists regarding the number of fingers used in playing. For example, Zoltán Antal uses two fingers, Mihály Halmágyi typically uses three, while Zerkula employs all four fingers in his playing.[45]

Zerkula's bowing technique is characterized by dynamic, long strokes, often using the full length of the bow, even for sixteenth-note figurations, where almost half a bow length is used. Rather than using the wrist, the bow is guided from the forearm, which results in the separation of the notes without the need for the bow to jump. This corresponds to the *détaché* playing style in classical bow terminology, which László Lajtha also refers to in the case of the musicians from Kőrispatak.[46] His intonation fits the traditional Gyimes playing and singing style: the notes b' – h', c' – cis', f" – f#", g" – g#" are not only heard in the 'pure' pitch values that can be read in the score, but also the colorful range of microtonal intervals between these notes is present.[47]

44 Attila Mihó, "Egy régies hegedűjáték nyomai Erdélyben" (DLA diss., Liszt Academy of Music, 2021), 32.

45 Márta Virágvölgyi, "Beszélgetés Zerkula János, gyimesi prímással", *Folkszemle* (2013), (accessed on February 15, 2025), https://folkradio.hu/folkszemle/cikk/6/beszelgetes-zerkula-janos-gyimesi-primassal.

46 László Lajtha, *Kőrispataki gyűjtés* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó Vállalat, 1955).

47 Sárosi, "A gyimesi csángó hegedűstílus", 183.

There is little dynamic shading in Zerkula's violin playing, unless a special situational effect can be inferred from the given recording. Naturally, there are minimal dynamic differences in individual melodies – similar to singing, following the natural dynamics, higher notes are slightly more prominent – but these are not significant in terms of analyzing the performance style and are not intentional dynamic changes. In terms of tempo choice, a distinction must be made between recordings made for functional and non-functional purposes, as in the former case, the dance's basic tempo limits the violinist's freedom to choose the tempo. However, this becomes particularly significant when comparing recordings made in different collection situations.

Regarding variations, it can be said that when playing in his familiar environment, even the same melody or the same verse will not be played exactly the same way twice in succession. In the case of plaintive song, he varies the ornaments on the melody notes, and in certain dance melodies, both ornamentation formulas and figurations are present in his playing. In some genres, the sixteenth-note, varied figurations come to the forefront (for example, in the *félolához* and *sebes magyaros*).

The Impact of Recording Situations on János Zerkula's Performance Style

In the final section of my study, I will first outline the recording situations in which Zerkula appeared during his lifetime, then I will support this with a few case studies demonstrating the impact of these situations on his performance style. I can categorize these situations as follows: arranged recording in his own environment with other musicians, arranged recording outside his own environment with musicians he was not accustomed to playing with, film recording, studio recording, stage performance with familiar musicians, with musicians he was not accustomed to playing with, or even with musicians from different genres.

Table 1: Physical and social environmental variables in three collections arranged in Zerkula's own home

Recordings in his own environment with a familiar musical formation[48]			
Physical environmental variables		*Social environmental variables*	
space	own home	*present individuals*	collector(s)
proximity-distance	small room, crowded space		
objects	microphones of various sizes and numbers	*fellow musicians*	Regina Fikó (*gardon*)

48 Violin: Zerkula János, gardon: Regina Fikó. Collectors: István Pávai. Recording: 6. 9. 1991; 16. 10. 1993; 16. 12. 1995, Gyimesközéplok. HH_DVD_PI_VHS_M_115a; PI_VHS_S_028; PI_VHS_M80.

In the recordings made with Zerkula in his own home environment, if he plays alone or with his wife, no significant deviation in performance style can be observed from the manner of performance he is accustomed to in functional situations. However, even in these situations, it is important to highlight certain circumstances that may influence his performance.

István Pávai recorded Zerkula several times using a video camera in the violinist's home, for example, in 1991, 1993, and 1995. In the segments of these recordings that I have examined, Zerkula plays with his wife, so there is no significant difference in social factors between the three recordings, considering that the collector is the same in all cases.[49] In the confined space, there is a microphone in front of the violinist in all three recordings; chronologically, the first one has a ceiling-hung microphone, the second one has a stand-mounted microphone, and the third one has two stand-mounted microphones (for stereo recording). In the 1991 recording, it is not apparent that Zerkula perceives the microphone (although he is obviously aware of its presence), but in the other two recordings, several signs suggest that the presence of the equipment has an impact on him. In the 1993 video, for example, it is visible that Pávai adjusts the microphone several times and then asks the violinist to turn towards it, and as a result, Zerkula adjusts his playing accordingly, several times aligning with the microphone. In the third recording, with two microphones, his movement while playing becomes noticeably more restricted due to the recording equipment; his posture and bow technique become more rigid and stilted compared to the previous two recordings.

Even in collections made under the same circumstances, it is important to track the entire process of the recordings, as it is possible that after a long and exhausting collection, the informant may become fatigued, and the fatigue, by its nature, will affect his playing style. This phenomenon can be clearly observed in Pávai's 1993 collection, where at 01:37:17, Zerkula sighs deeply to indicate that he is tired, and then requests a break. After the rest, his playing of the *kettős jártatója* shows less ornamentation and variation, with a less energetic performance, at a somewhat slower tempo compared to his usual playing, which is entirely attributable to the violinist's physical condition.

An important aspect in Pávai's collections is that in every case, he asks Zerkula to play the dances at the same tempo and duration as they would in a dance party. Furthermore, in all three collections, the non-verbal communication with his wife is noteworthy. While this may seem fundamental, it only occurs with musicians who are accustomed to playing together and have a good relationship with each other.

49 I have no knowledge of any other individuals present in the house, but knowing the size of Zerkula's kitchen, where the recordings took place, no more than one or two additional people could have been present besides the collector.

Throughout his life, János Zerkula appeared on numerous album and film recordings. Although the primary goal of most of these recordings was to document the violinist's traditional playing style, there are also releases in which he had to perform in unfamiliar musical formations. For example, in 2003, he was featured with the Szászcsávás band, whose traditional playing style, as well as their ensemble setup and repertoire, differ significantly from the Gyimes style. As a result, the musical and ethnographic authenticity of the recording is also problematic. Although the producers of the album state that it was not their intention to alter the violinist's traditional playing style, given that virtually every element of the recording differs from the traditional, the modification of his performance style was inevitable.[50]

Table 2: Physical and social environmental variables in the CD recording Zerkula János and the Szászcsávás band

Playing with other musicians outside of his own environment Zerkula János and the Szászcsávás band[51]			
Physical environmental variables		*Social environmental variables*	
space	own home	*present individuals*	collector(s), technical staff
proximity-distance	in the case of the examined melody, open space		
objects	camera	*fellow musicians*	

One of the tracks on the album, starting with the lyrics *Sír a szemem, hull a könnyem*, features a descending pentatonic melody in octaves, which is present in most of the collections made with him (see figure 1).

This plaintive song also appears in an other situation that significantly deviates from the traditional context, namely in a film recording made in 1994. Although Zerkula, who lost his sight due to a childhood accident, could not see the camera, the awareness that a film recording was being

50 "These performances are usually followed by dance houses, during which the musicians present, coming from various places, are eager to form improvised ensembles, thus entertaining themselves and their audience. As a result, János Zerkula made many new acquaintances, and during frequent meetings, he had the opportunity to play with many of them repeatedly. This album is unusual because in Gyimes, accompaniment is not typical; the violin is usually accompanied by a percussion instrument, the *gardon*. Perhaps this is why situations where contra, double bass, or cimbalom support the violin are particularly interesting to Zerkula. Playing together brought him great joy, and it became evident during the recordings that, as a true Romani violinist, he easily 'conducts' his impromptu band. However, the release of the album does not mean that we intended to alter Zerkula's natural, authentic music or encourage him to play Gyimes music with orchestral accompaniment in the future. Our goal was simply to show Zerkula this side of him as well." János Zerkula, *Zerkula János és a Szászcsávásiak*, with Balogh Kálmán and Vizeli Balázs, audio CD, FECD 010 (Budapest: Folk Európa, 2003).

51 Zerkula, *Zerkula János és a Szászcsávásiak*.

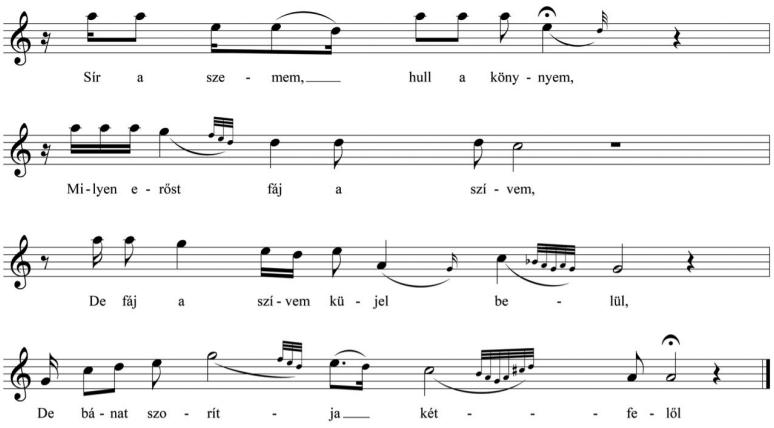

Figure 1: The song *Sír a szemem, hull a könnyem*.

made may have encouraged him to adopt a more noticeable, non-traditional performance style.

Table 3: Physical and social environmental variables in recording of the portrait film about Zerkula

Film recording in his own environment **"A szívben még megvan..."** ***A portrait film about János Zerkula***[52]			
Physical environmental variables		*Social environmental variables*	
space	studio	*present individuals*	collector(s), technical staff
proximity-distance	Exactly unknown, presumably a small space		
objects	recording equipment	*fellow musicians*	Szászcsávás band, Balázs Vizeli

I compare the two recordings made in unusual situations with two recordings made in the informant's traditional environment, one of which was recorded in 1962, when Zerkula was only 36 years old, and the second in 1977, during a collection also arranged in his home. The first piece of data is also interesting in that, at that time, the informant was not yet accustomed to the visits of collectors.

52 Béla Halmos and György Szomjas, "A szívben még megvan", János Zerkula, portrait film (Budapest: Goëss Film, 1994).

Table 4: Collection data of the examined plaintive song recordings

Recording date	Location	Collector	Collecting situation	Musicians
2. 5. 1962	Gyimesközéplok	Zoltán Kallós	Organized collection	János Zerkula
19. 7. 1977	Gyimesközéplok	István Pávai	Organized collection	János Zerkula
1994	Gyimesközéplok	Béla Halmos	Film shoot (Halmos–Szomjas 1994)	János Zerkula
June, 2003	Budapest	Róbert Kerényi	CD recording (Zerkula 2003)	János Zerkula, Szászcsávás band, Balázs Vizeli

When analyzing the recordings, I followed the criteria: dynamics, tempo choice, ornamentation, as well as variations and their frequency of occurrence. Since the vocal performance in terms of ornamentation and variations changed minimally, and the noticeable changes are also present in the violin playing, I will omit the transcription of the vocal line from now on, but will refer to it where necessary.

When examining the plaintive song, the most striking aspect is the choice of tempo, and in addition, timbre and dynamics are also easily perceptible. The tempo in the case of a *parlando-rubato* performance of a plaintive song is, of course, not exactly measurable, but approximate values are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Tempo of the recordings of the examined plaintive song

Recording date	Tempo
1. 1962	cca. Œ=106
2. 1977	cca. Œ=112
3. 1994	cca. Œ=110
4. 2003	cca. Œ=84

The reason for the difference in tempo may be, among other things, a phenomenon called "string parlando" by Bálint Sárosi, one of the characteristics of which is that even in strophes without vocals, the musician plays as if he were "telling" the text.[53] In the version of the CD recording, the plaintive song was played without singing, which could be motivated by several reasons. On one hand, the orchestral accompaniment could have also acted as a limitation for the

53 Sárosi, "A gyimesi csángó hegedűstílus", 178.

performer, since he may have felt that he had to 'conduct' it; or maybe they could have asked him not to sing in this track. Accordingly, the tempo is quite slow, the performance is much more drawn out than usual, and there is an increased slowing down in unusual places even within some verses of the plaintive song.

Since dynamic differences are not typically a defining characteristic of Hungarian folk music, their more prominent presence is certainly notable. The first two recordings, made during the first two collections, show minimal dynamic shading. In contrast, the 1994 film footage, likely as a result of the performance context, reveals a significantly greater use of dynamic nuance. The most notable instances are in the 3rd line of the 1st and 2nd verses, the 1st line of the 3rd verse, and the 3rd line of the 4th verse. In these passages, an unusual dynamic play can be heard compared to the other plaintive song recordings: the line begin in piano, and by the end of the line, it reaches the volume at which he usually sings and plays the violin.

Regarding the ornaments, it can generally be said that the same ornamentation formulas can be discovered on all recordings, as is generally typical in the Hungarian folk music tradition. Bálint Sárosi classifies the ornamentation of the violin style of the Gyimes region into the five categories: opening, circumscribing, underlining, bridging, and closing formulas.[54] An interesting feature of Zerkula's performance lies in the opening formula: in the case of the line beginnings, Zerkula usually either uses no upbeat at all or plays a three-note upbeat preceding the melody note. In the 2003 CD recording, however, we can hear the use of multiphonic upbeats. Already before the opening note of the first stanza, he reaches the melody-starting note via a scale spanning an octave, and in the following stanzas, similarly extensive upbeats appear in several places.

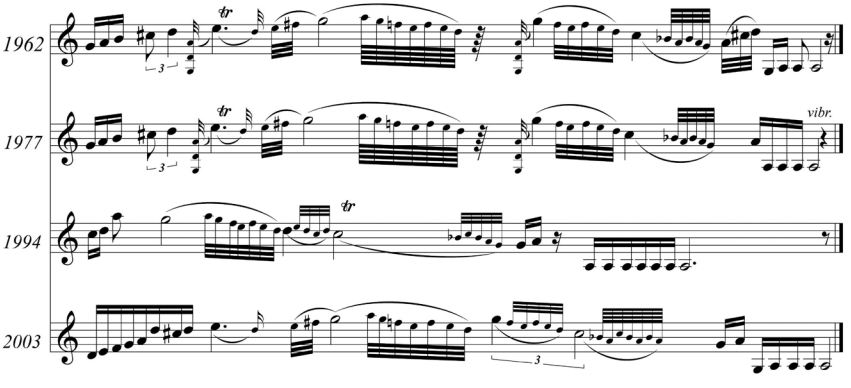

Figure 2: Examples of the opening formula.

54 Ibid., 176–183.

An example of the closing formulas can be found at the end of lines and the extent of their decoration and repetition. This formula is generally typical in the violin playing of the Gyimes region; it usually lasts as long as the sung melodic line fades. Among the examined recordings, the CD recording also stands out in this respect, where we can hear the ornament type extended on the final note of the second line of each strophe.

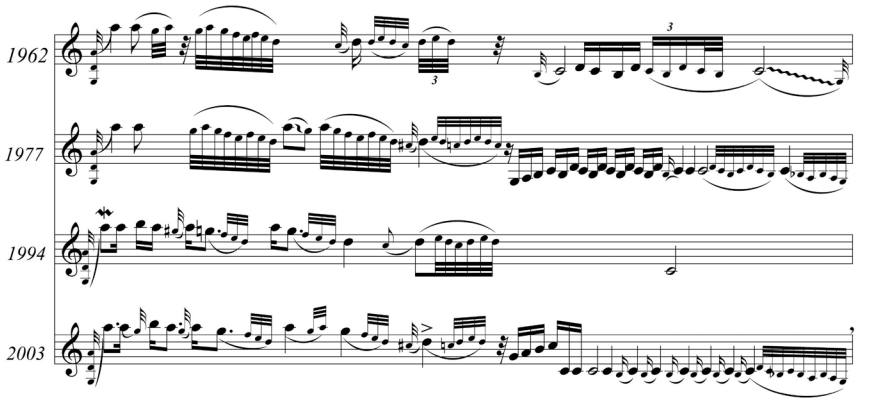

Figure 3: Examples of the closing formula.

The use of this ornament type is restrained in other recordings of the melody as well, its tempo is vigorous, and it does not appear in every strophe, so the phenomenon can be considered a situational effect.

In certain collecting situations, we can also observe that if a melody is requested from the informant many times in a row, then the rich decorations that had previously varied from verse to verse in other recordings become poorer, and even become fixed in one way. Perhaps this also happened during the film recording from 1994, when Zerkula presumably had to play the melody many times in a row. In the recording, the decorations of the violin part remain practically unchanged for all strophes. In the first two recordings I examined, the strophes were richly varied.

In all but one of the recordings, the violin solo begins with a solo verse from the main note, while at the entrance of the vocal part the violin moves down an octave to take over the role of accompanist. In the 1994 film version, this solo violin stanza was presumably only omitted because of editing. The recording with the Szászcsávás band shows a unique variation of this practice: here the melody is not sung, but the second verse is played an octave lower on the violin as if the vocal part were present. Here, the violin took over the accompanying function. The structure is also unusual: the suffix is repeated from the second verse onwards. This occurs only when the text requires it, but it is never heard

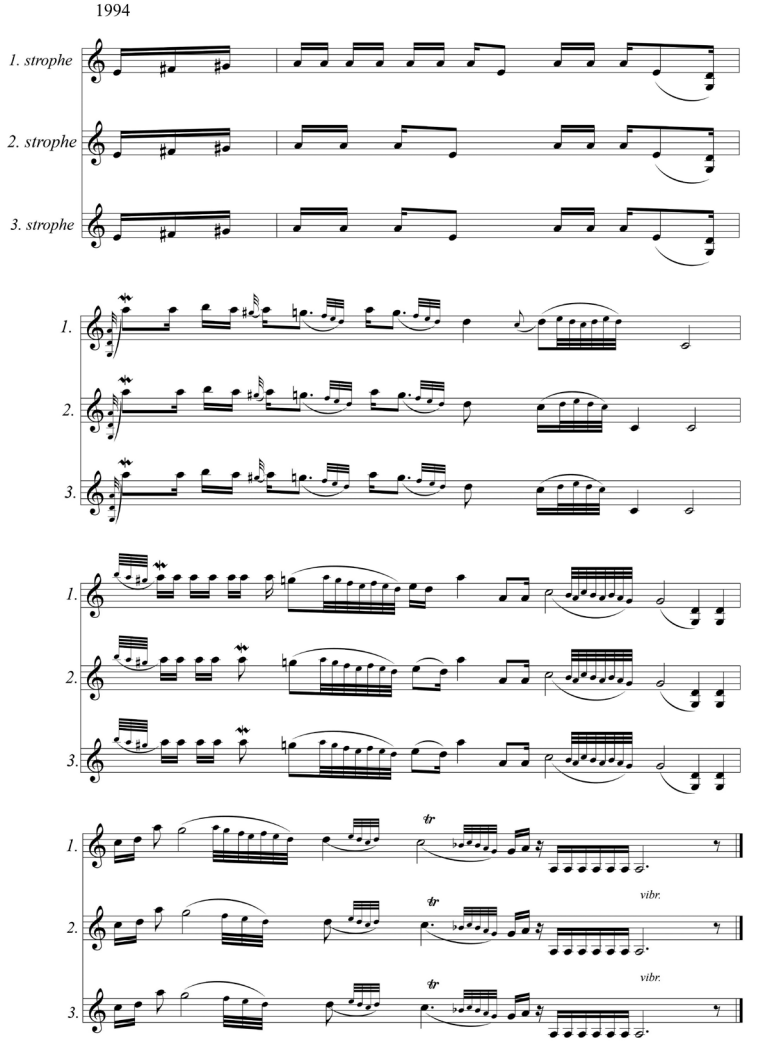

Figure 4: Unaltered ornamentation in the violin part from the 1994 film recording.

in recordings of this plaintive song on other occasions so that it can be seen as a situational effect.

Table 6: Physical and social environmental variables in the concert of Zerkula and Big Lucky Carter

Stage performance with musicians from outside the genre János Zerkula and Big Lucky Carter[55]			
Physical environmental variables		*Social environmental variables*	
space	basement room	*present individuals*	collector(s), dancers, audience
proximity-distance	crowded space		
objects	camera	*fellow musicians*	Big Lucky Carter, Gizella Tankó

János Zerkula's performance in 2001 with Big Lucky Carter, a blues guitarist and vocalist, represents a unique stage occurrence. The concert began with the two musicians performing separately, later joining together to play as a duo. The event took place in a crowded cellar, with the two musicians seated right next to each other while revival dancers were just 1-2 meters away from them. This recording presents an interesting blend of both traditional and non-traditional performance practices, as the musicians are playing in a setting far removed from their usual environment, yet still accompanying dancers. However, these dancers are not from Gyimes. By 2001, Zerkula had already found himself in similar situations numerous times, and this experience is reflected in how easily he engages with the audience. His anecdotes are humorous, at times almost intentionally dramatic, and they effectively maintain the audience's attention. The selection of lyrics and delivery of his songs further demonstrate his ability to connect with the listeners. Many of the phenomena analyzed in previous recordings can be observed here as well.

In the first example, the song *Babám, ha te Ricin túlmész...* (33:00), we notice that Zerkula employs dynamic shading techniques that are not typical of Hungarian folk music. In the second line of the second verse (34:25), for instance, he sings piano, and in the second line of the fifth verse (35:00), he emphasizes certain melody notes, singing them louder. The violinist-singer building up, where the solo violin and singing alternate, can also be observed, though it differs from the usual tradition: Zerkula repeats the second two lines of the first verse, and in the final stanza, only half of the melody is played, beginning with the first part.

In the case of the *héjsza* (a type of traditional dance), although certain components of the performance remain consistent, Zerkula adapts his playing to the specific situation. To ensure better audibility of the violin in the small, crowded space, he uses more double stops and open strings. This phenomenon,

55 Mediawave International Film Festival, 2001. Contributors: János Zerkula, Gizella Tankó. The concert also featured: Big Lucky Carter, blues guitarist-vocalist. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebxk0Q07-yY&t=1668s (last visited on February 17, 2025).

however, is more a response to the acoustics of the performance space rather than the non-traditional setting itself.

At the end of the concert, the two musicians played together. Zerkula initially accompanied Big Lucky Carter's guitar solo with chords, but realizing that these chords did not fit with the melody, he laughed and continued. Later, Zerkula, after hearing the guitar, improvises a Hungarian-style solo, which again does not fit with the Gyimesi melody. The two musicians' performance can be seen as an interesting experiment, but it is important to note that there is no true collaboration between them. Instead, they play alongside each other rather than together. This experiment reflects the folk revival musicians' approach, which views tradition as something that needs to be transmitted to audiences in a modern form, often creating something 'new' and 'different' by involving traditional musicians.

This phenomenon also has an ideological background, which can be seen in a comment attached to the video: "Wow, this is really good!!! Yes, indeed, music connects us. At first, one might think that Blues and Hungarian folk music don't mix. But as we can see and hear, that is not the case :) I believe both are rooted in the past, providing a foundation for the tree of musical diversity or its fruits."

Conclusions

Zerkula János's performance style has been recorded in a variety of different contexts throughout his life, with the physical and social environmental variables surrounding him affecting his playing to varying degrees. My research reveals that these factors did not influence all components of his performance equally. Certain phenomena, such as tempo variations, affected specific aspects of his playing, while others led to changes in ornamentation or a reduced his willingness to introduce variations. The findings also indicate which factors, according to the available collections, had the greatest and least influence on Zerkula's performance style. However, it is important to note that this classification represents only a general tendency, and in some cases, exceptions may occur. Additionally, for the sake of clarity, the physical and social environmental variables are discussed separately, although in practice they are always interconnected and mutually influential.

According to my observations, Zerkula's performance style is primarily influenced by social variables rather than physical factors. In other words, his performance is mainly determined by whether he is playing in a functional or non-functional context, whether he is accompanying dance, and who his musical partner is. For example, the manner in which he performs accompaniment for dance on stage (unless it is a choreographed performance) essentially does not differ from the dance accompaniment performed within the framework

of a recording in traditional situation. On the other hand, the collector's identity, expertise, and relationship with Zerkula have a much greater influence on the violinist's repertoire than on his actual performance style. With all these considerations in mind, it is crucial in the post-evaluation of a collection that future generations do not receive misleading information about the melodies used in the tradition, their application, the sequence of dances, or the ensemble setup. This responsibility undoubtedly falls on the collector.

The physical environment, such as the location of the collection, the objects surrounding the violinist, as well as the perception of proximity and distance, often influences the violinist's playing style. However, this effect plays a secondary role when compared to social factors. An example of this can be found in the three collections recorded by István Pávai in the informant's own environment, where, despite the microphones somewhat limiting the violinist's movement, no significant differences in performance style can be detected simply by listening to the recordings.

Beyond physical and social variables, temporal factors can also play an important role. This perspective can be observed in the previously mentioned Pávai collections, where Zerkula plays a double jig, recorded closer to the end of the collection, more slowly and with simpler ornamentation, likely due to fatigue. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the 1994 film footage, where the repeated performance of the plaintive song results in repeated, fixed forms of ornamentation.

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SUMMARY

János Zerkula (1927–2008) was a key figure in the folk music of the Gyimes region and an emblematic personality of the Hungarian dance house movement. His highly expressive violin playing, unique performance style, and extraordinarily rich and diverse repertoire made him one of the most significant representatives of folk music. From the 1960s onwards, numerous folk music researchers and devoted amateurs recorded him, resulting in a large body of sound recordings. However, the ethnographic authenticity of many of these recordings is debatable, as they were often made in contexts far removed from traditional community settings – including urban environments, or staged situations designed for documentation or presentation.

My research critically examines these recordings, focusing not only on their musical content but also on the circumstances of their creation. In addition to the analytical review of accessible musical materials, I consider interviews, field notes, and other textual sources to reconstruct the conditions of the recordings and to better understand how these influenced Zerkula's performance style. The central question of the study is how various recording contexts – shaped by the presence of collectors, technical equipment, and expectations from outside the local community – may have altered the way folk music was performed and transmitted.

This research lies at the intersection of ethnomusicology and environmental psychology, offering an interdisciplinary perspective on how space, presence, and interpersonal dynamics affect musical behavior. While the study focuses on the stylistic features of a single performer, it also highlights broader methodological issues in folk music research. In particular, it calls attention to the need for a more critical approach to archival recordings and encourages researchers to consider the circumstances under which folk music was collected. By doing so, it opens up new possibilities for interpreting source materials and understanding the ways in which tradition is mediated, reshaped, and preserved through the act of documentation.

POVZETEK

Sprememba sloga izvajanja pri godcu iz regije Gyimes glede na okoliščine zbiranja

János Zerkula (1927–2008) je bil ključna osebnost ljudske glasbe v regiji Gyimes in simbolna osebnost madžarskega gibanja *plesna hiša*. Zaradi močno izraznega igranja violine, edinstvenega sloga izvajanja ter izjemno bogatega in raznolikega repertoarja je postal eden najpomembnejših predstavnikov ljudske glasbe. Od 60. let 20. stoletja dalje so ga snemali številni raziskovalci ljudske glasbe in predani amaterji, kar je privedlo do nastanka obsežnega zvočnega arhiva. Vendar je etnografska avtentičnost mnogih med temi posnetki sporna, saj so bili pogosto posneti v okoljih, ki so bila daleč od tradicionalnih skupnostnih okoliščin – vključno z urbanimi okolji ali insceniranimi situacijami, namenjenimi dokumentiranju ali predstavitvi.

Pričujoča raziskava kritično preučuje te posnetke, pri čemer se ne osredotoča le na njihovo glasbeno vsebino, ampak tudi na okoliščine njihovega nastanka. Poleg analitičnega pregleda dostopnih glasbenih gradiv upoštevam tudi intervjuje, terenske zapiske in druge tekstovne vire, da bi rekonstruirala pogoje snemanja in bolje razumela, kako so ti vplivali na Zerkulov izvedbeni slog. Osrednje vprašanje študije je, kako bi lahko različni konteksti snemanja – oblikovani s prisotnostjo zbiralcev, tehnično opremo in pričakovanji zunaj lokalne skupnosti – spremenili način izvajanja in prenašanja ljudske glasbe.

Ta raziskava se nahaja na stičišču etnomuzikologije in okoljske psihologije ter ponuja interdisciplinarni pogled na to, kako prostor, prisotnost in medosebna dinamika vplivajo na glasbeno vedenje. Čeprav se študija osredotoča na stilistične značilnosti posameznega izvajalca, poudarja tudi širša metodološka vprašanja pri raziskovanju ljudske glasbe. Zlasti opozarja na potrebo po bolj kritičnem pristopu k arhivskim posnetkom in spodbuja raziskovalce, da upoštevajo okoliščine, v katerih je bila ljudska glasba zbrana. S tem odpira nove možnosti za interpretacijo izvornih virov in razumevanje načinov, kako se tradicija posreduje, preoblikuje in ohranja skozi dokumentiranje.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

VERONIKA PÁSKU (pasku.veronika@abtk.hu) is a PhD candidate in ethnomusicology whose research focuses on Hungarian folk music, with special attention to performance style and individual expression in the Gyimes region. Her dissertation examines how recording contexts influence musical performance, exploring issues such as stylistic adaptation, self-presentation, and the interaction between performers and collectors. Alongside her scholarly work, she is a trained folk singer and holds a degree in folk music performance from the Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. This dual perspective as both performer and researcher informs her approach to folk music. She works as a research assistant at the Institute for Musicology, contributing to archival and analytical projects related to Hungarian folk music.

O AVTORICI

VERONIKA PÁSKU (pasku.veronika@abtk.hu) je doktorska kandidatka na področju etnomuzikologije, ki se pri svojem raziskovalnem delu osredotoča na madžarsko ljudsko glasbo, s posebnim poudarkom na izvajalskem slogu in individualnem izražanju v regiji Gyimes. V svoji doktorski disertaciji preučuje, kako snemalni kontekst vpliva na glasbeno izvedbo, pri čemer raziskuje vprašanja, kot so stilistična prilagoditev, samopredstavitev in interakcija med izvajalci in zbiralci. Poleg znanstvenega dela je izšolana ljudska pevka in ima diplomo iz ljudskega glasbenega izvajanja z Lisztove akademije za glasbo v Budimpešti. Ta dvojna perspektiva izvajalke in raziskovalke vpliva na njen pristop k ljudski glasbi. Deluje kot raziskovalna asistentka na Inštitutu za muzikologijo, kjer sodeluje pri arhivskih in analitičnih projektih, povezanih z madžarsko ljudsko glasbo.

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Cultural Continuity and Transition: Adapting the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group to Modern Socio-cultural Contexts

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the adaptation of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group [侗族大歌] to modern socio-cultural challenges using the 'music sustainability' framework. It examines tradition bearers in Beijing, university integration, and government efforts, highlighting both challenges and revitalization, offering models for traditional culture's adaptation in contemporary society.

Keywords: Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group, cultural continuity and transition, dissemination methods, adaptation strategies, modern society

IZVLEČEK

Ta članek raziskuje prilagajanje *velike pesmi*, načina petja etnične skupine Dong [侗族大歌] sodobnim družbenim in kulturnim izzivom z uporabo okvira 'trajnosti glasbe'. Preučuje nosilce tradicije v Pekingu, integracijo univerz in prizadevanja vlade, poudarja izzive in oživitev ter ponuja modele za prilagajanje tradicionalne kulture sodobni družbi.

Ključne besede: *velika pesem* etnične skupine Dong, kulturna kontinuiteta in prehod, metode širjenja, strategije prilagajanja, sodobna družba

Introduction

The Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group is a distinct form of multipart singing tradition among the Dong people of China. Originating in the Dong-inhabited regions of Guizhou [贵州], Hunan [湖南], and Guangxi [广西] provinces, it is renowned for its complex musical harmonic structure and oral transmission. As an integral part of Dong cultural heritage, the Grand Song has historically functioned as both an artistic practice and a medium for social cohesion and knowledge transmission. The saying among the Dong: "Food nourishes the body, and song nourishes the soul," ["饭养命，歌养心"] reflects its deep-rooted cultural significance.

However, as globalization, urbanization, and shifting socio-cultural dynamics reshape traditional lifestyles, the Grand Song faces critical challenges in its preservation and transmission. Government policies, educational initiatives, and international recognition, including its inscription on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, have contributed to its continued visibility. Nevertheless, the decline of the Dong language and changes in performance contexts present ongoing obstacles in this processes.

This study employs the theoretical framework of music sustainability, proposed by Chinese scholars (mentioned in the next section), to examine the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group and its adaptation to contemporary socio-cultural environments. It focuses on the dynamics of cultural continuity and transition. Specifically, the study explores Grand Song bearers living in Beijing with a professional background in ethnomusicology, and working in leading national media. Additionally, the study examines cases of the Grand Song being integrated into professional university education. Through these cases, the research analyses adaptation strategies in modern society, offering valuable insights and references for its preservation and development.

Although the concept of folk music revival has not yet been explicitly articulated in China, in recent years, the government, academia, and various sectors of society have undertaken a series of proactive measures aimed at protecting and reviving the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group. These efforts encompass policy support, the effective integration of formal and vocational education systems, active participation from community and social organizations, and the effective use of modern communication tools. In the new socio-cultural environment, these comprehensive initiatives have not only revitalized the Grand Song, promoted its heritage and adaption, but also provided valuable models for the preservation and transmission of other traditional cultures. This series of actions demonstrates China's strong commitment to promoting the sustainability of folk music in the context of globalization. Naturally, it is inevitable that resistance and challenges arise during this process, and certain drawbacks

may even emerge. However, the efforts of the state, scholars, and individuals are collectively advancing towards a direction they consider beneficial, contributing to the future of the Grand Song and other traditional cultures.

The Challenges Facing the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group

The loss of the Dong language represents a major challenge currently faced by the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group, with multifaceted causes. First, the younger generation is increasingly migrating from villages to urban areas, losing the opportunity to grow up in a Dong language environment, thereby weakening their linguistic foundation. Second, with the increasing openness of marriage choices among the Dong community, many Dong people marry spouses who do not speak the Dong language, resulting in a lack of a Dong language environment at home for their descendants. This results in a break in the continuity of Dong language transmission. Furthermore, while the prevalence of Mandarin education ensures that children receive a good education, it also virtually disconnects them from the Dong language in the educational system, accelerating the erosion of the Dong language. These factors collectively result in a sharp decline in the use of the Dong language among the younger generation. The lyrics, tunes, and performance styles of the Grand Song are deeply rooted in the Dong language. As the language declines, the younger generation finds it difficult to understand and learn the essence of the Grand Song, posing severe challenges to its transmission.

Despite government support through policies like the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law (2011) and educational integration, the Grand Song faces critical issues, including limitations on official recognition of tradition bearers and financial constraints in preservation efforts. For instance, there are restrictions regarding the identification of tradition bearers, including a rule prohibiting them from being employed within the national system. This rule prevents many individuals who meet the criteria for tradition bearers from receiving official recognition due to their employment, with Wu Chuanjuan and her mother serving as prime examples. They are employed by the national media and the local government, respectively, which disqualifies them from being officially recognized as bearers. While the intent behind this practice might be to provide more economic support to bearers who are unstable in their employment or have low incomes, it also presents certain inconsistencies. Additionally, the monthly sponsorship amount received by officially recognized traditional bearers recognized as song masters is minimal; however, being a song master does help them engage in some commercial performances to earn additional income. In the traditional Grand Song system, the status of song masters is paramount; they not only serve as leaders but also as educators and mediators, often resolving interpersonal conflicts, guiding community rituals,

and preserving oral histories that reinforce social cohesion. However, these roles are unpaid, with honour being more significant than economic benefits. As society transforms, the challenges faced by song masters become increasingly apparent, and the government's support funds may not fully sustain their livelihoods. Despite China being a populous developing nation with many ethnic groups and having made significant efforts to protect traditional culture, this dilemma still needs to be resolved.

Theoretical Framework: Music Sustainability Origins and Multidimensional Perspectives of Music Sustainability Theory

The theory of music sustainability primarily integrates concepts of cultural preservation and ecological conservation, forming a comprehensive theoretical framework. This theory aims to address the challenges faced by traditional music cultures in the processes of globalization, such as cultural homogenization, market-driven transformations and modernization, including technological advancements and shifts in social values. It has gradually taken shape through interdisciplinary research spanning cultural heritage preservation, ecology, and sociology. In the latter half of the twentieth century, with growing attention to environmental conservation, the theory of ecological sustainability began to emerge. Specifically, the concept of sustainable development, introduced in the 1987 Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future,*[1] emphasizes meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The theory of music sustainability draws on this idea, applying it to the cultural domain by emphasizing the preservation of traditional music cultures while ensuring their continuous transformation in modern society. The *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, proposed by UNESCO in 2003, has significantly advanced the protection of intangible cultural heritage worldwide. The theory of music sustainability incorporates the principles of this convention, recognizing the importance of traditional music cultures as intangible cultural heritage and emphasizing the need for their protection and transmission in contemporary society.

In the field of ethnomusicology, numerous scholars have applied and developed theories of musical sustainability. For example, in *Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures: An Ecological Perspective*, a collection of essays edited by Huib Schippers and Catherine Grant,[2] scholars from around the world propose a framework for music sustainability based on an ecological perspective. While this approach shares similarities with the Chinese concept of musical sustainability

1 World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford University Press, 1987), 41.

2 Huib Schippers and Catherine Grant, eds., *Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures: An Ecological Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

in its emphasis on ecology, it differs in its theoretical orientation and implementation strategies. Schippers and Grant advocate for a dynamic, systems-based approach that involves multiple stakeholders, viewing sustainability as an adaptive and participatory process, whereas the Chinese perspective often prioritizes cultural heritage preservation through government-led initiatives and policy interventions. In particular, scholars focus on how to ensure that traditional music cultures maintain their sustainability and vitality in the context of modern society through innovative educational approaches and cultural policies. For example, in the collection of essays edited by Timothy J. Cooley, *Cultural Sustainabilities: Music, Media, Language, Advocacy*[3] scholars illustrate through various cases that music, as a valuable cultural resource, needs to be promoted through government policy, education, and community participation. The book emphasizes the interaction between music and various cultural and social practices.

In China, scholars have also focused on this theory, offering their own insights. Guan Jianhua was among the first Chinese musicologists to apply the concept of sustainable development. In his article "Global Cultural Development and Chinese Music Education" he introduced the theory of sustainable development in his discussion of ecological civilization and music education, but he did not address the issue of traditional music preservation.[4] Following this, it is important to note that his discussion of ecological civilization emphasizes the interconnectedness between environmental consciousness and cultural sustainability, while his perspective on music education highlights the need to integrate ecological awareness into curricula to cultivate a deeper appreciation for the long-term viability of traditional music practices.

In 2001, Cai Jizhou published the article "Sustainable Development: A New Topic in Chinese Musicology", in which he explicitly proposed that "cultural ecological sustainability involves equal dialogue, harmonious coexistence, and pluralistic coexistence of various cultures from ancient to modern times and from China to the world".[5] He further elaborated on this idea in his 2003 article, "The Ecosystem of Traditional Chinese Music and Its Sustainable Development".[6] This article reviewed changes in the ecological environment of Chinese traditional music throughout different historical periods and pointed out that the fundamental reason for the crisis lies in the transformation of its ecological environment, particularly the disruptions caused by urbanization,

3 Timothy J. Cooley (ed.), *Cultural Sustainabilities: Music, Media, Language, Advocacy* (University of Illinois Press, 2019).

4 Jizhou Cai, "The Ecosystem of Traditional Chinese Music and Its Sustainable Development", *Chinese Music*, no. 2 (2003): 16.

5 "文化生态上的'可持续发展'是古今中外各种文化之间的平等对话、协调相处和多元共存". Jizhou Cai, "Sustainable Development: A New Topic in Chinese Musicology", *Huangzhong* (Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music), no. 1 (2001): 14–15.

6 Cai, "The Ecosystem of Traditional Chinese Music and Its Sustainable Development", 16.

globalization, and shifts in cultural policies and the 'imbalance' in the development of Chinese music culture. Thus, he emphasized that the protection and sustainability of traditional music must be integrated into the broader system of contemporary musical culture, adopting a comprehensive governance approach from an ecological system perspective to achieve sustainability. This approach is aimed not only at protecting traditional music itself but also at preserving cultural diversity and the sustainability of human cultural heritage.

In summary, the theory of music sustainability requires an interdisciplinary foundation, incorporating ideas and practices from fields such as ecology, sociology, and anthropology. It aims to address the challenges of transmitting and adapting traditional musical cultures in the context of globalization, with different countries placing varying emphases. Chinese scholars such as Tian Qing, Qiao Jianzhong, and Cai Jizhou, have particularly emphasized the importance of preserving traditional music culture alongside its sustainable development in modern society, advocating for a dynamic balance between the ecological environment and musical transformations, where traditional music adapts to contemporary contexts while retaining its core cultural values. This balance involves acknowledging the inevitability of musical transformation due to globalization, technological advancements, and shifting cultural landscapes, while ensuring that these changes do not lead to the erosion of cultural identity.

In addition, they emphasize that maintaining cultural diversity requires an open yet cautious approach to innovation, integrating new influences without compromising the fundamental essence of traditional musical expression. Through active research and promotion, these scholarly perspectives have demonstrated significant value and potential applications in ensuring the continuity and transformation of traditional musical cultures, such as the Grand Song of the Dong ethnic group, in the contemporary era.

Therefore, this article adopts this theoretical framework, focusing on the impact of individual efforts and higher professional education on the traditional culture of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group. It analyses the crucial role of cultural continuity and transition in adapting to contemporary socio-cultural contexts.

Interpreting Cultural Continuity and Transition through Music Sustainability Theory

The theory of music sustainability, as developed by scholars such as Huib Schippers and Catherine Grant, offers an analytical framework for a better understanding of the complex issues of cultural continuity and transition.[7] This theory suggests that while socio-cultural contexts show adaptability and development, music culture must also maintain continuity over time by allowing

7 Schippers and Grant, *Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures*, 2016.

selective changes that ensure its preservation. The crucial question, however, lies in determining what kind of changes should be permitted, to what extent transformation is acceptable, and who holds the authority to approve these adaptations. As a unique cultural carrier, the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group and its adaptive development within contemporary society serves as an empirical case for this theory. It demonstrates the potential for balancing traditional and modern elements within music culture, revealing pathways to preserve cultural essence and achieve innovative transitions amid the processes of globalization, urbanization, and modernization.

First, the theory of musical sustainability demonstrates that the key to cultural survival and continuity lies in ensuring the adaptive preservation of musical traditions. This involves the preservation of traditional musical forms, as well as techniques and performance practices. The Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group, for example, not only preserves technical proficiency but also embodies and reinforces cultural values, highlighting the crucial role of traditional inheritance methods in sustaining cultural identity and intergenerational continuity. However, the rapid development of modern society has caused a crisis in the inheritance of traditional music and culture, leading to resistance to cultural continuity. To maintain cultural continuity, transition becomes a necessary step in adapting to the modern social environment. The Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group achieves both cultural continuity and transition by integrating traditional music with contemporary education, particularly through formal school programs and community-based initiatives that promote intergenerational learning and cultural engagement.

Second, the theory of music sustainability emphasizes the multifaceted roles of individual tradition bearers in both cultural continuity and transition. These bearers are not only protectors of traditional skills but also transmitters of culture and innovation in modern society. For example, Wu Chuanjuan's case, later more deeply discussed in this article, illustrates how the dissemination and development of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group can be promoted in modern society through various means.

Additionally, the adaptation and interaction of musical culture within the socio-cultural environment are essential components of music sustainability. This is particularly evident in the transition of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group in contemporary society. Through active participation in local festivals, national cultural events, and government-organized heritage programs, as well as performances in urban theaters and academic institutions, and by catering to the aesthetic preferences of modern audiences, the Grand Song has reached a broader audience, thereby enhancing its social influence and recognition beyond the confines of the villages. This adaptability and interaction are not only means of cultural dissemination but also act as drivers of cultural innovation and adaption.

Finally, the theory of music sustainability fundamentally requires that the pace of musical culture's development aligns with the rate of change in the ecological environment. With the accelerated process of urbanization, the lives of people in traditional Dong villages have undergone significant changes. A key concern is how to continue the transmission of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group after shifts in the ecological environment, such as rural depopulation, changes in land use, and the decline of communal singing spaces, have altered traditional modes of cultural expression. Through innovation and integration, traditional music can coexist this transformed ecological environment, where new performance spaces, digital platforms, and institutional support play a role in sustaining its practice and transmission.

In summary, the theory of music sustainability, as developed in ethnomusicology and cultural sustainability studies, reveals the dialectical relationship between cultural continuity and transformation. Through individual examples and cases from higher professional education, this article further demonstrates how to promote the adaptation and innovation of traditional culture in modern society while protecting its core values.

The Crucial Role of Individual Protection: The Case of Wu Chuanjuan

Wu Chuanjuan, a female Dong native born in February 1990 in Yandong Village, Liping, Guizhou, is a key subject of this study. As a bearer of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group, she not only learned Dong songs from her elders in childhood but also earned a Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology from the China Conservatory of Music. Her academic and professional trajectory exemplifies the intersection of individual agency, cultural adaptation, and music sustainability, making her a critical case for examining the role of tradition bearers in ensuring both cultural continuity and innovation. During her academic career, she actively participated in and organized various Dong cultural activities and co-authored works, such as *Research on the Survival of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group*.[8] In her professional career, she works at China Media Group [中央广播电视总台], the parent organization of China Central Television (CCTV), where she is responsible for planning and music production for major national programs. Her work involves integrating elements of Dong culture into modern media formats, including television productions, cultural programming, and digital dissemination.

My acquaintance with Wu Chuanjuan began in the classroom at the Central Conservatory of Music, where she shared her insights into the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group. As our discussions deepened, I became increasingly interested in her academic journey and practical experiences, which

8 Minwen Deng, Long Yuejiang and Wu Chuanjuan, *Research on the Survival of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group* (Social Sciences Literature Press, 2021).

vividly encapsulate the challenges and adaptations of traditional music in a rapidly modernizing society. Through ongoing dialogue and field observations, I recognized her case as a paradigmatic example of how individual agency can mediate between cultural continuity and transformation, a core concern of music sustainability theory.

The Role and Significance of Individual Tradition Bearers

The Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group faces the dual challenges of cultural continuity and transformation. Individual bearers play a crucial role in this process, learning from *Ga Lao* (highly respected elder singers in the Dong community) through oral transmission and using the traditional method to pass on both the skills and cultural values of the Grand Song. This process, deeply rooted in communal gatherings and participatory learning, emphasizes immersive experience and collective memory, forming an integral part of the socio-ecological system of the Dong people.

Wu Chuanjuan began learning the Grand Song at the age of four and has continued to engage in related activities throughout her life. She holds several roles in relation to the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group. First, she is a custodian of the Grand Song's art, personally preserving and transmitting a substantial repertoire of traditional songs and singing techniques. Second, she actively engages in educational endeavours beyond her primary occupation, serving as a guest lecturer at prestigious institutions such as the Central Conservatory of Music and the China Conservatory of Music, where she teaches the theory and singing techniques of the Grand Song.

Her teaching not only imparts technical skills and knowledge but also profoundly influences students' understanding of cultural heritage. As evidenced by student feedback, her classes provide an immersive experience that bridges the academic study of traditional music with its lived practice.

After interacting with Wu Chuanjuan in class, students described the experience as invaluable. One student shared that Wu's explanation and performance not only provided a deeper understanding of the singing techniques of the Grand Song, but also offered insight into the current state of intangible cultural heritage preservation. Additionally, the student noted an increased awareness of the complex power dynamics surrounding the Grand Song and how it has adapted to modern society. The experience was described as transformative, reshaping their perception of the art form as a dynamic and tangible cultural practice rather than merely a digital representation.

This feedback demonstrates that Wu Chuanjuan's promotional efforts go beyond the transmission of singing techniques; they allow learners to grasp the deeper social and cultural values embodied in the Grand Song, fostering its adaptation and sustainable development in contemporary society.

Additionally, Wu frequently participates in promotional activities related to the Grand Song, dedicated to imparting the wisdom of Dong culture and lifestyle to younger generations. During her academic journey, Wu Chuanjuan assumed the dual roles of cultural bearer and ambassador of the Grand Song. On one hand, she utilized her ethnomusicological knowledge to conduct research on the Grand Song, while on the other, she expanded its reach through performance practice, introducing it to a broader audience. Wu, along with her peers and seniors, conducted nationwide tours, significantly enhancing the social influence and recognition of the Grand Song.

Beyond her role as an educator, Wu Chuanjuan leverages modern media as a powerful tool to amplify the influence of the Grand Song. Her work in digital broadcasting and cultural programming exemplifies the evolving role of a tradition bearer in the digital age. As an active mediator between tradition and modernity, Wu Chuanjuan has expanded the reach of the Grand Song beyond its original ecological and cultural setting, adapting it to contemporary technological and social realities. This dynamic role aligns with music sustainability theories that emphasize adaptation as a necessary component of preservation, ensuring that traditional music remains a living practice rather than a static artifact.

Transmission and Transition in Modern Society

The Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group is facing unprecedented challenges in contemporary society. Traditionally, learning has emphasized oral transmission, a practice that is deeply rooted in the culture. However, since the early twentieth century, particularly during the "Songs for School Education" ["学堂乐歌"] phase in China, which emerged in the late Qing Dynasty and extended into the early Republican period (late nineteenth century to the 1920s), professional music education has fundamentally transformed the way many traditional musics are taught. The introduction of musical notation, the infiltration of Western professional music education concepts, and the rise of school-based music education models have collectively brought about significant changes also in the transmission modes of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group. This shift not only reflects transformation and transition in educational practices but also represents broader cultural adaptation to evolving societal frameworks and technological advancements.

Wu Chuanjuan's personal journey also reflects this transition. Raised in a Dong-speaking village, she initially learned the Grand Song through immersion in a traditional community environment. However, as she transitioned into a school system dominated by Mandarin and later pursued higher education, she experienced a fundamental shift in learning modalities. This shift underscores the challenges of cultural sustainability in an era where indigenous

knowledge systems are increasingly mediated through formal education rather than organic community transmission.

From a music sustainability perspective, this change represents not only an educational transition but also an ecological transformation. The Grand Song, once embedded in the rhythms of agrarian life and communal gathering spaces, is now increasingly detached from these socio-environmental contexts. As Schippers argues,[9] musical sustainability depends on maintaining the ecological conditions that support transmission, yet these conditions are rapidly evolving due to migration, language shifts, and changes in social structures.

Wu Chuanjuan's efforts to navigate this transformation illustrate how sustainability requires both preservation and adaptation. Her work demonstrates that maintaining cultural continuity is not solely about retaining traditional forms but also about recontextualizing them in new ecological and institutional settings. By integrating the Grand Song into formal music education and media production, she has created alternative pathways for its sustainability, ensuring that it remains relevant while preserving its core artistic and cultural values.

Ensuring Cultural Continuity and Innovation

For many traditional music forms, securing cultural continuity begins with documentation, and the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group is no exception. Based on an interview conducted by the author of the article,[10] Wu Chuanjuan mentioned that efforts to publish collections and audio record of the Grand Song are being systematically conducted. Along with her mother and other bearers of the Grand Song, she is dedicated to documenting and compiling these works. As a professionally trained ethnomusicologist with a Ph.D., she possesses the necessary research and writing skills to ensure the quality and efficacy of these recording efforts. Although these methods of recording and publication may not fully capture the live essence of the Grand Song and differ from the traditional oral transmission method, they have proven effective during times when the Grand Song faces challenges. These records not only preserve the traditional repertoire and singing style but also serve as an essential foundation for ensuring the long-term survival of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group. By converting oral traditions into written and audio formats, they create a valuable reference for future research and provide a structured way to pass on this musical heritage.

Wu Chuanjuan's role at the China Central TV (CCTV) exemplifies this principle. Through meticulous planning and production, she has integrated the Grand Song with other art forms, facilitating its dissemination to a broader

9 Schippers and Grant, *Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures*, 2016.

10 Wu Chuanjuan, in discussion with the author (May 29, 2024).

audience. For example, her efforts and planning contributed to establishing a branch venue of the 2018 CCTV Spring Festival Gala in Zhaoxing Dong Village, Liping County, Qiandongnan Prefecture, Guizhou. The Spring Festival Gala, watched by nearly the entire Chinese populace on New Year's Eve, boasts exceptionally high viewership. As the first person from her region to work at a national television station, she has significantly contributed to enhancing recognition of Dong musical culture nationwide.

Furthermore, in the program *The Sounds of Nature* [原声天籁] which she helped to plan, Wu invited Zhou Shen, one of China's most popular new-generation pop singers, to perform "Grain Rain Day" [《谷雨天》] with children from the Dong ethnic group in Congjiang. By blending pop elements with ethnic songs, she elevated the status of Dong musical culture among Zhou Shen's extensive young fanbase. The video of this performance has garnered nearly 200,000 views on Bilibili, one of China's largest video platforms, drawing widespread attention to Dong music. These initiatives reflect a broader strategy within music sustainability: utilizing mass media and digital platforms to reinforce rather than replace traditional transmission methods.

However, while such media exposure enhances visibility, it also brings to light the challenges of cultural preservation. A comment from a Dong community member on Bilibili reflects this sentiment:

> *I appreciate Zhou Shen for performing Grain Rain Day, allowing more people to recognize the Dong ethnic group. However, the preservation of Dong culture is increasingly difficult. With no written script, our language relies solely on oral transmission, yet fewer young people speak it fluently. Even in my middle school, though most classmates were Dong, only a handful could still speak the language. By high school, Mandarin had largely replaced Dong in daily conversations, even among peers. Many who spoke Dong as children eventually stopped using it, forgetting their mother tongue.*[11]

While digital platforms bring visibility, true preservation requires fostering active use within communities.

This feedback highlights a crucial issue in cultural sustainability: visibility alone does not guarantee preservation. While media exposure can spark interest, the survival of Dong cultural traditions ultimately depends on intergenerational transmission within the community.

Although more conservative people might view these changes as disrespectful to tradition or believe that such integrations betray the traditional Dong music culture represented by the Grand Song, from the perspective of sustainability, adaptation is not equivalent to loss. Rather, it is a process of transformation that allows traditional music to thrive in new socio-cultural

11 Yangshipin (CCTV Official Online Account), "[China Folk Song Gala] So Lovely! Zhou Shen and Dong Children Sing 'Grain Rain Day' Together", *Bilibili*, 19:35:49 (uploaded October 10, 2023; accessed March 6, 2024), https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV14w411A7Bc.

and technological contexts. Wu Chuanjuan's case illustrates how individual bearers function as cultural mediators, actively shaping the evolving identity of traditional music rather than passively preserving it.

By integrating the Grand Song with digital platforms, educational institutions, and cross-genre collaborations, she has helped position it within a broader cultural ecosystem. Her work demonstrates that sustainability is not about resisting change but about managing it in ways that uphold the integrity and vitality of the tradition. As music sustainability scholars emphasize, traditions that do not adapt risk obsolescence, whereas those that strategically evolve can achieve longevity while maintaining their core cultural essence.

In summary, Wu Chuanjuan's case exemplifies the intersection of music sustainability, cultural continuity, and ecological adaptation, demonstrating how individual agency plays a pivotal role in navigating the evolving socio-cultural landscape of traditional music. Her journey – from a Dong village to national media – illustrates the delicate balance between preservation and transformation, as she integrates the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group into contemporary platforms while maintaining its cultural integrity. By leveraging media dissemination, academic engagement, and cross-disciplinary collaboration, she has revitalized the Grand Song within a new ecological and technological context, ensuring its relevance in modern society. Her work underscores the ecological dimensions of music sustainability, where the survival of a musical tradition is intricately tied to its cultural and environmental conditions. This case highlights the necessity of adaptive strategies that allow traditional music to evolve while retaining its intrinsic identity, reinforcing the broader discourse on sustainable ethnomusicological practices in a rapidly changing world.

The Role of Higher Education: Examples from Guizhou University and Guizhou Minzu University

In the rapidly evolving societal context of China, higher education plays a critical role in cultural continuity and transition of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group. Universities provide systematic academic research and professional training, ensuring that traditional music is preserved while also evolving to adapt to modern contexts. Within the framework of music sustainability theory, education serves as a key factor in mitigating cultural disruptions caused by urbanization, language shifts, and changing transmission models.[12]

Considering that the predominant language in China is Mandarin, preferential admission policies for Dong students have been implemented at institutions such as Guizhou University and Guizhou Minzu University. These policies effectively promote access to higher education for more minority students. Additionally, these universities have integrated bearers of Dong music culture

12 Schippers and Grant, *Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures*, 2016.

into their teaching programs, creating a dynamic model of cultural sustainability in which traditional music is transmitted within structured academic settings while maintaining its connection to local communities.

There is a Chinese proverb, "Teaching and learning enrich each other" ["教学相长"], a principle that aptly describes the reciprocal impact of education on both the preservation and transformation of intangible cultural heritage. In this way, higher education is not only crucial for fostering the sustainable development of the Grand Song but also serves as a mechanism for cultural innovation, ensuring its adaptability in a rapidly modernizing society.

Higher Education Initiatives in the Preservation and Innovation of Ethnic Minority Music

This article explores the long-term impact of establishing programs related to the traditional music performances of the Dong ethnic group, focusing on two universities that offer preferential admission policies for Dong music students: Guizhou University and Guizhou Minzu University, higher education institutions in Guizhou Province.

Guizhou Province is home to a large number of ethnic minorities, with approximately 36% of the province's total population belonging to minority groups. These include the Miao, Buyi, Dong, Tujia, Yi, Gelao, Shui, Hui, Bai, Yao, Zhuang, She, Maonan, Manchu, Mongolian, Mulao, and Qiang peoples, encompassing a total of 17 ethnic groups. These universities have established dedicated music colleges specializing in the study, performance, and innovation of minority music. Guizhou University's Academy of Music offers programs in music, theater, and dance, with a particular emphasis on minority music performance, ensuring the continued study of traditional singing techniques. Guizhou Minzu University's Academy of Music and Dance, which houses the Department of Ethnic Performance, has further distinguished itself by creating a designated center for the preservation and research of the Grand Song under the Ministry of Education's Traditional Culture Inheritance Program.

These institutions exemplify the role of higher education in preserving and transforming traditional music. By integrating Dong music into formal curricula, they provide structured learning environments that supplement and adapt the traditional oral transmission system, a crucial aspect of music sustainability. However, the institutionalization of oral traditions raises critical questions regarding authenticity, performance practice, and the shifting modes of knowledge transmission.

Cultural Continuity and Transition in Educational Practice

Guizhou University and Guizhou Minzu University have incorporated the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group into a broader educational framework

through distinctive teaching content and models, ensuring the continuity of its musical culture within the realm of professional music education. These courses comprehensively cover the singing techniques of the Grand Song, theoretical instruction, and the teaching and performance of traditional instruments, offering students a systematic and cohesive learning framework. Additionally, both universities emphasize teaching music theory and cultural foundation courses. This approach, which integrates ethnic characteristics alongside regular higher education curricula, allows students to deeply engage in both professional courses and general education, enabling hands-on experience through ensemble participation, fieldwork in Dong communities, and interdisciplinary collaboration with departments such as anthropology and cultural studies.

Through this approach, each student serves as a vital link in the heritage transmission and transformation of cultural traditions. By implementing this educational model, the two universities not only ensure the continuity of the Grand Song but also establish a strong foundation for its adaptation in contemporary society. Higher education plays a crucial role in driving innovation in both the preservation and evolution of the Grand Song, integrating modern music education with multimedia technology and digital preservation methods. These efforts safeguard its traditional form while simultaneously ensuring its relevance in the modern world. By utilizing modern media such as audio and video through high-fidelity recording sessions, virtual learning platforms, and digital archives, universities create accessible repositories for students and researchers, enabling both remote learning and in-depth analysis of vocal techniques and performance styles.

However, it is important to critically examine how this formalized institutional approach compares to the traditional oral transmission system, where musical learning is deeply embedded in communal activities and daily social interactions rather than structured coursework. While higher education enhances accessibility and systematic learning, it may also risk detaching the Grand Song from its indigenous learning context, potentially altering its core aesthetic and improvisational nature. This shift poses critical questions about the impact of formal education on the essence of the Grand Song, particularly its improvisational and communal aspects. An additional question that needs to be explored in the future is whether digital archiving truly ensures the long-term preservation of music, as it cannot fully replicate the live transmission model of the Grand Song of the Dong ethnic group, which is centred on embodied experience, and what the potential consequences are of the transition from an oral-aural tradition to a visual-digital learning mode.

The wide application of multimedia technology in higher education enriches the learning experience of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group, making it increasingly visual and intuitive. Participants not only learn in depth through the traditional teacher-apprentice transmission model but also

effectively utilize various educational resources, such as audio and video recordings, in their independent learning. This diversified teaching model greatly stimulates students' interest, as they engage in hands-on training, collaborative ensemble practices, and multimedia-assisted study, enhancing their understanding of both technical skills and cultural contexts. This approach significantly enhances the overall effectiveness of teaching.

Higher education plays a crucial role in promoting the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group, serving as a bridge for communication that not only preserves cultural continuity but also facilitates cultural transformation by integrating traditional music into interdisciplinary research, experimental composition, and cross-cultural collaborative performances. By actively participating in diverse cultural exchange activities, such as academic seminars, touring performances, and cultural festivals, higher education institutions have accelerated the dissemination of the Grand Song within both academic circles and the public sphere, significantly enhancing understanding and interaction between different cultures. Nevertheless, this academic engagement raises important questions: Does increased public exposure through formal performances and media platforms risk commodifying the Grand Song, detaching it from its grassroots cultural significance? Or does it provide a necessary evolution that allows it to thrive in new contexts? These tensions highlight the complexity of sustaining traditional music within modern institutions.

For example, at the Central Conservatory of Music, where I work, we have repeatedly invited teachers and students from the two universities in Guizhou to participate in academic discussions and performance activities centred on the Grand Song. These initiatives have not only provided a broad platform for showcasing the Grand Song, allowing urban students to experience the unique charm of this pristine traditional music up close, but also facilitated the exchange and collision of cultural knowledge. More importantly, such interactions have sparked the creativity and research motivation of some faculty and students at our conservatory. Some have begun to focus their research and creative efforts on the Grand Song, exploring its diverse developmental possibilities in a contemporary context. While these efforts foster cross-cultural appreciation, it remains crucial to examine whether such academic and artistic interventions alter the fundamental characteristics of the Grand Song, including its improvisational style, oral transmission, and communal performance traditions. During my interactions with students from Guizhou Minzu University at the World Music Week at the Central Conservatory of Music, the students expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to continue learning their ethnic music traditions at the university level. They emphasized how proud they were to pursue this rare and valuable opportunity, which also served as a source of cultural pride. This inter-institutional cooperation not only maintains the historical continuity of the Grand Song as a cultural heritage but also injects new

contemporary significance into it through the integration of academia and art, achieving a modern transformation of the culture.

In conclusion, Guizhou University and Guizhou Minzu University exemplify the dual role of higher education in fostering the cultural continuity and transition of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group. Through academic research, structured pedagogy, digital resources, and global exchange, these institutions act as key agents in sustaining traditional music while addressing the challenges posed by linguistic shifts, technological change, and urbanization. Their efforts ensure that the Grand Song remains embedded in both scholarly and community-based practices, fostering its longevity and adaptability.

While institutionalization strengthens the sustainability of traditional music, it also introduces changes to its organic and participatory nature. The transition from community-centered oral transmission to structured academic settings raises important considerations about how knowledge is transmitted and experienced. Integrating formal education with traditional pedagogies is essential to maintaining the cultural and performative integrity of the Grand Song, ensuring that it retains its improvisational and social dimensions while benefiting from modern educational frameworks. By carefully balancing preservation and innovation, higher education plays a crucial role in ensuring that the Grand Song is not merely a cultural artifact but a living, evolving tradition that continues to resonate in contemporary society.

Reflections on the Sustainability of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group: Cultural Continuity and Transition

In the face of globalization, urbanization, and the rise of artificial intelligence, scholars, cultural practitioners, and policymakers cannot ignore the fact that traditional cultures, such as the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group, are being impacted. To maintain cultural continuity, it is essential to preserve an ecological environment conducive to it. However, once this ecological environment changes, cultural transition becomes imperative to adapt to new circumstances while ensuring continuity. Although cultural continuity and transition may seem intrinsically interconnected, they actually highlight profound shifts in the social environment – including the cultural environment – that are often accompanied by multifaceted conflicts. How should we respond to this situation? What role can ethnomusicologists play in this context?

A key challenge in preserving and transmitting traditional music, such as the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group, lies in balancing tradition with modern adaptation to ensure its continuity and vitality. Ethnomusicologists are responsible for recording and researching traditional culture, and their work extends beyond the preservation of music, covering a wide range of comprehensive recordings of cultural background, historical, and social significance.

This approach of 'cold preservation', which refers to the archival method of storing cultural materials in a static, non-performing state, akin to the way objects are preserved in museums, although often criticized as lacking in innovation and flexibility, has proven to be a sound and effective preservation strategy in the current context. In light of the constantly changing external environment, we cannot simply expect culture to continue and evolve on its own. On the contrary, cultural heritage transmission and adaptations are complex and delicate processes that require finding a viable path between respecting tradition and pursuing innovation. This means that we need to actively explore new methods and approaches to adapt traditional culture for modern society while preserving the essence of tradition.

While national protection policies have played a role in sustaining the Grand Song's ecological environment, the rapid modernization of society requires further adaptive strategies beyond governmental intervention. These strategies should focus on innovative ways to preserve the essence of traditional culture while expanding dissemination methods and audiences. By integrating such approaches, the Grand Song can continue to thrive in contemporary society.

As observed in the case of Wu Chuanjuan and the higher education models at Guizhou University and Guizhou Minzu University, adaptation is key to ensuring cultural sustainability. These examples demonstrate that successful preservation is not about resisting change but about directing it in a way that aligns with traditional values and community participation. While innovation is necessary, it must be context-sensitive, recognizing the importance of cultural identity, local agency, and historical continuity.

Cross-cultural exchange and cooperation are essential mechanisms for promoting the sustainable development of traditional music. They can introduce new elements and vitality into traditional music, allowing it to thrive in an international context. While traditional music cultures can achieve more stable development in their native environments, maintaining these stable environments is becoming increasingly challenging given current global trends. As adaptation to these trends becomes inevitable, we should actively promote deep collaboration and communication among scholars and artists from diverse cultural backgrounds. Such cross-cultural cooperation can enhance mutual understanding and acceptance between different cultures while also providing traditional music with new vitality within the framework of globalization.

In summary, cultural continuity and transition are not opposing forces but complementary dimensions of musical sustainability. While preserving the uniqueness and value of traditional music, we must acknowledge that societal development and changes in the external environment make transformation especially crucial. Through a degree of transformation, traditional music can align with modern audiences' preferences, technological advancements, and the evolving demands of cultural exchange while retaining its profound

cultural essence. This transformation not only revitalizes traditional music in a modern context but also ensures the continuity of musical culture.

Conclusion

The study of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group has garnered significant attention and established its prominence in the field of ethnic minority music in China. This article aims to examine its adaptation process in contemporary society from multiple perspectives, providing insights for the preservation and adaptation of similar traditional music cultures. Whether referring to the phenomenon of folk music revival in European folk music or the concept of music sustainability advocated by Chinese scholars, the core lies in promoting cultural continuity and transition. This ensures that traditional music can continue and innovate in a rapidly changing societal and ecological environment.

In the face of profound changes in contemporary society, many forms of traditional music, such as the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group, have transitioned from ancient oral traditions to written documentation and professional educational systems, particularly in higher education. While this process varies in specifics, it commonly reveals shared issues and challenges. Nevertheless, it is within this journey of transformation that we can identify some universal principles: higher education, policy support, the relentless efforts of individuals, and the application of modern technological methods collectively form the critical forces driving the protection and development of traditional culture in the contemporary cultural context.

The role of UNESCO in this context has been influential, particularly in recognizing and safeguarding the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group as part of the world's intangible cultural heritage. UNESCO's recognition has played a crucial role in raising awareness and prompting domestic authorities to place greater emphasis on preservation efforts, leading to increased support and resources for the continuity and innovation of this musical tradition, thus creating a supportive framework for its adaptations and transformations.

Admittedly, this article has several limitations. On one hand, due to constraints of length and resources, it was not possible to incorporate a wide range of case studies to fully demonstrate the diverse aspects of the adaptation process of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group. On the other hand, the analysis in this article remains at a relatively macro level and does not delve deeply into its original context through long-term, detailed fieldwork. Future research should aim to further refine case studies and explore the specific mechanisms of higher education models in the transmission of traditional music through interdisciplinary collaboration. Additionally, there should be an increased emphasis on fieldwork to collect firsthand data that closely reflects reality. This would enable a more accurate assessment of policy support for

cultural preservation and the effectiveness of modern technologies. It would also be interesting to explore the psychological and social roles of individual tradition bearers during the cultural transition process.

Ultimately, the adaptation process of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group in contemporary society is not merely about preserving a historical tradition – it is about ensuring that the tradition remains a living, evolving cultural practice. The self-renewal of traditional music, as demonstrated in this study, is not simply a response to external social changes but also an active process of negotiation between heritage preservation and cultural innovation. This continuous interplay reflects broader dynamics in music sustainability, where successful preservation depends not on resisting change but on guiding it in ways that uphold cultural integrity while fostering new creative possibilities.

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SUMMARY

This paper examines the adaptation process of the Grand Song of the Dong Ethnic Group within a contemporary socio-cultural context, emphasizing the dynamic relationship between cultural continuity and transformation. Utilizing the music Sustainability theory from Chinese scholars, the study analyzes the impact of modernization on the Grand Song, particularly through the experiences of tradition bearers studying and working in Beijing, as well as its integration into university education, highlighting both opportunities and challenges it faces today.

In the face of globalization and urbanization, traditional cultures like the Grand Song are undergoing significant changes. Maintaining cultural continuity requires an ecological environment conducive to tradition, while shifts in this environment necessitate cultural adaptation. The paper underscores the essential role of ethnomusicologists in balancing traditional preservation with modern relevance, aiding in the exploration of innovative methods to ensure the continuity of the culture.

By presenting case studies such as that of Wu Chuanjuan and examining the practices of higher education institutions, the research emphasizes the need for adaptation to contemporary contexts. It advocates for leveraging modern technologies, such as multimedia and digital archives, to expand access to the Grand Song and enhance its societal impact. Additionally, integrating traditional music into educational curricula is crucial for fostering cultural pride among younger generations.

Cross-cultural exchange and cooperation are identified as vital mechanisms for promoting the sustainable development of traditional music, introducing new vitality and innovation. While traditional cultures can achieve stability in their native environments, the increasing challenges posed by global trends highlight the importance of fostering collaboration among diverse cultural backgrounds.

In summary, this study illustrates that cultural continuity and transformation are fundamental to the sustainability of traditional music. Although societal changes demand adaptation, preserving the unique essence of the Grand Song ensures its survival and relevance. The paper acknowledges its limitations, calling for further fieldwork and case studies in future research to deepen the understanding of the Grand Song‘s adaptation process and contribute valuable insights into the preservation and development of traditional music in contemporary society.

POVZETEK

Kulturna kontinuiteta in prehod: prilagajanje velike pesmi etnične skupine Dong sodobnim družbeno-kulturnim okoliščinam

Članek proučuje proces prilagajanja *velike pesmi*, načina petja etnične skupine Dong, v sodobnih družbeno-kulturnih okoliščinah, s poudarkom na dinamičnem odnosu med kulturno kontinuiteto in preobrazbo. Z uporabo teorije trajnosti glasbe, kitajskih znanstvenikov, analizira študija vpliv modernizacije na *veliko pesem*, zlasti skozi izkušnje nosilcev tradicije, ki študirajo in delajo v Pekingu, ter njeno vključevanje v univerzitetno izobraževanje, pri čemer poudarja priložnosti in izzive, s katerimi se danes sooča.

Tradicionalne kulture, kot je *velika pesem,* doživljajo v času globalizacije in urbanizacije pomembne spremembe. Ohranjanje kulturne kontinuitete zahteva okolje, ki je naklonjeno

tradiciji, medtem ko spremembe v tem okolju zahtevajo kulturno prilagajanje. Članek poudarja bistveno vlogo etnomuzikologov pri uravnovešanju tradicionalnega ohranjanja in sodobne relevantnosti ter pri raziskovanju inovativnih metod za zagotavljanje kontinuitete kulture.

S predstavitvijo primerov, kot je primer Wu Chuanjuan, in preučevanjem praks visokošolskih institucij raziskava poudarja potrebo po prilagajanju sodobnim okoliščinam. Zagovarja rabo sodobnih tehnologij, kot so multimediji in digitalni arhivi, za širjenje dostopa do *velike pesmi* in povečanje njenega družbenega vpliva. Poleg tega je vključevanje tradicionalne glasbe v izobraževalne programe ključnega pomena za spodbujanje kulturne samozavesti med mlajšimi generacijami.

Medkulturna izmenjava in sodelovanje sta opredeljena kot ključna mehanizma za spodbujanje trajnostnega razvoja tradicionalne glasbe, uvajanje nove vitalnosti in inovativnosti. Medtem ko lahko tradicionalne kulture dosežejo stabilnost v svojem izvornem okolju, pa vse večji izzivi, ki jih prinašajo globalni trendi, poudarjajo pomen spodbujanja sodelovanja med različnimi kulturnimi okolji.

Rezultat študije kaže, da sta kulturna kontinuiteta in preobrazba ključna za trajnost tradicionalne glasbe. Čeprav družbene spremembe zahtevajo prilagajanje, zagotavlja ohranjanje samobitnosti *velike pesmi* njeno preživetje in pomembnost. Študija priznava svoje omejitve in poziva k nadaljnjim terenskim raziskavam in študijam primerov v prihodnjih raziskavah, da se poglobi razumevanje procesa prilagajanja *velike pesmi* in prispeva dragocene ugotovitve za ohranjanje in razvoj tradicionalne glasbe v sodobni družbi.

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O AVTORICI

ZHANG XIAOYU (zhangxy@mail.ccom.edu.cn) je predavateljica na Oddelku za muzikologijo na Osrednjem konservatoriju za glasbo v Pekingu, specializirana za področje etnomuzikologije, podrobneje evropsko urbano ljudsko glasbo in večkulturno glasbeno izobraževanje. Doktorski in magistrski naziv je pridobila na Osrednjem konservatoriju, diplomirala pa je na Državni akademiji kitajskih gledaliških umetnosti. Študirala je na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Ljubljani, objavila več znanstvenih člankov v kitajskih revijah in sodelovala pri različnih pomembnih raziskovalnih projektih, med drugim pri *Enciklopediji Kitajske*. Deluje tudi v več strokovnih organizacijah, kjer spodbuja mednarodno sodelovanje na področju glasbenega izobraževanja.

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Folk Dance Education Based on Structural Analysis in Hungary

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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the characteristics features of a definite dance motif from Hungary, presents the framework for its re-creation used during teaching and shows the educational process. The application of the methodological principles of the education contributes to the survival of the dance, promotes the traditional improvisational re-creation of the dance that displays individuality.

Keywords: folk dance, methodology, structural analisys, revival teaching

IZVLEČEK

Članek opisuje značilnosti določenega plesnega motiva z Madžarskega, predstavlja okvir za njegovo poustvarjanje, ki se uporablja pri poučevanju, in prikaže izobraževalni proces. Uporaba pedagoških metodoloških načel prispeva k ohranjanju plesa, spodbuja tradicionalno improvizacijsko poustvarjanje plesa, ki izraža individualnost.

Ključne besede: ljudski ples, metodologija, strukturalna analiza, pedagogika preporodnega gibanja

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Introduction

The folk dance tradition[1] has undergone significant changes in recent decades. The transformation and cessation of the peasant culture that gave rise to traditional dance forms in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries took place at different times and with different intensity in different regions. The film collections of dances started to be formed in the 1930s, the turn of the life reform movements towards folk culture,[2] the *Gyöngyösbokréta* [Pearly Bouquet Movement] of the 1930s and 40s, and the *táncház* [dance house] movement that started in the 1970s helped to preserve the still living peasant dance culture into the present age[3].

The movement[4] material of the constantly changing folk dance was preserved in an unchanged form by the film recording. This created new ways of learning. In addition to the previous knowledge transmission based on direct imitation, indirect learning from the dance film appeared. By slowing down the given movement with the help of the technique, and watching it several times, the student had the opportunity to copy it in detail. All of this means a completely different process of transmission in the revival compared to the original

1 By folk dance, I mean the dance folklore of the common people recorded during the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries, or more narrowly, the folk dance of the twentieth to twenty-first centuries, recorded on film. For scientific definitions of folk dance and a commonly agreed interpretation of the term, see: Henrik Kovács, "A néptánc társadalmi funkcióváltozásai: A néptánc szerepének vizsgálata a 20–21. század revival közegében", *Studia Folkloristica et Ethnographica* 84 (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem Néprajzi Tanszék, MTA–DE Néprajzi Kutatócsoport, 2021).

2 With the help of the life reform movements that appeared in the 1920s and 30s, elements of folk culture also appeared in high art. In the visual arts, the *Gödöllő* Art Colony (Katalin Gellér et al., *A gödöllői művésztelep 1901-1920* (Gödöllő, 2003)), in dance Rudolf Lábán (Rudolf Lábán, *Táncnak szentelt élet* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2009)), or the work of Etel Nagy (György Bálint, *Nagy Etel: Egy magyar táncosnő emléke* (Cserépfalvi, 1940)) is an example of folk culture importance.

3 Another important factor in the wider social spread of folk dancing was the establishment of the scouting (Krisztina Dóka, *A magyar táncfolklór átalakulása (1869–1945)*, PhD diss. (Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar, 2011)), folk art shows (Zoltán Bíró and Gagyi József "'Mi főleg csináltuk, mások magyarázták' (montázs a táncház jelenségről)", in *Néphagyományok új környezetben: Tanulmányok a folkorizmus köréből*, ed. Bíró Zoltán et al. (Bukarest: Kriterion Könyvkiadó, 1987), 162–183; József Liszka, *A szlovákiai magyarok néprajza* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2002)) and various ensembles and institutions (Gábor Bolvári-Takács, "Rögös úton: Dokumentumok az Állami Balett Intézet első tanévéből", in *Hagyomány és újítás a táncművészetben, a táncpedagógiában és a tánckutatásban*, eds. András Németh et al. (Budapest: Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskola – Planétás Kiadó, 2009): András Gombos, "Hagyományőrző mozgalom és együttesek Magyarországon", *Muharay Elemér Népművészeti Szövetség*, accessed April 11, 2019, http://muharay.hu/index.php?menu=133).

4 I use the term movement following the Labanotation literature (Ann Hutchinson, *Labanotation or Kinetography Laban: The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement*, revised and expanded ed. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1970); János Fügedi, *Signs of Dance: Laban Kinetography for Traditional Dancers: Solo and Circle Dances* (Institute for Musicology, Research Centre for the Humanities/L'Harmattan Hungary, Budapest, 2023)). The meaning of movement is the basis of the motion. For example, a movement could be a support (step or jump, etc.) or a gesture (leg or arm, etc.).

environment of the folk dance. The advantage of learning from film is that the movement can be repeated and slowed down. However, completely exact copying raises the question of the continuation of the improvisational dance and of the individual realization. The creation of individual versions, which are so important in peasant culture, the emphasis on individuality in addition to the observance of community rules is thus relegated to the background. In general, it can be said about the contemporary Hungarian folk dance movement that it is very attached to the traditional dance movements. In stage folk dance choreographies, productions of group or solo dance competitions, the copying of dance movements is emphasized.

György Martin already highlighted the distinctive characteristics of folk dance education within the revival movement, which differ from traditional contexts in 1979. He argued that before teaching dances from traditional communities, a thorough ethnographic examination is essential,[5] with structural analysis as an integral component. A crucial tool for this investigation is documentation, particularly the use of Labanotation.[6] In his writing, he emphasizes the need to "develop a dance instruction system that best aligns with the improvisational nature of Eastern European folk dances".[7]

In alignment with these principles the aim of this paper is to outline the elements of a teaching method that contributes to the preservation of improvised folk dance, which evolves through variations, without relying on direct copying. I present the method on a specific motif type of a given dance process *Kopogó*.[8] It was documented by István Molnár, Hungarian dancer, choreographer and collector in 1942 in Mezőkomárom[9] in a small village of Mezőföld region in the eastern Transdanubian subdialect of the western dialect.[10] The

5 György Martin, "Javaslatok az oktatási és tudományos szakbizottság munkájához," in *A néptánc-mozgalom néhány alapvető kérdéséről*, ed. Istvánné Héra (Budapest: Népművelési Intézet Művészeti Osztály, 1979), 40–41.

6 Ibid., 40.

7 Ibid., 44.

8 The dance is available on the website of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute for Musicology: https://neptanctudastar.abtk.hu/hu/item/dance/3359. The name *kopogó* means 'knocker' or 'knocking', referring to the original medium of the dance. Presumably, it alludes to the dynamic accents that repeatedly appear in the motif, particularly the heel strikes on the unaccented beats within the octet structure. Another key characteristic of the motif is the alternating eighth-note footwork, which begins on the right foot and concludes with a quarter-step.

9 See more about the dance style: György Martin, "Eastern European Relations of Hungarian Dance Types", in *Foundations of Hungarian Ethnochorelogy: Selected Papers of György Martin,* eds. János Fügedi, Colin Quigley, Vivien Szőnyi, and Sándor Varga (Budapest: Research Centre for the Humanities Institute for Musicology/Hungarian Heritage House, 2020), 119–168.

10 For details on the Hungarian dance dialects see György Martin, "Hungarian Dance Dialects", in *Foundations of Hungarian Ethnochorelogy: Selected Papers of György Martin*, eds. János Fügedi, Colin Quigley, Vivien Szőnyi, and Sándor Varga (Budapest, Research Centre for the Humanities Institute for Musicology/Hungarian Heritage House, 2020), 216–310.

dance itself represents the old-style *ugrós* [jumping] dance type.[11] I chose the eponymous knocking motif from the dance process shown in Ferenc Progl's (the village shepherd) performance to illustrate the educational approach. A detailed structural analysis[12] of the solo *ugrós* [jumping] dance based on Labanotation[13] revealed the inner structure of the dance.[14]

Distinctive Features of the Motif

Kopogó dance from Mezőkomárom was recorded on film once. The technical possibilities of the 40's made it possible to record just two parts of the entire dance process. Ferenc Progl danced the *kopogó* motif four times, always in a different version, during the one minute long parts. The structural analysis revealed the following variant formation aspects:[15]

- the length of the motif,
- the starting jump of the motif,
- the closing formula of the motif,
- the starting jump of the next motif,
- the foot parts (e.g. 1/2 heel, or 1/8 ball of the foot) of the supports,
- positional deviations (e.g. third or fifth position) of the supports,
- the amount of dynamic supports (e.g. four or eleven) and their location within the motif,
- the weight distribution (e.g. partial or full weight) of the supports,
- the height level (e.g. small knee bending or knee bending) of the supports,
- arm movements,
- matching the motif to the musical lines.

11 See more about the dance style: Martin, "Eastern European Relations of Hungarian Dance Types".

12 For a structural analysis of folk dances, see more Anya Peterson Royce, *The Anthorpology of Dance* (Bloomington – London: Indiana University Press, 1977); György Martin and Ernő Pesovár "A magyar néptánc szerkezeti elemzése: Módszertani vázlat", in *Tánctudományi Tanulmányok 1959–1960*, eds. Gedeon Dienes and Péter Morvay (Magyar Táncművészek Szövetsége Tudományos Bizottsága, 1960), 211–248; and György Martin and Ernő Pesovár, "A motívumtípus meghatározása a táncfolklórban", in *Tánctudományi Tanulmányok 1963–1964*, ed. Gedeon Dienes (Magyar Táncművészek Szövetsége Tudományos Bizottsága, 1964), 193–234.

13 János Fügedi and András Vavrinecz, *Old Hungarian Dance Style – The Ugrós: Anthology*, eds. János Fügedi and András Vavrinecz (L'Harmattan, 2013), 215–218.

14 János Fügedi and Henrik Kovács, eds., *Mezőföldi ugrósok: Táncelemzések* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2014); Henrik Kovács, "A mezőkomáromi 'kopogó' motívum szerkezeti elemzése", in *Tánc a változó világban: VIII. Nemzetközi Tánctudományi Konferencia, Magyar Táncművészeti Egyetem, 2022. május 6-7*, eds. Gábor Bolvári-Takács and Ildikó Sirató (Budapest, 2022), 90–102.

15 For a detailed presentation of the aspects, see Kovács, "A mezőkomáromi 'kopogó' motívum szerkezeti elemzése", 90–102. I use the terms 'variant formation aspects', or 'aspects' from the perspective of a dance analyst. Later in the paper, I use the term 'editing principles' with the same meaning from the perspective of a teacher or a student.

Teaching Method of the Motif

Before describing the methodological elements, I will describe the pedagogical environment. Dance has been taught for several years at the Hungarian Folk dance specialization of the Dancer and Coach program of the Hungarian Dance University. The specialisation is based on a part time system with 21 teaching days per semester and approximately 10–12 courses. The main subject of folk dance covers the typical dance styles of the main regions of the Carpathian Basin in 42 teaching hours per semester for 6 semesters. Within this framework, 12 teaching hours are devoted to the *ugrós* [jumping] of Mezőföld, of which 6 teaching hours are devoted to the 'knocking' in addition to the pair jumpers. Typically, we have seven sessions of approximately 40 minutes for teaching Ferenc Progl's dance. The aim of the lessons is to learn the improvisational performance of the dance, to recognise the principles of structure in the original dance and to apply them in the re-creation of the dance. The course also aims to prepare students for training as folk dance teachers in the present day. Accordingly, the teaching of dances includes not only the movement-based learning of the curriculum but also its understanding. In the case of the *kopogó*, this means the transfer of the above-mentioned structuring principles.

The eleven editing principles (above arranged as variation aspects) were grouped based on their difficulty, importance in motif creation,[16] prior learning and age of the students. The first group, which is consistently included in the teaching process, focuses on following aspects: the length of the motif, the starting jump of the motif, the final formula of the motif, and the starting jump of the next motif. Of these, the learning of a motif typically starts with the transmission of the length and the starting jump of the *kopogó*. These are soon followed, in many cases in a second session, by the teaching of the next motif's starting jump and variations on the final formula. Of the other seven aspects, footparts variations, arm movements and the fit of the motifs to the lines of the music are factors that are rarely introduced into the teaching process. The remaining four editing principles (positional variations of the supports, the amount of dynamic supports and their position within the motif, the weight distribution of the supports, the height of the supports) are typically not given attention within the indicated training framework. However, these aspects represent a very small change in pattern formation. Thus, their omission does not essentially compromise the re-creation of the *kopogó* motif.

During the teaching process, the motif is paired with the *háromugró* [triple jump] motifs, as demonstrated in the film recording. This is because variations

16 The more important aspects are those that greatly influence the aesthetics of the motif, and are easier for the dancers and the audience to see and interpret. Accordingly, for example, the differences in height level are of little importance, since they are always of one degree. The difference between the initial height levels (small knee bend or knee bend) is barely noticeable, mainly due to the dance notation.

of the starting jump of the *kopogó* and the starting jump of the next motif are typically achieved by dancing the two motifs in succession. The teaching begins with the alternating support, shifting from the left leg to the right leg – a well-known variation from other dances – followed by the introduction of the repeating support. Once these two motifs have been confidently linked, the more difficult *háromugró* [triple jump] motif[17] is introduced, usually at around the fourth session.

You can also modify the llength of the motif in the editing principles. Ferenc Progl dances the *kopogó* in 8, 7 and 6 quarter lenght. At the beginning of the teaching process, the number of quarters is reduced, usually to 4 and 5 quarters. There are several reasons for this change. Firstly, during the initial stage of teaching, where the variations of the starting support are shown, the shorter motifs make the task more comprehensible for the students. This is especially true for the 4-quarter length, which is in line with the 2/4 musical structure and the students' previous experience of matching dance music. As a result, there is no starting point of the motif other than the beat to occupy the dancers' minds. The body of experienced dancers realizes the 4-quarter length of the motif almost without conscious control, allowing them to focus their attention on the variations of the starting jump. Later, by around the fifth session, the length is reduced to 3 quarters, which introduces a new challenge from a dance and improvisation technical point of view, as the tempo of approximately 120 beats per minute requires a quick choice between the end of the motif and the beginning of the next motif. The reduction in motif length also contributes to a higher number of repetitions per session, which is one of the foundations for proper rehearsal. Shorter motifs also help to conserve the students' energy. This benefit extends beyond the teaching of the *kopogó*. After all, the physical demands on the students are very high during the whole day. With the right workload, it is possible to keep the students energetic and focused throughout the entire teaching day. This balance forms one of the foundations of successful long-term education and also plays an important role in avoiding injuries.

One of the biggest differences between traditional and revival context is the duration of learning. While dance in its traditional context was learnt from an early age, outside of an institutional setting and as an integral part of the community's daily life,[18] these days it is often thought in a school setting, tipically starting at the age of six. In the traditional community, the dance heritage was used throughout their lives, whereas in the revival context, dancers learn new

17 In the structural analysis of the dance, it was given the type 1. See in Fügedi and Kovács, *Mezőföldi ugrósok: Táncelemzések*, 35, figures 42–45.

18 For further information on learning to dance within the traditional medium, refer to Ferenc Pesovár, *A magyar nép táncélete: Tánctanulás, táncalkalmak, táncrendezés* (Budapest: Népművelési Propaganda Iroda, 1978) and Lujza Ratkó, *"Nem úgy van most, mint vót régen…": A tánc mint tradíció a nyírségi paraszti kultúrában* (Nyíregyháza – Sóstófürdő: Sóstói Múzeumfalu Baráti Köre, 1996).

dance material every year. All this requires a well-developed system of methodology. Due to the constraints of the time frame, the effective transmission of both the practical and theoretical aspects that structure the dance is crucial. The conveyance of a large volume of information is only feasible through gradual progression, ensuring that each element builds systematically upon the other. In the case of the *kopogó* motif, the first 3–4 sessions are devoted to learning the main features of the motif. In the fifth and sixth sessions, the more difficult variations are learnt, while the last session, the seventh, concludes with a summary of all the previous sessions. Each session includes a teacher presentation, short etudes choreographed by the instructor, and joint practice. The amount of time devoted to the teacher's presentation and the short etudes choreographed by the instructor is gradually taken over by the students' independent dance creation. These are typically performed in small groups and then individually. The teacher regularly uses in-process assessment. The training sessions are usually held every two weeks. Therefore, each session begins with a repetition.

The aim of the teaching is an improvised re-creation of the dance, using the structural principles of the dance recorded on film. This is achieved through classroom exercises and methods of assessment. Through teacher demonstrations and joint exercises, the students' independent dance re-creation is initially given equal time and gradually more and more time. At the beginning of the teaching process, individual variations are created on the basis of the the aspects learnt, with volontary application. Occasionally, one to three individual versions are learned by all. Homework is also assigned for the creation and design of other individual versions. The methodological element is concluded with a compulsory presentation of the individual version to everyone during the semester. The latter task can be performed in two ways: 1) A computer-generated version, unique to each student, must be recorded on video; 2) The individual version must be performed and recorded on video according to the given criteria.

It should be emphasized that no version of the original *kopogó* dance sequence is performed during the teaching. The goal is not to copy the dance, but to re-create it. It is especially rewarding when a student individually develops a motif that happens to match the version captured on film.

Group teaching of solo dances often risks reducing individual variations, as students may copy the movements of the teacher or the dancer performing in the film.

This can be avoided by constantly increasing the time devoted to individual improvisations, as outlined earlier, assigning tasks that encourage the creation of individual variations, and teaching the principles of editing.

In summary, the tradition of folk dance has undergone a significant transformation in recent decades, brought about by the transformation and disappearance of peasant culture. The various movements and initiatives of the twentieth

century, such as the *Gyöngyösbokréta* [Pearly Bouquet Movement] in the 1930s and the *táncház* [dance house] movements of the 1970s have played a key role in preserving folk dance and ensuring its transmission into the present day. Thanks to film recordings, new learning methods have emerged that allow for detailed copying of movements. However, this raises the question of individual creativity and the preservation of the earlier, improvisatory nature of dance. Current folk dance teaching and performance often focus on the exact copying of movements seen in archive films, which overshadows individual variations.

Conclusion

In this article, I have presented a methodological approach to education based on a detailed analysis of the *kopogó* motif from Mezőkomárom. This approach aims to support the survival of improvised folk dance without copying, thereby promoting the re-creation of the dance with the individual variations of the students. The teaching method used in the Hungarian Folk dance specialization of the Dancer and Coach program of the Hungarian Dance University is based on the transfer of the principles of traditional dance construction, through which students learn to re-create dances. It is very important to select the most relevant principles of motif construction, taking into account the purpose of the teaching, the dancers' background, age, time available and the importance of the principle of dance construction in the creation of motifs. The transmission of the four most important principles (the length of the motif, the starting jump of the motif, the final formula of the motif and the starting jump of the next motif) is based on gradual progression. Aspects and concrete curricula should be built on one another, as this approach fosters deeper understanding of dance for the students. An essential element of this is the use of the *háromugró* [triple jump] motif, typically associated with the *kopogó* motif, in the teaching process, aligned with the filmed traditional process. Individual creative work should be increasingly prominent in the teaching process in complementing group exercises. The in-class and extra-curricular exercises described above are essential for the creation of individual versions of the dance. Some of the editing principles observed in the traditional dance process have been modified regarding the length of the motif to enhance the success of the instruction. Reducing the length of the *kopogó* motif to four, or possibly three quarters, resulted in new variations that did not significantly deviate from the original dance but posed greater challenges from a dance technique perspective.

The outlined educational approach can also be applied to other motifs and dances. The teaching methodology based on structural analysis, as described above, contributes to the preservation of the movement and creative heritage of traditional dance culture within the revival movement.

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SUMMARY

The topic of the paper is the educational possibilities of the *kopogó* motif from Mezőkomárom, Hungary. The traditionalization of Hungarian folk dance was transformed by the breakup of peasant communities and the appearance of film recordings. With the development of technology and institutional education, new learning strategies have emerged. With the possibility of slowing down dance films and the emergence of group education, in addition to individual dance realization, copying dances is gaining an increasing role. The study aimed to present an educational methodology that promotes the survival of improvised folk dance without copying.

The structural analysis following the recording of the Labanotation of the dance revealed 11 aspects, with the help of which the motif appears in different versions. On the one hand, the description of the teaching process presents the 4 most important aspects of variation formation: the length of the motif, the starting jump of the motif, the final formula of the motif and the starting jump of the next motif. On the other hand, the study covers the details of the core implementations of the various aspects. This is how it deals with the issues of gradation, building sub-curriculums on top of each other, adapting to the student's abilities, the ratio of individual and group work, and examination.

The process outlined above of the educational methodology based on structural analysis contributes to the survival of the movement set and creative method of traditional dance culture in the revival movement.

POVZETEK

Poučevanje ljudskega plesa na podlagi strukturne analize na Madžarskem

Tema članka so izobraževalne možnosti plesnega motiva *kopogó* iz Mezőkomárom na Madžarskem. Tradicionalizacija madžarskega ljudskega plesa se je spremenila z razpadom kmečkih skupnosti in pojavom filmskih posnetkov. Z razvojem tehnologije in institucionalnega izobraževanja so se pojavile nove strategije učenja. Z možnostjo upočasnitve plesnih filmov in pojavom skupinskega izobraževanja, ob že uveljavljeni individualni plesni realizaciji, pridobiva vse večjo vlogo kopiranje plesov. Študija je namenjena predstavitvi izobraževalne metodologije, ki spodbuja ohranjanje improviziranega ljudskega plesa brez kopiranja. Strukturna analiza plesa z uporabo kinetografije je razkrila enajst aspektov, s katerimi se motiv pojavlja v različnih različicah. Po eni strani opis poučevanja predstavlja štiri najpomembnejše aspekte oblikovanja variacij: dolžino motiva, začetni skok motiva, končno formulo motiva in začetni skok naslednjega motiva. Po drugi strani študija zajema podrobnosti osnovnih izvedb različnih aspektov. Tako obravnava vprašanja gradacije, naslojevanja podkurikulumov, prilagajanja sposobnostim študentov, razmerja med individualnim in skupinskim delom ter preverjanja znanja.

Zgoraj opisani proces pedagoške metodologije, ki temelji na strukturni analizi, prispeva k ohranjanju gibalnega sklopa in ustvarjalne metode tradicionalne plesne kulture v okviru plesno preporodnega gibanja.

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O AVTORJU

HENRIK KOVÁCS (kovacs.henrik@mte.eu) je izredni profesor kinetografije in metodologije ljudskega plesa na Madžarski akademiji za ples. Ima diplomo iz kmetijskega inženirstva za razvoj podeželja (Univerza Szent István), s poudarkom na vlogi ljudskih plesnih ansamblov v lokalnih skupnostih. Na Madžarski akademiji za ples je pridobil diplomo in magistrski naziv iz poučevanja ljudskega plesa. Kot nekdanji namestnik direktorja osnovne šole za ples je diplomiral tudi iz vodstvenih funkcij v javnem šolstvu (Univerza za tehnologijo in ekonomijo

v Budimpešti). Leta 2019 je doktoriral iz etnografije (Univerza v Debrecenu). Od 14. leta poučuje in je v tej vlogi sodeloval z ljudskimi plesnimi skupinami, na tečajih in taborih v Karpatski kotlini. Je avtor študij o metodologiji plesa in kinetografiji ter član Mednarodnega sveta za kinetografijo Laban in Mednarodnega združenja za tradicije glasbe in plesa. Leta 2022 je prejel Viteški križec Madžarskega reda za zasluge.