THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPROVISATION IN THE ETHNOGRAPHIC TYPE DANCES. A SHORT CASE STUDY: THE *CĂLUŞ*

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SUMMARY. Improvisation is one of the essential choreutic processes for the folkloric nature of traditional dances, therefore it should be accorded the same importance in the dances of ethnographic type, as elements of a sustainable safeguarding. After a relatively consistent bibliographical introduction, centered on one of the studies based most on the Romanian choreic data, this article puts forward a short case study focusing on the ways improvisation reveals itself along the dances integrated in the ritual of *Căluş*. Detecting the mechanisms of the improvisation at the levels of its choreic texts and co-texts aims to reveal the significance of this process throughout the re-folklorization of the dances of ethnographic type.

Keywords: improvisation, *Căluş*, traditional dance, ethnographic type dance, composition, grammar of dance, safeguarding, folklorism

Introduction

In the counter-current of the transformation brought about by postmodernism and globalization, the safeguarding of traditional dance has, besides its scientific forms, those circumscribed to folklorism. The formulas of existence – most of them spectacular – of the dance which are circumscribed to this new phenomenon have at present, in comparison with the genuine forms of traditional dance still alive in some local traditions, a weight which is more and more significant for the national culture, a reality which has determined us as well to pay them a more attentive regard.

Caught in the race of the market economy, the forms belonging to the choreutic folklorism have become at present the object of a true dynamic industry in which, besides the show institutions financed out of public funds, private initatives are present in a growingly manner. The performances, TV emissions and shows containing dances which aim to salvage the traditional

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ones are relevant indicators for both the Romanian public's appetite for products inspired by the choreographic folklore and the patterns in which this products are designed and produced.

I have already pointed out, on a different occasion, the fact that being brought to its secondary existence (belonging to folklorism), the dance loses its quality of being 'traditional', turning itself into one of the following: character dance, theatre dance ot ethnographic dance. The last one can represent, due to the high level of its referentiality, an alternative method of safeguarding traditional dance and an approach complementary to the scientific one. But this only on condition that the ethnographic dances leave the choreographic patterns imposed in the first stage of the Communist Era, patterns which stem from the egalitarian ideology promoted by the communists and from the form thouroughly influenced by the Moiseevian vision on dance. I was stating, on the same occasion, the urge for a paradigm shift in the valorization of traditional dance, a shift prone to reconnect the ethnographic dance to the creative processes specific to the folkloric act, to its re-folklorization as a necessary form of a sustainable safeguarding (Petac, 2015).

Such a creative process, vital for the folkloric nature of dance, is the *improvisation*. Consequently, what we aim to achieve by this article is to investigate its role in the re-folklorization of the ethnographic dances: why is it so significant in the paradigm shift which is bearing nowadays the valorization of traditional dance? But before we find answers to these questions, let us ground our reflection on the opinions of some ethnochoreologists who have already drawn their attention to this research topic.

Ethnochoreological studies dedicated to improvisation

Analysed from different perspectives: anthropological (Kaepler, 1987), structuralist (Győrgy, 1980), semiotical (Giurchescu, 1983), looked upon through the lens of the personal experince of dance (Eriksen, 2000) or from the angle of its teaching utility (Okstad, 2000), improvisation still remains nowadays one of the topics arising the interest of the ethnochoreologists, a fact which indicates its importance for the understanding dance in general, as well as for perceiving the ways in which it develops itself in particular. Because this last but not least dimension of *process through which creativity (choreological, in this case)* manifests itself seems to be the essential convergency of all the pertinent observations made upon the improvisation in traditional dance.

From an extensive study dedicated to improvisation we retain some observations made by Anca Giurchescu starting from the dichotomies which mark the foundations of this process (passim Giurchescu, 1983). For our perspective, a more attentive lecture of this study imposes itself, given the fact that the article addresses mainly the issue of improvisation on the data of Romanian culture of traditional dance, which culture we are also investigating and addressing.

Expression of the creative individuality, the improvisation is thoroughly conditioned by the interpersonal and social relations, being the resultant of a balance between two circuits of communication: one – 'internal', of psychic, mental and emotional origin, reflecting the dancer's personality and the other – 'external', belonging to the social level, consisting of the conditionings issued from the dance partners, the musicians, the audience, the cultural and social norms. The dichotomy between the *freedom* and the *contraints* which mark the emergence of the dance forms as bodily expressions of the dancer's creativity is doubled by another dichotomy, between the *model* of such a dance (model which exists in the mind and in the body of he dancer and which includes mental, emotional and kinetic images) and *the unique variant* of that dance, embedded, in a context always definable through other conjectural data (*passim* 1983: 23-25).

The same semiotic paradigm is to be found in the dichotomy between the *competence* and the *ability* to improvise of a dancer. The author defines the competence as '...the relation of an individual to the level of the dance idiom which exists in a given cultural tradition. More specificaly it comprises generalised mintal and kineæsthetic representations of rhythmically ordered movements, structured according to a set o grammatical rules which, when performed, are recognised by the given community as dance patterns' (1983:27), while 'the form in which particular competence is translated into reality (i.e. in an actual dance perfomarnce) is shaped by virtue of the dance's ability', a form which involves '…the faculty to recall, evaluate and select nearly simultaneously the pre-existent dance stereotypes, according to all the objective and subjective conditions which determine a given performance' (1983:28).

Last, but not least, an important dichotomy is that which makes the distinction between the process of *improvisation* and that of *composition*, respectively between the improvised variants and the composed ones. These last ones can be defined by the fact that they are repeated identically, in fixed forms, throughout each and every execution, while improvised variants most often differ one from another, being considered new personal creations. Both processes are intentional and have the same phases, the essential distinction consisting of the fact that, in the case of improvisation, the phase of mental preparation of the execution is congested in the next phase: the execution of the model, the act of dancing (*passim* 1983: 21-29).

The semiotic anchorage of the approach is much more visible in the definition given to the improvisation: 'improvisation in dance may be interpreted as a form of artistic communication through which man releases his creative energy, in strict to the social context' (1983:26), a communication finding its shape in a dance idiom culturally determined. From here stems a specific name of improvisation, each personal creation 'is in fact only a particular mode of employement, and manipulation of a traditional kinetic-rhytmic vocabulary according to a set of supra-individual structural rules' (1983:24).

Analysing mostly Romanian choreutic data, the author draws the distinction between the different grades which improvisation can unfold (*passim* 1983: 29-49). A grade 'zero' of improvisation is to be observed in some types of group dances, marked by homogeneity in execution (a fixed succession of the dance sequences strongly related to the musical phrasing, fixed itineraries of the group's unfolding in space, strongly formalized relationships between partners).

A first grade of improvisation is specific to those dances in which we are confronted with the variation of some fixed structures within a larger structural frame, that of the dance's entirety. This improvisation grade is to be encountered in the group dances mostly danced in an open circle (chain dance). Within this class of dances, the improvisation can be produced mainly in two ways: either by varied links of unities with a fixed dimension, but which are familiar to some improvisation within this dimensional frame (most often by the changing the theme), or by linking some different, heterogenous motifs (1983:32-34).

Within the class of pair dances with a free disposal in the dancing space an important limitation of the improvisation stems from the nature itself of the couple formation. Here, the improvisation asks for a good interaction between partners, meaning 'collaboration, reciprocal understanding, flexibility and feeling for the other partener's creative intentions, as well as equal degree of technical skill'. Improvisation is also limited by the type/ sub-type of dance, by a repertory of dance sequences (mostly motifs) imposed by the local tradition, repertory which can be leaned on (especially by the man, who leads the dance), sometimes by the melody on which they dance (its metrico-rhytmic). Improvisation can appear, as the autor points out by means of some examples, at the level of the dance sequences by means of variation between distinct phrases or varied phrases. As well as that, improvisation can be present in the dimensioning of the phrases, in a strong link with the melody and the text of the *strigătură* (shout) (*passim* 1983:34-39).

The freedom to improvise is to be found at its highest level in the solo dances, in which '(...) the dancer operates primarily with the smallest significant and independent unit, the dance motif'. The improvisation leans here both on the principle of analogy and on that of contrast by the fact that the motifs relate one to another by dint of of these two principles. By means of analysing two types of improvised solo dances, the researcher comes to the conclusion that, in improvising dances belonging to these types, a repertory of motifs whose limit is dictated by the type to which the dances belong is to be employed. In the composition of these dances, beyond the extra-choreutic elements, which can strongly influence the construction of a dance form (the dancing melody, the relation with the musicians, with the onlookers), one can detach a series of patterns by dint of which the improvised forms come to life: '1. aaa_v (b)*; *ababab*: this forms offer the lowst rate of new inputs; 2. *abacad...*; the regular repeat of the same image enables the mintal planning of the new and always varying motifs

(rondo-like forms); 3. *abc*; *abbc*; the grouped forms, with functionally differentiated units, reflect a clear way of thnking and make up most of new, unexpected innovations' (*passim* 1983:39-48).

The same relevant observation on the improvisation as a creative process can be found in a study of Martin György. Without persisting on this one we retain nevertheless some of the observations made by the Hungarian researcher (*passim* György, 1980). Focusing on the culture of traditional Hungarian dance, the researcher first of all notices the fact that the study of improvisation allows a peer through the history of dance, by demarcating some paradigms of creation in traditional dance and by contextualizing them on historical criteria (1980:393-394).

The throughgoing study of improvisation asks as well for the understanding of the regularities contained by the dance: 'The study of improvisation means at the same time the investigation of the regulation of folk dance as well, namely it reveals those regularities which build the performance on the basis of the instantaneous eventualities' (1980:394).

Improvisation is pursued depending on the way in which it can operate in the different dance categories in the Hungarian culture of traditional dance. The Hungarian researcher demarcates four levels of improvisation, from the highest level specific to the solo dances to the lowest one, particular to couple dances which themselves compose a certain formation (line, semicircle, circle).

The analysis of the Hungarian boylike dances from the perspective of the construction methods of the dance text by means of improvisation leads the Hungarian choreologist to demarcating two stylistic areas of Hungarian boylike dances (partially valid for some of the Romanian types): an Eastern area and a Western one; for the first of them, the particular structure is the type $AAAA_v$; AAAB; $ABAB_v$, for the second – the ABBC type (1980:420).

An *intimate* regard (as the author herself calls it) on the improvisation is put forward by Helen Eriksen in a short article through which she pursues to conceptualize as much as possible the act of improvisation, to which she often refers in her work as a professional dancer. The author creates on stage many spontaneous moments 'in constant interaction with music, musicians, audience and a variety of other factors (as varied as: my mood, what I ate for breakfast, the lighting, a splitere in my foot etc.).' (Eriksen: 2000:1)

Thus, improvisation at its best is something quite far removed from composition. Not only because it occurs in a split second, but mainly because the act of conscious choice is discontinued and room is opened for true creativity, which seems to me to come from beyond the confines of personal consciousness, somewhere from a realm that could be called divine inspiration, or collective consciousness or... (Eriksen: 2000:2).

Even though more essay-like, the dancer's discourse is also one that catches some of the essential aspects of the improvisation process. Some important elements in the act of improvisation are spontaneity, communication, expression, inner state. All these, according to the author, come together with

a certain *flow* which has to contain the *sense* of the improvisation, a sense that stems from somewhere inside the dancer.

Kari Margaret Okstad arranges the analysis of the concepts of composition and improvisation in the context of the methods of teaching Norwegian traditional couple dances. For Okstad, *composition* 'means the rule for putting together dance motifs while you are dancing in order to stay within the norms of the dance community for what this dance should look like (...) we may talk about composition as the rules governing the spontaneous act of composing while dancing, where the aim is to compose the dance differently in each performance', while *improvisation* 'is the skill the dancers have, spontaneously and with personal solutions, to adapt both the dance form and the step patterns during the performance to the situation and the context. (...). In my mind the improvisation is a result of individuality appearing as response to stimuli from the dance environment' (Okstad: 2000:1).

By means of analysing the way in which traditional couple dances have been transmitted, the researcher indicates the fact that, in Norway, the *revival*-type activities initiated at the beginning of the 20th century have lead to the repetition, in a standardized way, of some dance motifs, nevertheless without transmitting the rules of combining these motifs as well, the result being a dance from which improvisation was missing. Abandoning this means of transmission, the researcher indicates that nowadays the teaching methods focus not only on the dance motifs, but also on the grammar rules to which these on are submitted, in such a way that 'the dancers are expected to compose their dance in their personal style each time they dance' and even to dare to compose their own dances. (Okstad: 2000:2).

Variation as a form of improvising in dance texts of *Căluş* in Izvoarele, Olt

The *Căluş* dances are only apparently less bidding for a study dedicated to improvisation. And this mainly because, as their principal function resides in the ritual or ceremonial pursuits, they are structured in a pattern which has to be reproduced as exactly as possible on the occasion of each performance. Neverthelss, they are far from appearing as standardized, their structural regularity and their stylistic homogeneity being submitted to the folkloric relativism as well as to all the mechanisms of producing and transmitting specific to all folkloric facts. In this study we are interested in learning the forms in which improvisation is present in *Căluş* dances and how it is produced, which role it plays within the dances and the whole *Căluş* ritual in Izvoarele, Olt. It must be mentioned here that the aspects subdued to our analysis are to a large extent specific to a larger *Căluş* area, expanded from the towns of Drăgăneşti-Olt and Roşiorii de Vede (at the South) to Piteşti-Râmnicu Vâlcea (at the North).

The cycle of *Căluş* dances in Izvoarele, Olt district consists in three dances: *Căluşul*, *Sârba căluşărească* and *Hora*. The *Căluş* dance is composed of two alternative parts, generically called: *plimbări* (strolls) and *mişcări* (movements).

The term *plimbare* (stroll) denominates both *a part of dance* and *a motif* or *a figure* which most often gives its name to this part[2]. At its turn, the term *mişcare* (movement) covers three choreological facts. The first one is that of the whole part of dance (a choreutic macro-structure). As well as that, we understand by *mişcare* the choreographic structure consisting of five figures: *Una-două*, *Surpătura*, *Târul*, *figura-temă*, *Târul* (in the village of Izvoarele). In the end, the third choreological fact so called is the theme-figure, the one which gives its name to the whole sequence and part of dance[3].

One of the forms of manifestation of improvisation in *Căluş* dances is *variation*, and among the different forms this one has, the most visible in these dances is the *dimensional variability*. It is produced differently within each one of the three dances. The highest level of dimensional variability is to be found in *plimbări* (strolls – parts of the *Căluş* dance) and *Hora*, while in *mişcări* (other parts of the *Căluş* dance) and in *Sârba*, the dimensional variability is relatively reduced.

The structuring of the *plimbări* (part of the dance) of a *Căluş[4]* (understood here as a dance) is variable. All the sections in a *plimbare* have a dimensional variability, therefore they are subdued to improvisation by variation. Only that dimensional variability is created in different manners. For a first category of sections in this dance the dimensional variability is based on the identical or varied concatenation (correspondent variation) of the basic cells. These open sections are very unstable from the formal point of view, their dimension being influenced by the ex-choreographical factors (the mood of the *vătaf* – the leader, the extent of fatigue, if the band is dancing for an ex-*căluşar* or for a more important person, the time that the leader wants to assign to a dance in the yard of each villager etc.).

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[2] The dance has a vertical organization structured on several formal levels. The main level is *the dance itself* (T), which can be decomposed in *parts of dance* (P) or in *strophes* (St), sometimes even in *sections* (S) or in *phrases* (Ph). The parts of dance can be decomposed at their turn in sections and phrases. The sections can be decomposed in phrases and a phrase can be decomposed in *motifs* (M). Motifs can be at their turn fragmented in subdued unities, in *cells* (Motif-cell, Mc), the cells in *elements* (Motif-elements, me).

[3] The denomination by the same term of several choreological facts infers that on each employment we indicate the meaning we give to the term, on condition that this meaning be not easily deductible from the immediate context.

[4] By *Căluş*, during fieldwork, we understand together: (1) the bunch of aromatic plants held on top of the band's flag, in fact a symbol of their ritual bond; (2) the dance composed of the alternative succession of certain *plimbări* and *mişcări* (as parts of the dance); (3) the complex of rites and ceremonials carried out by the band of *căluşari* during the days of the Whitsuntide, a complex which is centered on the dances performed on this occasion.

The second category of section from strolls consists of two types of subunits: one dimensional variable subunit born through identical repetition of a cell and one or two subunits which have invariable dimension. They bring stability for whole part of dance. Although have fixed size, their repetitions in a frame by a part of dance can dictate this part of dance some dimensional variability.
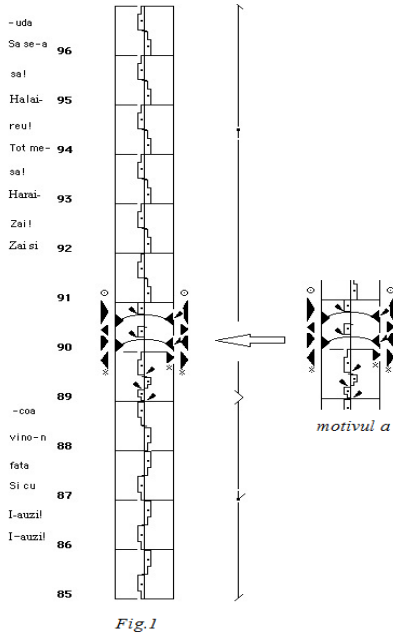
E.g. 1

Fig.1

The syntactic rules to which these open as well as closed structures are subdued are characterised by a thorough stability. These rules generate – for each of these structures – specific syntactic functions (introductory, linking, theme or conclusive functions).

In the following, we draw attention only to one example. In the *Căluş* dance from the village of Izvoarele, the shift in the movement direction and in the body orientation within these open sections of the *plimbări* (strolls) has to be done by means of the interposition of the motif *a* between the two sections linearly contingent (see fig. 1). This motif holds the position of an introductive unity for the section which it opens. But in the ensemble of the *plimbare* (the part of the dance) it can be understood as a structure with a linking function between the two open sections of the *plimbare*. Consequently, the functions of a unity derive as well from the choreutic level which we are taking into consideration when analyzing them. The relation established between the motif *a* and the rest of the section which it introduces is a fix one, in the sense that the motif can only hold this position within a section of a *plimbare*.

As well as that, the figures which represent stability anchors in the ensemble of the *plimbare* within the very open structure of the improvisation respect, within the sections, the same functional pattern: at the section level they hold an introductory position. But at the level of the ensemble, a figure can hold the position of the *theme* (sometimes giving its name to the whole part of the dance) as well as the the position of conclusion. The dimensional variability is strongly linked to the compositional methods, a fact which finally influences the style of these dances. By means of it, the *vătaf* (the leader) expresses his liberty of improvisation in devising the whole dance. The compositional methods which operate during the *plimbări* (strolls) are as follows:

A. The repetition

A.1. the varied repetition of the principal parameters:
A.1.1. the kinetic one
A.1.1.1. correspondent
A.1.1.2. alternative
A.2. the structurally varied repetition

B. The composition (by means of juxtaposition)

One of the forms resulting of these compositional methods is the *rondo* form, one which we can find at different levels of thse dances: at the level of the elements, at the level of the cells, at the level of the motifs (see Petac, 2014:72). We also have to remark that the dimensions of the open sections as well as the number of repetitions of the closed sections are decided by the *vătaf* (the leader), by means of the shouted command.

A *mişcare* (part of the dance) regularly has, in this area of the *Căluş*, two parts: an introductory part and the proper *mişcare* (section of the dance). The same as in *plimbare*, the dimensional variability in a *mişcare* (part of the dance) has two sources: the variation of the introductory part and the repetition of the proper *mişcare*. But a significant difference between the *plimbare* and the *mişcare* is the fact that in the case of the *mişcări* (movements – parts of the dance), the dominant unities are those with a fix dimension, which is unchanging in the syntagmatic plan.

E.g. 2

The introductory part is most often composed of microstructures (motifs of small dimensions) and it varies in dimension depending on the number of repetitions dictated by the *vătaf* (the leader). Within a *Căluş* dance only one or two *mişcări* (parts of the dance) are usually performed, this number of repetitions is seldom surpassed.
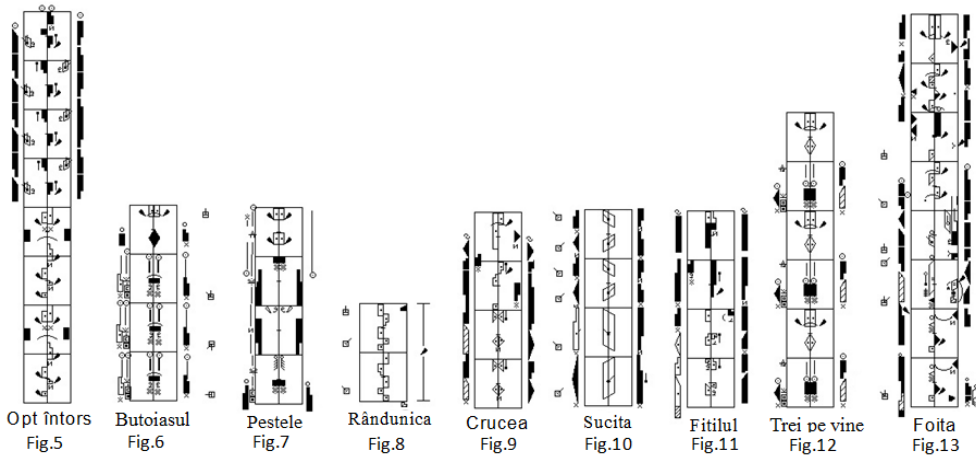
In case that, within a *Căluş* dance, two or more different upper movements are danced (as sections), the dimensional variability is influenced as well by the dimension of the theme-figure. This is because the themes of the *mişcări* (sections of the dance) can have a different metrico-rhythmic dimension. As we have already mentioned, a *mişcare* in the village of Izvoarele, Olt district, has the following structure: (a) *Una-două* (fig. 2); (b) Surpătura (fig. 3); (c) *Târul* (fig. 4); (d) *Figura/ motivul-temă*; (e) *Târul* (fig. 4). Out of all these unities which form a *mişcare* (section) in Izvoarele,

Fig. 2
Una-două

Fig.3
Surpătura

Fig 4
Târul
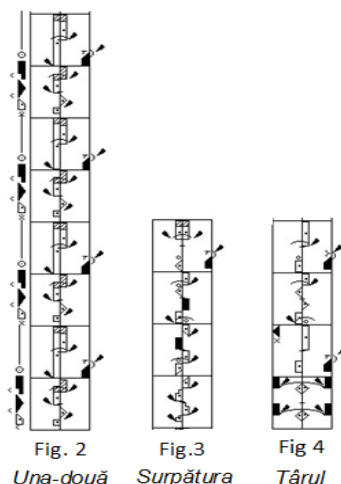
Olt, the theme-figure is the only one that changes, all the other unities staying the same on every occasion.

So, in order to understand the dimensional variation specific to this part of the dance, we must observe all the theme-figures which together form the specific paradigm of this part of the *Căluş* dance in Izvoarele, Olt. To give an example, we indicate in the following the paradigm of the motifs/ theme-figures identified by us in the fieldwork carried out in Izvoarele in 2007 (fig. 5 – fig. 13). The paradigm of the themes (at the level of the section) is as follows:

E.g. 3

Opt întors
Fig.5

Butoiasul
Fig.6

Pestele
Fig.7

Rândunica
Fig.8

Crucea
Fig.9

Sucita
Fig.10

Fitilul
Fig.11

Trei pe vine
Fig.12

Foita
Fig.13

In a paradigmatic plan, each of these themes enters in a relation with the other structures forming the text of a *mişcare* (section); in a syntagmatic plan, they have syntactic relations with the structures placed in the immediate vicinity, according to the principle of liniarity. Consequently, for a *mişcare* (section), we have the following types of syntagmatic relations: *Una-două* – (fix relation) –- *Surpătura* – (fix relation) – *Târul* – (mobile relation) –- theme-/ motif-figure – (mobile relation) –*Târul.* Hence, the correlations appear in only one place of this text, linked to the theme-figures.

The reduced dimensional variation of the *mişcări* (as parts of the dance) is due to the fact that an important part of the part of the dance is composed of sections whose compositional method is the juxtaposition. The contingent identical repetition of these ones leads to the consolidation of this impression of formal stability, even if it produces the effect of a dimensional variation. The higher grade of liberty concerning the dimensional variation belongs to the introductory section, whose compositional method is the identical repetition (possibly varied kinetically). Eventually, we have to highlight the fact that on the motif level of the movements we can encounter the *rondo* form, the same as in *plimbări,* a form resulted of the recurrence of a certain unity.

In comparison with the *mişcări*, *Sârba* has a much more accentuated dimensional variability, similar to the one in *plimbări*. This dimensional variability, controlled as well through the shouted command of the *vătaf* (the leader) is encountered in all the four sections of the dance, with the only mention that in the first section the principal unity it is a motif, while in the other three sections the principal unity is the figure.

Less shouted, *Hora* has as well different dimensions, depending of the context (whether there have been many spectators, whether within the *Hora* there have been *jucaţi* – danced – small children etc.). The decision to close this dance is usually left at the ease of the musicians.

All the dances in the *Căluş* cycle are dimensioned by means of the dance commands formulated by the *vătaf* (the leader). In a *Căluş* (the dance) they regularly dance three *plimbări* and two *mişcări*, one *Sârba* and one *Hora*. But, as we have already indicated, depending on several factors related to the social context of the performance, the number of *plimbări* and *mişcări* can grow or, on the contrary, it can decrease, sometimes the *Hora* can be absent as well.

The analysis we have unfolded indicates *where* and *how* the improvisation can appear at the level of the dance texts and co-texts, *which* are its limits within the *Căluş* dances in Izvoarele. The chained forms are also to be encountered in the *plimbări* and in the *Hora*, those emerged on the principle of grouping being rather encountered in the *mişcări* and in the *Sârbă*. The *rondo* form balances the micro-levels of the *plimbări* and the *mişcări*, being formed especially of elements, cells and motifs. The improvisation limits stem from the syntactic relations in which the dance structures are involved, as well as from the correlations imposed by the paradigms of these three dances.

We also have to highlight the importance given to the shout of command. By means of it, the *vătaf* (the leader) dimensions the sequences of the dances, dictating by default the composition method. The dance melody, the other co-text, has not such a great importance when speaking of improvisation in the *Căluş* dance analysed here. But we must highlight the fundamental link between the three types of texts (dance, music, text), a link due to the 8/8 series, a common one for the dance motif, the musical phrase and the shouted verse.

Beyond the dance texts, in the ritual/ ceremonial of the *Căluş* there is also a moment where the improvisation plays an important part: the burlesque theatre scene unfolded by the *Mut* (an inside out leader) in collaboration with the *vătaf* (the leader) and the other *căluşari* (dancers). In the case of the *Căluş* from Izvoarele (and, by extension, for its whole stylistic area), the improvisation serves at:

- the adaptation of the repertory to the exigence of the context in which this is performed, as well as to the spontaneous possibilities of the dancers;
- the creation of an emulation within the group of dancers and within the 'patients'/ the audience;

- the abandon of a monotony which becomes inevitable when repeating the same cycle of dances;
- the detour of a standardization in performing the dances; even if the local tradition imposes performing of the same pattern (cycle of dances), between a performance and another there are differences in achieving this cycle of dances. The fact determines the dancers to pay more attention to the *vătaf*'s commands, according this way authenticity to those precise, unrepeatble moments;
- a better knowledge of the *Căluş* repertory by the community members (passive participants to the ritual/ ceremonial), but also by the dancers themselves, especially by the new ones in the group;
- practicing the structural unities (motifs, figures) and the rules by means of which these ones receive a shape, practically the actualizing of the local dance grammar of the *Căluş*;
- the safeguarding of certain motifs or figures which, for various reasons, are about to enter the passive repertory, the performance of these last ones being most often imposed by the ex-dancers or other villagers with a virtuosity in *Căluş* dances;
- proving, in front of the group and in front of the community, the leadership qualities of the *vătaf*.

The significance of improvisation in the safeguarding of the *Căluş* dances by means of the ethnographic type dances

Back in this paper I was stating that the ethnographic type dances can constitute o complementary way (of practical nature) for the scientific safeguarding of traditional dances. The essential condition is that of respecting as much as possible the folkloric nature of traditional dances, as well as a re-contextualization as close as possible to the original (both in function and in form).

In the case of the *Căluş* dance, this process of translation from the traditional culture towards folklorism uprises several specific issues, given the bonds (still very strong here and there) to a background of specific mythical and religious beliefs. Consequently, we are entitled to ask ourselves what is that can be translated (re-contextualized), which are the 'losses' and which are the 'profits' that accompany this process.

First of all it must be emphasized that this process of re-contextualization in folklorism of the *Căluş* dances is not at all new. On the contrary, given the weight of national symbol that the ritual has (so, by default, its dances), it has been among the first elements of the traditional peasant culture to enter the attention of the Romanian intellectuals during the 19th century. Both then and now, the main aspects which were translated were the dance, its music and, to a smaller extent, the *strigătură* (shout).

It is obvious that all the elements thouroughly bound to the ground of magical and religious beliefs are, if not impossible, at least very difficult to re-contextualize. An entire series of rites (those of the ritual binding of the group, of its untying, the curing and the prophylactic rites) cannot make sense in the new contexts, given the absence of that background of beliefs to which I was refering upwards and the absence of the time, space and causality elements which define the original context.

In this case, the aspects which still can be re-contextualized are the dance, the music and the *strigătura* (shout). Only the taking over of *the whole textual structures and the grammar by virtue of which these structures make a* **choreutic** *sense* can lead to keeping that ethnographic information which gives the re-contextualization the value of a safeguarding act. It is only this way that the re-contextualization respects, at its highest level, the principle of referentiality, a principle essential to the safeguarding of the folkloric elements of traditional culture.

Taking over the grammar of the dance together with the textual structures involves by default taking over the methods of improvisation of the dances' texts. The improvisation contributes, to a large extent, to the creation of the local/ regional identity of a dance repertory, its role being essential from the perspective of preserving the diversity which is specific to the cultures of folkloric type. Consequently, we can understand that only those performances of ethnographic dance which respect this specific morphological and syntactic content can be truly considered acts of safeguarding of certain forms of traditional dance.

Pursuing for years now the phenomenon of the *Căluş* dance, we can state that nowadays we are confronted to two types of capitalization (most of all on stage) of the *Căluş* dances:

a. A first type is when the actants are most often authentic *Căluş* dancers, who dance in the original villages a ritual or ceremonialized *Căluş.* The majority of these groups present, in the contexts subdued to folklorism, the whole dance cycle, respecting by these means not only the original stylistics, but also the composition methods of the *Căluş* dances. The very high level of referentiality turns these dances of ethnographic type into real samples of folkloric culture, acts through which the *Căluş* traditions can be safeguarded.

b. A second type of capitalization is the one which was born during the communist dictatorship, under the very strong influence of the Moiseevian model of choreographing folkloric dances. These groups of dances regularly present several choreographic compilations which actually lack a plain identity and, most severe of all, lack any logic in the grammar specific to the *Căluş* dances. In general, these dances are thouroughly fictionalized, inevitably warding off from a high level of referentiality. The strong standardization leads to a severe shrinking of the methods by means of which improvisation can manifest itself, thus generating, with each performance on stage, forms evacuated of all ethnographic content.

Only by understanding the differences between these two types of capitalization can we understand as well the importance of improvisation within the dances of ethnographic type. Taking over the improvisation methods specific to the *Căluş* dance (as part of the package of morphological and syntactic information transmitted in the context of folklorism) can lead, *volens nolens*, to the process of re-folklorization of these dances of ethnographic type and to the abandoning of those methods of stage capitalization stemmed from the communist ideology and contrary to the folkloric nature of the dances of ethnographic type.

From this perspective, the improvisation is one of the elements than can turn sustainable the process of safeguarding the forms of dance/ music/ literary text specific to a certain locality or zone where the dance repertories share the same principal stylistic traits. Because beyond anything else, the important target in the process of safeguarding is keeping this local/ regional specific as an essential factor of the cultural difference, as an indentitary mark for a certain community and as a proof for certain ethnographic realities on the verge of extinction.

Translated by Anca Maria-Pănoiu

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