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Men and female in dance tradition of Magyarózd

Summary

During my university studies, it usually caught my attention that in Hungary, the relations between men and women has never been clearly defined, analysed and interpreted, neither in Hungarian dance folkloristics, nor in folk dance education, which is built from a historical-geographical and structuralist research approach. Generally speaking about the history of Hungarian dance research, it was man-centred and androcentric, therefore, most of the informants were men. A man can never experience the situation or the role of a woman, and vice versa.

According to my hypothesis of the PhD research, dance may include all those gender roles that are present in the whole society. The question is that which social expectations are applied: how the image and the role of a woman or a man are constructed. This leads us to the question: if dance carries only these gender roles, can it be interpreted as a kind of border crossing? Touching limits can stand as an example. During dancing, the dancers are allowed to touch such parts of each other's bodies where physical contact would not be allowed in the other aspects of social life. In case dance carries (also) this meaning, then to what extent can it add more to everyday life and differ from common situations? Which indications or signs in a dance can be interpreted as expressions of an individual's sexual identity and roles? Is it even possible to put such an interpretation on these signs? Is it possible to understand them? I sought answers to these questions during my PhD.

In my research, I considered dance as a cultural and social phenomenon, I tried to do the analysis of the message what (supposedly) expressed the dance, and I focused on the role and the social function of the dance in the society. Thus, in my dissertation, I considered predominantly the approaches of dance anthropology, which I supplemented with the popular and accepted theories of gender studies in postmodern social sciences.

One of the important papers are Judith Lynne Hanna *Dance, Sex and Gender*. It was published in 1988, under the title of *Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance and Desire*. According to her, we can understand each other by the terminology of socio-cultural gender. She considers that there is a less widely recognised opportunity in dance, which "tells us" what it means to be a woman or a man. (Hanna 1988:3)

Hanna does not consider the gender expressions of dance to be intentional, she regards them unintended. (Hanna 2010: 212) In other words, dancing is an action during which the gender roles and symbols become clearly visible, but the individuals do not apply them deliberately.

Since the 1980s, studies on the relationship between dance and gender have become increasingly popular in international dance anthropology. Looking at the results of international discourse, it became apparent that, in many cases, little attention was paid to the presentation of the surrounding society and its interpretation as part of the interpretation of dance. One of the most comprehensive books is by Jane K. Cowan, who, at the end of the 20th century, provided a comprehensive account of the manifestations of the social gender roles of a Greek village in its community and dance tradition.

In Hungary, research in this field began only at the end of the 20th century, and earlier, mainly descriptively, works were not really interested in gender roles, and the articulation and in-depth study of these roles in dance is clearly missing from previous works. In Hungarian folkdance, the accepted attitude is that in dancing the man is the leader and the woman follows him. This general approach has not yet been studied in depths.

In 2015, with the help of a village structure questionnaire, I surveyed the settlement composition, demographic structure, ethnic, denominational change, occupational distribution and educational attainment of the village. In society of Magyarózd, which was inhabited mainly by Hungarians, after the Second World War, economic and social changes caused men to be more burdened and earlier to die, so there are far more widows than widowers. Its population has been declining steadily since World War I, which by 2015 had fallen below 300, and has since fallen over the last 4 years. There was no significant change in the ethnic and denominational division, and it is clear from the census that it is a Reformed village with a Hungarian majority from the 19th century to the present.

After the structure of the settlement was introduced, the society and dance life were introduced with the gender roles in the centre. Three major age groups can be distinguished in human life: childhood, adolescence and adulthood (which involves the old age). In my analysis, I introduced social phenomena and dance life in these four stages of life in relation to the interaction of the two genders and their relationship to one another. For each age group, I have associated social expectations that are specific, but not exclusively, to a given age, such as socialization in childhood, choosing a partner in adolescence, and family formation in adulthood.

During childhood, children become a part of society through socialization, get to know their immediate environment and culture, and become familiar with their dance traditions. Their specific biological sex at the moment of birth affects all the roles that society gives the individual. The related processes and roles are encoded in the society, thus they are integrated into its basic institutions (economy, family, politics). In traditional peasant societies, including Magyarózd, in the 20th century, children at the moment of their birth were placed in a particular order, whose unwritten rules, laws first unnoticed by the parents through their parents, then by the school and their peers the individual.

In the 20th century, the post-confirmation period brought a great change for the youth of Magyarózd. In this phase of life, they have to choose a partner. In terms of gender, choosing a partner plays an important role, as the male and female characteristics that come to prominence can carry relevant information about the expectations of the community and culture towards women and men. Such a prime location is the spinning institution, because as a continuation of socialization, young people learned here what is right and wrong for boys and girls. Explaining the play of the girl spinning, pittance created an opportunity for sympathy, love, and young people learned the rules, taboos and rights of lovers in the 20th century within the framework of village society.

Below are some of the conclusions that can be drawn from my research:

1. In my initial hypothesis, I interpreted dance as a social phenomenon in which the gender roles of society become apparent. If we look only at the relevance of childhood, this stage of the dance life reflects the individual's social expectations of childhood. This period of the dance tradition is also characterized by socialization, unobtrusive learning, boys and girls unobtrusively mastering the unwritten rules of dance and, of course, the very foundations of concrete dance.
2. The social expectations of the individual during marriage are transformed and changed. At this age, the roles and tasks of men and women are manifested mainly as family roles. After the choice of a spouse, starting a family in the individual's life becomes the primary expectation and this determines the gender roles for most of their lives. In the analysis of childhood and adolescence we could see that social practices and dance life are in sync with each other, and social expectations of the individual can be traced in dance life. In the dance life of the adolescent, this is also apparent in a less explicit way. If we consider social gender roles to be very significant as family roles, the problem of deciphering their articulations in dance is problematic. The regularity of dance in the

marriage period is much lower than in the younger age, in addition to the daily routine they dance much less, the spouses entertain themselves and their forms of entertainment change. Life events in an individual's life also have an impact on participation in dance events. The given social expectations only provide guidance to members of society, but individual intentions allow for behaviour to be deviated from norms. Different behaviours compared to social expectations are noticed, reacted, accepted or rejected by the given community.

3. The comparative analysis of the “szegényes” female and male versions of the 20th century projection of the gender roles of Magyarózd made a major contribution to the emergence of feminine and masculine signs of dance. The “szegényes” analysis of the Hungarian hostess dance and the male did not give a general feminine and masculine result, but we learned what this town of Maros-Küküllő expects in the 20th century, what qualities and movements it gives to women and men as individuals. What we consider to be feminine, masculine, are attributes and characteristics that probably have a different meaning nowadays. The dance examples I examined also confirm that the dance traditions and situations that override these stiffened views can also be found in the Hungarian traditions of dance. Although uncommon, housewife’s dance was an integral part of the dance and wedding process, and it was not unusual in village society for women to raise their feet or swung their feet at certain dance events. The men especially liked it, they watched which woman raised her legs higher. All the qualities that a society gives or expects of an individual contribute to the development of femininity and masculinity. Behind the feminine and masculine movements are socially determined regularities from which the individual cannot escape under any circumstances. Gender symbols discovered in society can provide a clue as to whether gender roles are grouped along the same lines in dance. All this requires a better knowledge of the dancing community and culture.
4. The important question is whether dance carries only the gender roles existing in society, or can it be interpreted as a kind of border crossing? I looked at the Magyarózd couple dance, the csárdás, as to whether the touches and gestures in it could really be considered as border crossing. With the inclusion of the second group of revival dancers, it was necessary to recognize the fact that if we wanted to identify and analyse the gender roles in dance and cross-border movements along the information they received. We could not help but see that the members of these two groups were socialized at different times and

in different social contexts, as a result of which borders are displaced. In other words, comparisons were made difficult, as what might happen to one group might not fit into the dance.

First, I examined the proximal factors of whether the distance between a man and a woman is a border crossing. Despite the fact that Hall are confronted with a sense of confidentiality while dancing, and that physical proximity can become both disturbing and intrusive, this branch of proxemics, despite the initial hypothesis, is not a possible way of border crossing. It is common practice in everyday life to use space, that is to say, when we consider dance as an integral part of society, there are also proxemic features and attributes that are not common in other areas of everyday life. However, it does not have cross-border properties.

Because of the inherent nature of the Magyarózd couple dances, the dancers are placed at a distance from each other, so if we follow my initial hypothesis, even if it is a couple dance, there is already a clear crossing over everyday interpersonal space use. The distance between the two parties is different from everyday life. But that would obviously be the wrong conclusion.

5. There are countless socially defined unwritten rules of physical contact that are known, accepted, and used by the individuals who make up that society. In general, couple dances provide a way to touch our partner.

In local dances, with the back and the arm touched, men could touch the breasts and buttocks of women with their palms. The research suggests that the phenomenon was actually found in several areas of the 20th century Hungarian folk dance tradition. After the examples and interviews, it can be stated that there are indeed these touches in dance, which appear as surplus in the dance process, which are not indispensable in the dance, without which their contents would not be damaged. These movements can be considered as cross-border movements.

6. In my research, the content of the understandings, consciousness becomes the key. In my dissertation I interpreted it as follows: on the one hand it can be an act performed by a person, in this case a deliberate individual decision due to individual decision, on the other hand as another level, we can define the actions we are aware of, but not as a result of our own decision, but as doing, or not doing, the norms we have learned through the socialization of the society around us.

Interview details show that men are aware of their actions, but the touch is not the result of an earlier decision, but the frames and boundaries provided by the dance allow them to move. It is also apparent from the reports of the revival dancers that there are men who have often, but not at all, been acquainted with the individual dance styles after several dances, and have known which men are to be expected of these extra touches. According to an informant from Magyarózd, this was completely natural and was an integral part of the dance.

Clothing cannot be ignored when decoding dance and intimacy, especially since the female perception of touch is highly dependent on the type of clothing the woman is wearing. In thicker and often tighter clothes of traditional peasant culture, women felt less and perhaps less intrusive when touching their breasts while dancing than in the thinner, lighter clothes of contemporary culture.

In everyday life and in dance, there were different unwritten rules whose boundaries did not coincide. Dance allowed much more for the individual in 20th-century peasant societies, as it was the only time for physical contact, especially for the youth. The frames of the dance allowed these extra touches.

7. My local informants in Magyarózd can be divided into two large groups according to what they think about this touch. One group treats it as completely natural, while the other group ignores the existence of the phenomenon, denies it completely, never considers it to be occurring. The touches of the breasts and the buttocks were part of a segment of the 20th century Hungarian-Hungarian dance culture that, in some situations, fit within the framework of dance. My local informants did not scandalize me on this subject, but the open communication about it did not fit within the framework of decency. If we consider dance as part of society, it follows that the boundaries and boundaries of dance existing in a given society have been unnoticed by the people in that society, of course, we cannot regard these boundaries as a constant, constant frame, constantly changing.
8. My revival informants were socialized in a completely different society, at a time when the boundaries of the given society and the dance that existed there were elsewhere, yet they had acquired the dance tradition of peasant society. When a socialist revival dancer starts dancing with a local dancer, these divergent frontiers meet, and what comes from the urban sphere is naughty and unpleasant is part of the dance, if not a necessary part of it, but for him, within their limits.

In my dissertation I dealt with the dance traditions of a Transylvanian village, Magyarózd, in which the expectations of society appear. My hope is that it has become apparent that my present work is only the beginning of an extremely long journey, further research, both territorial and temporal, and it is needed to understand the complexity of male and female roles. My prospective plans include exploring the gender roles of other settlements, as well as the revival movement based on Hungarian peasant dance material, including the analysis of the gender roles of stage choreographies, as I could explore new aspects of the topic. In my view, exploring the role of men and women not only contributes to our understanding of the dance culture and society of traditional societies, but also to our understanding of the social processes and genders of the 21st century, and ultimately to ourselves.

Keywords: dance anthropology, gender studies, woman, man, gender roles, couple dance

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