



## DIALOGGING WITH THE CONCEPTS: FOLKLORE AND POPULAR DANCES

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### ABSTRACT

This review article is based on the PhD thesis on Human Motricity in the dance specialty entitled: "THE POPULAR DANCE IN THE TRAINING PROCESS OF THE CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY DANCER: STUDY ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF THE BOLSHOI THEATER OF BRAZIL" held at the Faculdade de Motricidade Humana, Portugal. In thinking about the expression "popular dance," we are immediately confronted with analogies as manifestations of the "people," folklore, and the idea of "less privileged culture," that is, dances inherent to popular cultures from different geographical regions. As each culture develops in the face of a systemic apparatus that characterizes it according to the influences that each member of the cultural communities has, we believe that each person has a unique capacity to contribute to their culture and consequently to their dance.

### KEYWORDS

folk dance; Popular dances; folklore.

This review article is based on the PhD thesis on Human Mobility in the dance specialty entitled: "THE POPULAR DANCE IN THE TRAINING PROCESS OF THE CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY DANCER: STUDY ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF THE BOLSHOI THEATER OF BRAZIL" held at the Faculdade de Motricidade Humana, Portugal, and it is motivated by the growing relevance of the knowledge and uncertainties that arise around the concepts of folk dances and folk dances in the academic field.

We would like to start this way by trying to create a conceptual field regarding popular and folk dances, within the urban and contemporary universe, which becomes a great challenge. Carvalho (2000) believes that in the models known to analyze the problems at the level of culture always need a plurality of positions. So, the need to use the new theories of the Social and Human Sciences appears in this area of study.

Folklore and Popular Culture will be treated as synonyms in this work. We will therefore treat, as a popular culture according to FUNARTE (2009), any and all artistic-cultural manifestations produced, enjoyed, preserved and transformed by the formative social groups of the Brazilian nation.

Since the origin of the word folklore is directly linked to the European context, we have decided to focus on a part of the history, and we will pay more attention to what happened in the 19th century in Europe. In this period for Little (1998), Romanticism established a vision of what is "exotic" for cultural communities, whether closer or farther away, which was regarded as fascinating and mysterious territory, place of countless researches to be made. For Little (1998) the model of folklore was inspired by nationalism and romantic evolutionism. In this context, according to the same author, the concept of folk dance has its origin in the identity of folklore. It was at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century that the European society, its folklore and folk culture became the object of many academic and also empirical studies. For this same author the folk dance specifically only began to be studied from 1890, more than 100 years after the first studies on folklore.

With the social changes of the time, the twentieth-century scholars began to idealize folklore and look at their pure national culture as an antidote to correct the wrong things that had been happening, and in this way sought the ideology of romantic nationalism as quoted by Kapper (2013). As the 20th century progresses, as Europe's folklore studies progress, global economic and cultural policy is turned to full globalization, and the communication network engages us in a tangle of information as illuminating as mass. The borders would cease to exist. In this way, according to Frade (2004), this European movement reaches the

new continent, and in the United States the "American Folklore Society" was created by Fran Boas. Little (1998) suggests that in this country, the movement around folk dances began somewhat differently from the European nationalist movement. Initially the interest of this movement was for Physical Education classes and small movements with organized games were an effort to attract immigrants to leave the streets and come to public and recreational parks. The contemporary American anthropologist Anthony Shay (2006) in one of his studies deals with what constituted the folk dance performed at the Folklore Festivals in the United States in the same period. For him very briefly and summarily, folk dance in the true sense of the word is "[...] regional folk dance in those regions of the world with long-term peasant or tribal populations and performed as an integral part of these people's life" (SHAY, 2006, p.9).

In that period it was already verified that many of the great productions made by the companies of popular dances and or folk were subsidized by the governments, in order to show the local culture, and for that they appropriated this popular knowledge and made great artistic productions. For Shay (2002, p.26) "a national dance company embodies a nation. [...] the companies also attempt to find choreographic strategies to visually depict all of 'The People' of the respective nation-state". A great example of these productions is the Polish Folk Music and Dance Ensemble Mazowsze, as shown in the picture below.

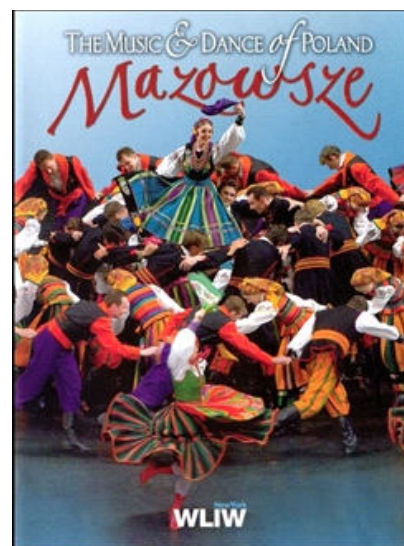


Figura 1: Polish group pf folk music and dance Mazowsze

Numerous other Popular Dance Companies were already appearing around the world, differentiated by the way they presented themselves and represented in their performances, both visually and verbatim (see table 1). Shay (2002) proposed this spectrum below so that it would be easier to visualize the representation of two genres: the field and the stage. In this model he shows how the Igor Moiseyev Dance Company as well as Mozo used some steps based on folk dances. In contrast, the essentialist end of the spectrum are groups like SIDE and Dora who opt for choreographic outputs that are deeply committed to the extensive use of authentic particularized elements.

**Table 1- Continuum: The Field and the stage**

- Moiseyev, Reda (Egypt), Mazowse (Poland)
- Bulgarian State Folk Ensemble (Philip Koutev)
- Ballet Folklorico, Bayanihan (Philippines)
- KOLO (Serbian State Ensemble)
- Mahalli Dancers (Iran)
- Georgian State Folk Company
- LADO (Croatian State Ensemble)
- Dora Stratou Greek Dances Theatre
- Don Cossacks Chorus Kamensk Folk Group,
- JVC, not the professional group of the same name
- Timonia (Kursk Folk song group)
- Groups from Poland (Folk Dances of Poland, entire tape)
- Village Dances of Yugoslavia
- Villagers from Torbat Jam and Bojnurd, Khorasan, Iran
- Villagers from Liamtsa

Fonte: Antony Shay – *Choreographic politics*, p. 22

Based on what was present, it is very important to mention three studies about this theme because they discuss possible categories in order to facilitate the study of folk dances, Joann Kealiinohomoku (1972), Andriy (1972) Nahachewsky (1995) and Kapper's (2013). All authors take the ideas of the ethnomusicologist Happy Hoerberger, who proposed that folk dances should be divided into two forms: the first existence and the second existence.

Joann Kealiinohomoku (1972), in appropriating these categories, wrote that a series of new questions arose about "folk dance" as a concept and as a field of study. For her the first existence of dance in the field was that dance of integral form in the life of a determined cultural community, that is, this would be the true folkloric dance. For this anthropologist:

*In the "first existence" dance environments, those individuals who grow up in a society in which dancing constitutes part of the living traditions learn dances primarily in one-on-one situation similar to the way in which games and languages are acquired- that is, generally, but not always, in informal situations in trial-and-error fashion. Such a situation, therefore, constitutes a branch of folklore studies. The dance repertoire that such individuals acquired usually constituted of a body of choreographic and movement material and styles that was in vogue at the time in the region in which they lived, or was learned by immigrant groups from older generations (p.387).*

The second existence of folk dances (revival dancing) are those that accept more interferences, where presentations with performative intention begin to appear. This term used for a second existence was much questioned at the time, for it seemed to many as a second-hand type that it bothered immensely the members of the National Companies known as "recreational folk dancers." This was because they devote years of bodily practice and rehearsal to their purposes and who vehemently believed that what they were doing was true. For them any activity in which thousands of people get involved and spend hours of dedication, has an authenticity by itself. The lived experience makes each fact authentic. What the new choreographers do according to the "recreational folk dancers" is to give new life to what already existed in the cultural

communities through great productions

In another approach on the same subject, Nahachewsky (1995) proposed the use of new terms for this differentiation of folk dance styles, which would be "presentational" and "participatory". He suggests that instead of considering these two categories as being separate, they must be conceptualized, or understood as a continuum. He also says that professional dancers, semiprofessionals or even amateurs of a folk dance company do not know the dances of the field, or the "participatory" dances, because their training is in another area of dance.

Kapper (2013) suggests that it is very clear to researchers in the field of folklore studies the differentiation in intention between folk dances, of which one she calls author choreography and others are called folk creation, where Author is unknown or not important. However the two terms use the word folk dance, which in the conception of the speech of those who are watching is often irrelevant, because the relationship with folk is present in both performances. For Kapper (2013, p. 90) "author choreography and folk creation, so clearly distinguishable from each other in both classifications, turn out undifferentiated in presentational situations, when they are performed by dancers in national costumes". This means that both forms of dance have to do with national expression in a visible and corporeal format, and the origin of movement motifs or style of presentation does not matter in the end.

As for popular dances, Little (1998) suggests that they differed from folklore by origins, functions, forms, and styles, and were therefore considered impure. For this same author popular dances were thought of as an innovation promoted by people, or masters of dance, and in a hybrid way, was to borrow and borrow foreign elements. It was to create products in which the bourgeoisie offered the people as a form of national and aesthetic heritage. With this new market and hybrid function of popular dance, Cancline (1998) says that Popular's concept is not restricted to what is consumed by the greatest number of people or what is "authentic", with a sense of resistance to a supposed culture dominant. The term "popular culture", in this sense, corresponds to the desire to cross borders, establishing communications between the social agents involved in the construction of cultural products and their relation to modernity, that is, the search for the market grows (Cancline, 1998).

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