

TRANSYLVANIAN DANCING IN THE FINAL HOUR

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Transylvania is the region of present-day Romania bounded by the sweeping arc of the Carpathian Mountains. Over several centuries, the Hungarians, Romanians, Gypsies, Saxons, Jews and other peoples of Transylvania developed particularly rich village traditions, living side by side. The relative isolation of Transylvania and its rural character promoted the survival of village traditions far into the 20th century. [1] But the wars and political upheavals also wrought their share of damage to older ways of life. And the pop cultures of the West gradually penetrated to the youth of the villages. [2]

There were also substantial changes in the demography of Transylvania, and a couple of these should be mentioned at the outset. Transylvania lost its Jewish inhabitants in the course of the Holocaust. [3] Then, beginning in 1978, the West German government paid a head price to Romania to buy the Saxons free, and Romania's German-speaking population began a large-scale immigration to Federal Republic of Germany. [4] Although the Jewish community vanished and the German cultural community was faced with collapse, Romanians, Hungarians, and Gypsies remained. Romania promoted some shifts of populations within Transylvania, especially to enhance the "Romanianization" of areas where, for reasons of location and/or size, the Hungarian-speaking population seemed to pose a threat to the regime.

In the decades when pop music and dancing was taking over the villages, a more modest movement in the opposite direction was occurring. In the early 1980s, the study of Hungarian and Transylvanian dancing was on the threshold of becoming an international phenomenon. American dancers gathered in the summer on the east and west coasts for week-long workshops taught by the best among Hungary's first generation of dancers of the so-called *táncház* or 'dance-house' movement. [5] The *táncház* movement brings village dancing to urban dancers—both as a strictly social dance activity and as the foundation for ensemble performance.

The dancing of the Hungarians, Romanians and Gypsies of Transylvania came to be taught in Hungary and abroad, chiefly by researchers from Hungary. [6] Although the Hungarian dancing of Transylvania is the focus of this article, the following observations are likely to apply *mutatis mutandi* to Romanian and Gypsy traditions as well.

There are a couple of reasons that the phenomenon of village dancing in Transylvania should be of interest beyond the relatively small universe of *táncház* dancers

and performing groups. After the fall of totalitarianism in Romania at the end of 1989, the villages of Transylvania finally became accessible to outsiders. The *táncház* movement was, thus, able to come full circle, returning to the villages of its origin. The past fifteen years or so have been a moment of special grace, allowing surviving elder dancers to participate in the teaching of their cultural heritage to young dancers both local and international. Moreover, this enterprise is the more intense for the circumstance that these dance traditions are quite complex with a high degree of improvisation.

The following sections of this article consider, first, the *táncház* or 'dance-house' movement; second, the role of improvisation in Hungarian and Transylvanian peasant dancing; and, third, the status of village traditions today.

The *Táncház* Movement

Reminiscences, centering on the beginning of the *táncház* movement in the early 1970s, show it to have been, like so many a youth movement, a counter-cultural alternative to the established order. In an era of international communism, the *táncház* movement was a way of being essentially Hungarian. At the same time, participants assumed habits of dress and appearance that made them look much like the hippie generation in North America and Western Europe. They contemplated going "back to nature." Certainly, the dance culture of the peasants was one way of returning to origins. [7]

The immediate appeal of village dancing must also have had much to do with its being an intensely social experience. [8] Men's dances are competitive in spirit. The dances for couples make for close contact between partners. The male leads richly figured dances with the sort of dynamic, aggressive partnering that is familiar to Americans from our various swing dance traditions. The cycle of dances from a given village may easily last over half an hour, proceeding from slow tempos to very quick tempos. The time between dance cycles is for drinking, singing and all other forms of conviviality.

Yet it was not an easy matter to turn Hungarian dancing into something of a youth movement. For one thing, virtuoso traditions require long study, and that presupposes strong commitment. For another thing, it was hard to gain access to source materials. Above all, the moment had to be right. Official attempts to promote traditional

Hungarian dance and music with youth failed to take hold in the 1950s and 1960s. And then, in the early 1970s, folk traditions were embraced with an anti-establishment fervor that, while far from blatant, must have been clear to anyone who looked closely.

The realm of Hungarian cultures divides itself into the Hungarians living *within* Hungary's borders and the ethnic Hungarians living *beyond* the borders, chiefly in present-day Slovakia, Romania, Serbia and Croatia. [9] The dismemberment of historical Hungary is a legacy of World War I and the Treaty of Trianon. Bearing in mind that one generalizes at considerable peril, it is probably safe to say that the village dance traditions of Hungary had largely vanished by the 1970s and needed to be revived from archival materials. [10] The traditions of areas beyond Hungary's borders needed to be studied and preserved, but they were very difficult of access, in large measure because neighboring countries were inclined to isolate and oppress their Hungarian minorities.

In an earlier era, Bartók and Kodály had pioneered the collection of audio materials in the villages. [11] In mid-century, legendary collectors like György Martin brought field recordings and film to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. [12] Another pivotal figure, Sándor Tímár, was instrumental in establishing the *táncház* movement. [13] And the *táncház* movement, in turn, supplied a cohort of young, dedicated dancers and musicians who were inspired to undertake cloak-and-dagger missions into the villages of neighboring counties to continue learning the traditions. [14] In the first wave, archival film, pioneer researchers, and living informants furnished the source material for the dance-house. In the second wave, the first dance-house dancers themselves began to teach new generations in Hungary and abroad. [15]

In the *táncház* movement, the traditions of Transylvania have been accorded a special role. [16] The Hungarian minority there is relatively large and is spread over several folk cultural regions. Within those folk cultural regions, each village has—or, at one time, had—its own dance and music dialect. This adds up to a great number of individual traditions—each of which is, or at least one time was, highly complex with a very large inventory of possible dance figures.

Scholars explain the wealth and persistence of traditions in Transylvania by pointing out that Romania remained more agrarian, less urbanized, more isolated than, say, Hungary. Transylvanian culture remained relatively unaffected by the Turkish conquest of Hungary and the Balkans. Romanians, Hungarians, Gypsies, Saxons and Jews lived in mixed villages or in close proximity. Although each ethnic group maintained its own dance and music traditions, it is evident that they influenced one another profoundly as they evolved side by side. [17]

The process of researching the many individual village traditions began even before the *táncház* movement and seems to have proceeded ever more intensely over the past two decades. In the first phases of the *táncház* movement, teachers tended to synthesize related village dances into a sort of “generic” regional dance. [18] In other cases, they chose one particular village's tradition as the ideal representative of a regional type. [19] In subsequent phases, however, there emerged a tenacious commitment to research and teach the traditions of as many individual villages as possible. The sheer wealth of material appears to be adequate for lifetimes of documentation and study. [20]

Improvisation in Transylvanian Dancing

Inasmuch as Transylvanian village traditions usually have a large inventory of dance figures, much depends on how those figures are put to use. An essential feature of the dancing is its highly “improvisational” quality. [21] Hungarian and Transylvanian village dancing does not have, so to speak, a fixed “text.” There is no prescribed sequence of figures. In men's dancing, a man dances his own figures in his own preferred order, fitting his choices at least somewhat to the spirit and the impulse of the moment. When couples dance, they likewise assemble their own individual dance in keeping with the village's tradition. [22]

Three aspects of improvisation deserve special discussion. First, improvisation is, so to speak, the fundamental mode of creativity and performance in traditional cultures where all artistic forms are based in variations within a tradition's stylistic inventory. An embroidered peasant blouse or jacket, for instance, will not be identical to any other. But it will clearly bear the stylistic imprint of place and time. Villagers in traditional dress may appear to be wearing a sort of uniform, but, on closer inspection, each garment is unique. [23]

Second, improvisation is a received skill, passed down from one generation of practitioners to another. Traditional musicians learn “by ear.” Post-traditional musicians learn from sheet music. Like musicians, dancers are able to improvise *within* a tradition because they have assimilated both the “grammar” and the “vocabulary” of the dance, that is, both the units of expression and the rules for organizing them. [24]

Third, the survival of a high degree of improvisation is rare in modern times. Improvisation became impoverished in Western European regional ethnic dancing relatively early on. The Southern German *Ländler* dance forms, for instance, appear to have been improvised when settlers took them to Transylvania in the 18th Century where they retained their free character. But those dances soon took on a fixed form in a fixed sequence of figures in Bavaria and Austria. [25]

Hungary and, especially, Transylvania offer not only a singular richness of dance and music traditions. They also provide insight into how improvisation once functioned in European dancing as it has until fairly recently in other traditional art forms. Although survivals of improvised dance forms are not unknown in Western Europe, they are relatively rare and the inventory of figures is often very small. Improvisational discretion may, thus, be limited to the timing of the sequence of a handful of figures (e.g., Norwegian *pols* or Swedish *polska*), whereas in “non-improvisational” dancing the sequence of figures is fixed to the length of melody units (e.g., Swedish *hambo*, various forms of *Schottische*). [26]

The Status of Village Traditions Today

What is left of the old village traditions today? The impulse to explore this question is all the stronger because Transylvanian traditions are the focus of special interest beyond Transylvania. This outside interest is due partly to the special character of the dance and music, partly due to the circumstance that some Hungarians have come to see Transylvanian Hungarians as bearing a Hungarian identity more ancient, more authentic, more essential than their own.

Many students of Hungarian dancing seem to have a temperamental preference for Transylvanian dancing. Both Hungarian and Transylvanian dancing mix layers of older dance forms with relatively new dance forms. [27] If dances from Hungary require a lot of jumping and leaping about, Transylvanian dancing seems to flow more elegantly and to allow more intimacy in partnering. [28] If Transylvanian music sometimes has a more melancholy tone, it may also strike the listener as more compelling, more passionate. [29]

Students of dancing can visit some Transylvanian villages where there is still at least a remnant of a village band and where elder dance informants can still show their dance. These musicians and dancers often suffered under the repressive strategies of the Romanian government in the years leading up to 1989. [30] During the totalitarian regime, the interest in Hungarians beyond Hungary's borders was tied to concerns for human rights. And many urban Hungarians also came to see in the survivals of Transylvanian Hungarian dance and music a sort of confirmation or validation of their own cultural identities. [31]

The last fifty years have brought changes to life in rural Romania which are analogous to those which occurred significantly earlier in most other areas of Europe: A transition from traditional village culture toward a post-traditional culture with more “Westernized” features. Among the ethnically Hungarian villagers of Transylvania, various political, economic and social forces have tended

to retard this process even further. The end of the long era of totalitarianism over a decade ago has occasioned new challenges and opportunities for the Hungarian minority in the villages.

The fate of the traditions of the Hungarian villagers in Transylvania is inseparable from their status as an ethnic minority in Romania. The pressures on minorities within Romania, even after the change of 1989, tend somewhat to discourage identification with the minority culture but also, in many ways, to reinforce identification. Adherence to traditions in music and dance was, in many a case, an assertion of identity and an act of defiance. As such, it was often punished. On the other hand, some Hungarians are said to have tried to avoid oppression by becoming relatively “assimilated,” even by becoming “more Romanian than the Romanians.” [32]

Hungarians, Romanians and others are always conscious of social and ethnic tension. This has created a complex framework of identity and change as people in the villages struggle with political tension, with economic challenge, and with the other anxieties attendant to life in changing world. Villagers seek to establish themselves within the evolving political and economic realities. Hungarians, in particular, seek to express a sense of identity which they have long been obliged to suppress.

The issue of determining which Transylvanians are Hungarians is not altogether unproblematic. On the first order, Hungarians are people whose first language is Hungarian. But this definition would include many individuals who identify themselves as Gypsies and/or are so seen by other Hungarian speakers. [33] And social factors like mixed marriages and employment choices may ultimately facilitate or cause a shift of identity. Another facet of Hungarian identity is determined by religious confession; another still, by a shared cultural heritage. In terms of Transylvanian village life, this shared cultural heritage resides principally in the traditions of any given community.

How can any given village tradition be regarded as “Hungarian” in view of the fact that any given dance cycle is unique to a particular village? What allows us to identify infinitely varying forms as “Hungarian”? For purposes of sustaining a Hungarian identity, it does not seem to matter that those traditions vary from village to village and from region to region. What matters is that they are perceived as belonging to the Hungarian community and not, say, to Romanians or Gypsies. Moreover, the Hungarians in any given village are likely to claim that their dance and music are more genuinely Hungarian than that of neighboring villages. The dancing of the Hungarians in the neighboring villages is, they often confide, “really Romanian.” [34]

Indeed, among those village traditions in which Hungarians invest their sense of identity, dance and music seem to be the most vital. Up until the change of

governments in Romania in 1989, the Ceausescu regime employed many strategies to isolate ethnic Hungarians in their villages and to thwart the study of their village traditions. Access to ethnically Hungarian villages was generally forbidden to outsiders. Research into the dance and music traditions of this region was carried on largely as an act of defiance through surreptitious excursions into the villages. Many village musicians were reportedly forbidden to play their music ever again. The use of the Hungarian language was suppressed in education, in the press and in other forms of community and public life.

After 1989, Transylvanian villages were opened to visitors from Europe, Asia and the Americas who are devoted to the study of Transylvanian music and dance traditions. At least in this special sense, the dispersion of Transylvanian dancing has run full circle. [35] Individual villages host week-long dance and music "camps," usually taught by professional dance teachers with the participation of village musicians and dance informants. [36] A critical challenge is posed by the circumstance that the older generations of village musicians and dancers have dwindled close to vanishing, just as the intense activity of outsiders has helped to redirect the interest of villagers and their urban neighbors toward their own local traditions. A great many villages now have "dance ensembles"—Gypsy, Hungarian and/or Romanian. It is clear that the revived dance forms are a mark of village identity and ethnic pride. [37]

The last manifestations of the "living" music and dance culture are in their "final hour." [38] In some places, the oldest surviving "traditional" musicians and dancers are still participating in the transfer of their art forms to a young generation. The dance is no longer deeply imbedded in the life of the entire community. Weddings, for example, are celebrated to electronic "disco" music. [39] The resurgence within the younger generation occurs chiefly in the context of village dance ensembles. [40] In this sense, the culture has become a "post-traditional" one, in which traditions are honored by conscious efforts at conservation and revival.

The dance and music traditions have to some extent bypassed the middle generations. Dancers and musicians in the oldest and youngest generations are, in many cases, the principal focus of interest, for at least some of the youngest are inspired to learn the forms from their surviving elders. [41] Moreover, the state of things for dancers and musicians is by no means the same. There are a large number of village dance groups, but since there are relatively few young village musicians, there is grave concern about a loss of continuity in the music forms. [42] The traditional peasant culture is waning to the vanishing point even as it is being discovered and conserved by schooled musicians and dancers and by an international urban following. [43]

Especially since 1990, a critical transition from traditional culture to postraditional has been underway with local participation as well as participation from all over Hungarian-speaking territories and abroad. The living traditions are truly in their final hour, and we are living in the moment after the glory. Yet many of the dance and music forms have entered a new mode of transmission and existence.

Let us allow a young, university-bound informant from the village of Vajdaszentivány in southeast Transylvania the final word. My wife, Ildikó Kalapács, and I interviewed Etelka Bálint in summer 2000.

Ildikó: Do you think that such a small community as Vajdaszentivány is able to say, "*This is important to me, but I won't accept that*"? And thus choose among options, maybe ten or twenty years from now when they see that not everything is good that comes from the West? Not everything is positive?

Etelka: It's possible that that will come to pass, and it's possible precisely because there is already an organized dance and music camp here. It will strengthen this awareness in people. They will see that the people who come here, these throngs of people, come here expressly to learn a dance that seems so simple to them, one that they perhaps regarded as valueless at the outset. So this will gain strength in us and, whether consciously or unconsciously, we're going to hold onto it because we regard it as something valuable. And then we'll know how to choose between McDonalds and folk dance, between different places of entertainment. [44]

ENDNOTES

1 This paper is based on the endowed lecture with the same title that I gave at the invitation of the Selma Jeanne Cohen Fund for International Scholarship on Dance on November 1, 2003, at the annual conference of the Fulbright Association in Washington DC.

2 On my very first evening in a Transylvanian village in 1993, my wife and I were able to spend a few hours with the fiddler, István Kávés Szabó, "Hunchback Pisti," of Szék. The young teenagers of the street seemed to use the occasion of our visit—nothing goes unnoticed in a village—as a pretext for occupying one of Pisti's two rooms and watching television. Pisti played us tune after tune from the extraordinarily rich tradition of Szék. The teenagers in the other room watched a pop music festival broadcast from Brassow, looking back toward us from time to time as if mildly curious that we had come half way around the world to hear music that was not in the center of their interest. One house, two cultures. "Hunchback Pisti" died in the spring of 1999. Korniss (1998:140) has a portrait of István Szabó taken at the age of 63 in his home in 1997.

The musical culture of Szék—until recently the model for the “dance-house” revival—is said now to include electronic amplification and keyboard synthesizers. In summer 2000, we talked with a woman who had recently had her hair cut short and who had set aside the kerchief and traditional dress of Szék in favor of modern dress. She said that since Szék was one of the last villages to abandon more traditional ways of life, it would probably be one of the last villages to begin a revival.

I shall write the names of villages in their Hungarian form, for the perspective of this paper is that of someone who has specialized in Hungarian village culture and dancing.

3 Ioanid (2000:289) is not able to give figures for Transylvania as a whole but notes that as “a consequence of the wartime changes in borders, 150,000 of the original [Jewish] population ended up under Hungarian sovereignty in northern Transylvania, deported in 1944 to concentration camps and extermination centers in the Greater Reich; nearly all of these—130,000—perished before the war’s end.”

4 Gündisch (1998:236). There was another surge of emigration in 1990 and 1991 (Gündisch 1998:246). The extent to which the Transylvanian Saxon culture collapsed is measured by Gündisch (1998:247): “Ende 1996 zählte die Evangelische Kirche in Rumänien weniger als 20 000 Seelen. Etwa in dieser Größenordnung ist die Zahl der Mitte der neunziger Jahre noch in Rumänien lebenden Siebenbürger Sachsen anzusetzen. Dabei fällt neben der im Vergleich zu früher starken geographischen Streuung die ungünstige Altersstruktur ins Auge—der überwiegende Teil der siebenbürgisch-sächsischen Bevölkerung ist älter als 60.”

5 I attended the first Barátság Hungarian music and dance camp in the Mendocino Woodlands of northern California in 1982 (after serious Hungarian content had been included in a mixed camp the year before). It was taught by László Diószegi, assisted by Éva Kiss. The east coast Symposium was founded in 1978.

6 The Romanian dancing of Bonchida on the Transylvanian Heath, by way of example, was widely taught in Hungary and abroad in the early 1980s. After the Gypsy band from Szászcsávás burst into international awareness in 1992 with its Quintana Harmonia Mundi recording (QUI 403072), the dancing from that community came to be taught widely. The Szászcsávás Band has toured in the United States several times.

7 Bodor (1981) chronicles the first decade of the *táncház* movement with copious photographs in an anthology with text in both Hungarian and English. Kürti (2001), as may be read from its subtitle, gives an extended analysis of “Transylvania in the Hungarian Imagination” in which the *táncház* movement and its attachment to the

peasant culture of Transylvania plays a featured role. See especially chapters four and six.

8 Sebő’s reminiscence (1994:92) shows the first *táncház* in May 1972 to have been a happy sort of accident, planned as a social diversion for dance ensemble members: “Az első Táncház 1972. május 6-án jött létre a Liszt Ferenc téri Könyvklubban. Szervezői a Bihari Táncgyűttes tagjai voltak, akik a másik hasonló típusú amatőr táncgyűttes tagjai számára (Bartók, Vasas, Vadrózsák) kellemes, zártkörű klubestet szerveztek. Az elképzelés az volt, hogy a színpadra koreografált néptáncokat ezúttal a saját szórakozásukra, társastánc módjára használják fel. A zenét a Sebő együttes szolgáltatta. Az este olyan jól sikerült, hogy folytatni kellett, még hozzá hamarosan a zártkörűség feloldásával, az utca embere számára is megközelíthetően.”

9 See, for example, Balassa (1989) and Felföldi and Pesovár (1997).

10 Kodály’s librettist for *Háry János*, Béla Paulini, founded the Gyöngyösbokréta (‘Pearly Bouquet’) movement in 1931 in an effort to breath new life into traditions of folk song and dance that were already dying out in Hungary (Eősze 1982:79). See also Kürti 2001.

11 Their collecting began before World War I and continued even through the war. Eősze (1981:156) shows Kodály dancing at a peasant wedding in 1966, less than half a year before his death on March 6, 1967.

12 According to Andrásfalvy (1993:41), “A magyar néptánc kutatásnak döntő korszaka volt 1951-től a 60-as évek végéig tartó időszak, amiben—annak idején—Martin Györgynek vezető szerepe volt. Ez idő alatt gyűlt össze az a táncfilm- és magnetofonszalag mennyiség és minőség, ami meghatározta a magyar tánc kutatást. A 60-as évek után Magyarországon alig lehetett már eleven gyakorlatban néptáncot felvenni. Az a generáció, amelyik még a Gyöngyösbokréta idején kicsit felelevenítette saját hagyományos táncéletét, már nem állhatott a kamera elé, azt már csak néhány idős ember képviselte. 1961-ben kiterjedhetett ez a táncgyűjtés Erdélyre, ami döntő táncanyagot hozott a magyar tánc kincs megítéléséhez.

13 As the *táncház* movement began, Tímár formed the Bartók Ensemble. He has remained an influential teacher in the movement and became director of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble.

14 As Kürti (2001:150) notes, “By the start of the 1980s, youth from Hungary flocked to Transylvania in increasing numbers.”

I held a Fulbright Research Grant for Hungary in 1986–87, and my sponsors were László Diószegi and Ágnes Gaug, directors of the Gutenberg (now Válaszút) Ensemble. László Diószegi who had danced in the early days with Tímár in the Bartók Ensemble told me in 1987 that the Romanian border officials maintained a long list of individuals they prohibited from entering Transylvania.

He no longer dared to cross into Transylvania, for fear that the next time would end up being his last time. All visitors to Hungarian villages in that era have adventurous stories to tell. For background, see Kürti (2001:156).

15 Among the dancers of that generation are László Diószegi and Ágnes Gaug, Zoltán Zsuráfszki and Zsuzsanna Vincze, Zoltán Farkas and Ildikó Tóth, as well as Ferenc Sára and Zoltán Nagy.

16 The dances from Szék had a defining role at the very beginning of the movement when Ferenc Novák had just completed his ethnographic master's thesis on that tradition (Kürti 2001:140). See also Kürti (2001:148).

17 See, for example, Martin (1988:63): "In Transylvania, Hungarians, Rumanians and Saxons, keeping their own particular features, yet in mutual interaction, developed an extremely rich and wonderful peasant culture, which could not have arisen if one nation only had lived there, or would not have become so colourful. The ethnic multiplicity, the articulation of the landscape and undisturbed development largely contributed to the survival of the multi-coloured character. ... There are many small villages in the Mezőség, with no more than a few hundred inhabitants each, where Hungarians and Rumanians, and sometimes even Gypsies live together. In some of them they have kept apart, in others their culture has become part of a melting pot. It is just about impossible to discern what is particular to each nation."

18 I am thinking of examples like the dances from Dunántúl (Transdanubia).

19 The dance from Magyarpalatka, for example, as the representative dance from the Mezőség (Transylvanian Heath).

20 A footnote to Martin and Pesovár (1998:542) lists a total number of meters of archival film that triples the account given in 1979: "Az MTA Zenetudományi Intézet archívumai 1998-ban mintegy 350 000 méter filmen, melynek egyharmada hangosítható, kb. 30 000 táncfolyamatot őriznek a Kárpát-medence 1200 településéből."

Before the use of video tape and VHS-playback became widespread, Laban notation seemed to be the most effective way of recording dance material. Ágoston (1980) provides a sort of primer in Laban notation for folk dancers and other sources rely heavily on its use.

21 Martin (1988:12): "The most important stylistic feature of the dance within the Carpathians is thus the unusually large amount of personal improvisation. Hence its extraordinary richness in spite of the small number of types of dances, and hence its own particular hue in the European context, distinguishing it from the dance world of Western Europe and of the Balkans." See also Martin (1980:12–14).

22 See Kraft (1989) for a more comprehensive discussion of improvisation in Hungarian dancing (conceived

during the 1989 National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar "The Oral Tradition in Literature" under the direction of John Miles Foley at the University of Missouri at Columbia).

23 A pair of Levi's 501 jeans, by contrast, is a "text." It is always put together in exactly the same way. Levi's jeans may smack of the American West, but they are thoroughly international at the same time. Westerners may look like rugged individuals, but each piece of clothing they wear exists in countless identical versions.

One accessible source on Hungarian peasant costumes is Gáborján (1988), although I cannot find that she has emphasized the improvisational quality. Gáborján does note the responsiveness of peasant costume to prevailing fashions and to the availability of new materials (5–15).

I can relate an amusing adaptation of double-breasted men's jackets. I have a felted wool jacket from Csíkszentdomokos which was originally single-breasted. Someone simply added an (asymmetric) row of buttons to make it appear to be double-breasted—a solution that I have noted on other pieces of clothing as well.

24 The use of language as a conceptual framework and metaphor for dance was elaborated at least as long as a hundred years ago. See Zorn (1905:16) and, for Hungarian traditions, Martin and Pesovár (1961:3–4).

25 Goldschmidt (1966:109): "Die Tanzform des Ländlers muß schon am Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts voll entwickelt gewesen sein. Einen Beweis dafür sieht R. Wolfram in der Tatsache, daß er bei österreichischen Siedlern in Rumänien und in der Slowakei, deren Vorfahren schon um 1735 und 1775 dort einwanderten, einen älteren Typus des Ländlers vorfand, dessen Figuren mit den bekannten bayrisch-österreichischen im wesentlichen übereinstimmen, jedoch viel freier verwendet wurden. In diesen freien, doch stilgebundenen Ländlern—bezeichnenderweise auch immer noch 'Deutsche' genannt—machte jeder 'was ihm beliebte und wann es ihm liebte'. Das freie Umwerben des Mädchens durch den Burschen, das den uns bekannten Ländlern fehlt, war bei den Alten noch bekannt."

26 For Norwegian and Swedish traditions, respectively, see, for instance, Bakka (1978) and *Folkdanser* (1975).

27 Martin (1988 and elsewhere) discusses the layers present in traditions from various parts of the Hungarian cultural realm. Some forms are shown to be distant reflexes of medieval and Renaissance dancing. Moreover, Martin (1988:6) asserts: "Historical descriptions, a brief mention here and there, and illustrations showing dancers give an even more fragmentary picture of the history of Hungarian dances than musical notation which can be decoded with relative precision and which has survived in far greater quantities than descriptions of dances. Living folk-dances are therefore the primary sources of dance history."

28 Jumping dances and figures are prominent in the Danube and Tisza regions of Hungary proper—not so much in Transylvania.

29 Especially older slow dance forms like the *széki lassú* and the *mezősegi akasztós* (see Martin and Pesovár 1998:568).

30 The story of Márton Maneszes of Magyarszovát, for instance, was told in a documentary done by Duna TV in the mid-1990s that I have seen but could not verify before publication. He related his story to me in person in summer 1995. Other musicians like Sándor Fodor of the Kalotaszeg region report having come to a sort of accommodation with the local police that spared them.

31 See, for example, Kürti (2001:163–164).

32 In September 1995, we were able to meet with a group of Hungarian villagers beyond the Carpathians in Romanian Moldavia. The Moldavian Hungarians have been the most isolated and had not been allowed to learn to read or write nor to worship in their mother tongue. In advance of our meeting, it had been reported that some people from Hungary had tried to deliver a car- or truck-load of books to Hungarians in Moldavia. They had been intercepted by Romanians and soundly thrashed. Like many other Hungarians in Romania at that time, they lived in fear. They explained that they were happy to meet with outsiders on videotape so that their story could be told if they subsequently vanished. But the condition of our meeting was that we left the village, drove several miles down the highway, crossed a marsh and climbed a hill to the edge of a wood, away from all watchers. On the way out of the village, the women bent down in the vehicle so that they would not be seen by other villagers. Most of their fellow villagers were also Hungarian, but that did not mean that they could be trusted. Our recent communications with our friends there indicate that anxieties have somewhat diminished.

33 In 1993, my wife and I spent an afternoon with a Gypsy musician in Méra. As the music culture of his district waned, he had acquired a second career as a chimney sweep. At one point he said approximately the following: “The Hungarians consider me a Gypsy, but I never learned the Gypsy language. I grew up here among these Hungarians and I’ve always spoken Hungarian. What kind of Gypsy am I? The Romanians say that Romania has only Romanians. To them I am officially neither a Gypsy nor a Hungarian. But it is clear that I’m not a Romanian either. I’m sixty-three years old. I’d like to know who I am before I die.” We saw him again in August 1995. He died less than a year after that second meeting.

34 A village informant in Szék, for instance, told me in 1993 that the dancing of the other Hungarians in the surrounding Transylvanian Heath was really Romanian. An informant in Kalotaszentkirály told me in 2000 that

the local Kalotaszeg dance form is Hungarian; the widely taught form of the Kalotaszeg dance from Méra is really Romanian.

35 The return to the villages is certain to have brought some happy surprises with it. Zoltán Nagy reported to me in 1995 that he had recently shown the classic archival footage of Bonchida dancing to some villagers, secure in the belief that no living villagers knew the dance forms any longer. Someone in the small audience said, “That’s me! And that other couple is...”

36 There are, at present, about a dozen such camps throughout the summer all across Transylvania and into Romanian Moldavia. In some villages, like Vajdaszentivány, the workshops teach the village’s own dancing. In other villages, the site of the camp is at odds with the material being taught. In Válaszút in 1995, for instance, the dancing of neighboring Bonchida and somewhat more distant Magyarszovát was taught.

The Kalotaszeg camp was sited in Kalotaszentkirály in the earliest 1990s because that village had a suitable infrastructure (and has since developed a role in village tourism). For nearly a decade, the Kalotaszeg dancing of Méra was taught in Kalotaszentkirály and even the youth of that village was learning a form of a different sub-dialect (and watershed) than their own.

Villagers show some competitive spirit with regard to their local dance, and I have heard villagers comment on the circumstance that they teach their own villages dance whereas some other village has to use an outsider from the city to teach its youth.

37 In summer 2000, I saw a “festival of a dozen villages” in Vajdaszentivány that, in the event, turned out to have performing groups from fourteen or so villages. The ensembles represented Hungarians, Romanians and Gypsies.

38 I first heard this expression from László Diószegi in 1987. In 1997–98, the Fonó Budai Zeneház sponsored a Final Hour Project (*Utolsó Óra program*) with the support of the Zenetudományi Intézet of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. They archived hours of recordings from each of more than a dozen village ensembles and issued for each ensemble a selection on CD under the Fonó series, *Új Pátria*.

39 As informants explained, for example, in Gyimesközélpók in summer 2000, a wedding is a social occasion that is embedded in a network of reciprocal obligations. Once the change from traditional music to pop music occurred, village usage had passed a point of no return. A couple who might have wanted a more “traditional” wedding celebration was prevented from choosing traditional music and dancing by the obligation to provide guests what they expected.

40 I encountered youth dance ensembles or dance groups in several villages (Kalotaszentkirály, Méra,

Vajdaszentivány, for instance) in 2000. It is likely that a substantial number of villages throughout Transylvania now have such groups.

41 I attended a village party in Csíkszentdomokos in 1995. At the center of attention were two sets of grandfathers with their grandsons. One of the old men danced a couple of men's dances, then encouraged the younger generation to dance. The grandsons had become dancers in a semi-professional ensemble in Csíkszereda. (The grandmothers were also present, but gender roles accorded them less prominence than their husbands.)

I had very few opportunities to see small children dancing. During the week-long camp in Vajdaszentivány in 2000, a Romanian father, whose wife happens to be Hungarian, often danced with his young daughter at the evening dance-house. This father-daughter moment was particularly beautiful, but one which I fear may be rather rare.

42 I expect that this concern is expressed in a great many villages. I remember specific occasions in Vajdaszentivány and Gyimesközéplek in summer 2000.

43 In many a village, the dance informants seemed to be in their seventies in 1995 and 2000. These elder dance informants typically have bad hips or knees and other effects of age. They suffer considerable pain and move with a certain stiffness. But they dance with an amazing energy and elegance, and their faces betray no inconsiderable joy.

44 Ildikó: Gondolod, hogy képes egy ilyen kis közösség, mint Vajdaszentivány, arra, hogy azt mondja, nekem ez fontos, viszont én ezt nem fogadom el, és így, így szelektál, így talán tíz-húsz év múlva, amikor látják, hogy nem minden jó, ami Nyugatról jön. Nem minden pozitív.

Etelka: Lehetséges lesz ez, és pedig azért lesz lehetséges, mert az itt van már egy megszervezett tánc- és zenetábor, ez fogja erősíteni az emberekben ezt a tudatot. Fogják látni, hogy azok az emberek, akik eljönnek ide, ez a rengeteg embercsoport, azért jön el, hogy egy olyan, számukra egyszerűnek tűnő táncot tanuljon meg, amit talán kezdetben értéktelennek tartott. Tehát ez megerősödik bennünk, és hol tudatosan, hol tudattalanul, fogunk tudni választani McDonalds és néptánc között, meg különböző szórakozóhelyek között.

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