

INTRODUCTION

LYNN MANERS

STATE UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA

Welcome to this Special Issue of the *Anthropology of East Europe Review*! Little did I realize when I, to appropriate the Geertzian metaphor, diffidently volunteered to act as editor for this “Dance and Music in Eastern Europe” issue of the AEER, just how much work this would be. My hat’s off to those who edited scholarly journals in those antediluvian, pre-computer, pre-email days!

In many ways, the genesis for my editorship of this Special Issue began many years ago with an international folk dance class. As an undergraduate at the University of California-Riverside, I was an anthropology major, with an emphasis in archaeology. I was also a varsity swimmer and water polo player. Near the end of my sophomore year, I hurt my knee and was advised to take a light recreation class to help with the rehabilitation. I settled on a folk dance class, as something both appropriate and (seemingly) easy to master. I quickly fell in love with folk dance, especially the dances of Eastern Europe, and soon told my advisor that I wanted to shift from an emphasis in archaeology to an emphasis in cultural anthropology, specifically ethnochoreology and ethnomusicology. From that point on, I have seldom looked back. Many times, while traveling in Eastern Europe in pursuit of my academic interest in the relationship between performance and political economy, people have assumed that my ancestry must be Eastern European and they always seem surprised when I tell my interlocutors that I can claim no Eastern European ethnic connection. Becoming intrigued with a mode and practice of performance with which one is not ethnically connected seems to be a common experience for North Americans who study the folklore of Eastern Europe, including some contributors to this volume.

Although Eastern Europe, and Europe in general, has traditionally been marginalized in North American and Western European anthropological scholarship, this attitude is slowly changing as anthropology focuses less on fetishizing a hypothetical Saidian Other and more to recognizing that globalization, with all its contents and discontents, began with Europe and its relationships to the world. Arguably, the modern political economy which underlies modernization and globalization began in Western Europe and Eastern Europe was among the first to feel its effects. (It is not well known that Bosnia was Austria’s only colony and they were determined to use it to exhibit the ideal colonial relationship.) Likewise, expressive behaviors (dance, music, art, theater, literature) in Eastern

Europe have been of less interest to mainstream anthropology than they have in the derived scholarly traditions of ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology. Aesthetic anthropology, basically established through the writings of Jacques Maquet, is still a subfield in which production has not yet caught up to its great potential. This, too, is changing as graduate students in anthropology programs are drawn to recognizing the diversity of performance found in formerly outlying parts of Europe. Among Europeans themselves, as is illustrated by some articles in this volume, there is a long scholarly tradition specializing in the study of national folklore, the most prominent feature of which (and usually the most “colorful”) is music and dance.

As Eastern Europe has moved into the European consciousness, and in May of 2004, into the European Union, as they have become Europeans and not just Eastern Europeans, so has an interest in music and dance in the region moved more onto our ethnological coign of vantage.

In this issue, I have tried for a sense of balance between theoretical perspectives, between North American and European scholars, between newer and more established scholars and between various regions of Eastern Europe. Unfortunately, I did not receive equal submissions for all regions of Eastern Europe; nonetheless, I have tried to construct a volume that will be of some lasting value to a diverse range of scholars of Eastern European interests. In this light, during the process of editorial revision, I have asked the contributing authors to cite a number of the most important papers in their particular region of interest. (I have also allowed each contributor to write and cite in the style in which they are accustomed, as opposed to imposing a particular “look”). My editorial bias in general has been towards selecting articles that foreground the relationship between performance and/or political economy/nationality. A number of articles in this volume reflect that general interest. This has been the focus of my personal research work with folklore ensembles in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. At the suggestion of the regular editor, I tried to avoid articles on diaspora populations, which is why no article on dance and music in the post-1992 Bosnian diaspora by your humble servant appears in this volume.

In reading the articles in this volume, it rapidly becomes apparent that 1989 was a memorable year, marking the beginning of the end of authoritarian state socialism, on the model of the Soviet Union, and the beginnings of a

groping towards a different relationship between performance and political economy. I well remember attending a folklore festival in Hungary a few years ago, with a group of ethnochoreologists. As we were bused back to the conference hotel, our guide bemoaned the fact that the festival might not be held at the same place in the future because the venue where it was held had been privatized and the rent might be unaffordable to the organizers. Largely forgotten, or at least taken for granted as understood, is a previous revolutionary period in Eastern Europe, the events of 1848 and after, which set the stage for the creation of nations and the study of national folklore, seeking their roots in a romanticized rural peasantry. These ideas were developed and exploited for almost a century, until the advent of Communism, with its emphases on the political and openly ideological direction of all creative activities, expropriated and transformed folkloric performance. In a very broad sense, I think it is fair to say that many Eastern European scholars, as well as their general public and cultural elites, such as media directors (as we will see in some of the contributions to this volume) still tend to fall largely within this tradition of focusing on their particular national folklore, though that national folklore plays a different role in the post-Socialist era.

In organization, this volume follows a particular trajectory. It begins with an article by Kürti on dance events in Hungarian communities in Romania, followed by Smith's article on how music is used by the state to support the political economy in Hungary. Mills' article focuses on folklore ensembles and national identity in Romania, while Cash's examines the same phenomenon in ex-Soviet Moldova. Kraft's article, which follows, limns the attenuation and potential revitalization of dance. Moving south-westward, Wallace provides us with an outsider's insight

into popular music and nationalism in contemporary Croatia, while Zebec, looking at his native Croatia, focuses on the staging of folklore, the influence of media elites on performance and the role of the authentic. Mijatovic and Kronja provide us with complementary perspectives on the war-related role of "turbo-folk" music and nationalism in Serbia. Moving further south in former Yugoslavia, Aguilar discusses urban folklore ensembles in Macedonia and theoretical perspectives on movement. Thence, we move south for two contributions relating to performance practices in Greece. Manos focuses on dance and nationality in northwestern Greek Macedonia, while Hunt provides a more traditional ethnographic description of Greek dance practice, with a useful critique of a recent book examining the relationship between state-sponsored folklore ensembles and political economies. Moving back north, and ultimately across the Atlantic, we have a contribution by Louise Wrazen on dance events in Poland and its emigrant population, looking at them both structurally and in terms of the gender relations embedded within them. Finally, in what I thought was an especially fitting touch, we conclude with an article by Webster on the influence of Bulgarian vocal musical practice on North American women's vocal performance, how American women interpret and understand Bulgarian women's musical practices. In many ways, understanding the mystery of music and dance performance in Eastern Europe has exerted a strong pull on the lives of the contributors to this Special Volume and I am grateful to each of them for their efforts and insights in this regard; I know that you, our gentle reader, will be as well. I also want to thank Barbara West, the AEER's regular editor, for extending to me the challenge and opportunity of putting together this Special Volume on Music and Dance in Eastern Europe.

Hvala!