

IDENTITIES IN MOTION – 60 YEARS BULGARIAN DANCES WITHIN DIFFERENT POLITICAL CONTEXTS

Gergana Panova-Tekath

Abstract: The Report reviews interpretations of identical dance material in different historic-political contexts in Bulgaria, and in countries in the West (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Canada and the USA). The international cultural relationships of Bulgaria are pointed out in the course of the review and the role of North America for the approbation of a “chain” for the dissemination of the Bulgarian traditional dances in the last 60 years is presented. On a macro-level the interpretive spiral of the so called “Dancing the Bulgarian Way” originates in Socialist Bulgaria, reaches North America, from there spreads on to Western Europe, reenters democratic Bulgaria and again returns to the West with the new Bulgarian emigrants. The different models of dancing defined hereunder allow for the comparative study of Societies. At the same time, the ample empirical material serves for the situational analysis of the body’s potential for the unraveling of old and the creation of new meanings. Thus “dancing the Bulgarian way” has been transformed into an optical lens of modernity and an example of nonverbal intra- and inter-cultural communication.

Key words: “Dancing the Bulgarian way” in different political contexts, Bulgaria – North America – German speaking countries, “circle dance” and choreography, national identity, intra- and inter-cultural communication through dance.

The term “Dancing the Bulgarian way”

Many people from the German speaking countries, who dance in their spare time folk dances from different parts and regions of Bulgaria, call this a hobby-pursuit “*Bulgarisch Tanzen*”, i.e. “Dancing the Bulgarian way”. Translating the German phrase, I have come to realize that it generalizes the content, attributed to all variations of the phenomenon, which I explore in the different historic and political contexts. It imposes the perspectives of “from inside” and “from outside” on the hobby and professional form of this very interesting construct – “Bulgarian folk dance”.

An old form with eternal importance

We are used to and it is completely justified to associate the dance tradition in Bulgaria and its modern choreographic manifestations with the evolution of the Balkans, Russia, Eastern Europe, the East as such.

Until the end of the 19th century Bulgaria was part of the Ottoman Empire and the music-dance folklore was one of the few instruments for the preservation and propagation of the Bulgarian cultural identity. This image of the traditional dance is one of the Myths in the cultural heritage of the Bulgarians. It is viral, because it is being constantly reaffirmed in their communicative memory. It is very rarely that we can hear in any one of the Western European countries the assertion, repeated time and time again in different variations by 82% of the dancing and non-dancing informers from Bulgaria – “What would we be if it was not for our folk dances and songs? Nothing! No one!”

What is the main form of the Bulgarian dances, which corresponds to and supports this myth?

The Circle

In the 19th century when the people in Central and Western Europe have relegated the circular forms of dancing to the children’s dance repertoire and themselves dance in pairs, the Bulgarians elaborate new rhythms and steps, while continuing to dance as a group in age defined and patriarchic hierarchies, holding hands or hands on shoulders or clasping their neighbor’s belt. The “circles” are actually “semi-circles”, i.e. there is always someone “leading” the so called circle. There are regions (for example in North Bulgaria) and dances where the performers are arranged by families (father, mother, children ...). But in most cases in Bulgaria dancers form female and male groups where all the women position themselves by age and social status in the middle of the semicircle, whereas the men – the older at the beginning and the younger at the end of the semicircle. At certain points in time and positions in the semicircle are included children. In the Pirin ethnographic region one observes dancing in several concentric semicircles where men form the outermost semicircle. This does not alter the patriarchic idea of the dance structure and strengthens the symbolic role of men as the filter and defense from outside threats.

The so called “circle form” of traditional dancing has been preserved in Bulgaria to this day and is in essence the drawing and personification of the cultural identity. Its name is similar to that used by some of the other Balkan peoples – “horo” and has its origins in the words “people”, “peoples”, “folk”.

The national spirit tells its story, gives vent to its creativity, selects its leaders and delineates the boundaries (contours) of its societal structures by means of the “horo”. The dancing individual feels sheltered – being part of a larger moving entity, and orientated – the “circle” is the epitome of his own life circle. We could talk at length about the psychological and organizational aspects of the “horo”, based on numerous valuable collections, excerpts from travel notes and studies of Bulgarian ethnologists, musicologists and choreologists¹. The fact that

¹ View the fundamental studies by Vakarelski, Djudjev, Stoin, Kacarova-Kukudova, the collections by Drumev and Tsonev, as well as the research papers of their followers – Ilieva, Racheva, Kraev, Shturbanova, the collections for dance students by Vuglarov, Petrov, Tsvetkov and by many other younger authors.

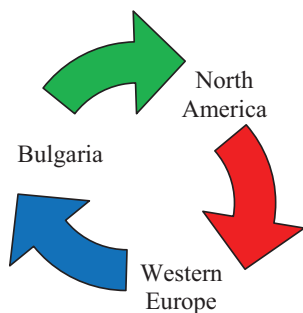


Fig. 1

the Bulgarian folklore dance is concomitant to the life and calendar cycle is nothing out of the ordinary. What is notable is the longstanding and enduring vitality of the circular form and the old traditional dance style. It is at the root of the preservation to this day of the connection of modern populace with the folk music and dance as a symbol of “national identity”.

Let us now turn to the **chain of propagation of “Dancing the Bulgarian way”** in the course of the last 60 years in a wider context of the modern political World. I think that we can discern the intercon-

nections in a seemingly spiral chain.

Moreover, I can identify four models of “Dancing the Bulgarian way” in the West and East.

1. “Dancing the Bulgarian way” in Socialist Bulgaria

Bulgaria was one of the countries in Eastern Bloc where considerable effort and resources were allocated for the preservation, popularization and professionalization of traditional singing, musical performance and dancing. In a country with a population of 8 million inhabitants besides the numerous amateur children’s and youth’s groups for folk dances, after 1951 17 professional Ensembles, numerous specialized schools and academies were established. After the Soviet model, they were the object of concerted support on the part of the socialist state at the time. With plenty of talent, knowledge and of course generous financing, the traditional “horó” was modeled, based on principles of stage art, into an incredibly attractive Art.² All the Bulgarian ensembles very rapidly acquired their attractive and specific pattern and character³, but this did not exclude them from the general socialist context⁴. Directed “inward” it served as a source of amusement and consolidation of the “working and agricultural laborers’ class”⁵, where as “outwards” – the West, it served as an attractive “business card” of Bulgaria and Socialism as such.

If we are to use Yuri Lotman’s terminology, this new form of city dancing the Bulgarian way served the purpose of a bilingual boundary of the semisphere of the respective culture. This aligns it with the dance folklore form, described above. Even the “patriarchic” norms were preserved on the stage. In the Socialist Era the strength of traditional dancing was revealed and instrumentalized

² For the modern founding principles of collecting, analysis, processing and teaching of Bulgarian folk dances, please view [Zahariev, 1955; Dikova, Maslarski, 1958; Djenev, Haralampiev, Kyuchukov, 1960-1978; Abrashev 1989; Yanakiev 2007; and Ivanova-Naiberg 2011], whereas for choreographic examples – the booklets “Tancova Samodejnost” (“Amateur dancing”) and “Tancovo izkustvo” (“Dance art”) from the period prior to 1989.

³ View how it worked by Botusharov 1994.

⁴ Please view Anthony Shay’s perspective 2002.

⁵ Please view the Introduction and Conclusions of [Dikova, Maslarski, 1958 and Ilieva, 1994].



Fig. 2. The beautiful business card of Bulgaria. State Ensemble “Thrakia”, Plovdiv. Photo: B. Kalcheva

from “above”. It had a sense of “nationality”, political content and artistic form, all in one⁶.

It is important to mention here, that in that same period the State sponsored Center for the so called “amateur art activities” (*Център за художествена самодейност*). This Center did involve not only the urban younger generation. To a lesser extent it took care of the preservation, or rather the “vacuumization”, of the so defined “authentic” or “spring folklore”. As in other socialist countries, in Bulgaria likewise the so called “people’s genius” and “people’s wisdom” were highly valued and appreciated. In relation to this, numerous old regional and national happenings have been supported and many more new folk art festivals were initiated⁷, in the course of which village groups came together and expert city-dwellers judged the beauty and purity of their folk art.

But let us not dwell here on the definition of “authenticity” in the context of the totalitarian approach to dance folklore. Historically, this type of cultural policy has provided unique opportunities for scientists to collect and structurally analyze factual material, rural communities – to enhance their own self-esteem, young urbanites – the opportunity for self-expression and group identification as a whole. It created an entirely new genre – folk dancing on stage. It made

⁶ My conclusions are based both on a theoretic analysis and a comparison with other State cultural policies, as well as on several stages of my empirical study of dancing in the Totalitarian regime in Bulgaria, which I conducted in the course of 1988-1998 amidst students and teachers in the professional schools, dancers, choreographers and audiences.

⁷ One can find extensive sources on the subject.

the most of the folklore forms and thereby heightened the interest of the modern young in the Bulgarian musical-dance traditions and the “Bulgarian” in particular. From my own experience and based on more than 64 interviews, I have conducted with professional and amateur dancers and choreographers in the course of 1994-1998, I can say that the young generation, which is involved with folk dancing have developed a new national identity and were as willing and enthusiastic as the performers of the Irish “River Dance” and “Lord of the Dance” to befittingly publicize their own country abroad.

2. The American model

2a. “Dancing the Bulgarian way” in North America

In 1963 the “State Ensemble for folk music and dances” and its Director Philip Koutev visited North America. This was the time when the “Recreative Movement for international Dances” had taken hold starting with an interest in the English dances at the beginning of the 20th century, but has gradually shifted towards Eastern Europe. The pursuit within the framework of clubs, camps and performing groups of traditional dances in one’s leisure time perfectly matched the spirit of the “hippy culture” of the West, its motto – “back to nature” and one’s own roots, its avangardistic and free spirit, the natural curiosity for whatever lies beyond the Iron Curtain, the intrinsic desire to be different and cosmopolitan. Philip Koutev’s tour fitted in very well with the emerging “Balkan Fascination” in the USA⁸. Some young people, motivated by their curiosity traveled to Bulgaria where they learned first-hand Bulgarian folk dances and music. One of these was the 17 years old Canadian – Yves Moreau. In his desire to travel to Bulgaria and learn to dance Bulgarian folk dances he was assisted financially by the Bulgarian National Radio and the Agency for friendship and cultural ties of Bulgaria. Surprisingly for his Bulgarian hosts he refuses to enlist in one of the professional schools at the time, but rather prefers to visit traditional folk happenings and festivals for professional dance performers, while at the same time attending private lessons in the course of which he masters diverse variations of the folk “horo” and the specifics of the different regions in Bulgaria. It was with great emotion that he recalled how “Balkanton”(the Bulgarian recording company at the time) made a special record “Bulgarian folk dances”⁹ for him with the best Bulgarian performers and how he was seated next to Raina Kacarova and Stoyan Djudjev on the Jury table in Thrakia... On his return Yves Moreau becomes and still is the most acclaimed performer and lecturer of Bulgarian folk dances in North America, he is the driving force behind numerous Festivals of Bulgarian culture, he choreographs stage performances and is an active disseminator of Bulgarian folk dances worldwide. “Dancing the Bulgarian way” becomes his vocation and sole profession. Yves describes his mission

⁸ Please view how this theme has been expertly dealt with in the book *Balkan Fascination* [Laušević, Mirjana, 2007].

⁹ All those dancing Bulgarian dances over the world remember and love “Yves’ red record”.

as a builder of bridges between Bulgaria and the Western World, but acknowledges that he is not the sole propagator of the “American model”¹⁰ for “Dancing the Bulgarian way”. He has introduced me to his teacher Michelle Cartie, who has come face to face with Bulgarian folk dances as early as 1957, as well as with some of his students – organizers of Dance camps and choreographers of the first groups for stage performance of Bulgarian folklore on the East and West Coast of the USA. Yves Moreau in my mind is a remarkable personality in the domain of the American model of “Dancing the Bulgarian way”, which is characterized by the fact that the Bulgarian dances are thought, performed and popularized by foreigners in private Clubs.

*2b. “Dancing the Bulgarian way”
in Western Europe*

The Balkan euphoria crosses from North America to Western Europe in the 70s and 80s of last century, a process stimulated by instructors like Yves Moreau and the cultural models in the USA. The hobby indulgence in international folklore still exists, but the boom years are over. “Dancing the Bulgarian way” in the German speaking countries in Western Europe (Germany, Austria and Switzerland) has seriously impacted on my research¹¹.

The “American Model” of dancing of Bulgarian dances has undergone a minor transformation due to differences in the political context, historic past and ethnic structure of the US society and the German speaking countries. In Germany and Austria the local folk dances are not only less “attractive” and stimulating, but are still burdened by their national-socialist interpretations. 15% of my more than 300 informers are still afraid not to be associated with the so called “right”, only because they dance German folk dances.

It is both interesting and important for the analysis of the intercultural communication according to me to follow the motivation of the hobby dancers in Western Europe and North America, who are not burdened with WWII heritage or other East European immigrants’ origins. Amongst these hobby dancers I have delineated three degrees or forms of approachment to the Bulgarian folk dance, which reflect different viewpoints of the “national”: 1) Those representatives of the Global world who are interested in the sporting element in



Fig. 3. Yves Moreau and the specially produced and recorded gramophone disk “Bulgarian folk dances” – the “Yves’ red record”.
Photo: G. Panova-Tekath, 2013

¹⁰ This is the term used by Yves Moreau in my interviews in 2013 and 2014.

¹¹ Further information on the subject, empirical material and theoretic concepts are contained in my book “Tanz nach der Wende”, Vol. 1 and 2.

the act of dancing, who are oblivious of any “national” identification and view dancing Bulgarian folk dances as a challenge and physical exercise; 2) Those who are part of meditative and sacral groups, who denounce their German identity and want to be “Bulgarians” because of the well preserved roots of an more “profound”, “older” and “richer” civilizational tradition in Bulgaria; 3) Those who are aware of the existence of national contours and want to communicate with a different culture without the need of a verbal language. All these motivational groups preeminently discover or re-discover themselves through the practice of dancing of Bulgarian folk dances. They come in contact with the different specific aspects of the “Bulgarian” which is why one cannot expect a seamless communication with all dancing Bulgarians. This is common for both the American and European models of “Dancing the Bulgarian way”.

It is noteworthy to mention that the contact between Western Europe and the not so distant geographically Bulgaria in the beginning was only through its “horos”, introduced by Americans – without the active input of Bulgarian instructors or the active involvement of Bulgaria emigrants.

After 1989 the opportunities to travel, live abroad and freely communicate have greatly expanded, but till 2005 it was still a rarity to find Bulgarians in Western clubs and dance groups. Nowadays Bulgarian dance instructors have perfectly adapted themselves to the Western tastes and travel worldwide.

3. Modern day Bulgaria

After “Perestroika” in 1989 the State cultural policy has undergone profound changes and has practically suspended its involvement in supporting folk dances and music. The amateur and professional folk dance ensembles suffered serious financial and ideological constraints. Local self-awareness focused on the Balkans and the East, and the country gradually acquired the characteristics of “Chalgaria” as termed by most Western ethnomusicologists¹². The people associated with the traditional Bulgarian folk genre did not have the opportunity to react in mass to the political transformations. In their midst there were choreographers, who like many musicians and composers¹³ turned to the roots (the “wild berries”) of Bulgarian tradition and modernity in their creations. The new Dance image of democratic Bulgaria first emerged amongst the private dance groups (such as Neshka Robeva’s), and later, though laboriously was adopted by the more traditional ensembles (such as the “Philip Koutev” Ensemble). The problem, though, persisted in the day-to-day dance practice and the Bulgarian audience, which refused to identify itself with the “Chalgaria”, but was equally afraid of losing its identity while adopting foreign dance styles. Gradually, without the financing and

¹² View the texts of the leading ethnomusicologist and expert on Bulgaria [Timothy Rice, 2002] and of the Bulgarian ethnomusicologists [Dimov, 2001; Statelova, 2005; Pejcheva, 2008].

¹³ Please consult [Buchanan, Donna A., 2006; Pejcheva, 2008] on the subject of the capabilities of Bulgarian musicians and music.

directions from “above”, many former dancers and choreographers from the State owned ensembles have come to challenge the spread of the “Chalga” and “Latino” culture. One of my informers – Eva Delinesheva, who at the time organized one of the first Folk dance clubs in Sofia and later on the first Festival of folk clubs, has been threatened by “the prospect that if nothing is done soon enough we will have to look for our folklore in the West”¹⁴.

According to me, it is very important to note that **Western Europe plays a two-pronged role**: on the one hand, it is associated with the possible threat of assimilation, smelting, domination within the European Union, and, on the other, Western Europe and indirectly the USA and Canada have revived the penchant of town dwellers in Bulgarians for the villagers’ “horos” and have provided the model for the dance club form.

Thus, Bulgaria’s accession to the EU in 2007 has marked the emergence of a new era in the way traditional dancing is perceived. My informers very rarely acknowledge the link with this political step, but it is a matter of fact that in Bulgaria in the course of the last seven years we are witnessing a real boom in the area of “Dancing the Bulgarian way” and the revival of national self-consciousness. Thousands of young Bulgarians are members of Bulgarian folk dance Clubs, they take part in festivals and folk dance competitions. In the beginning not all were motivated by patriotic feelings in the choice of a hobby. Three of my informants even say that they have joined a Bulgarian folk dance club to reduce weight! Later on, though – as the manager of one of the most popular Clubs “Gaytani” claims – “most everyone get to the point when they are driven by a common desire to revive and preserve the very best of the Bulgarian tradition – its folk dances.”¹⁵ Obviously the transition of every dancing individual through an interpretive spiral and its inherent degrees of simple sensitivity, action and thought.

The phenomenon is open to the public and society. November of 2011, the first “horothèque” (instead of discotheque) opened doors in the underground passage of the National Palace of Culture in Sofia. Similar dance places were set up in all large cities of Bulgaria. The DJs in those places play only traditional dance music - “horos”. The log-books and my interviews with the DJs demonstrate a high level of appreciation of the emanating energy while dancing in a circle and an upsurge of national self-identification. DJ Bojidar shares: “I have engaged in this only to help my friend (Constantine Gospodinov - founder of a “horothèque” in Sofia and leader of the largest Club in Bulgaria – “Chanove”). I wondered how was it possible for complete strangers to hold hands and dance in a circle without interfering with each other ... nowadays doesn’t everyone has his own “private space”... I took a closer look once and practically saw energy passing along the line of hands. I couldn’t believe my eyes!” He then became a DJ and gradually collected music for more than 80 horos. People started hiring him for wedding parties. “Can you imagine, there are people who marry only

¹⁴ Interview 4/2011.

¹⁵ Interview 5/2013.



Fig. 4. Clubs for folk dances at the “Horo se vie, izviva” – Festival in Sofia, 2012.
Photo: Y. Dimitrov

if such music is playing? I too became enthusiastic and when I am not at work I learn these dances.” To my question about the motivation of the dancers, DJ Bojidar replied: “It is a compilation of motives. The bottom line is the rejuvenation of the national spirit.”¹⁶

Understandably there is much more to say to adequately analyze the phenomenon of modern “Dancing the Bulgarian way” in urban areas. We have to speak both of the potential, as well as the risks of ethnocentrism. For the time being manifestations of ethnocentrism of all involved with Bulgarian folk dancing are limited to an acceptable level of existential ethnocentrism. An example for this is the emancipation in the structure of the new Bulgarian horo. It is a reflection from the majority of the dancing girls and women in the Clubs and the lack of connection of the dancers with specific ethnographic regions. It expresses itself in the free positioning within the horo and leading role in the circle, as well as the choice of a highly varied Bulgarian repertoire.

4. With Bulgarian emigrants back into the Western World

Let us first revisit North America in order to realize that the Bulgarian traditional dance in the course of the last 60 years is going through an interpretive spiral. In the USA and Canada the boom of recreational folk dancing has seemingly abated. As two of the doyens of this movement - Yves Moreau

¹⁶ Interview 11/2012.

(Canada) and prof. Carol Silverman (USA) have shared with me - if there is any interest on the part of Americans in Bulgarian folklore, it is in the first place an interest in the music and its performance and only then in the act of dancing of Bulgarian dances.¹⁷ On the other hand, after 2001 all of a sudden the so called “folk dances” have emerged as a focal point for the coming together of the “Other Bulgaria” – the Bulgaria of emigrants. This movement was initiated by the new Bulgarian emigrants of a younger generation, who are far more liberated and who are imbued with considerable professional and national self-esteem compared to the older generation emigrants. “This is the only way to survive: by demonstrating our dance heritage to the world at large”, confides the founder of the “Bulgari” Ensemble in Montreal, Monika Vuleva, who has never ever danced Bulgarian folk dances while living in her native land¹⁸. “Formerly we had no real feeling for folk dances, whereas now we cannot live without them! We have even produced our own folk costumes!” says the manager of one of the numerous Bulgarian folk groups in California, Valentin Kunev¹⁹. Some of the emigrants are professional dancers, others are products of the so called “amateur art” movement in Socialist Bulgaria, still others learn Bulgarian folk dances from YouTube, and still others attend classes... Konstantin Marinov is the leading person, who has set his mind on bringing together for a Bulgarian dance festival in Chicago the entire diaspora in North America and with his successes in North America is a match for Yves Moreau’s missionary zeal. The common denominator of almost all Bulgarian groups in North America is their desire to “perform” on stage. This naturally forces them to rely on the “stage” style forms of dances. And lo and behold, dancing of Bulgarian “folk dances” is once again used as the business card of Bulgarians abroad. The difference is that this is a grassroots movement and is not instilled from “above” or as a State policy as afore. It does not belong to a totalitarian regime, but is part of the Myth of a cultural tradition of the Bulgarians.

If we are to compare briefly the model of “Dancing the Bulgarian way” in democratic Bulgaria with the émigré’s model we will unravel very interesting interrelationships. The dancing of the younger Bulgarian diaspora more often focuses on the very brilliant choreographies and forms of expression of the former “Socialist” ensembles, whereas their counterparts in Bulgaria are more receptive to the Western club form and actively espouse the older style circle dance forms. Both groups combine the vital and reflective characteristics in a spectacular manner and associate the heritage (the past) with their day-to-

¹⁷ About the interest in Bulgarian music see [Pejcheva, Lozanka, 2008: 609-545].

¹⁸ Interview 03/2013.

¹⁹ Interview 06/2012.

²⁰ I have adopted the terms “Vival” and “Reflective dance” from the cross-cultural approach to the Ukrainian dances by Andrij Nahachewsky, see [Nahachewsky, 2012]. As Nahachewsky admits, the meaning of these terms corresponds entirely with my differentiation and theory of dancing Bulgarian dances in Europe, expounded in “Tanz nach der Wende”.

day life style.²⁰ Everywhere – while speaking to representatives of the younger generation both in Bulgaria, as well as abroad and observing the proliferation of Festivals (such as the “Horo winds and writhes” in Sofia and the Bulgarian festival of “Vereya” in Chicago), one can boldly claim a state of resurgence of traditional dancing.

Interrelationship of dancing of Bulgarian dances abroad as a foreign or one’s own tradition

I have been studying with intense interest the existing local groups abroad, specialized in the teaching and presentation of Bulgarian dances as a foreign tradition and the groups for folk dances of the imbued with new awareness Bulgarian ethnic diaspora. The chain of continuity is no longer solely generational: through the local transmission dancing transgresses in an entirely new way the dividing lines between foreigners and Bulgarians. For example in 2012 Yves Moreau’s Canadian dance group donated its 64 Bulgarian folk costumes in commemoration of its tenth anniversary in Montreal to the “Bulgari” Ensemble. The evolution of the phenomenon of transmission in Western Europe is not that much different from the one in North America. In many of the European towns the old local amateur performing groups for Bulgarian



Fig. 5. The Dance Group “Lazarka” from Munich. Photo: S. Fodor, 2003

²¹ This is a term used by my Bulgarian informers living abroad.

dances are giving way to the new Bulgarian emigrants' dance groups. This is the case in Budapest, Vienna, Zurich, Munich, Berlin, London... Certain Groups for Bulgarian dances "pass (relay) the baton" (it is thus in Montreal), while redirecting their emphasis on dances other than Bulgarian, or through rediscovering their own dance heritage or terminating their activities due to aging of their members. Other groups, set up by foreigners are literally being taken over by the burgeoning numbers of new members from Bulgaria (for example the "Lazarka" group in Munich). Still others continue their existence in parallel with the newly emerging Bulgarian groups as in the case in the town of Bern. Very often I encounter in the newly established Bulgarian groups one or two non-Bulgarian dancers, who remember the aforementioned recreational folk dance movement in the Western World. I don't have the space here to describe the attitude of the Bulgarian émigrés towards them. Dance obviously draws together and unites individuals and the transition to a "harder" and more "authentic"²¹ Bulgarian dance presence is gradual and peaceful – as if totally "natural". Thus in the course of the well-established over the years Bulgarian happening "St. Lazare" in Montreal, which was started by Yves Moreau, all the food provided in the course of the happening and its actual continuation in the last 3 years is entirely in the hands of Monika Vuleva and her Dance group "Bulgari". It would be difficult to pick out amongst its members Robert - the "pure Canadian" as he styles himself. The situation in Dusseldorf is identical. On the occasion of the Europe Day in 2012, 2013 and 2014 Bulgaria was represented by a Bulgarian dance group, not by a German one, in contrast to the previous occasions. Two of the performers were one German and one Swiss, whereas the group was led by a former dancer from the "Philip Koutev State Ensemble", named after its founder and longtime director – Philip Koutev.

Conclusions

The Phenomenon of "Dancing the Bulgarian way" lays bare the specifics in the evolution of the aforementioned societies and the differences in their corresponding policies of individual or collective identity. It provides an excellent means for the analysis of the potential of the human body in its quest of the „else's“ and the creation of „one's own“ meanings, because it traverses interpretive spirals both on the micro-level (thematizing the individual's reflexion), as well as on the macro-level (connecting different countries and cultures). The bottom line is that "Dancing the Bulgarian way" offers us a very interesting and valuable example of national and international communication in today's polyvalente World.

This World is hard to differentiate between East and West, but if we simplify and limit the number of players in the act of communication (to oversimplify somewhat) to two sides, we could say that in the process of "Dancing the Bulgarian Way", Bulgaria has offered the World a multitude of attractive choreographies and an opportunity for the experiencing, sharing and sheltering of the individual in a "social" and creative circle. North America not only provided an audience for the Bulgarian dances, but was the originator of the dance Clubs, which has proven very successful, for all involved countries, organizational form

for Bulgarian dances. The so called amateur groups – presenters of foreign folk dances also emerged in the West as missionaries of the multicultural tolerance and pursuit of the understanding of the “other” through one’s own body.

Thus “Dancing the Bulgarian way” received worldwide recognition and continues to bolster the self-confidence of many a man and woman – of Bulgarians, who are gaining an intimate knowledge of their cultural heritage and is for us – researchers an optical lens. With its help we can study the contours of the different national identities, to compare the development of the modern societies, to forecast the success of the newly formed communities and formulate theories in the field of intra- and inter-cultural non-verbal communication.

My research to date shows not only the tenacity of “Dancing the Bulgarian way” in different political contexts, but its ability to create new communities and to connect different worlds: Capitalist and Socialist, American and European, modern and traditional, postmodern and post-traditional. All of this is the guarantee for the survival and future evolution of the Bulgarian dance.

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Correspondence address:

Gergana Panova-Tekath –Assoc. Prof. PhD
Institute for Art Studies
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
Phone: 0888 941 426; 0049 1782 184 423
e-mail: gpanova@yahoo.com