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***THE 23TH SYMPOSIUM OF THE STUDY GROUP ON ETHNOCHOREOLOGY OF
THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR TRADITIONAL MUSIC***

Monghidoro (Italy), July 11-17, 2004

Members of the study group on ethnochoreology of the largest world association of ethnomusicologists *The International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM)* gathered for the twenty-third time in July 2004. Eight days of intensive work went by in the beautiful wooded scenery of the small Italian village of Monghidoro near Bologna. Apart from the plenary gatherings of the Association which are attended by several hundred ethnomusicologists from around the world, the study group on ethnochoreology was this year again, as it has been for years, one of the best attended events at which 63 papers in all were presented. The general topic was *The Silence of Dance* with the subtitles *Visible and Invisible Dance* and *Crossing Identity Boundaries*. The presented works were grouped into several broad problem circles: 1. *Connecting Different Worlds*, 2. *Hidden Structures and Symbolic Meanings*, 3. *The Female Aspect in Music and Dance*, 4. *Historical Sources*, 5. *The Hidden Power: Healing through Dance* and others.

The first working day of this year's symposium was opened by a doyen of European ethnochoreology, Anca Giurghescu (Romania/Denmark). For years this scholar has been studying the dance of the Walachians who migrated from many villages in northeastern Serbia to Denmark during the second half of the 20th century. This time she focused her interest on the characteristic Walachian dance hora as a "symbol of home" in which symbols glorifying life and death are united.

Linking up to the ritual aspect of Anca Giurghescu's work, Georgiana Gor (England) said, based on the material collected in Nigeria, that in addition to its numerous functions ritual dance can also have a "cognitive function" through which the dancer makes conscious his own position and role in the ritual. After Gor, Chi Fang Chao (China) presented interesting material recorded in Thailand related to the ritual dance of men in a circle dedicated to the deceased.

In her theoretical thought Theresa Buckland (England) reflected on the numerous problems regarding objectivity in ethnochoreological research. Starting with a search for the "archetype" of the numerous variants of a traditional English dance (the Morris dance), she reiterated the perpetual question – what is truth? Without giving a concrete answer, Buckland concluded that objectivity does not really exist, because

the researcher, himself profoundly determined by the culture he comes from, spontaneously evaluates and assesses the material he works on.

Judy Van Zile (USA), Olivera Vasić (Serbia and Montenegro) and Dalia Urbanaviciene (Lithuania) concentrated on individual dance phenomena, such as the Korean masked-dance drama (Zile), Christmas (koledarska) and rain (dodolska) dances (Vasić), and dance with a blind man (Urbanaviciene).

Several eminent scholars helped bring about an unusually interesting ending to the first working day of the symposium with their relaxed presentations realized through direct communication with the audience. Firstly, Frank Hall (USA) suggested the revision of one of the current definitions of dance as a non-verbal language, next Laxmi G. Tewari (USA) demonstrated a possible interpretation of gestures during the singing of traditional Indian songs as a kind of dance. The impressive ending to an exhausting day was provided by Mary Lee Sanders (USA), who informed us that sign language, too, was a form of dance which allowed those who use it to achieve specific thought processes free from the restraints of spoken language.

The second working day was opened by Mohd Anis Md Nor (Malaysia). In a carefully prepared twenty-minute lecture he presented the Malaysian female shamanistic ritual. Vice-president of the Association and one of its Bulletin's regular editors, Adrienne Kaeppler (USA) explored the possibility of globalizing certain dance phenomena that differ greatly from one another – ballet, dance in the Broadway play "Cats" and the Hawaiian hula.

In addition to presentations of influential ethnochoreologists Anis Md Nor and Adrienne Kaeppler, the second and third day of the symposium were marked by the presentations of a series of researchers with different field experience and academic achievements. We will mention only some of them: Ana Shtarbanova (Bulgaria) and Ana Ilieva (Bulgaria), this year's hostess of the symposium Placida Staro (Italy), Gabriela Berlin (Germany), Jörgen Torp (Germany), student Mumtaz Backer (Malaysia), Luisa Del Guidice (USA), Iva Niemčić (Croatia), Ana Paula Hofling (USA), Selena Rakočević (Serbia and Montenegro), Omer Barbaros Unlu (Turkey), Vytautas Tumenas (Lithuania), Giselle Guilhon Antunes Camarago (France)...

On the fourth, fifth and sixth day of the conference, 20 ethnochoreologists presented their works. Here I would like to single out the theoretical work of Nancy Lee Reyter (USA) about the un/changing identity of a dancer who performs dances from different historical and cultural epochs; the extraordinary material recorded in summer 2003 which testifies to the vitality of text and context in the traditional Greek dance presented by a Swiss of Greek descent, Christine Glaused (Switzerland), and the interesting video presentation of Joško Čaleta (Croatia) about the transformation of a Christmas carol (koleda) from the island of Pašman in the period between 1996 and 2004. Other participants who presented their works included: Fahriye Dincer (Turkey) who dealt with the traditional heritage of the Kurds, Colin Quigley (USA) who talked about dance ideologies in Transylvania, Mats Nilsson (Sweden) who dealt with the phenomenon of the polka, and many others.

Although very heterogeneous, the works presented at the 23rd symposium of the ICTM study group on ethnochoreology may generally be divided into two groups. The first group would include works that may roughly be determined as “ethnographical” because they are dominated by the very material on traditional dances whose appeal or topicality overshadows a potential scientific problem. The second group of works may be termed “problem works”, because in them the material on traditional dances, regardless of how interesting it is or is not, was used to explain and prove certain scientific premises and theoretical hypotheses.

This year’s symposium will be remembered for the fact that, despite the obvious heterogeneity of scientific approaches, there was a feeling of the domination of American ethnochoreology which was referred to as the anthropology of dance (12 of the 63 works were presented by Americans). Despite this, the next symposium which is to be held in July 2006 will be linked to Europe (Slovenia, Romania, Greece or Turkey). This is perhaps because the examination of traditional dances would not be complete without the developed procedures for a structural analysis of the European ethnochoreological and ethnographical school.

Translated by Jelena Nikezić