6. The Role of Music and Musicians in the Revitalisation of Dance Heritage

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This chapter emphasises the important role that dance music plays in the study and revitalisation of dance traditions. By providing insight into the interweaving of music and dance in Slovenian folk culture and based on the experience of music and dance presentations as part of folk dance ensembles and folk music revival groups, it aims to set out the endeavours and experience of folk dance revitalisation so far. It also seeks to highlight that music and musicians can play an important role in the sustainability of dance heritage.

Keywords: interweaving of music and dance, dance music, participatory folk dance communities, revitalisation, music and dance heritage

Introduction

Much like in the field of ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology in other countries, researchers in Slovenia have not devoted much attention to in-depth and extensive research into the interplay and interdependence of dance and music. Specialist literature in Slovenia also lacks in-depth research on instrumental folk music, especially dance music, as music researchers have devoted more attention to vocal folk music, while dance researchers have mainly focused on dance itself.

In recent decades, it has often been observed that instrumental folk music performed in Slovenia is more suitable for listening than for dancing. This is also the case, for example, with dance music performed by folk dance ensembles and various instrumental forms of the folk music revival movement. In fact, musicians are increasingly less skilled at playing music for dancing, and their music is moving away from the previously typical danceability. For some time now, the same trend has been observed elsewhere. Several decades ago, this was also the case in Hungary, where at the beginning, during the 1970s, one of the fundamental aims of the now-recognised and established *táncház* (dance house) movement was to bring instrumental folk music back to its original function: playing music for the purposes of dancing.

This paper focuses on the role of instrumental music and musicians in participatory folk dance communities and in the process of folk dance revitalisation. It is based on the situation in Slovenia and emphasises the importance of dance music in the study and revitalisation of dance traditions. By presenting the interweaving of music and dance in the Slovenian folk culture and using the findings of research on (stage) presentation of music and dance as part of folk dance ensembles and folk music revival groups, it aims to present the efforts and experience of folk dance revitalisation to date. It also seeks to draw attention to some starting points and possibilities of the attempts to bring music and dance back from the archives to a local community. Although the dominant role of folk dance is often highlighted in the context of dance heritage, music can play an important role in the sustainability of these activities.

This research is based on personal experiences of the author, who actively participated in different folk dance ensembles during the 1980s and 1990s. He was first a musician and instrumental band leader, and later also the author of musical arrangements. He has attended a variety of seminars,

workshops and education programmes for musicians and folk dance ensemble leaders, initially as a participant and subsequently, for a number of years, also as a lecturer. For analysis of the interdependence of the dance and music in the folk dance ensembles in recent years, the author has replaced the autobiographical method with observation of, and participation in, various events featuring folk dance ensembles. Another source of information is his personal ties with the folk music revival movement and his own experiences, as he had actively participated in the movement and used to be a musician in a folk music revival group. In addition, the author draws upon collected sources, literature, records and digital ethnography.

Choreomusicology – Music and Dance Practices as Holism

The interweaving, interdependence and interplay of folk dance and folk music have been studied by many researchers of both dance and music. In ethnomusicology, calls for joint research of music and dance emerged as early as the mid-1950s arguing that "while there is music without associated movement and dance without melodic accompaniment, the two are for the most part so closely related as to demand joint analysis" (Kurath 1957, 10). The strong interdependence of music and dance is certainly also true when it comes to the traditional music and dance culture in Slovenia, as dance events did not exist without music, which was usually performed live by musicians.

The view of music and dance practices as holistic has been the object of discussions and research in several publications (for more see e.g. Stepputat and Seye 2020, 12–14; Ahmedaja 2023, 7–9). As noted by Kendra Stepputat and Elina Seye in their introduction to a scholarly music journal issue, dedicated to the theme of choreomusicology (2020),[1] "research on sound in combination with motion, and on dance in combination with music", has gained increasing attention since the 1990s in disciplines such as musicology, dance studies, performance studies, psychology, cognitive science and acoustics. It should, however, be pointed out that ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology research which is characterised by a focus on the rela-

[1] The term choreomusicology is proposed as an umbrella term for the various approaches used to investigate music-dance interrelations, where the focus is on combining views from ethnomusicology and ethnochoreology.

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tionship between music and dance has been spasmodic and the theoretical ideas that have been presented have rarely been applied or developed by other scholars. At the same time, the two authors note that, despite the fact that there is a significant shortage of theoretical writings, many more studies are focusing on specific musical and dance traditions, and the number of publications has increased significantly over the last twenty years.

In general, dance and music can correlate in different ways, in different forms and at different levels. In some cases, they correlate only at a single level, and in other cases at multiple ones (cf. Bakka 2023). While some researchers have attempted to identify a definitive or universal model of the relationship between music and dance (e.g. Giurchescu and Kröschlová 2007), many others have highlighted more general and principled connections between the two, as well as their role in the community and the social and cultural perspectives of the music and dance relationship. As previously pointed out by László Felföldi, it should, however, be noted that, "connections between dance and music are not mechanical, easily definable, or quickly understandable. There is a colourful interplay between them that is conditioned and influenced by many other (textual and contextual) factors" (2001, 163). In any case, the intensity of music and dance connections can also be different.

Music and dance are often performed at the same time and depend on one another. In many performing arts traditions, they are inseparable and not even considered separate art forms. As has been well documented in (ethnochoreological, ethnomusicological and choreomusical) literature, the ethnocentrically European term "dance" is often not applicable to systems of structured human body movement of non-European peoples, who have their own terms of reference for conceiving such activities. Dance and music are conceptually linked; in some cultures and languages, this is evidenced by expressions that use a single word to encompass the inextricable whole of music, dance and play (cf. Gore 2001; Bakka et al. 2024). The question as to why dance and music are "often considered to be separate categories, both in practice and in research" (Stepputat and Seye 2020, 7) therefore comes as no surprise. This is especially in cases where they are closely intertwined and interdependent, and one can even speak of "dancing the music & musicking the dance" (Melin 2007, 124); a feature also evident in Slovenian folk culture.

The Interweaving of Music and Dance in Slovenian Folk Culture

In Slovenian folk culture, instrumental music and dance are often closely intertwined, even inseparable, which is manifested in various ways. Generally speaking, people have always danced to instrumental music. Thus, before the late twentieth century, there were hardly any traditional folk dance events that did not feature the participation of performing musicians. This is also attested by certain common sayings and phrases. In such expressions, dance music is strongly connected to dance and musicians, and they describe the meaning and role of musicians in society. A traditional folk musician, for example, described this in an interesting way, stating that "the musician is always around, like the broom" (Kumer 1983, 152), since it was impossible to dance without musicians in times when recorded and broadcast music was not yet readily available. This is why they were highly sought-after and respected, often enjoying a privileged role in the local community (cf. Kumer 1983; Strajnar 1986). Therefore, without musicians, there was no dancing and no local parties and fun (very often connected with dancing), which many people, especially the younger ones, were very eager to have. This was often pointed out also by those who believed that dancing could quickly lead to debauchery and "moral abyss" (cf. e.g. "Št. Gotard." 1931: 6) and that limiting the performance of instrumental music would result in fewer dance parties and consequently fewer temptations and a more virtuous life for young people.

The close connection between folk music and dance was also reflected in the musicians' relation to dancing and dancers. There was a constant interaction between them. Traditional musicians were very familiar with dances, they also knew when and how to interpret individual ones so that the outcome was appropriate for the event and accordant with customs and tradition. Often, they were skilled dancers themselves, and while playing they observed the dancers closely, adapting the playing style to the character of the dance, and the dancers' ability and mood (cf. Strajnar 1986). On the other hand, the dancers followed the music with their movements, responding to it through dancing. In a literal and figurative sense, they danced to the tune of musicians. Therefore, it was important for musicians to play enthusiastically so as to encourage the audience to – as the popular Slovenian saying goes – "let music into their feet" (*gre glasba v noge*), making sure that everyone would "get itchy feet" (*zasrbijo pete*) and would want to dance.

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This means that music was performed in a way that was as compelling and zestful as possible, to entice and excite the present audience for dancing, to elicit a physical response. The primary function of folk dance music was therefore its danceability, to which the performance, including the aesthetic component of the music, was adapted, whereas the virtuosity of the musical performance was of secondary importance, though still appreciated.

The usual contemporary term, which is often used both in everyday communication by the general public and experts in research studies, is that a musician or music "accompanies" (*spremljajo*) dance. A commonly used phrase, for example, is that "dance was accompanied by a musician" (*za spremljavo plesa je poskrbel godec*) or that "they danced to the accompaniment of upbeat music" (*zaplesali so ob spremljavi poskočne glasbe*). In this case, dancing occupies a primary role, while the music is seen as a kind of "add-on", "a supplement" that merely accompanies the main action. And yet, it would perhaps be more appropriate to say that it is dancing that accompanies the music, since it is music and musicians who are some sort of animating spirit and the motor of dance, and the ones that determine many aspects of dancing and dance events. This is also characterised by the popular phrase "you will dance to my tune" (*plesal boš, kot bom jaz igral*), which communicates the more important role music occupies in comparison with dance, while metaphorically acquiring an even broader meaning, i.e. doing exactly what someone has dictated or commanded (cf. "Plesati" 2014). In public perception, all this points to the very important role that music and musicians play when it comes to dance.

Music and Musicians in the Folk Dance Ensembles

Today, "folk dance" (*ljudski ples*) in Slovenia no longer exists in the environment nor fulfils the same function as when first documented by folklorists. Instead, what is considered as folk dance is often presented only in the form of stage performances. Although there are some other spaces where folk dances or "ethno-identity dances" (Shay 2016) are danced outside of the established stage production of folk dance ensembles (see Kunej 2023), the term *folk dance* is still frequently connected with the work of contemporary folk dance ensembles and what they represent on stage.

In Slovenia, folk dance ensembles (*folklorne skupine*) have a long-established tradition spanning over a century. They present tradition-based

music, dances, costumes, rituals, and customs at various public events in the form of musical-dance performances. The activities of folk dance ensembles in Slovenia rest on amateur foundations and are institutionally organised. Although the work of folk dance ensembles is generally a complex activity, where various tradition-based elements are supposed to be intertwined and combined in equal measure, the dominant role is occupied by dance. Music is usually subordinated to dance and its presentation on stage; nevertheless, music plays an important role.

The important role of dance music in folk dance ensembles originates in folk tradition, where people always danced to instrumental music. It is therefore not surprising that in folk dance ensembles in Slovenia, live music continues to be the customary way of performing. Musicians in folk dance ensembles, much like the ensembles themselves, can be very different, with dissimilar musical preferences, abilities and knowledge, but also inclinations, roles and intentions. The musicians and their music often also reflected the orientation and activities of the folk dance ensembles they were part of, as well as shifting trends in the work practices and tendencies across various time periods.

Most folk dance ensemble musicians are amateur musicians. They may be self-taught or without any formal music education, or have basic music education attained in the system of well-developed musical schooling in Slovenia, where the emphasis is on Western-classical music education and its aesthetics. Unfortunately, in Slovenian music schools, traditional musical practices are not part of the curriculum.

Until the last quarter of the twentieth century, folk dance ensembles, which performed largely local tradition and were predominantly active in rural settings, sometimes featured the participation of local folk musicians. They were well versed in the folk dance music repertoire and the traditional style of playing, which only had to be adapted for the stage choreography of the music-dance performance events. Today, there are almost no musicians of this type left in folk dance ensembles, meaning that ensembles also only represent dance traditions that have disappeared.

Over the past decades, folk dance ensembles have been seeing increasing numbers of musicians with basic music education. This is especially the case in those folk dance ensembles that draw not only from the local environment, but also represent traditions from a wider area of Slovenia. These musicians have received their musical education and acquired instrument-playing skills in music schools, where there is no opportunity to

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learn about the aesthetics of folk music and how to play it, nor to acquire the skills in performing music for dancing. Moreover, most of these musicians have had no direct contact with folk culture and had to first learn about the traditional folk repertoire and style of playing, as they had not been familiar with it before joining a folk dance ensemble. This tends to lead to certain divergences between the traditional way of playing (and folk musical aesthetics) and the view of music and playing style acquired during musical schooling. Musicians also have to gain experience of playing music for dancing and learn about the characteristics of the dances.

In folk dance ensembles, academy-trained musicians are few and far between. In rare instances, they participate in larger urban ensembles; often this takes place on an occasional basis, i.e. they join an ensemble for major performances and tours. Their playing is based on the academic approach, often of a highly advanced technical and musical standard, though at times lacking a deeper connection with the dance and dancers as it is not based on the danceability but rather on the virtuosity of a musical performance.

Yet the way folk music is presented on stage not only depends on the musicians, but largely also on the authors of musical arrangements and dance choreographies. Due to changes in context and stage presentation, instrumental music in folk dance ensembles was adapted and transformed in similar ways to those established in the realm of dance as analysed by Rebeka Kunej (e.g. 2010, 2023). Being subject to the demands of public performance and stage design constraints, music and dance on stage can no longer appear in their original form but may only approximate the traditional folk template. Two principles offering two poles of the stage presentation spectrum are the concept of *passive adoption* and the concept of *active transfer* to the stage. In passive adoption, folk music and dance are adapted for the stage in a form as close as possible to the traditional template, using all their characteristic elements. Active transfer to the stage, conversely, uses only selected folk elements while evidently transforming or newly creating the rest. The passive adoption model aims to portray a notion of authenticity, frequently even idealisation and fixation of the image of folk tradition, whereas in the active transfer the tradition is subjected in great part to the creativity of the authors of the performance. Both approaches involve shaping the music and guiding the musicians, and preparing a musical arrangement for the musicians to perform with the chosen set of instruments. In active transfer to the stage, the arrangement expresses the author's strongly emphasised creative view of the music pre-

sented, while in passive adoption, the arrangement shapes the folk music that the author of the musical arrangement aims to reconstruct.

The arrangement of the musical part of a staged music-dance performance can involve various approaches, depending on the practices of an ensemble as well as the participating musicians. One of the approaches is that the music arrangement is prepared by the musicians themselves. In this case, in accordance with the choreography of the dance performance, the musicians jointly assign the order of the melodies received from the choreographer, the number of repetitions of individual melodies, their potential modulations etc., and agree on the role individual instruments will have in the performance. The musicians usually build on the choreographic concept, which presents the choreographer's perspective of the music-dance event, arranging music accordingly. The music concept is generally not fixed with sheet music but is shaped during live rehearsals into a form that is eventually memorised, and then partly improvised during performances. Such musical arrangements often incorporate elements and aesthetics of popular music that are often featured in the media and with which musicians today are much more familiar than folk music; in part, also due to the fact that they mostly no longer have direct experience of different local musical-dance traditions upon which to draw.

Often, the musical arrangement is prepared by a musically educated individual who is usually familiar with the characteristics of folk music tradition, in addition to the fundamentals of music. Since the 1990s, these individuals have mostly been researchers of traditional music whose field research has provided them with insight into folk music tradition and the work of folk dance ensembles. In the later period, i.e. during the past two decades, many arrangements have been made by the more engaged and ambitious ensemble musicians, who are often versed in art and popular music, and less so in folk music. These arrangements are often written down as sheet music, learned by musicians at rehearsals involving dancers and then played from memory.

The experience of Slovenian folk dance ensembles has shown that regardless of who makes musical arrangements and the approach taken, the authors of arrangements and choreographers, or those who take care of the dance part of a stage performance, need to work together to create the final form of the music-dance presentation. This is the best way to achieve a coherence between the music and dance and to make sure that the stage presentation is homogenous and cohesive. When it comes to this, the usual

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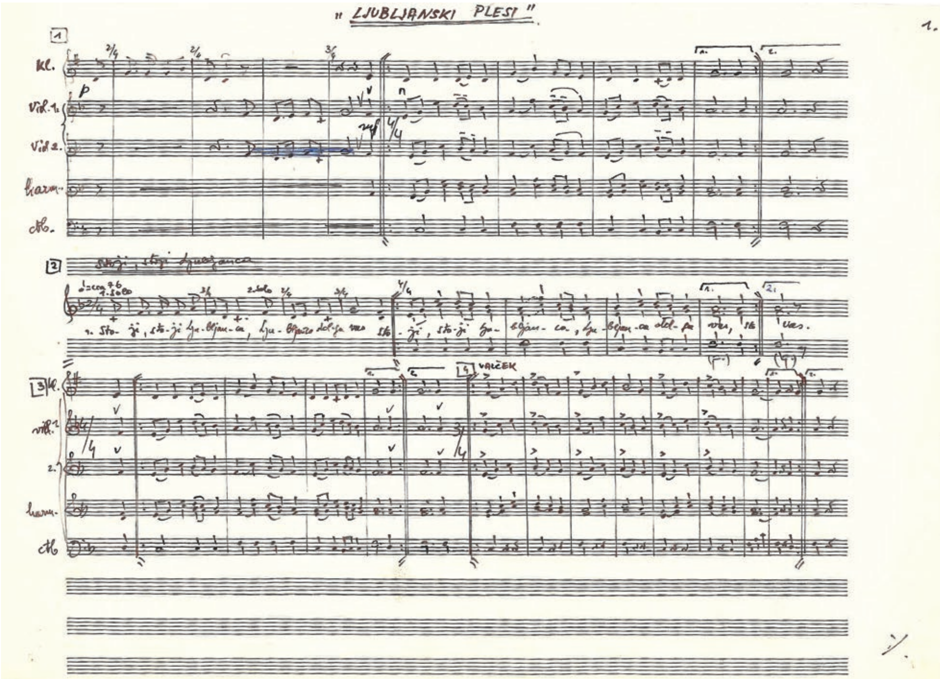

Figure 1. *First page of a handwritten musical arrangement, prepared by Julijan Strajnar, ethnomusicologist, composer, and researcher of Slovenian folk music at the Institute of Ethnomusicology ZRC SAZU, and former musician of the folk dance ensemble.* From the private archive of the author.

practice is to start with a dance and a choreographic idea; the music is then adapted and the musical arrangement subordinated to it. In folk dance ensembles, the dance and musical parts are usually taken care of by different "authors", which can cause difficulties in co-shaping a uniform stage presentation and a proper interweaving of music and dance.

Only in exceptional cases do choreographers also make music arrangements by themselves. A Slovenian artist who certainly stands out in this respect was the late Bruno Ravnikar,[2] who authored the musical arrangements for all his numerous staged music-dance performances. It is inter-

2 Dr Bruno Ravnikar (1930–2023) was the leader of several folk dance ensembles, and the author of many music-dance stage productions. He was involved in the organisation of folklore activities in Slovenia and was in 1969 among the founders of the International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts (CIOFF). He was an expert in recording folk dances by means of Kinetography Laban, and the initiator and contributor of several folklore-related journals.

esting to note that he built the music-dance performance from the music arrangement concept first and then matched it with the choreography. This approach is quite distinct from the one employed by most choreographers who normally ground their work in dance to which music is then adapted, with arrangements prepared by a third party (the musical arrangement author). According to Ravnikar, his holistic music-based approach and the authorship of music and dance by the same individual were key in catalysing the great popularity and success of his music-dance performances (Bruno Ravnikar, interview with author, 11 August 2020).

Experience of Dance in Folk Music Revival

It seemed that the idea of folk dancing outside the context of folk dance ensembles would come to life to the greatest extent as part of the folk music revival movement. In Slovenia, the first such folk music revival scene appeared in the late 1970s, while a significant increase in folk music revival performers was observed in the early 1990s. The movement was mainly based on the performance and presentation of music. In the second half of the 1990s, when the groups' activities became more organised as part of the Folk Slovenia Cultural Society (*KD Folk Slovenija*), the society – inspired by the *táncház* movement in Hungary – also tried to set up a dance house in Slovenia. Although a relatively large number of groups also performed Slovenian folk dance music, the dance houses did not flourish quite as much as might have been expected (see Kunej 2025).

Most musicians of the folk music revival movement based their respective repertoires largely on or were inspired by the Slovenian traditional music and folk musical practices. Many group members had previous experience of playing in folk dance ensembles, and they often collected or researched the folk music tradition themselves before incorporating it into their repertoires. Many of them had also received formal musical education and had a wealth of experience in other musical genres. In their musical activities, the musicians were often inspired by and followed the example of revival groups in other countries, including Hungary, and the *táncház* movement.

In the first period, pre-1990, all three most notable folk music revival groups – *Trutamora Slovenica*, *Istranova* and *Trinajsto prase* – also had folk dance music in their respective repertoires. However, this music was gen-

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erally not intended for dancing, but mainly for stage presentations and concerts. A closer look at these groups' repertoires and the way they presented instrumental folk music to the public reveals that the dance music performed was changed from its original, primarily concert-centred approach, which was based on the presentation of the music itself, to that of dance and playing for dance. This, however, happened gradually and took a long time.

The group *Trutamora Slovenica* was established in 1978 – at the time it did not yet have a name – to present the findings of the founding member Mira Omerzel's ethnomusicological field research on stage. The aim of their first concerts, which were held under a common name *Slovenska ljudska glasbila in pesmi* (Slovenian Folk Instruments and Songs), was to present "folk music in a form as close to the original as possible" (Omerzel-Mirit 2013, 8). The group performed numerous concerts in Slovenia and abroad, thus presenting the Slovenian folk music by means of "original folk instruments and reconstructions" (Omerzel-Mirit 2013, 8). It also held several educational concerts and workshops, and was thus part of the school curriculum. It presented folk music in a new way that was entirely different from what was the norm at the time, especially in folk dance ensembles. Based on field experience with living folk music practice and with the help of a collection of old folk instruments, which they learned to play directly from folk musicians, they wanted to "present the Slovenian musical tradition in an undistorted form, without any popular and fashionable distractions; the songs and a colourful range of unusual and long-forgotten musical instruments helped them get in touch with themselves and their own existence" ("Ansambel Trutamora Slovenica iz Ljubljane..." 2000). When it came to this, they had a clear vision: "a concert-based revival path: research, restoration, revival, presentation at concerts, raising awareness and exposing our true and undistorted musical heritage"; and "to introduce into the Slovenian area creativity that was previously non-existent" (Omerzel-Mirit 2013, 1).

The group was focused on Slovenian folk music until 1999, after which it changed its name to *Vedun* and gradually shifted its focus to sound therapy, "old meditative music and the revival of spiritual healing sounds of the cultures of the world" ("O ansamblu Vedun" n.d.). Although the group also had direct contact with folk musicians and had some folk dance music in its repertoire, it was by no means intended for dancing. In fact, the group's performance was not one that enticed or encouraged the audience to dance; often it was not even possible to dance to the music they were

playing. Moreover, dancing would probably have distracted the musicians and their playing, as they wanted to create an atmosphere of concentrated and immersive listening, similar to that of classical music concerts. For this reason, some experts believe that the group's musical practices were, in general, too academically oriented and based on a style of Western "classical" presentation and hence do not even consider the group to be part of the folk music revival movement in Slovenia (cf. Kranjac 2014). Nevertheless, the group, with its pioneering work and its many activities, greatly influenced numerous folk music revival groups established at a later date.

When it comes to folk dance music, the same is true of the *Istranova* music group. Some experts consider the group, founded in 1980, to be the very first folk music revival performers in Slovenia (cf. Kranjac 2014; Juvančič 2005, 213). The group consisted of students who were inspired by the folk music revival in other parts of the world and searched for unconventional musical practices. The group started exploring and re-creating folk music from the region of Istria, which at the time was completely marginalised and almost entirely unknown. They used a variety of new musical elements and instruments, and incorporated them into folk music, thus building a repertoire that many performers draw from even today (cf. Juvančič 2013). *Istranova*, whose repertoire was focused on highlighting the multiculturalism of the Istrian peninsula, put on numerous performances and concerts, which largely increased its visibility and popularity. The group split in 1988.

The members of *Istranova* were also in direct contact with folk music. They went around Istrian villages, collecting and documenting folk music in a systematic and studious way. They also went there to play music. They would often show up unannounced in villages where they had previously documented folk music, and would hold free concerts, where they played together with the village musicians (Juvančič 2013). They also included folk dance music in their repertoire; their performance, however, was not intended for dancing, but mainly for concert and stage performances, although it was possible to dance to their music. Despite their local folk repertoire, their approach and performance were more similar to that of the so-called "acoustic groups" that performed "acoustic music",[3] mainly aimed at a more specific and discerning (alternative) musical audience.

[3] From the 1970s onwards, so-called "acoustic music" was made mostly by students who identified neither with the hard-edged electric melodies characteristic of punk rock and rock, which during this period took on a mainly rebellious note, nor with Slovenian pop songs and folk-pop

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The *Trinajsto prase* group started performing in late 1987, in part as a result of socialising and ties with the *Istranova* group. On the one hand, they were inspired by their role models (e.g. *Istranova*, Hungarian groups that were part of the *táncház* movement), but on the other hand, they followed their own path, drawing mainly on the broader Slovenian folk music tradition. The group's repertoire consisted mostly of reconstructed folk dance music, and was characterised by the use of simple folk instruments and traditional playing styles, resulting in a recognisable sound akin to the sound of folk musicians. The group travelled to the Prekmurje region several times to meet local folk musicians and play music with them. Moreover, in Prekmurje, the traditional music practice was still very much alive and the repertoires of many musicians included various folk dance tunes, which people still danced to at parties. The group took a similar approach to reviving the folk music of the Primorska region. It performed a great deal both in Slovenia and other countries and also undertook many recordings for radio and TV programmes. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was one of the most popular folk music revival groups in Slovenia. It split in 1993.

Trinajsto prase was the first group to present instrumental folk music in the manner of folk ensembles that existed in the past; their aim was to "play live music in its function" ([JeS] 1994, 11) in a spontaneous, direct form to which the audience was supposed to respond spontaneously (Muršič 1993, 11). They based their music on the "fundamentals of folk music", in which there is "no pretence and no embellishment" (Tomaž Rauch, interview, 20 July 2020). When it came to performing, their main aim was to entertain, both themselves and others. However, even at their performances and concerts, people often did not respond by dancing, although the music and the way it was performed were very suitable for dancing.

A significant increase in folk music revival performers in Slovenia was observed in the early 1990s, many with a focus on instrumental music (e.g. the group *Marko banda* and the group *Pišćaci* in 1990, the group *Kurja koža* in 1992, the group *Tolovaj Mataj* in 1994, the family group *Volk Folk* in 1996). Some groups performed only for a short period, while others are still active. Some musicians were part of several groups, and some went on to

music, which was and still is very popular in Slovenia. The "acoustic music" of that period was inspired by the aesthetic of singing folk ballads and was influenced not only by foreign folk music of Anglo-American origin, but also by the Slovenian folk music heritage, as well as elements of the music from various historical musical periods (cf. Juvančič 2016). "Acoustic music" influenced many folk music revival performers that emerged at a later time and some of which had been part of "acoustic ensembles".

Figure 2. *Members of the folk music revival group* Trinajsto prase *playing reconstructed folk dance music in a stage performance. Although the repertoire and its performance practice were well suited to dancing, the audience often refrained from doing so.* Photo: © Milan Mrčun. Courtesy of the private archive of Roman Ravnič.

form new ones after the groups they had belonged to split. The repertoires and the performance of many of these folk music revival musicians also drew inspiration from local folk music tradition; in fact, these musicians often had direct contact with traditional folk musicians, and they often collected and studied folk music and musical instruments. Although their repertoires were often based on folk dance music, their playing, with a few exceptions, was not primarily aimed directly at dancing.

Important changes in this respect took place in 1996, when most members of the folk music revival movement in Slovenia joined the Folk Slovenia Cultural Society.[4] From then on, their activities were carried out in an organised manner. The main aim of the society's activities was to achieve greater prominence for Slovenian folk and folk revival music and to ena-

[4] The society was later renamed Folk Slovenia Cultural and Ethnomusicological Society (*KED Folk Slovenija*).

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ble an easier exchange of experiences and more coordinated activities of the performers. Its aim was also to organise various trainings, workshops and seminars for the members and the general public, and to present folk revival music at various concerts. Moreover, inspired by the *táncház* movement in Hungary, the society also tried to set up a dance house in Slovenia.

The very first dance houses in Slovenia were therefore established relatively late, especially compared to Hungary, where dance houses had emerged as early as the 1970s, and their establishment was closely linked to the activities of the Folk Slovenia Cultural Society. As noted by Rebeka Kunej, dance houses were modelled on the well-established *táncház* movement, although they were based on a slightly different (political) premise and founded in different circumstances:

> the first, trial dance house took place at the assembly of the society's members in late 2000, while the proper start of the Slovene Dance House project is considered to be 2001, when the dance house was organized five times between March and December. In the following years, with the financial support of the Ministry of Culture and/or the JSKD,[5] between two and five events were usually organised per year, most often in Ljubljana and rare instances in other parts of the country. The political idea of being an alternative to Soviet-style choreographed stage presentations of dance folklore and a subculture (see Balogh and Fülemile 2008; Diószegi 2008), which carried and energised the Hungarian dance houses, was absent from the background of Slovene implementation. (Kunej 2023, 48–49)

The idea of establishing the first dance houses was presented by folk music revival musicians who wanted to perform folk dance music that had a function, i.e. was intended for dancing. Thus, members of some folk music revival groups, together with dance instructors, jointly developed the programme of individual dance workshops for the first dance houses according to their own musical and dance preferences. At that time, musicians most active in these dance houses were members of the groups *Tolovaj Mataj, Kurja koža, Volk Folk* and some members of former folk music revival groups, e.g. *Trinajsto prase, Pišćaci* and *Istranova*. Often the musi-

[5] *Javni sklad Republike Slovenije za kulturne dejavnosti* (Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities).

cians slightly adapted the way they performed music that was part of their concert repertoires to suit the purposes of the dance houses and the dance itself, especially when musicians from several different groups played together. Occasionally, special practical workshops were organised for musicians to play folk dance music and also to facilitate their participation in dance houses. Experience has shown that playing folk music for dancing can be quite specific and some musicians were familiar neither with such musical practices, nor with the dance tradition itself.

Rather than being a social event and a leisure activity, however, dance houses soon turned into dance workshops and some kind of folk dance courses with relatively limited attendance. Eventually, these courses also started teaching dances choreographed for the stage production of folk dance ensembles, in addition to the initial dance variants recorded in the field. This was mainly due to the fact that there was a severe lack of traditional dance practice skills among the participants, as most folk dances in Slovenia had already been forgotten and were no longer danced in their primary environment. The dance house participants/dancers were often former and current members of various folk dance ensembles, and during the final years of the dance houses' existence were also university students for whom dance houses constituted a practical (and often compulsory) addition to their ethnomusicology classes (Kunej 2023, 49). The presenters/leaders, i.e. dance instructors and later also musicians, increasingly started to draw on the experiences and practices of the folk dance ensembles, many being members and therefore most familiar with these approaches. As a result, the dance house project in Slovenia was not particularly successful and after a few years, the dance houses were no longer organised.

We can conclude that the folk music revival groups and the folk revival movement in Slovenia have not significantly influenced the dance practices associated with the folk tradition. Instead, except to a small extent in dance houses organised by the Folk Slovenia Cultural Society, their performances have been more of a presentation of folk dance music for listening to and as music "on stage". Although many folk music revival musicians and groups in Slovenia were inspired by the *táncház* movement in Hungary, dance houses and the playing of folk music for dancing as part of the folk revival movement did not catch on in Slovenia and are very different from those in Hungary.

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Conclusion

Although researchers of folk music and dance in Slovenia, as well as musicians and dancers (in folk dance ensembles and folk music revival movement) themselves, have not dealt with music and dance as holistic in detail, many have become aware of how closely linked they are. The fact that dance and music are correlated in different ways and different forms, and that they are often inseparable, both at dance events and in people's consciousness, has previously been revealed by research into Slovenian traditional folk culture (cf. Kumer 1983; Strajnar 1986; "Plesati" 2014). Similarly, research on the characteristics of the performance of instrumental folk music and folk dance itself has shown that music and the way it was performed could entice people to dance and guide dancing, and it also co-shaped dance events, influencing the sustainability of folk dance practices (cf. Kumer 1983; Strajnar 1988; Ramovš 1992).

The experience of folk dance ensembles, moreover, shows that dance (on the stage) is closely related to live dance music, which is performed by different kinds of musicians and is often created by those who make musical arrangements for them.[6] In folk dance ensembles, however, the usual practice has almost always been to have dance and a choreographic idea as a foundation; the music is then adapted to the choreography and the musical arrangement is subordinated to it. In folk dance ensembles, dance and music are most often taken care of by different "authors". This can cause difficulties in co-creating a coherent stage presentation and the appropriate interplay of music and dance. The musicians (and also the authors of musical arrangements) are thus often placed in a lower position and are overly subordinated to the stage presentation of the dance and the chore-

[6] Records of guidelines and teachings concerning the performance and arrangement of music in folk dance ensembles had for a considerable time revealed an orientation towards "genuine" folk tradition and customs (cf. Strajnar 1986; Volk 2008; Rauch 2008, 2010), following aspirations whose seeds had been planted in the 1970s with the start of systematic institutional education and expert guidance. Such orientation, which followed historical and geographical features drawing on ethnographical data, corresponds to the concept of passive adoption to the stage, i.e. the stage presentation of folk music and dance closely follows the original and includes all the characteristic folk elements. In the last decade or decade and a half, the initial ideas gravitating towards a close portrayal of "tradition", "veracity" and "authenticity" have transformed into an "artistic concept", in which folk tradition assumes the role of inspiring the creativity of choreographers and authors of music arrangements. Over the same period, there has also been a general decline in interest and popularity in folk dance ensembles; it is, however, difficult to tell whether new approaches have contributed to the decline in interest or whether the decline in interest has encouraged the search for new approaches.

Figure 3. *Folk dance ensemble stage performance with live dance music. The musicians are positioned at the back of the stage and play musical arrangements from written sheet music, which could often cause a lack of interaction between the musicians and the dancers, Ljubljana, 2017.* Photo: © Peter Košenina, Archives of the Akademska folklorna skupina France Marolt.

ographer's ideas. In addition, there is a lack of interaction between the musicians and the dancers, which is otherwise typical of traditional folk culture. Both the musical and dance parts of the folk dance ensembles' stage presentations are thus more oriented towards attractiveness and audience appeal, and are often based mainly on virtuosity – which is a feature alien to folk culture – of the performers, both dancers and musicians.

The folk music revival movement in Slovenia operated on a very different basis from folk dance ensembles, in that it was based primarily on music itself, which was presented to the public in various ways. Although the revival groups often included traditional dance music in their respective repertoires, this music was usually not intended for dancing, but rather for listening to at various performance events. A historical overview shows that it was only over time, and very gradually, that the revival groups started to depart from exclusively presenting dance music at concerts to performing it for the purposes of dancing. The idea for this came from the musicians who wanted to play music for dancing, i.e. for it to have a function

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that was typical of traditional folk culture. The musicians' aim was to combine the two "domains of folk tradition", music and dance, having music as the foundation and adding dance to it. Perhaps this dominance of music and the lack of interweaving and connection between music and dance – which, when it comes to the Slovenian folk music revival movement, were not on a par and did not reach attention in equal measure – was the reason that the dance houses in Slovenia did not become more popular and were not able to sustain themselves.

Dance music is generally not meant for listening, but for dancing. And dancing to well-played music is much more enjoyable and inspiring. The active involvement of dancers enables folk dance music to survive and keeps it sustainably in the sphere of folk dancing. On the other hand, suitable folk dance music ensures the continued existence of folk dances. The experiences of both folk dance ensembles and the folk music revival movement in Slovenia show that the sustainability of folk dance music and folk dance is not easy to ensure. This is even more so, if one disregards how closely interwoven, connected and interdependent they are by focusing too much on just one of the two segments. In other countries, the coherence of music and dance has also been clearly highlighted on several occasions; for instance, well-known Austrian musicians have expressed the belief that "the craft of their musical practice serves the dancers" (Pietsch 2017, 218), thus attaching meaning to their playing that goes beyond a purely musical purpose. Equally telling is the realisation that "dance music in its initial meaning is first of all stimulation, not a timekeeper and formal prescription. The dancer doesn't want to be regulated but rather animated and excited" (Hoerburger 1966, 85). This is in line with similar findings from research on Slovenian folk dance music and dance. When it comes to their dancing, dancers like to feel creative and free, but also inspired by music. It should, however, be pointed out that musical stimuli for dancing can be different and are not always related only to rhythmic expressions (cf. Morgenstern 2023, 122).

Therefore, the musicians, the way they perform music and the music itself can make a crucial contribution to the interaction with the dancers, and above all, can have a decisive influence on the danceability of the music and on encouraging and enticing the dancers to dance. Thus, they also have a powerful impact on the popularity and success of dance events. Musicians who know how to make sure people "let music into their feet" and that everyone present "gets itchy feet" and wants to dance can contribute

significantly to the existence of fresh, creative and attractive dance events, and thus also help in the successful revitalisation of dance heritage and its sustainability.

In the case of folk dance ensembles and the folk music revival movement in Slovenia, the revitalisation of folk dance and folk music was undoubtedly hampered by the focus on either the music or the dance. One may even question whether they can be recognised as participatory folk dance communities at all, as they mainly served to present the dance and music heritage on stage. Following the example of Slovenian folk culture, in order to engender the revitalisation and sustainability of folk dance and music in participatory folk dance events, it is essential that future initiatives ensure that dance and music are more interwoven, interdependent and equally represented.

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