

**PhD Dissertation Summary**

# **Folk Dance – Social Role – Transformation**

**The examination of the functions of folk dance in the traditional and revival environment of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries**

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## **I. Precursors, objectives, and the delineation of the subject**

The precursor to writing the present dissertation was a nearly 20 years long research work, which was based on the field work carried out in the traditional cultural context, as well as the time spent in the revival movement as a folk dancer and folk dance teacher. The cornerstones of the dissertation are the literature review from the field of anthropology dealing with folk dance, specifically the research on the functions of dance, as well as the overview of the empirical research investigating the relationship between dance and society.

The key idea of my research is rooted in this question: what is the function of folk dance in the traditional and revival communities in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries? My objective in answering this question is to explore the functions of folk dance both in the traditional and the revival context. I pay close attention to identifying the 21<sup>st</sup> century function of folk dance, as well as to tracing its evolution and transformation. After all, dance used to be bequeathed from one generation to the other naturally in the peasant culture: the majority of the village community possessed the knowledge of dance. However, by the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it was only practiced by a specific portion of society. It was not passed down any more in the more intimate environment of family and friends, but in an institutionalized context. All this could have resulted in transforming the functions of folk dance.

In my investigation, I focus on the recreational, festivity and the showcasing, bravado, spectacular, and entertaining functions of dance prevalent in the traditional culture and the revival folk dance context. Besides the social role of the above dance functions, the paper presents their transformation over time, as well as the evolution of the relationship between the two main functions (recreational and entertaining).

The first chapter of the dissertation delineates the subject and the objectives.

The second chapter provides a more detailed presentation of the research. A separate section deals with the hypotheses and the methodology. This section is also where the following research questions are presented: What is the role of folk dance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century society? What transformation do recreational and entertaining folk dances go through while being transferred from the peasant culture into the revival context? Does the number of years spent with folk dance affect the attitude towards folk dance? I have set up 10 hypotheses for the affirmation or confutation of these three questions. The research methodology section consists of two parts. The first provides a general presentation of the research – the position of the researcher, as well as the parallel use of synchrony/diachrony and the quantitative/qualitative approach –, while the second contains the methodological elements of the research: document analysis, focus group interviews, observation, questionnaires.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the relevant research history. In the section clarifying the concepts used, I specifically focus on the terms dance, dance language, folk dance, revival, and traditional culture in more details. In this work, I strive to capture one slice of the continuous transformation, integrating the anthropological principle of cultural resilience. The definition of the main concepts is followed by the key characteristics of Hungarian folk dance. Section 3.3 explains the theories related to the functions of folk dance, as well as the comparison of the various classifications, which is followed by the literature review concerning the recreational, festivity and the showcasing, bravado, spectacular, and entertaining functions of dance comprising the backbone of my paper.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of my own research. First, the data collected in traditional communities in connection with the role of folk dance will be shown. The second part of the chapter presents the analysis of my questionnaire-based research conducted in the revival folk dance community. The closing section delineates the similarities and differences between the recreational and the spectacular folk dance revealed in the peasant and the revival context.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the dissertation, including a proposal for a more distinct separation of the recreational/festivity and the showcasing, bravado, spectacular, and entertaining dance functions, as well as the unifying of the various designations, so that the difference between the two basic functions could be better exposed. Furthermore, this chapter presents the key elements of the change and shift in function revealed in the course of the research.

## **II. Methodology**

Basically, the research utilizes a postmodern approach. It considers the subject to be a representation of reality within the individual, in which people interpret the role of folk dance in their life in accordance with their own stand-point, or perspective. The research includes the diachronic investigation of how the functions of folk dance transformed over time, as well as the synchronic examination of the role of folk dance, regardless of the different eras.

The research methodology literature emphasizes the advantages of a dualist approach, that is, utilizing quantitative and qualitative methods at the same time. In accordance with this approach, I analyse the collected information both in quantitative and qualitative ways.

In the course of my investigation, I explore the system of dance functions, the role of folk dance in the traditional context, as well as the findings of the preceding empirical research via the method of *document analysis*.

*Focus group interviews* aided in drafting the final version of the questionnaire. The interviews were conducted in oral and written form with 20 participants: members and leaders of folk dance ensembles, and people taking part in *táncház* folk dance events, as well as folk dance courses and camps.

Via my close connection with the subject, first as an amateur dancer, an assistant teacher, and later as an educator, I have been using the method of *observation*, with an increasing intensity during my doctoral studies. I learned about how the dancers around me relate to folk dance by observing their discussions, and actions. I integrated the resulting conclusions into my work.

The main sources of the quantitative research were the answers given to the *questionnaires*. The questionnaire-based data collection was preceded by the analysis of earlier questionnaires, by observations, as well as by structured interviews.

When wording the questions, I took into consideration the main principles of questionnaire-based research: the questionnaire should include open and closed questions, the questions should be clear, there should be no double-barreled questions, the participants should be competent in the given subject, and the questions should be relevant to them. I also aimed to form concise questions. At the same time, some of the questions required long sentences due to the complexity of the subject, or the type of the question (e.g. "Please indicate which relationship or which event helped you decide on dancing" or "How is the time you spend dancing divided..."). In such cases, I helped the participants by changing the type of the question (matrix questions). There are no negative items in the questionnaire. For maximum simplicity and willingness to fill in the questionnaire, I did not use conditional or tricky questions either. As for the closed questions, I used simple and multiple-choice questions, as well as a Likert scale.

I subjected the 2568 answers given to the questionnaire closed down on July 24, 2016 to data cleansing, which resulted in a final sample of 2469 items. I assessed the answers quantitatively (with statistical methods) on the one hand, and qualitatively (via textual analysis) on the other hand.

The frequency distribution calculated via univariate analysis neatly presents the distribution of the sample regarding age and gender, as well as the frequency of the dance-related community formations, the time spent with folk dance, the reasons for becoming a folk dancer, the frequency of the dance events, the ratio of the staged and the recreational folk dance, the role of dance. As for the multivariate analyses, I conducted cross-tabulations for several questions, where I found answers regarding the functions of the community format and the dance, the relationship between the number of years spent with dancing and the ratio of staged dance, the number of years spent with dancing and the community formats, the time spent with folk dance

and the attitude towards the characteristics of folk dance, or the interrelation between the community format and the function of dance. The third larger group of statistical analyses was exploratory factor analysis. I subjected the answers received to the complex questions referring to the functions of folk dance to factor analysis, and the results delineated four large components that were easy to interpret: “Identity formation,” “Entertainment,” “Self-Entertainment,” and “Heritage conservation.”

I used textual analysis to interpret the answers given to the open questions of the questionnaire: What appeals to you in dancing? Do you think dance has affected the course of your life (your thinking, your relationship with people, your physical and mental well-being, etc.)? For me folk dance is... I used open coding in order to make the large number of answers manageable. I searched for key expressions in the existing texts, on the basis of which I set up various categories. Thus, the covert content present in the answers is also possible to reveal in an unequivocal way. The subjective information gathered this way, the characteristics valuable for the community, as well as identifying the attitudes of the participants provided a more thorough overview of the role of dance.

### **III. The thesis-format enumeration of the new scientific findings of the dissertation**

The findings of the dissertation contribute to the functional analysis of folk dances, the exploration of their role in society, as well as the ethnological-anthropological investigation of how the functions of dance found in the traditional and revival communities in Hungary have changed over time.

1. In the course of the literature review carried out in order to clarify the social role of folk dance, it was determined that the numerous categorizations of the functions of folk dance show many similarities and differences as well, and also that the international and Hungarian categorizations both pay little attention to amply define the difference between the recreational/festivity function and the showcasing, bravado, spectacular, and entertaining dance functions.
2. Therefore, the dissertation presents a specific definition of these two basic functions of dance, emphasizing the adaptation to its constantly changing social role, which enriched the differentiation between the two functions with new interpretations, based on the research conducted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century revival community.
3. The definition of the dance functions was established via the questionnaire-based research conducted in the folk dance revival community with the largest known

sample size so far. The 2469 item sample helped to reveal the similarities and differences between the social role of folk dance in the traditional and the revival community, in the course of a multi-perspective, detailed investigation.

4. As part of the research, I conducted a targeted investigation regarding the social role of folk dances via field work in Transylvania and Hungary. This made it possible to further refine the image of dance functions in traditional culture with the help of specific questions.
5. The research revealed that the functions of dance present in the traditional context would often appear in entirely different roles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century revival movement. This functional change is mostly detectable in staged folk dance. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, staged folk dance does not only comprise of dances with a showcasing, or spectacular function, but in most cases, the dance productions created for the entertainment of the audience are based on recreational and ritual dances of the traditional culture.
6. In extreme cases the functional change becomes a functional shift. In the case of the above-mentioned ritual function, the emphasis is already shifted so much that the original function has almost completely disappeared, to be replaced by the entertainment function. This functional change regarding the recreational and entertaining dances is also apparent from the questionnaire-based research. In the life of a dancer, as entertaining dances gain ground, recreational dances are effaced. The components revealed by factor analysis, and the clusters created in the population on their basis unveil that the staged folk dance and the recreational folk dance almost entirely exclude each other. When one of the functions is accentuated, in most cases the other function falls behind.
7. Examining the functional and substantive characteristics of folk dance, we can say that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, folk dance is the medium for recreation, heritage conservation, and the realization of the dancer identity. Thus, folk dance plays a considerable role in the process of enculturation.
8. The questionnaire-based research clearly delineates the microstructure of the folk dance community as well. The investigation confirmed that in terms of the staged folk dance, the professional dancers can be clearly distinguished from those dancing in different community formats (except for amateur dancers). It can be shown that those dancing in amateur ensembles, have the same relationship with staged folk dance as members of the professional ensembles.

Furthermore, the microstructure of the 21<sup>st</sup> century folk dance revival community is also characterized by the relationship between the time spent with folk dance and the involvement in staged folk dance. The research reveals that the ratio of staged folk dance is the highest among those who have been involved in folk dance for the longest time. Those who have been dancing for a shorter period spend more time with recreational dance. Those having danced for longer appreciate the folk dance function providing an opportunity for appearing on stage. Those having danced for a shorter time do not consider this characteristic important at all. This is especially important in the case of those who have been dancing since their childhood. For them, folk dance is much more about appearing on stage than for those who became involved in folk dance as adults.

9. The dissertation determines the relationship of the 21<sup>st</sup> century revival folk dance community towards dance building on the data of the questionnaire-based research, which is primarily focused on the relationship between the entertaining and the recreational, or self-entertaining, dance. Thus, we can identify the four well-delineated functions of “Identity formation,” “Entertainment,” “Self-Entertainment,” and “Heritage conservation.” Although the questions mainly focus on the issue of entertainment and self-entertainment, the appearance of the “Identity formation,” and “Heritage conservation” functions clearly shows the mission of folk dance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century revival community.



## IV. List of publications related to the dissertation



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Subject: PhD Publikációs Lista

Candidate: Henrik Kovács  
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Doctoral School: Doctoral School of History and Ethnology  
MTMT ID: 10067595

### List of publications related to the dissertation

#### Hungarian book chapters (3)

1. **Kovács, H.:** Mire való a néptánc? A néptánc funkciójának antropológiai vizsgálata.  
In: Tánc és Társadalom : V. Táncstudományi Konferencia a Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskolán,  
2015. november 13-14.. Szerk.: Bolvári-Takács Gábor, Németh András, Perger Gábor,  
Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskola, Budapest, 119-128, 2016, (Táncművészet és  
tudomány, ISSN 2060-7091 ; 9.) ISBN: 9786158029759
2. **Kovács, H.:** A Gyöngyösbokréta hatása a kor táncművészeire és társadalmára.  
In: Az életreform és reformpedagógia - recepció és intézményesülési folyamatok a 20.  
század első felében. Szerk.: Németh András, Pirka Veronika, Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest,  
246-266, 2013. ISBN: 9789636934712
3. **Kovács, H., Megyeri, I.:** Népművelés a néptánc eszközeivel - népművészet és a Gyöngyösbokréta  
ideológiája.  
In: A hagyományos táncművelés metamorfózisa a 20. században. Szerk.: Bolvári-Takács  
Gábor, Fügedi János, Mizerák Katalin, Németh András, Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskola,  
Budapest, 70-80, 2012, (Táncművészet és tudomány, ISSN 2060-7091 ; 4.) ISBN:  
9789638514455

#### Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (2)

4. **Kovács, H.:** Egy szakma felnőtt.  
*Tanít-Tanít Online* 2, 51-56, 2009.
5. **Kovács, H.:** A mérés-értékelés lehetőségei a néptáncoktatásban.  
*M. Pedagóg.* 107 (2), 111-122, 2007. ISSN: 0025-0260.

#### Other journal articles (1)

6. **Kovács, H.:** Az unokák táncolják nagyapáik táncát: Szucsági Szüreti Bál.  
*Táncművészet.* 6, 39, 2008. ISSN: 0134-1421.



## **V. List of conference presentations related to the dissertation**

1. Gyöngyösbokréta, mint a széles társadalmi rétegek életreform mozgalma. Conference of the Hungarian Dance Academy. 6-7. 11. 2009. Budapest.
2. Számomra a néptánc. Conference of the Hungarian Dance Academy. 11-12. 11. 2011. Budapest.
3. Öreg táncos-e az öregtáncos? Roundtable conference of the Folkdance pedagogy substudy group of the Hungarian Association for Ethnochoreology. 30. 03. 2015. Budapest.
4. A népi játékokban és a néptáncban rejlő nevelési lehetőségek. Conference of the Art Theory of the Hungarian Academy of Arts 25-26. 09. 2015.
5. Mire való a néptánc? Conference of the Hungarian Dance Academy. 13-14. 11. 2015. Budapest.
6. Research of the Folkdance functions in the literature and the hungarian revival community. The traditional dance and music. Research, theory and artistic representation, Conference in Nitra 4. – 5. 7. 2016.
7. A néptáncos társadalom mikrostruktúrájának jellemzése. II. Conference of the Dance research doctoral students. 12. 05. 2017. Szeged.
8. Néptánc funkciók a revival közösségben. Táncművészet és intellektualitás. Conference of the Hungarian Dance Academy. 17-18. 11. 2017. Budapest.

## VI. List of other publications



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### List of other publications

#### Hungarian books (1)

7. Szerk. Fügedi, J., **Kovács, H.**: Mezőföldi ugrósok: Táncelemzések. L'Harmattan :, Budapest, 122 p., 2014. (Az európai régi táncréteg : Ugrós monográfiák) ISBN: 9789632368702

#### Hungarian book chapters (2)

8. **Kovács, H.**: A néptánc titkos törvénye: Egy mezőföldi kanásztánc csodája.  
In: Alkotás - befogadás - kritika a táncművészetben, a táncpedagógiában és a tánc kutatásban : IV. Tánc tudományi Konferencia a Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskolán, 2013. november 8-9. Szerk.: Bolvári-Takács Gábor, Fügedi János, Mizerák Katalin, Németh András, Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskola, Budapest, 90-94, 2014, (Táncművészet és tudomány, ISSN 2060-7091 ; 7.) ISBN: 9789638984241
9. **Kovács, H.**: A háromugrós mozdulatsorának néptáncpedagógiai alkalmazása.  
In: Hagyomány és újítás a táncművészetben, a táncpedagógiában és a tánc kutatásban : tudományos konferencia a Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskolán, 2007. november 9-10, Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskola : Planétás Kiadó, Budapest, 146-155, 2009, (Táncművészet és tudomány, ISSN 2060-7091 ; 1.) ISBN: 9789639414211

#### Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (3)

10. **Kovács, H.**: Különbözőség és másság a rituáléban.  
*Tánc tud. Közl.* 3 (3), 89-93, 2011. ISSN: 2060-7148.
11. Bányász-Németh, T., **Kovács, H.**, Pethő, V.: A tánc- és zenei nevelés megjelenése a XX. század elején kibontakozó életreform mozgalmak tükrében.  
*Iskolakultúra.* 20 (3), 31-47, 2010. ISSN: 1215-5233.
12. **Kovács, H.**: Etüdszerkesztés a néptáncoktatásban.  
*Folkmagazin.* 10 (1), 43, 2003. ISSN: 1218-912X.

#### Other journal articles (1)

13. **Kovács, H.**: Gyermektánc közelben.  
*Iskolakultúra.* 19 (5-6), 151-153, 2009. ISSN: 1215-5233.





Informational/educational articles (1)

14. **Kovács, H.:** Forr-más, Naprózsafa, Vecsernyica, Hajtóka és társaik.

*Diósdí Krónika* 4 (2), 14, 2010.

The Candidate's publication data submitted to the iDEa Tudóstér have been validated by DEENK on the basis of the Journal Citation Report (Impact Factor) database.

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## **VII. List of other conference presentations**

1. Rítus és tánc. V. Conference of the Young ethnographer and cultural anthropology students. 20. 09. 2008. Backa Topola.
2. A tánc rituáléja és a néptánc oktatásának rituális elemei. Conference of the Pedagogical Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. 25-27. 06. 2010. Székesfehérvár.
3. Mozdulatsorok szerepe a táncelemzésben. Conference of the Dance science Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. 27. 04. 2011. Budapest.
4. Labanolego – A creativ method for teaching Labanotation. 27th Biennial Conference of ICKL. Budapest
5. Depths of variations - a notation-based analysis of a Hungarian traditional dance with props. 29th Biennial Conference of ICKL. Tours. France.
6. The use of Laban kinetography in ethnochoreology. 30th Biennial Conference of ICKL. Beijing. China
7. Páva pedagógia. Roundtable conference of the Hungarian Dance Academy. 17-18. 11. 2017.