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SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS
PROMOTING ROMANIAN TRADITIONAL HERITAGE
AND CHARACTERISTICS OF
THE CONTEMPORARY PERFORMING ARTS,
IN MUSICAL THEATRE CHOREOGRAPHY SHOWS

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Key terms:

Musical theatre choreography show, performing arts, theatricality, dance, arts interaction, professional folk ensemble, heritage, folklore, traditional culture, valorisation, audience

The thesis concept lies in the belief that traditional civilisation, in general, and folklore, in particular, reverberate in the contemporary performing arts. This study is not intended to be an exhaustive thesis, identifying the musical theatre choreography show as the original and unique preserver of traditional culture, but it is meant to be a research that reflects convergent formulas of contemporary performing arts and traditional culture and the fact that the musical theatre choreography show, as a synergic formula, provides the creative space in order to incorporate facts of traditional culture and to appeal to contemporary audiences.

Traditional culture is often thought to be anchored in customs and old-fashioned patterns, foreign of the technology used in contemporary performing arts, foreign of the arts minimalism and the turmoil of modern thinking. But, over the centuries, traditional culture and folklore have proven to be extremely protean, adapting to the changing social, cultural and economic environment; folklore, a living phenomenon (Roşianu 2019, Balazs, 2003, 16, Dundes, 2007, 4) reacted to the external background. Of course, such statements involve discussions about the dissolution of traditional culture, but cultural memory and identity, also defined through traditional civilisation and folklore, are active, allowing the promotion of traditional culture through contemporary artistic or technical means. Spectacularity and theatricality cross like a red thread Romanian folklore, from customs to folk theatre and traditional dances (Boghici, 2015, 24) and, consequently, folklore can be promoted in artistic forms specific to the 21st century and also in musical theatre choreography shows. Unfortunately, in specialised literature and the practice of stage productions, this type of show has been little approached compared to theatre performances, dance-theatre, musicals or folk performances.

In this context and relying on my 25-year experience in the field of interference of performing arts with folklore, I consider that the musical theatre choreography show can resonate with the interdisciplinarity of performing arts, with the specifics of traditional culture and the required interaction with audience. Thus, the present research foregrounds possible decoding keys for the textual, musical and choreographic artistic levels of shows, from the perspective of folklore and contemporary performing arts, applying them to the musical theatre choreography shows of “Cindrelul-Junii Sibiului” Professional Folk Ensemble.

The first chapter entitled *The show - a syncretic concept* underlines that defining the show as a work of art is an ongoing and difficult problem. Reviewing the etymological meanings of the term “show” and its trajectory from both a transversal perspective (with emphasis on relationships and interferences) and longitudinal viewpoint (its diachronic transformations), I suggested that the framing of this concept in rigid boundaries is difficult, as theatre, music and dance coexisted with rituals ever since the ceremonies preceding the first forms of theatre; the model was reproduced in Antiquity through choir songs (Aristotle, 1965, 4), in the Middle Ages when flutes announced the type of performance, in the Renaissance - at the emergence of the first theatre building with a pit for

musicians (Brockett, Hildy, 2014, 149) or now when musical themes and live music are part of theatrical productions.

Then, discussing the show aesthetics, I analysed the concepts and processes of aesthetic experience (beautiful - ugly, mimesis - imagination, aesthetic perception, aesthetic emotion, literarity, theatricality, musicality, corporeality) and the aesthetics of live performances. The live show, a dynamic process, is based on a pre-existing script and directorial vision, but its materialisation is unique, depending on the artists' involvement and the audience's interaction with the artistic act and artists (Hobart, Kapferer, 2007, 17), each representation being unrepeatable. Thus, human experience becomes a fundamental parameter for defining art, which can no longer be equated only with the final material product (a comedy, a painting, etc.), but it must include human experience (a theatre show, an exhibition) in order to be complete. The show functions as a social transfer of knowledge, memory, meaning and identity, the emphasis shifting from text to body, from artistic gesture to spectators' reactions; thus each performance is defined by moments full of aesthetics and intensely intersubjective (Haedicke, 2013, 75).

The musical theatre choreography show involves a combination of elements: story / script, instrumental and vocal music, choreography - dance, direction, production of set design and other technical aspects. All must be acknowledged by artists and the voices of authority specific to each art (director - for theatre, choreographer - for dance and conductor - for music), in order to create a unitary and expressive, synergistic whole, in which music and movement continue the story and create artistic expressions, reverberating from syncretism, "a transitional concept, describing cultural interaction" and striking recombination processes (Stummer, Balme, 1996, 17). From this syncretism, which blurs boundaries between artistic genres and species, reverberates the common form of Music-Text-Dance performance: "music, sung or spoken text, and dance are used to advance a dramatic structure or form an integral part of such a narrative" (Beeman, 1993, 381). Nadine George-Graves emphasises that the musical theatre choreography show develops at the intersection of choreography and dramatic or lyrical text (2015, 3). Jennie Morton claims that the performer in musical theatre choreography performances must have extraordinary skills and talent to interpret the dramatic text, to dance and sing, and that is why a rigorous training in the three arts is needed (2014, 213). This position echoes a motto often found among performers in musical theatre choreography show, confesses Jack Viertel: "when you can no longer speak, you sing, when you can no longer sing, you dance!" (2016, XVI).

Within the context of arts inter-relationship, I analysed the creative functions in musical theatre choreography show: director, choreographer, composer / conductor, set designer and screenwriter communicate with actors, dancers and musicians (Manea, 1983, 6), but also communicate between themselves, constantly relating to other arts. I approached the choreographer's role, who conceives a performative dance and not a critical one (Carroll, Moore, 2008, 56): he introduces dance movements in support, in anticipation of music or as a retrospective of it; conceives staccato, syncopated movements, in tension or in balance in order to respond to musical impulses, to create artistic contrast or to increase the text power through movement.

The actor-dancer-musician relationship is addressed considering that in a theatre show, dance show or concert, each performer carries out a well-established role, being messenger of the author, director, choreographer, respectively, composer and, at the same time, being messenger of his own artistic conceptions and approaches. In a show dominated by syncretism, the functions of actor, dancer and musician interact and often dissolve into each other or each other. If the same artist assumes the fulfilment of the three arts, a universal interpretive talent is necessary, because with the

same expressiveness the artist must act, dance and sing (Miklós, 2002, 12), using his body as an instrument of artistic expression. This is the concept of “total actor” or “triple threat”, a performer who must be a good actor who masters the art of using words, a singer who masters the art of using the voice, but also a dancer who “writes” with his body, in order to transmit ideas and feelings (Baldwin, 2010, 92), in a universally accessible language. In a tumult of creative synergies, the total performer transposes emotion into words, music and dance, creating a story (Streeton, Raymond 2014, 78).

The second chapter entitled *The musical theatre choreography show of traditional inspiration* emphasises that this artistic product becomes a mirror of tangible and intangible heritage, synthesising concepts, techniques of performing arts, and symbols, beliefs, artefacts of traditional civilisation. The continuous congruence of the form (attractive show) with the background (ideas, concepts, beliefs, knowledge, etc.) and the dialogue between heritage and creativity are essential in a synergistic show.

The syncretic character of this show finds its roots in the cultural heritage, defined as a bridge between past, present and future (Bold, Pickard, 2018, Vecco, 2010, 322), providing information about the life and creativity of diverse social groups who created heritage (Maroevic, 1998, 135), as well as about the cultural, social, economic (Dümcke, Gnedovsky, 2013, 4), political (Konsa, 2013), (Trofanenko, 2015, 161) implications of that heritage for the present. Thus the cultural heritage asserts itself as a living structure, in constant change, involving new creations and transforming the existing ones (Palmer, 2009, 6).

Addressing the issue of intangible heritage, I underlined its fragility given by a combination of factors, from socio-economic changes to tourism impact. The difficulty of safeguarding is increased by the impossibility to corporealise intangible heritage: a song no longer performed ceases to exist, and the transfer from a community’s affective memory to practice is extremely difficult, sometimes even impossible (UNESCO, 2019c, 4). Real safeguarding does not mean video, audio or photo recording, but a transfer of knowledge and practices from one generation to another, so that the legacy of the past can be spiritually found inside present generations (Ispas, 2009, 3). Tourism can influence intangible heritage from an anthropological perspective, but also from the viewpoint of preserving the local specific: cultural commodification grants an economic function for a socially recognised cultural fact and transforms the sacred into profane and the authentic into non-authentic (Shepherd, 2002, 184). Thus cultural heritage no longer has only an aesthetic value, but combines aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, historic value with the economic one (Klamer et al, 2013, 40), cultural value, the value of authenticity, integrity and uniqueness (Throsby, 2001, 28-29), all addressed in the UNESCO, UN and Council of Europe conventions.

The folk show approached as an artistic act, a form of safeguarding and promotion of traditional culture, reflects the transition to modern society, which has inevitably produced important changes in the traditional culture and civilisation; thus, its primary functions and specific formulas are less known and even less practiced, although they are closely linked to national identity and cultural memory; in this context, tradition-inspired musical theatre choreography shows can contribute to the preservation of cultural memory and identity.

Researchers and theorists of traditional culture, the folklorists Constantin Brăiloiu, Sabina Ispas, Narcisa Știucă, Stan V. Cristea or choreographers Gheorghe Baciu, Gheorghe Popescu-Județ, Roman Jora, Ioan Macrea, Ioan Corneliu Vasiliu have spoken about the folk show as an intrinsic reality of the 20th and 21st centuries: traditionalists have campaigned for the purity of folklore, but a growing number of specialists have highlighted the role of folk show as an event that evokes, reproduces and

promotes traditional culture: “I do not want to confuse the genuine folklore, which has certain functionalities, with the folk show, which means another type of creation, another type of performer and so on” (Ispas, 2001), “folk shows are not means of folklore safeguarding, but artistic products conceived in accordance with contemporary audience’s expectations and taste, and with old customs” (Sava, 2017, 7). Andrei Bucșan pointed out that it is essential for these shows to harmonise with the laws and norms of folklore and, also, to cultivate the reality of the time represented on stage (1974, 22). Mihai Pop opened a new perspective in approaching the folk show as a “vehicle” to promote the cultural specificity and to harmonise the traditional code with the artistic one (1976, 188).

Presently, a folk show, resonating with the interactivity demanded by audience and with the interdisciplinarity governing the performing arts, can no longer be conceived as a simple succession of musical and choreographic moments; thus, a new concept is needed to integrate traditional culture into the performing arts, by synthesising and merging movement, sound, word, narrative and objects (Schechner, 2009, 8), by using modern technology and interaction with the audience. However, so far, musical theatre choreography shows dedicated to folklore have been little approached, only when talking about the choreographer's styles - Lynne Anne Blom and L. Tarin Chaplin mention the cultural style (1982, 136), or about the story inside the show, the concept of “storytelling” being mentioned by theorists Nadine George-Graves, Richard Kislán, Robert Berkson, Michael Bennett, Nina Penner, Mitchell Marcus, Lynne Anne Blom, L. Tarin Chaplin, and choreographers George Balanchine, Agnes De Mille, Jerome Robbins, Gower Champion etc. In tradition-inspired musical theatre choreography shows, the art of storytelling is essential because the relationship to traditional civilisation is permanent: choreography arises from folk dance, music - from folk song, script - from customs, all three evoking the image of traditional heritage through show. Heritage is deconstructed and reconstructed in order to be transmitted, assimilated and experienced through the show, an open manifestation, full of interpretations and re-interpretations, which relates to heritage and audience. In this context, the relation director - choreographer - set designer - screenwriter - ethnologist must be seen in the interdependence characterising them, because traditional culture must be deconstructed by each of them in order to extract essential sequences of intangible heritage, to filter and reconstruct them. Thus the show sequences will be illustrative for the specifics of cultural heritage and for the artisticity of the show.

According to my experience, I advanced the idea that dance occupies a prominent position in the traditional show, because dance tells a story, emphasises purely theatrical sequences, talks about characters, ideas and feelings, connects episodes, offering the most visually engaging part of a show (George-Graves, 2015, 150) and “transcends the geography of the show in a way inaccessible to the word and humanises the expression in a way inaccessible to the music” (Kislán, 1980, 237). In this context, I approached the relationship of traditional dances with show choreography, emphasising that “traditional dances” refer to dances performed in traditional society, closely related to everyday life (Lykesas, 2018, 108) and community life (Hoerbürger, 1968, 30), while “folk dance” reveals the decontextualisation and dance performing in different social and cultural contexts, foreign to the original ones. Three stages of dance evolution have been traced: the primitive one characterised by imitation and incantation movements; during the traditional stage, dance gains expressivity, lines and steps are developed, people dance by pleasure, inside their community; the academic or scholarly stage is characterised by a high degree of abstraction, by learning and performing according to pedagogical and choreographic norms, by the connection with the audience (Lykesas, 2018, 108). From the same perspective of tradition - show relationship, three types of dances are delimited, all rooted in traditional dance. Their distinction is made according to the degree of referentiality /

fictionalisation towards traditional dance: ethnographic dance (respects the structure of traditional dance, but it is adapted for the stage); character dance (it is an academic dance that stylises and stages characters and choreographies of folk origin) and dance-theatre, where hierarchies are abolished (Petac, 2015a, 16).

The chapter concludes with considerations on the relation of individual / community with folk dance, which responds to the community needs to communicate and to communicate itself. Under the influence of social and political changes, the dancer is no longer just a man dancing for himself, inside his community, but he becomes a voice of his community, presenting dances in other cultural, geographical and temporal contexts (for example, in 1935, the Căluș ritual was presented by a group of men from Pădureți - Argeș at the International Folk Dance Festival in London). Later on, folk dance has become part of the complementary educational system, being taught in schools, clubs and various organisations. The aim of this training was to prepare the dancer to execute choreographies and, finally, to perform on stage, at amateur and, then, professional levels. In such a context, the concepts “national folk dance” and “folk ensemble” are related to the generational renewal, a fair one as long as it maintains and promotes the relationship between aesthetic production / performance and cultural identity / heritage.

The second part of the thesis is dedicated to the artistic highlighting of the approached theoretical concepts; thus, the third chapter *Prefigurations of musical theatre choreography shows in the repertoire of “Cindrelul-Junii Sibiului” Professional Folk Ensemble* opens with some information on Junii Sibiului's evolution since the group was formed by Ioan Macrea, my father, in 1944 until today, when Junii Sibiului are recognised as outstanding folk ensemble of Romania, because of the figures outlining their activity: over 45,000 performances, 700 tours performed in our country, in Europe, in America, Africa and Asia, 200 national and international awards, 3,800 dancers. Today, Junii Sibiului is the brand uniting dancers of yesterday, today and tomorrow, four generations activating inside this artistic family: professional dancers of “Cindrelul-Junii Sibiului”, the old generation of “The Veterans of Junii Sibiului”, young dancers of “Ceata Junilor” Folk Ensemble and children who discover folk dance during the programs of “Ioan Macrea” Dance School.

The ensemble's activity shows that four key elements have contributed to staging musical theatre choreography shows: the repertoire diversity, teaching and learning dances according to professional systems, dancers' efficient training and the promotion of Romanian folk dances to specialised audiences.

The repertoire diversity has been a constant target for the choreographers and managers who led Junii Sibiului's activity: Ioan Macrea, Ioan Bogorin, Octavian Pițan, Dumitru Giurcă-Notar, Traian Rapiță, Ion Dinu, Theodor Vasilescu and, the undersigned, Silvia Macrea. The evolution was constant: men's dances, Jiana and Invârtita - dances specific to Mărginimea Sibiului area, folk dances specific to other ethno folkloric areas, staging traditional customs and thematic dances dedicated to social gatherings and pastoral life (Moise, 2014, 15). Today, the ensemble's complex repertoire includes: Romanian folk dances from Transylvania, Oltenia, Muntenia, Moldavia, Dobruja and Banat (these are temps or contretemps dances, set up on in line, in circle or in semicircle); German, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Mexican and Italian folk dances; elements included in the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List (doina, lad's dances, men's group Colindat during Christmas rituals); life-cycle ceremonies (baptism, coming-of-age rites, marriage, death etc.); housework and agricultural rituals (plowing and harvesting ceremonials, whitening cloth in the river, Drăgaica ritual, Govia ceremony for showing the lasses' handicrafts); calendar-related rituals (associated to the 1st of March, to Christmas, to the New Year, Căluș ritual). The repertoire also comprises vocal and

instrumental musical pieces, including George Enescu's *Ciocârlia* and *Romanian Rhapsody no. 1*, solos for panpipes, violin and tarogato.

Simultaneously, the ensemble promoted collaborations with actors (Ion Besoiu, Florin Coșuleț, Mihai Bica, Sandu Pop) and famous Romanian pop-rock musicians (Monica Anghel, Marcel Pavel, Vlad Miriță, Paula Seling, Nico, Luminița Anghel, Ovidiu Lipan Țândărică, K1 Band). A special segment is represented by the thematic shows *The endless thread of life* - staged in 2009, *Romanian Journey with Lyrics, Music and Dances* – 2010, *Of Love and Sorrow* – 2011, all three being appreciated for the artistic concept that involves re-creating sequences from Romanian traditional village.

The wide repertoire and the ensemble status required adequate framework training for dancers, emphasising the professional choreographic education, the dancers' corporeal expressivity and the study of theatrical techniques. In Romania, the lack of a university complex specialisation in folk dance was deeply felt in professional ensembles, so the establishment of the Choreography Specialisation, by the Department of Drama and Theatre Studies inside the Faculty of Letters and Arts of “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu, allowed an academic training for many members of “Cindrelul-Junii Sibiului” Ensemble. The benefits are visible in dance styles, eurhythmy, aesthetics of performing arts, stage improvisation and acting art etc., the dancers improving their body expressiveness, acting skills and emotions transfer with audience. These three elements are essential in repertoire widening through crossing-arts productions (such as musical theatre choreography shows), collaborations with other cultural institutions (with “Radu Stanca” National Theatre for the show *The Broken Jug*, after Heinrich von Kleist, directed by Dominic Friedel, or the one with the ASTRA Museum for a series of cultural animations) and especially in an exciting artistic environment, where the competition for the cultural representation of Romania is to be found both between arts and between organisations.

For teaching - learning dances process, it was adopted Theodor Vasilescu's system of dance notation, a system internationally recognised due to the fact that it graphically renders movements and steps of folk dance in its finest details.

A special attention has been paid to valuing Romanian folk dances among foreign choreographers, dancers and researchers. This appraisal is congruent with the international trend set up at the end of the 19th century by introducing folk dance as a study program in the USA colleges. Inside Junii Sibiului Ensemble, valuing Romanian folk dances among specialists was a constant endeavour, Ioan Macrea being asked to coordinate dance classes at international festivals and other cultural events (Macrea, 1995, 17). Personally, I continued this line by coordinating dance classes and workshops, co-organised in Europe, Asia and America. Considering folk dance an essential part of the Romanian heritage, the classes were meant to technically assimilate the steps, movement and rhythm, and to communicate about our cultural specificity and the universal language of dance (Blom, Chaplin, 1982, 15), ensuring a generous framework for intercultural dialogue (Lähdesmäki, Koistinen, Ylönen, 2020, 42). The results exceeded expectations, the benefits being tripartite: foreign specialists consolidated their knowledge on Romanian culture; we identified the requirements and needs of foreign audiences towards Romanian heritage, and we set up partnerships for future international projects.

The fourth chapter *The duality of musical theatre choreography shows staged by “Cindrelul-Junii Sibiului” Professional Folklore Ensemble* applied theories and scientific concepts to three productions: *The Old Times Fair*, *At Ghiță's Inn*, *Seven brothers for seven brides*, starting from the

idea that folk shows must find the necessary levers for the continuous valuing of traditional culture in contemporary formulas, easy to be assimilated by the 21st century audience. All three shows were staged up by similar artistic teams - Theodor Vasilescu, Silvia Macrea (directing, choreography), Constantin Dobrescu (author), Alin Gavrilă (set designer), dancers from Junii Sibiului and Ceata Junilor, guest actors, this allowing to level theatre - music - dance balance, to focus artists on performing arts and to gradually accustom audience with a special artistic concept.

The Old Times Fair was staged for the first time in 2012 and presented, in a renewed concept, in 2020. The first part focuses on recreating the atmosphere of old times fairs organised in the Large Square of Sibiu, where merchants from Lipsca, furriers from Mărginimea Sibiului, Saxon craftsmen from Hochfeld, governors, fiddlers, Moldavian boyars travelling to Vienna used to meet. Key factors in recreating the Baroque fair atmosphere are: the rich decorated counters, the wagons loaded with goods, the dozens barrels full of wine, the Baroque and peasant costumes, the presence of the City Official, traditional songs and dances (in situ previously researched or learnt from specialised studies), ballroom dances specific to urban communities, lively dialogues, and traditional instruments, such as violin, brass, double bass. The second part of the show sets the action in contemporary Sibiu, the Large Square becoming a meeting place for traders and community members. Sibiu's multicultural values are illustrated through the groups of Hungarian, German, Roma and Serbian merchants who meet with Romanian craftsmen and merchants from Mărginimea Sibiului, Bistrița, Bihor and Muntenia. Merchants and craftsmen become representatives of their communities and of their cultural heritage, through songs and dances, traditional artefacts – sheepskin coats for Mărginime, gossamer-thin blouses for Muntenia, hats adorned with peacock feathers for Bistrița, or gastronomy products : Apfelstrudel - for the Saxon community, șlibovița drink - for the Serbs, etc. At the musical level, new instruments are introduced on the stage, like harmonica, tarogato and saxophone.

The crowd and the verve specific to the fair were staged by means of the distribution which included over one hundred artists, almost all simultaneously present on the scene. The artists are members of the folk ensembles “Cindrelul-Junii Sibiului” and “Ceata Junilor”, dancers, instrumentalists and singers. By co-opting in distribution the professional actors, Sandu Pop, respectively Florin Coșuleț, the show won in theatricality.

The show relies on the mix of traditional (tangible and intangible heritage) and modern (20th century musical sequences, lighting and artificial voice amplification), considering the fact that traditional culture is enjoyed by both rural and urban people, familiarised with technology (Birket-Smith, 1969, 7). The scenario, linear in terms of feelings, was counter pointed by the amplification of words through theatrical techniques (trumpets announce the City Official entering the stage, the crowds open a central corridor for the Governor's Delegate, whose announcement is doubled by people's cheers), through crescendo rhythms appealing the audience (the moments of technical and artistic virtuosity: repeated beats, strings of pirouettes), stop-frames (specific to the animation technique) and rushing dances, with quick changes of rhythm and movements. The energy-full processions increase the show intensity and channel audience's attention to large groups of artists.

In a folk show, where cultural memory is defining, the title suggests a high degree of referentiality to the heritage, as it refers to the theme - the fair and the space - the market, both determined by the *genius loci* recognisable in the Large Square of Sibiu for 600 years. As for the fair, a real event in the community life, it has an intense commercial and social character, being perceived as a real show *in se et per se*: “The fair is an enormous stage, / With many shouts and tropes, / With many goods and advertising, / With haggling and dealings”.

Relying on the unity of content and structure, the episodes construction follows an identical pattern: a) a merchant invites passers-by to admire and buy his goods (the discourse promotes archaic terms and regionalisms, traditional tools and objects, some of them out of use); b) the merchant – customers dialogue gives the opportunity to draw attention to tangible heritage (folk costumes, household textiles, ceramics, gastronomy); c) the invitation to dance (traditional dances are performed in variants and sub-variants most of them never staged before by Junii Sibiului). Inside the show, the Storyteller has multiple functions: structures the episodes, appreciates the show, and mediates the artists - show - audience relation, his monologues constitute the Prologue and the Epilogue, contributing to capturing audience's attention and developing a complex cyclical structure. The discourse is marked by orality and direct addresses, similar to performances held in public spaces and to the tradition of orators who attract spectators by talking about the show and sprinkling the speech with jokes (Tomuș, 2013, 145), in order to establish a direct contact with the audience: “So we invite you to the show, / Right here, in the Large Square of Sibiu, / Where in the hustle and bustle of the crowd, / There is a fair, of no resemblance!”.

At the musical level, the structure is based on three aspects: instrumental songs for background music, dance songs and folk songs, specific for the 21st century folk music, for several ethnic groups living in Romania and 18th century traditional music through Barbu Lăutaru character. The dances included in the show were either already part of the ensemble's repertoire, or were staged for the first time provoking dancers to performances leading to the sphere of classical dance. Romanian traditional dances are promoted: *Joc în ponturi* and *Hărtaș* from the Transylvanian Plain, *Călușerul*, *Tortoroiul*, men's dances from *Mărginimea Sibiului*, *Ca la ușa cortului* and *Vlăscenčuța* from Muntenia, dances specific for the Hungarian, German, Serbian and Roma communities, *Waltz*, *Polonaise* and *Invărtita de salon*, the last two being peasant dances which gained popularity among nobility and townspeople.

The scenography has had a special approach: taking into consideration that people go to the fair to see and to be seen, all the props (pots, clothes etc.) have become a pretext for characters' actions and an impetus leading to dialogue, songs and dances. The show stage was extended into the audience's perimeter, as the ramps located on both sides of the stage allowed artists to descend among spectators, to perform improvisations and to dialogue with the spectators, thus “freeing the audience from the role of passive consumer” (Boenisch, 2012).

In 2013, *At Ghiță's Inn* marked a turn in Junii Sibiului's musical theatre choreography shows, through the emphasis on theatricality, actor and the art of acting. The show relies on the lively atmosphere of an old inn from Transylvania, where meet townsmen from Brașov, travelers from Banat, Moldavia, Făgăraș, Bulgaria, the famous 19th century poet Anton Pann and outlaw Iancu Jianu; all of them are welcome by the innkeeper Ghiță, his wife Anita and the servant Gavrilă, with food, drink and good cheer.

Based on the offering chronotope of the inn as a space for shelter, knowledge, meeting, retrieval and peace (Bunescu, 2017, 124), the show developed eight acts, which allow structuring the text, the artists' entrances and exits, as well as a good audience reception. The cyclical structure is preserved, the role of opening and closing the dramatic story belonging to the Storyteller. The Prologue was filmed (a premiere for Junii Sibiului's shows) and combines the characteristics of epic and descriptive texts, because the Presenter, the master of ceremony, welcomes the screen viewers, and from the perspective of an omniscient narrator, provides information about the old inns. In the Epilogue, the Presenter enters the scene reciting Octavian Goga's lyrics and gets in touch with the audience, for the first time.

The outlaws, merchants, innkeepers and servants inside the show are representative characters for the typologies found in Romanian and universal literature; the dramatic text is inspired by the reality of the time and transposes the characters into fiction, managing to imprint the veracity required by Northrop Frye (1972, 214-215), but also a narrative theatricality, through the way theatrical discourse and gesture depict the characters (Manea, 2006, 117).

Travellers' entrance inside the inn's chronotope borrows the frame tales technique, with the innkeeper, his wife and the servant ensuring the connections between narrative sequences and provoking the travellers to narrate the next story. This technique, both literary and dramatic, ensures the transposition of traditional heritage elements into the show, because travellers bring forward traditional costumes, songs and dances from their native area. Thus the script outlines several "cutouts", which transcend from travellers' everyday reality to inn's reality, the inn becoming a "chronotope of the entire country" (Bunescu, 2017, 126) and even of traditional heritage: "We from Oaş keep going / Towards the city of Braşov / Where a proud man of ours / Is the head of the imperial archive / And now we go to ask him, / To be the godfather of this wedding / When we sanctify our marriage / On Saint Elijah Day in mid-summer."

The choreographic concept promoted a wide repertoire: Învârtita, Brâul, Lezeasca, Breaza dances from the Braşov area; Oltenian fast dances; Purtata, Învârtita, Fecioreasca from the Făgăraş area; dances from the Mehedinţi area; the Jianu dance, led by the character Iancu Jianu himself; the contretemps Brâul from the Highland Banat; the Bordeiaş dance; syncopated wedding dances from Oaş; Roma dances, difficult to interpret due to the fast rhythm, with small steps and successive tips; Braşoveanca, a dance specific to Braşov townspeople, staged for the first time. Through dances, artists embodied a collective character of great strength, for which corporeality and dance become means of expression. The annihilation of spoken word for this collective character has beneficial consequences: dancers form a unitary body and express themselves through movement, decisive being their pathos and joy, not the synchronisation nor the execution technique (though mandatory for a professional ensemble).

The musical level of the show is constructed on four layers: 21st century folk music, instrumental solos, scholarly-inspiration songs and traditional dance songs; a fifth layer of musicality is obtained through rhythmic beats (heel striking on the floor; leg slapping; palm, elbow and knee hitting the aluminium boilers etc). Their chaining enhances the show artisticity, musicality and theatricality: 21st century folk songs provide the party atmosphere characteristic to inns and outline an engaging show, with rapid successions from one ethno folkloric area to another; the instrumental solos dramatise certain scenes from a musical perspective (e.g. the tarogato mournful sound accompanies a love story, playing the violin without the bow incites the audience and reminds of the unusual interpretive techniques that have made famous many fiddlers).

In terms of discourse, this verse drama is written in cross rhymes, considering that the tension, intensity and economy required for a verse in a poem is similar to the suspense and simultaneity required in drama, at the level of a line or a scene (Oswald, 2020). Theatre - poetry technical affinity supports the script and the show structure, consciously reaffirming the connection with the popular theatre, through characters, dialogue, musical interludes and comic pantomime (Haja, 2003, 178).

Preserving the tradition of wooden constructions and of imposing inn buildings, the set designer created an inn with a functional porch, where travellers enjoyed the cultural moments offered by other guests. The inn's design was a great challenge because folklore audience was not accustomed to such

constructions; the desired impact on audience was achieved, this innovative element being positively received.

With *Seven Brothers for Seven Brides* (2015), the crystallisation of theatre, music and dance increased the show's approach to the way theatricality and theatre are perceived in the 21st century, with the minimalist decor, focused on video projections, and the textual and dramatic dominance being eloquent. Relying again on a synergistic factor and on a traditional energy resource, the show is built on the complex wedding ceremonial, promoting rituals from seven ethno folkloric areas: Bistrița – launching the wedding invitations with processions and flags, the arrival of the wedding procession at the bride's house, asking parents' forgiveness, the bride's dance in money; Moldavia – dancing and blessings at the bride's house, the bride's song and dance, the godfathers and guests dancing; Sălaj - the Vărgel, custom of finding the chosen one; Dobrudja - asking permission for marriage and the wedding party; Muntenia - dowry negotiation, launching the wedding invitations, the groom's symbolic shaving, bride's adorning with the wedding veil; Banat - asking the bride in marriage, groom passing three tests to prove his maturity and wisdom, bride's adorning with gold coins; Sibiu - love confessions, bride's adorning with a helmet specific to Făgăraș area, giving away the dowry chest in a chariot. These sequences are preceded by a Prologue and followed by an Epilogue, both of them highly developed to include songs, dances and dramatic moments.

This complex dramatic structure has been chosen due to the multitude and diversity of nuptial practices in Romania and to the importance of storytelling in musical theatre choreography shows. The narrative thread determined at least four main and secondary characters and a collective character for each act, all being played by invited soloists and Junii Sibiului artists. The transition between acts is ensured by Ghiță, an omniscient playful narrator, who permanently enters the story, speaks with the characters and incites them to action: “Have a nice day, dear groom, /But why are you so bent/ Covered in your sheepskin coat, / You look like a prince from Lowlands, / Be happier and merrier!”.

Seven Brothers for Seven Brides is undoubtedly the show reaching the synergy of theatre, music and dance; moreover, its architecture is surprising from at least two viewpoints: the involvement of technology and the theatricality focused both on drama and comedy. The mixing of traditions and technology may seem risky, but it works perfectly due to the show's theatricality and artistic expressiveness. In fact, this new concept of mixing elements marked the show from the beginning: for the first time in a Junii Sibiului's musical theatre choreography show, the opening was made with folk music orchestrated on modern rhythms: soloists performed a fast Sârba song, with breaks and musical pauses, during which the cadence was given by dance rhythms, hands clapping and leg slapping.

From the point of view of theatricality impact and artistic effects, it is necessary to analyse the characters' entrances and exits. Avoiding the monotony of construction, some acts open with processions full of joy (as is the case of the Dobrudja sequence), with dialogues between two characters (the mother - daughter discussion in the sequence dedicated to Sibiu, Ghiță - groom dialogue in the Banat sequence), with joyful scenes, such as the dowry negotiation specific to Muntenia area.

The thematic register allowed the highlighting of the musical and choreographic levels, because songs and dances accompany all the moments of a Romanian traditional wedding. Thus, the show promotes extremely rhythmic and engaging songs; lads' dances, lasses' dances and mixt dances, many of them becoming a test of maturity for the bride and the groom. Moldavia is choreographically represented by Bride's Hora and Bătuta de la Vorona, during which the groom demonstrates his skill in dance; Bătuta de la Enisala, Geambășeasca, Dobromireasa and Popârlanul are specific to Dobrudja

region; Bugeacul, Teleorman Hora and Brâul are folk dances chosen to represent Muntenia area. The choreographic climax is reached in the last act, in which dances from Mărginimea Sibiului and Făgăraș are a pretext for competition, as often happened in Romanian villages in old times.

Dance becomes a communication channel: the bride and groom rarely use the word power, as they express themselves predominantly through dance, corporeality and costume. The bride's dance in money, specific to Bistrița, and the lyrical dance, with elements of ballet, modern dance and folk game, performed by the bride from Dobruđja, unleash emotions through bodily expressiveness. Similarly, adorning the bride with a wreath or a veil become landmarks of how the costume pieces can trigger strong feelings, expressed through dance. The bride and groom dialogue exclusively with other characters, although situations of this type are extremely rare: the groom talks to the wedding headman and Ghiță in the wedding sequence dedicated to Banat, and the girl from Făgăraș talks to her mother, during the act dedicated to Sibiu traditions. Otherwise, the bride and groom participate in the seven stories, express their feelings through facial features, gestures and dance: they prove their maturity by leading the dance and, also, symbolise their union through dance. In order to correctly understand the main characters' typology, one must approach traditional weddings: here, young people are led by relatives and friends, who play the role of mentors, spokespersons and defenders of the new family. Speaking on behalf of bride and groom, the headman asks for their parents' forgiveness; the village women ask the mother-in-law to kindly welcome her daughter-in-law, and examples can go on.

The musical level of this show has a much stronger part than in previous productions, being illustrative for joy rendering, but especially for the emotional impact of the wedding and the changes it brings to the bride and groom's life. Love and party songs are performed by soloists, in an infusion of sound energy; moreover, songs specific to certain wedding ceremony episodes are performed in a manner leading to ritual.

The last part of this chapter is dedicated to audience, an essential element for a live show, and which must be approached through its double reference to performing arts and traditional culture. The audience of these shows is generally one with a high degree of heterogeneity, this being explained by the high level of folklore consumption in our country; analyses conducted at national level show that 33% of survey respondents go to folk performances several times a year (Croitoru, Marinescu, 2019, 103). Three audience categories require special attention. First, the youth: in urban areas, young people are not generally consumers of folklore (Balazs, 2003, 27); in order to attract them, Junii Sibiului relied on representations in unconventional spaces; musical projects initiated by bands that combine folklore with modern and even underground music, online and television projects, musical theatre choreography shows that incite curiosity. The second audience category is formed of frequent consumers, who are not academically specialised, but possess generous knowledge of traditional culture, approaching these shows through their own practice of traditions, folk songs and dances, etc. Thirdly, the Internet development has brought the performing arts into the virtual environment, with streaming or live peer-to-peer broadcasts becoming a habit or even the only possibility of contact with the public, as happened in 2020, when “digitalisation of culture” has become “digital culture” (Alsina, 2010, 1).

In conclusion, the three shows were approached from a double perspective: that of presenting traditional culture in its manifestation forms extremely spectacular in the old-time villages, but also appealing to contemporary audience. In the cultural context of this audience being predominantly formed of adults and seniors, an interesting artistic concept was imposed for the young audience. It relied on the complex production of musical theatre choreography show, in which traditional and

urban culture meet; a complex production in which folklore is presented in all its forms of manifestation, with moments full of humour and flavour; a complex show promoting soloists of great popularity among youth; a complex production including drama actors, well known to the public. And the stakes have been a success, the shows being repeatedly staged.

From traditional civilisation to the performing arts, the path of any artistic production seems difficult, especially since over the last seven decades the dissolution of traditional civilisation and terms such as “folklore” and “kitsch” have always been associated with such productions. In this cultural context, a question arises: does the musical theatre choreography show stand a chance to give folk culture a second life, simultaneously dependent on traditional culture and on performing arts, while rising to the standards imposed in both fields? The answer has been too little given so far, because there have been few such shows staged in Romania and, consequently, even less specialised literature.

But after discussing the theoretical concepts and analysing the three shows *The Old Times Fair*, *At Ghiță's Inn*, *Seven brothers for seven brides* we conclude that the musical theatre choreography show witnessed the searches of a chameleonic species: the show cannot evolve independently of the irreversible changes occurring in society, because it will always relate to an audience that experiences those changes, assimilating them. In such a framework, the musical theatre choreography show must be recognised a mission, already experienced: it is a modern instrument of non-formal education. The general, non-specialised public does not and will not lean on folklore studies and collections, on the treatises of traditional civilisation in order to know the specifics and roots of our culture, but rather the public will get acquainted with traditions through attractive artistic forms, these being easier to understand and assimilate; musical theatre choreography show with traditional specifics fulfills these necessities.

The musical theatre choreography show can be successful in promoting traditional heritage because along the two millennia of theatre's interference with music and dance, the show - a chameleonic species has discovered new ways to appeal the audience; it has assimilated new forms of expression, in order to include technique, virtual reality, to excite the audience staying in front of a stage or a screen. Since the traditional musical theatre choreography show finds its vivacity in this chameleonism, its future lies in keeping this binary relationship permanent, which ensures a second life for traditional culture and performing arts - a subgenre that evokes traditional values, viable today.

The future of traditional musical theatre choreography show certainly depends on contemporary creators' appetite to discover resources of theatricality and artistry in traditions, to interpret and re-interpret traditional sources, relating them to contemporary technology and audience's expectations. However, the long time expected revival of the folk show will be decided in the performance hall, where creators and audience communicate themselves and with each other through artistic acts.

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