

Report on the 24th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology

10th – 16th July 2006, Cluj, Romania

About 80 participants gathered in the university town of Cluj, Romania for this year's biennial symposium of the Study Group on Ethnochoreology, held from 10th -16th July. Papers submitted fell into two main themes: From Text to Field: Translations and Representations, and Dance and Space, which inter-wove together as the symposium proceeded. The week-long meeting took place at the Tranzit House, an old synagogue now converted into the Centre for Contemporary Art and Culture - a perfect setting with its large space for both oral and practical presentations, and set beside Cluj's main river, the Someşul Mic. A cosy internet café above the main hall provided relaxing space, online access and extra coffees when needed and the symposium was staffed and generously supported by students working at the Tranzit House under the direction of Kőnczei Csilla, the local organiser. The organising committee was Corina Iosif, Harbula Hajnalka, Kőnczei Csongor, Silvestru Petac and Helene Eriksen.

Monday morning saw all the participants (from 23 different countries) seated in the Tranzit House listening to an opening welcome from Anca Giurchescu, chair of the Study Group, followed by the inaugural session introducing the first of the themes From Field to Text. Colin Quigley (USA) began by giving a comprehensive overview of the history and development of dance ethnography, noting the importance of the published work of some of the key members of the Study Group in this regard, and the relationship between dance and text. His paper was followed by lively presentations by Chi Fang Chao (Taiwan) and Kristen Harris Walsh (Canada), both giving details of their own case-studies. The ensuing debate with the audience was thought-provoking, questioning the use of life-histories in constructing 'texts', and the validity of 'composed realities' within research. Further sessions in the afternoon and early evening continued the analysis of moving from field to text, and included a paper from Linda Dankworth (UK) discussing 'embodied translations' of Mallorcan dance and Daniela Stavělová (Czech Republic) introducing us to her documentary film on Czech carnival rituals. Before supper, and the special Opening Ceremony, a panel organised by Andriy Nahachewsky (Canada) and consisting of Egil Bakka (Norway), Marie-Pierre Gibert (France), Mats Nilsson (Sweden), Stephanie Smith (USA) and Tvertko Zebec presented their research on themes of revival (or 'vival') and a group's orientation to the past.

Day two of the event examined the topic of space and dance through an extensive range of sources and geographical places, beginning with Georgiana Gore's 'Understanding the other's dancing experience' in which she discussed changing anthropological methodologies and techniques that allow both objectivity and deeper cognitive understanding. Joëlle Vellet (France) presented issues of space within the dance form of the Bourée, and Nancy G. Heller (USA) gave an illustrated paper on the changing spaces within Flamenco dance. This was followed by Ann David's (UK) consideration of the issues of sacred space in UK Hindu dance practices, and Kendra Stepputat's (Germany) analysis of the changing performance space of the Balinese Kecak. The tradition of encouraging student presentations during the symposium continued with four short papers given by students from Slovenia and Serbia (Nataša Visočnik, Vesna Bajic and Zdravko Ranisavljevic) that examined the Japanese Buto, the Serbian Kolo dance form, and issues of authenticity. During the afternoon, we listened to a presentation by the sub-study group on ritual in which Adrienne Kaepler (USA), Hanafi Hussin (Malaysia) and Mohd Anis Md Nor (Malaysia) described their trip to Sofia, Bulgaria earlier in the year, where they participated in a traditional St George's day ritual.

Part of the following day, Wednesday, was devoted to presentations relating to methods of dance analysis using electronic and traditional techniques: Elena Bertuzzi (France) discussed dance anthropology using Kinetography Laban, and was followed by János Fügedi's (Hungary) detailed account analysing the male Hungarian solo dance form, Legényes. Further formal analysis was presented by Gábor Misi (Hungary), and all three papers led to an animated audience discussion questioning whether these techniques could be applied cross-culturally, on the appearance of 'mistakes' and their notation, and the usefulness of language analysis. This area was concluded by papers from Elsie Ivancich Dunin (USA/Croatia), and Victor A. Stoichiță (France/Romania) who introduced new computer technologies for research and analysis. A late morning session featured two Canadian papers looking at aspects of revival (or not) and performance space (Vincent Rees and Sherry Johnson), plus a comprehensive review of the presentation of traditional Turkish dance from Mehmet Öcal Özbilgin. Further sessions during the day offered a mix of formal papers with practical demonstrations of Norwegian dance (Ruth Anne Moen, Siri Maeland and Sigurd Johan Heide -Norway), a personal account questioning the place of embodied fieldwork (Helene Eriksen -Germany), and a panel considering the different aspects of Romanian folk dance in funeral contexts from Silvestru Petac, Narcisa Știucă and Florin Teodorescu.

Day four provided a welcome 'day off' for an excursion to visit the village of Frata, 50 km from Cluj, where we watched (and participated in) displays of costumed folk dance performed by the villagers and by a local Romany group. After a hospitable lunch we travelled to the heritage site of Bánffy Castle in Bonțida village to view the restoration work being carried out there. The day concluded with a convivial meal and impromptu dancing in the village of Chidea.

The final two days of the conference brought a wide range of presentations examining dance and space from Edwige Dioudonnat (France), Omer Barbaros Ünlü (Turkey), Barbara Alge (Portugal), Carol A. Marsh (USA), Olivera Vasić (Serbia), Sándor Varga (Hungary) and Rebeka Kunej (Slovenia). Papers were given too from Judy van Zile (USA) on the use of space in South Korean masked Dance-Drama, Owe Ronström (Sweden) on Swedish Polska dancing, Barbara Sparti (Italy) on the importance of space in 15th century Italian dance, and Daniela Ivanova (Bulgaria) discussing the folk dance ensemble in Bulgaria. Zamfir Dejeu (Romania) discussed the changes from field to stage in the traditional men's dance, and also included dance demonstrations. Others looked at the use of film in ethnographic work, such as Judy Olson's (USA) recording of the Hungarian Táncház, and Péter Csempezs's (Hungary) DVD of a milk-measuring ritual. Later on Saturday, a panel of ICTM members presented their findings from fieldwork carried out in Izmir, Turkey: Mehmet Öcal Özbilgin spoke of the aims of their work, Anca Giurchescu (Denmark/Romania) and Felföldi László (Hungary) discussed the diversity of the field reality, Fahriye Dincer (Turkey) interpreted the Alevi Semah, and Jaynie Rabb (USA) presented a DVD dedicated to the mens' dance of Zeybec. Helene Eriksen too gave a showing of slides from the trip.

Other delights of this friendly, lively and stimulating symposium were further professional-standard DVD presentations by Hédi Sztanó (Hungary) on Mundruc, an exceptional Hungarian dancer, and by Irene Loutzaki (Greece) on her work with village women. Each evening, there were opportunities to learn traditional Romanian dances with live music, later followed by dance sharing workshops, in which most delegates participated. The final summing up of the symposium took place on Saturday afternoon, where an animated discussion raised questions on the real meaning 'text'; on issues of authenticity and preserving 'tradition'; on whether space can be a useful term for dance

analysis, and how to meet the needs of a changing group that now includes younger, less experienced scholars. Location and topics for the next symposium (in 2008) were aired.

The final evening's farewell party was not only an end to the symposium and a thank you to the organising team and the staff of the Tranzit House, but also a special and fond goodbye to Anca Giurchescu, retiring from her chairmanship of the Study Group on Ethnochoreology after eight years, and a warm welcome to the newly elected chair, Felföldi László .

Ann David