

**Report on the sub-study group on Dance Iconography
held in Bamberg, 27-30 March.
Compiled by Barbara Sparti**

The meeting was wonderfully hosted by Marianne Bröcker in her home in the historic and lovely town of Bamberg. The meeting consisted of (1) presentations of works in progress followed by ample and in-depth discussions. (2) An afternoon was dedicated to database cataloguing of dance images, and (3) a session devoted to the volume or book of essays on dance images the sub-study group would like to produce. This last needs to be discussed further by our group and by the sub-study group meeting in Monghidoro (at which time we can present our notes on our discussion in Bamberg). It is still not clear what type of articles we wish to have, by whom and for whom.

I. Individual Presentations--Summaries by authors (Please note that I, Barbara, decided that for our members it was important to have some real idea of what each person at Bamberg discussed--and thus to see parallels among them--rather than the usual report limited to name and title. This latter, succinct version will appear in the ICTM Bulletin. Each presenter wrote her/his own summary stressing the points they felt were significant.)

Grazyna Dabrowska: "Some Polish dances--the polonaise and others--painted in different historical times". The most ancient information about Polish dances may chiefly be found in musical and literary sources. The Death Dance is the oldest illustration dating back to 17th/18th century. It is a painting by an anonymous author that may be found at the Bernardins' church, Cracow. It is an allegoric representation of 9 women in a circle dance with skeletons and representatives of various social strata: emperor, king, magnate, noblemen, tradesman, farmer, soldier, Jew, child and jester, all performing the same dance at the end of their lives. The majority of iconographic material on Polish court and folk dances dates back to the 19th century. The material discussed is only a part of my more extensive work. I present here and discuss the painting representations of the polonaise, a Polish dance well-known throughout Europe. I pose a series of questions, the answers to which, from the points of view of aesthetics and others, and of historical context require a more extensive analysis than permitted by the time reserved in Bamberg.

Christine Glauser: "The use of old photographs in Greek village interviews". Christine's paper on photographs of dance events of the 1950s to the 1970s in the region of Siatista, northern Greece, focused on two subjects: 1) methodological aspects of using photographs during interviews about dance events of that period (use of photos in Oral History); 2) photographs as a source for socio-anthropological analysis of dance events and the practice of taking photographs during dance events of that period. This second part was based upon Pierre Bourdieu's concepts developed in his book *Un art moyen*. Another point which was important in the paper and was also mentioned by Laszlo in the discussion was: The study of the social use of (dance) photos in a rural context, which opens interesting perspectives upon the interrelationship of peasant culture and urban culture and especially upon the process of urban influence in the villages. Photography is one source for studying this process and at the same time is itself an urban technique.

Barbara Sparti: "Who are the dancers in Lorenzetti's 'Buon Governo'?" Barbara's presentation on Lorenzetti's "dancers" in the "good city" of Siena (14th century) successfully broke down recent views that the dancers were men and public entertainers through the use of sources such as contemporary chronicles, paintings and literature, dress, and symbols within the fresco itself. Unfortunately there was no time to go

into the "unreal" and symbolic quality of the dancers in comparison with the "real" serpentine "canzone a ballo" (the earliest and still most magnificent conception of a chain dance in painting). To be continued!

Tvrtko Zebec: "Stecci--reflections of culture and faith" The background, knowledge and interests of the particular researchers have resulted in various approaches and interpretations, which is clearly shown in their particular interpretations of the symbols on the upright (standing) tombstones - stecci. [note by BS: These were reported on in Urbino and Szeged by Elsie Dunin.] Christian iconographers say that the visual art sources and models of Christian iconography belong primarily to Antique and Oriental compositions, whose mythological content is visually similar to Christian parabola and evangelical events. Thus, they were adopted by Christianity in their visual art form, but given a completely different content. I have tried to connect two different medias – tombstones on one side – with their "heavenly" or "celestial" kolo-dance engravings motif, and – on the other side, fresco depiction of the dance of death (Totentanz, danse macabre), as the same idea developed in two different ways. The techniques and manners of presentation may differ, but the symbols/ symbolism are the same – the link between the world of the living and the world of the dead – or, in other words, a transition, the crossing of a soul into eternal life.

Judy Van Zile: "Images related to Korean dance--a summary" Judy spoke about issues in interpreting the myriad kinds of visual representations of dance in Korea, and commented on broad issues she considered potentially important in other geographic areas as well. Beginning with ancient tomb paintings of dance and progressing through various kinds of court documents, she contextualized images in relation to artistic conventions of the time and the reasons for which images were created, and related selected details represented to contemporary practices. She pointed out that dance has been considered sufficiently significant to be the subject matter of a vast array of images, but raised questions regarding assessing their documentary veracity.

Irene Loutzaki: "A visual play between myth and history. The folk painter Theophilos Chatzimichael (1873-1934)". This study was guided by the words of the poet Odysseus Elytis (1911-1996), who said that "the new Hellenism must finally attempt to discover its true identity, since that which it has so far considered to be Greek, is actually distorted according to the way that the west perceives Greekness". Therefore, in my presentation the use of folk painting as a medium to study dance was not about painting per se but about its potential to question, tell in different voices or see through different eyes what is depicted. Painting is capable of articulating its own particular cultural voice within the discipline, as a document of culture whose legitimacy is drawn from the fact that its creator--in my case Theophilos Chatzimichael--is attempting to communicate values and negotiated realities which are integral to human experience and consciousness. As an example, in my paper I dealt with two famous "naïf" compositions--"The dance of Zalongo" and "the Dance of Megara"--made by the folk painter Chatzimichael. As an artist, the public identified Theophilos with the concept of "Greekness" as it was experienced and promoted, in ideological terms, during the first post-War decades (after 1940), an attempt to return to the roots of Hellenism. Observing his images as a formal symbol in a new alphabet, I tried to depict, thanks to the explanatory accompaniment of words, the tradition of mythological narrative which must assume the form of historical fact.

Mohd Anis Md Nor: "Iconographic perspectives of Islamic culture and their dances". Anis spoke on the elements of the artistic expression of tawhid in Islamic art, which also included culturally structured movement systems. An overview of dances in the Islamic

communities were presented to illustrate the categories of dances (unfavored, indifferent, recommended and commendable forms) similar to the categories of music and singing as cited by Al-Faruqi in the categories of handasah al-sawt. After positioning the categorical hierarchies of permissible dances, he went on to elaborate the notion of Islamic aesthetics that are depersonalized through the abstractions of the arabesque. The iconic structures as embodied in the arabesque were highlighted in the dances of Islamic societies. The essence of tawhid as the guiding structure in the Islamic arabesque was applied to outline Islamic dance iconography.

László Felföldi: "Stereotype elements in iconographic representations" Laszlo's presentation proposed such questions as the motives for using stereotypes in images, which included: lack of invention, impressing the public, propagandistic aims, political purposes; and how to evaluate stereotypes? Negatively? Positively? Neutrally? Stereotypes, patterns, motives, clichés, emblems are artistic expressive elements in the framework of an artistic creation which are used to help in the effective representation of the artistic message, by their metaphoric features. Their meaning and their formal and functional characteristic features were discussed, with particular references to repetitive elements in dance images of the 18th-19th centuries in Hungary and bottle dances in recent 20th century folklore. Several conclusions were presented as well as guidelines for future work. Our sources for dance research are more inclined to be fiction rather than reality. This is not negative or positive in itself. It is our metaphoric way of thinking, a kind of incapability to verbalise things, which are expressed in a more proper way in other languages (sound, movement, colours, forms, and behaviour. We have to admit that there is no one reality that we are trying to grasp. There are different realities, which may be valid at the same time, and we are also part of the reality that we are examining, regardless of whether it came into being some hundred years ago.

Placida Staro: "Dance as Metaphor--a report on a work in progress" In the civilizations which use written languages, the symbolic connections are mediated in an idiomatic form. Therefore, the use of a representation of movements that crosses words and is connected with the symbolic universe, is always predominated both by the author and the interpreter of the work. This differs from those communities which do not have a written language, and where movement assumes, or can assume, in its iconographic form, a linguistic meaning, a direct rapport with the universe of ideas, as in the case of hieroglyphics. But precisely because its approach is univocal, the gesture assumes an emblematic value. The gesture is therefore represented not in virtue of its own dynamic capacity but in virtue of the system of connections which renders it explicit through the visual representation. Now, the questions posed are: has the dance within western culture ever assumed an emblematic value "for itself", that is, not mediated by the idiomatic link with language? And if the answer is positive, in what period, in what works, for which motivations? And in which works can we see this represented? On the other hand, what shared stereotypes allow the members of a culture to distinguish a portrayal of a dance from a representation of relations between or subjects represented? When are these stereotypes formed and transmitted? What is the mechanism that distinguishes these three levels? The answer to this question can help us to clarify the separation between the ideal and the real dance which exist in our western culture.

Questions raised by Judy Van Zile concerning "dance iconography": We might consider adding these questions to our Guidelines for Reading Dance Images.

-- How do we interpret images of the past in the present? Do images reveal or conceal? We are involved with describing and evaluating, which lead to interpreting.

-- How do our interpretations of the past contribute to our practices of the present, and perhaps the future? Are images used to reconstruct the past? Validate the present? Suggest reality? Document reality?

-- Apart from obvious issues of translating from one medium to another, are there universal issues in interpreting dance images? Issues that suggest methodologies?

-- Did the artist intend his work as a dance image, or is it a dance image only because we label it as such--because that's our interest.

-- Can art historians and dance researchers contribute to each others' methodologies and foster the fullest understanding of dances images?

Future meeting

I have taken Judy's last question and been working on setting up a meeting in Rome next winter at the American Academy (proposal has been accepted) in which we would meet with art historians (and painters, archeologists, and interested others including specialists from appropriate museums and cultural institutes) to listen to each other's presentations, to question, and to learn from one another.

Epilogue (Adrienne, of course!)

Then Laszlo appeared once again
Seen handing to Dina a pin
While holding a spider
He sat down beside her
And gave it to her with a grin.

Our man from Szeged with a spa Happily shouted a final hurrah
Sea level with fountains will transform into mountains
Where we all will appear once again.

Database report in Part II.

Part II: Report on dance iconography and "database" session at Bamberg: Elsie Dunin.

Adrienne Kaeppler reviewed the early purpose of the iconography sub-study group that focused upon developing a universal index and cataloging system for a dance image database. Elsie Dunin noted that in ensuing years (only a decade of time) there has been a rapid advancement of computer technology available to the personal user, including massive gigabyte memory in home computers, but also read and write CDs. In addition for the general user, there are more cataloging and indexing programs for text or images. These programs can be customized to personal or small project archiving needs that were not available at the initiation of this sub-study group.

At the iconography Urbino meeting, August 2001, musicologist Mariagrazia Carlone demonstrated a computer program, "Musico," developed for music iconography, but not yet used for dance images. Elsie Dunin volunteered to do a "dance iconography pilot" using personally photographed fieldwork images of dance events. Elsie briefly reported her difficulties with setting up the Musico program (which is not compatible with the Macintosh platform) on a PC with the latest Windows XP platform (year 2001). Therefore Elsie was not able to pursue the "dance pilot" as planned. However, the Musico program was applied to a European-based project "Images of Music" to

document and catalogue images with musical subject matter. The project produced three "exhibitions" on the internet (www.imagesofmusic.net), and made available three CD-ROMs. One of the interactive CDs features "Rhythm in Music and Dance" and was available to view at our meeting. There was not enough time at the meeting to evaluate the CD fully, but in general the information and sound examples were considered to be superficial. On the other hand, the collection of historical images was considered valuable. Another controversial issue was brought up: whether or not some of the historical images actually portrayed dancing. The 14th century image that Sparti discussed in her presentation happened to be also included on this CD.

Within the context of sharing experiences with cataloging projects using available programs, Judy Van Zile discussed the Endnote software, which is basically designed for bibliographic cataloging. It was customized for an iconography database project for Korean dance images. A model was created for inputting "records" of iconographic images, which could then be outputted in a variety of formats. Ultimately a notebook with images and printout of data about the images was produced. Elsie pointed out that although Endnote was selected for the Korean project, there are other bibliographic database programs, such as ProCite that have the same capability of customization and can be outputted into a variety of bibliographic formats. ProCite is used for the Study Group's Dance Research publication that is now produced in Zagreb. Using the text based bibliographic programs offers a challenge of linking thumbnail images with the text information, and enables one to search and sort on either the text or image. There are photographic database programs that can be adequately sorted into groups, but the text fields are very limited. Elsie mentioned FotoStation, a photographic database program (designed in Norway) as being useful as a cataloging program, and one which is compatible with both Macintosh and PC systems. Unfortunately there is a limitation to the customization of text fields.

Dunin's point is that many ethnochoreologists have amassed personal collections of fieldwork images that only they can identify, but which are invaluable for the tracking of continuities and changes in the dance events that are being studied. The tangible image of these studies is a treasure chest of information, and must be catalogued and indexed by the collector, and not by a third party. Technology developed for the consumer is useful: within the last two years, for example, scanning equipment to digitize slides and photographs has become relatively standard and reasonably priced for the fieldworker. For this reason, it is useful to identify computer programs that are basic, useful and that will not become obsolete in a matter of a few years. Therefore, a continuing discussion and sharing of information about technological advances to catalog and index images should continue at future meetings of this Sub-Study Group.

Report by Placida Staro:

Dina reported about the latest feature in cataloging images, sound, and historical data in different kind of projects. The "architecture" of the different programs now used in national archives (U.S.A. and Europe) is constantly updated because of the changes in media development. The discussions she had with the heads of these projects brought her to the conclusion that it is not now necessary to have a shared protocol in the software used, but first of all to use programs with a high degree of compatibility with the most common protocols for data-base. The future is in the virtual projects and the scholar's problem has to be the consistent way of classifying his/her own material (in our case "dance") and not the technical media.

Report by László Felföldi:

In order to promote cross-cultural research in ethnochoreology, we would need to create MULTIMEDIA DATABASES being accessible on internet or on CD-ROM. It may be especially useful in smaller regions, where the dance iconographic materials (together with the historical texts and musical documents) have easily comparable genres, techniques, topics. Another important issue is the comparison of historical dance material with the documents of recent dance folklore. That is why I urge international cooperation in this field. As a preparation for this project we (members of the sub-study group on dance iconography) could compile a collective database with some examples interpreted and described in their regional and historical framework.

Comment by Barbara Sparti

Many of the past years of the Ethnochoreology's sub-study group on dance iconography have been dedicated exclusively to cataloging. At the Urbino meeting in 2002, except for Elsie Dunin, there was almost no interest in pursuing this further, in some cases because of the elusiveness and special problems of world-wide dance. The Bamberg meeting showed instead that a few members are very dedicated to this aspect of dance images, and some are curious about it, while some are not interested at all. It clearly is worth keeping this aspect alive for those who are interested in it as one part of the projects undertaken by the sub-study group (if not as a separate sub-study group). As Laszlo put it, "We have to keep this topic alive with those who are interested in it. We may write a pilot on it in order to decide the main issues (software, content, ways of processing). To start as a snowball in a smaller circle and then widen it as it is needed."

Report compiled by Barbara Sparti in July 2003 for the Dance Iconography Sub-Study Group following the March 2003 Bamberg meeting

Barbara Sparti