

Sub-Study Group on 19th Century Couple Dances  
First meeting in Prague 3 - 6 April 2003

At the Symposium in Szeged, Hungary this summer Egil Bakka suggested to revive the Sub-Study Group on 19th Century Couple Dances. This sub-study group was already proposed at the Korcula symposium, but did not get started.

Idea. At the end of the 18th Century the waltz and other dances with similar movement patterns started spreading in Europe, and became a dominant genre for the 19th century. The dancing masters of that time called them round dances. The dances even spread to other continents where Westerners had influence. These dances will be the topic of the sub-study group. The idea is to start by comparing such dance material and discuss, whether we can find basis for a classification of the material in a few main groups. How to continue will then be discussed at the first meeting.

Practical information. The first meeting in the Sub-Study Group on 19th Century Couple Dances will be held in Prague, thanks to our colleague Daniela Stavélová who has been kind enough to host us. Participants should plan to arrive in Prague Thursday evening the 3rd of April, so that we can start the 4th April in the morning at 09:00. We will end our meeting Sunday the 6th at 15:00 o'clock. The principle for a Sub-Study Group meeting is that the host finds a location where we can meet, and give us suggestions for a couple of alternatives for accommodation. Then everybody pay their own travel and stay and make their reservations for accommodation.

Working order. In my mind a Sub-Study Group works through informal exchange and discussions over prepared material, rather than through papers. It is also my experience that a Sub-Study Group needs to start on a simple and clearly formulated working plan, rather than with a discussion on how to work. As secretary of the group, I therefore would like to suggest a working plan for the first meeting. Then, having worked according to this plan during the meeting I suggest we evaluate and discuss further work on an open basis, at the end.

My suggestions are: 1) We concentrate on couple dance material of types like waltz and polka, and everybody prepares as much as possible by surveying such material in a country or region he finds natural to study. 2) Everybody brings examples of such dances, on video, in notation or descriptions from traditional environment or from dance teachers, or even from revival. Ideally everybody should bring at least 5-10 examples with as much information as possible about the sources of

the material. It would be good to have a bit more material than we have time to present. 3) We work by presenting to each other our material, one dance at a time, briefly in about 5 minutes, and then go on discussing each example. We discuss different sources, we discuss if the dance to our knowledge is widespread or not and we compare examples. 4) After some rounds of presentations, we can start discussing how we define this kind of dance material, and see if we can reach questions worthwhile following up in later meetings.

Information on the meeting has already been circulated to those who signed up for the sub-study group in Szeged. Several of those have already said they will come, but the meeting is still open to members of the Study Group on Ethnochoreology. If you are interested, please contact me as secretary as soon as possible.

Very best wishes  
Egil Bakka  
Secretary of the Sub-Study Group on 19th Century Couple Dances

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