

## LIFE ENDOWMENT TO ETHNOCHOREOLOGY REVIEW ABOUT THE BOOK FOUNDATIONS OF HUNGARIAN ETHNOCHOREOLOGY: SELECTED PAPERS OF GYÖRGY MARTIN

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The scholarly discipline of ethnochoreology or, as Hungarians would say, dance folkloristics has had a profound and developed history in Hungary. From the very beginning of its establishing in the early 1950s, various intense research activities have focused on the collection, documentation and systematization of traditional dances throughout the country, but also on developing particular theories about their historical and regional stratification. Along with dance notation (Labanotation), one of the main methods of collecting and documenting traditional dances has been their planned filming during pre-arranged sessions, financially and organizationally supported by the state institutions. Among early dance researchers, Labanotators and ethnochoreologists, the most significant figure whose influence will far exceed the historical timing and national boundaries of his scholarly work certainly is György Martin (1932–1983). Thanks to the fertile environment of early traditional dance investigation in Hungary coupled with his academic education in folkloristics and ethnomusicology, but also on the other hand, his huge passion for field research and cabinetwork equally, Martin has left a monumental academic foundation in all of his numerous writings, among which some were published after his early death. The book *Selected papers of György Martin*, edited by prominent dance researchers from Hungary (Fügedi, Szőnyi and Varga) and Ireland (Quigley), consists of the most significant Martin's articles from various periods of his career. Beside Martin's essays translated or re-edited in English, there are also dozens of papers by dance scholars, mostly from Hungary. They critically reinterpret Martin's achievements and reposition them not only within Hungarian but also within international scopes, pointing to their great importance for developing ethnochoreology as an academic scholarly discipline in general and to the continuation of their actuality in the second and third decades of the 21st century. Thanks to the fact that this capital publication is printed in English, Martin's most significant papers and their scholarly interpretations will be available to a wider readership around the world, which will enable further theoretical, methodological and intellectual considerations about (traditional/folk) dance.

The book comprises four main sections. The first part titled as *Prolegomena: György Martin's role in Ethnochoreology and Dance Folkloristics*, consists of five articles that critically observe Martin's achievements from various perspectives. Colin Quigley's introductory essay *The Anglophone reception of György Martin's work: 1960–1990* first reflects insufficient and sporadic reception of Mar-

tin's structural-formal methodology and theoretical standpoints within dance anthropology and dance ethnology in North America and the British Isles, wondering how those disciplines would develop if Martin's achievements would be more available and used by Anglophone scholars. In the second part of his essay, Quigley indicates a neglected field of Martin's action, and that is his crucial contribution to applied ethnochoreology through key interventions in Hungarian presentational stage choreography and participatory dance revival, the areas of research which should be highlighted much more in future scholarly writings. Offering a critical overview of Martin's papers from the 1950s when he entered the university until the 1980s, Lajos Vargyas introduces his main scholarly results both in ethnomusicology and emerging ethnochoreology. Considering Hungarian social and cultural history research within the European academic context, Tamás Hofer critically positions Martin's work within Eastern European national ethnographism, too dually insisting on its differences in regard to Western European concepts of dance research. Pointing to his great contribution to ethnomusicological research, Katalin Paksa focuses on Martin's fruitful contribution to the research of European musical and dance history through systematization of different rhythm types of dance music and tracing their historical and geographical spreading, presented to a world audience in posthumously published books in English: *The Music of the stick dance* (2005) and *Old Hungarian dance style –the Ugrós anthology* (edited by Fügedi János & Vavrinez András, 2013). The last article in this section is written by Sándor Varga, who critically considers Martin's work within the Eastern European socialist nationalism of the middle of the 20th century, pointing to some of its limitations as it, according to Varga, did not focus on cultural micro-processes nor social, political and economic contexts and was based on inflexible theoretical preconceptions of isolated ethnic (Hungarian) village communities, neglecting the social dances traditions of the bourgeoisie. As Varga explains, these *ethnicizing and archaizing* attitudes were taken over from musicology, which newer scholarly production about dance in Hungary has been trying to surpass. Considering that the strong critical observation of Martin's work is necessary for the aim of understanding his results in socio-political and historical contexts of developing Hungarian dance folkloristics from the 1950s to the 1980s, Varga admits that regardless of contemporary condemnations, it "owes its existence and international recognition to Martin's unparalleled achievements" (p. 93).

After the first one, the continuation of this book consists of Martin's most important papers, which are grouped in three segments, preceded by introductory essays. Each of those three segments highlights Martin's achievements in various domains of dance research: 1.) historical and comparative studies, 2.) structural-formal analysis and 3.) case studies of dance traditions of the individual geographical regions in Transylvania.

Trying to comprehensively define Hungarian dance dialects based on the differentiation among various dance types, Martin devoted several of his writings to particular aspects of their historical background and geographical positioning within the Alpine-Carpathian basin, nested between Western European and, on the other hand, Balkan cultural influences. There are as many as six of Martin's main articles on these subjects in this segment of the book, which are translated to English and

available for future reexamination. As for now Vivien Szőnyi puts it in her introductory essay, Martin's historical and comparative achievements were influenced by theoretical standpoints of cultural evolutionism, diffusionism, theory of *variant and affinity* and the positivistic approach of scientific objectivism. Despite this highly elaborated criticism, Martin's considerations of geographical and historical tracing of Hungarian dance traditions remain an unavoidable starting point for all future reflections of European dance history from a geo-historical perspective.

The segment of the book devoted to Martin's accomplishments in the domain of structural and formal aspects of dance is introduced by János Fügedi and Zoltán Karácsony. They reflected Martin's astonishing ideas about dance analysis, among most of which were shaped together with Ernő Pesovár. Influenced by ethnomusicological analysis of Zoltán Kodály and Béla Bartók from the first decades of the 20th century, they were based on the examination of 1.) the content and function of dance, 2.) music and 3.) formal characteristics. For the first time in ethnochoreology, at the beginning of the 1960s, starting from the analysis of comprehensive and detailed Labanotation, Martin and Pesovár conceptualized the concepts of kinetic element and motif unit as basic components of dance. They devised a pyramid of formal dance units, defined a motif as a core element of dance performance, and offered a model for universal motif classification. Starting from these theoretical achievements, Martin further focused on exploring the laws of processes of dance variation and improvisation. All of this is expressed in his anthological articles, six of which are printed in English in this amazing book. No matter the fact that those theoretical standpoints already influenced researchers from Europe and the USA joined the Study Group on Ethnochoreology of the International Council for Traditional Music, their re-editing will certainly inspire future considerations of dance analysis, offering solutions for the conceptualization of basic principles of its segmentation and processualisation.

The last segment of this publication is devoted to case studies of Martin's research in Transylvania introduced by Sándor Varga. Starting from his general theoretical considerations, five of Martin's case studies printed here are devoted to particular Hungarian dance genres (*improvisatory male dance* and *hajdútánc*) and characteristics of dance traditions of individual regions of Transylvania.

Summarizing theoretical and analytical achievements of a unique and outstanding Hungarian intellectual from the second half of the 20th century passionately focused on dance – György Martin, offering subsequent re-reading of his articles and their reevaluation by some of the dance scholars from Hungary and Ireland, all of which now available to wide readership all around the globe, this capital publication represents exemplary of ethnochoreological intellectual thought at the beginning of *the new era of world order*, which is based on the establishment of *new normality* of propagating physical distance and defining new territorialities (and nationalities) in order to ensure the health protection of the individual in the third decade of the 21st century. Underlying the significance of this extraordinary book not only in the domain of dance research and ethnochoreology, and rather than making any final conclusions, I would finish this overview by quoting Martin's words written almost fifty years ago: "Instead of cultivation historical myths further; research must bring to light real historical interrelationships in the interest of unprejudiced national self-consciousness."

Fügedi, J., Quigley, C., Szőnyi, V., & Varga, S. (Eds.) (2020). *Foundations of Hungarian Ethnochoreology: Selected Papers of György Martin*. Research Centre for the Humanities Institute for Musicology, Hungarian Heritage House, Budapest. 824 pp. ISBN 978-6155167324

**Reference**

Fügedi, J., & Vavrinecz, S. (Eds.) (2013). *Old Hungarian Dances Style – The Ugrós* [Antology]. L'Harmattan Kiadó