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Representing National Culture on the Dance Stage: A Chapter from the History of Hungarian Ballet between the Two World Wars

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Abstract: In the case of a mixture of dance languages, especially in dance productions that are the result of a conscious creative process, the interpretation of the symbolic content and message of the dance language elements becomes important. It is in this context that the dance art endeavours of the 19th and 20th centuries in Hungary can be examined, which aimed at staging folk dance culture on the one hand, and at developing a modern language of dance art by using folk dance culture as a source of inspiration on the other. The underlying motivations behind these dance art endeavours could be different, as they could be born in the spirit of modernism or traditionalism, or they could be the manifestation of political-social artistic aspirations, or the two different motivations could overlap. Taking these aspects into account, my study seeks to answer the question of why and how the need for a stage work to function as a national representation of Hungarianness emerged in the history of Hungarian ballet.

Keywords: dance languages; Hungarian ballet; national culture; Hungarianness; Aurél Milloss; folk dance

Citation: Kavecsánszki, Máté. 2023. Representing National Culture on the Dance Stage: A Chapter from the History of Hungarian Ballet between the Two World Wars. *Arts* 12: 41. https://doi.org/10.3390/arts12020041

Academic Editor: Anna Mária Bólya

Received: 15 December 2022
Revised: 29 January 2023
Accepted: 18 February 2023
Published: 22 February 2023

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1. Introduction

The study of the symbolic power of dance on stage is becoming a new and increasingly popular field of research in Hungarian dance anthropology, joining the decades-long fertile field of mainly British and American dance studies. The period from the 1980s to the early years of the millennium was one of international boom in dance studies, when fundamental changes occurred in the field. It was a period when researchers moved away from the tradition of a purely artistic, art-theoretical approach to dance and turned to the social, historical, political, economic and all other contexts of dance.[1] This ”new dance studies” defined the research of the second half of the 1990s in the international arena, with the main ambition to interpret the moving body as a ”text” and to ”read” it in order to explore individual and community identities (O’Shea 2021, p. 23). This endeavour became particularly important for the post-millennial generation of dance researchers in Hungary. This meant a move away from the structural, formal, plastic, rhythmic, motivic and dynamic fields of dance research, or more specifically, a broadening of these classical approaches, and the intention to interpret dance not only as a cultural but also as a social phenomenon, which increasingly required interdisciplinary approaches and intensive, theory-oriented and methodological linkage with the relevant related disciplines.

For the purposes of this paper, it is of particular importance to understand stage dance as a cultural phenomenon with symbolic and representational power. The body is one of the most ancient means of symbolic communication, capable of representing the mentality and habitus of the community, of visually representing the latent or sometimes explicit symbolism of social interactions.

2. Dance Culture as a Symbolic System

The symbol itself typifies, represents or evokes something (Turner 1983, pp. 179–80). Raymond Firth, for example, sees symbols as a means of expression, communication, knowledge and control. As a means of expression, he relates symbols mainly to the arts, such as dance. According to him, symbolic art "clearly expresses the values that the people who create them consider emotionally or intellectually important."[2] (Firth 1983, p. 190.) Symbolic art is made up of symbols, including objects, actions and gestures, which are linked together in the artistic creation to form a system. The symbolic systems that art uses (or transforms or creates) to express itself are able to reflect the socio-cultural attributes, value preferences and power relations of the community that created them, including the individual or individuals who created them. Thus, the symbolic system forces us to identify with, dissociate from or ignore the representation:

> "It is obvious that to identify with or reject a social value system—with sufficient effectiveness—can only be done symbolically. Direct identification or rejection is much less effective; social sanctions are also much more direct and aggressive." (Hoppál and Niedermüller 1983, p. 264)

For this reason, dance—whether in community or theatrical form—can be a social, cultural or even political expression of acceptance/rejection, of identification/dissociation. For this to happen, however, a collective field of consciousness must be created in which the symbol expressed in the language of dance is linked to meaning in a communicative situation.[3] This is most successful when the dance language—for example, peasant, social—is able to symbolically represent the social or ethnic group attributed *to* it,[4] or the values associated with it, in a given situation.

The blending of different dance languages is particularly characteristic of dramatic-act dance productions, in which dance, music, play and scenic elements are used together to create dramatic images. The movement language of a dance drama can of course be homogeneous (based on classical dance only, folk dance only, etc.), but very often the movement language is combined and uses several dance languages at the same time. In this case, the different dance languages can represent different social statuses, characters and even moods, thus realising an exercise in symbolic representation.

In the case of a mixture of dance languages, especially in dance productions that are the result of a conscious creative process, the interpretation of the symbolic content and message of the dance language elements becomes important. It is in this context that the dance art endeavours of the 19th and 20th centuries in Hungary can be examined, which aimed at staging folk dance culture on the one hand, and at developing a modern language of dance art by using folk dance culture as a source of inspiration on the other. The underlying motivations behind these dance art endeavours could be different, as they could be born in the spirit of modernism or traditionalism, or they could be the manifestation of political-social artistic aspirations, or the two different motivations could overlap. Taking these aspects into account, my study seeks to answer the question of why and how the need for a stage work to function as a national representation of Hungarianness emerged in the history of Hungarian ballet.

3. Dance Historical Antecedents in the Age of Romanticism

From the very beginning, the representation of national themes and the form and style of Hungarian folk dances[5] played an important role in the history of Hungarian ballet. In the 18th century, the Kingdom of Hungary, which existed within the framework of the Habsburg Empire, was a multinational country in which many nationalities lived together in their own cultural context. During this period, the Hungarian aristocracy and nobility increasingly spoke German, French was the language of cultivated conversation, Latin continued to be used in state administration, and the bourgeoisie of the important Hungarian towns were often native speakers of German. At the same time, the proportion of the peasantry in the Hungarian state was still extremely high by Western European

standards, accounting for around 90% of the population (See among others Gunst et al. 1999, p. 47). As the 19th century approached, the era of nation-building and Romanticism, one of the characteristics of Hungarian nation-building began to become clear to the Hungarian intelligentsia (citizens, nobles and aristocrats alike): the importance of the Hungarian language and the elevation of Hungarian culture. In this concept, strengthening Hungarian culture became one of the important tools of nation-building. Especially in the first half of the 19th century, the tendency emerged, which is also one of the main characteristics of European Romanticism, that the "original", "ancient", "uncorrupted" culture of a nation was preserved by the peasantry.

Ever since the claim to build a modern bourgeois nation appeared in the political discourse from the late 18th century onwards, traditional dance, the dance language ascribed to the peasantry, has been considered, like other elements of popular culture, one of the most representative symbols of national identity. The political content of dance action can be attributed to one of the most important characteristics of structured human movements accompanied by music: the ability of dance to express, explain, interpret, symbolise and, in essence, model the micro-(local) or meso-(national) culture in which it takes place. Through dancing and participation in dance, a community is created, and belonging to this community naturally implies acceptance of the cultural message expressed through dance, i.e., the manifest or latent politics of dance (thus, active participation in dance is an expression of individual identity on the one hand, and collective identity on the other) (See Liebsch 2001, pp. 14–22; Wulf 2007, pp. 126–27; Wulf 2010, p. 4). Beyond the mere aesthetic-artistic goals, we must also interpret this possible underlying set of goals in the process of staging folk dance.

Romanticism, which began in the 1820s, sought to create a unified national culture in the most diverse areas of cultural life, as a basis for nation-building. In the spirit of the cultural-nationalist conception, which was particularly characteristic of East-Central Europe, the ancient roots of national culture were thought to be found in the village world, among the peasantry slowly leaving serfdom, often mistakenly identifying, for example, the "folk" with the "old" in our country. This means that the culture of the peasantry was assumed to have preserved the original form of Hungarian culture, free from Western European influences. Therefore, in the spirit of Romanticism, the appearance of elements of folk culture in the high arts, with the power of highlighting national characteristics, was a kind of authentication. This is the reason why many artistic forms turned to popular culture—or were considered to be so—for inspiration.

A dance performance created in a given dance language, or a dance art production created using the given dance language(s), can become a representative of a social, cultural, ethnic, etc. group symbolically linked to the dance language, displaying the (perceived or real) values and worldviews attributed to the group. The dance of a social stratum, ethnic group, etc. can thus serve to represent the group itself and to symbolically represent the values and worldviews associated with it. This can also lead to a spontaneous or artificial mixing of dance languages.

For this reason, folk dance—like any other form of expression using the body as a vehicle—can carry a symbolic message, i.e., it has a meaning when it appears on stage. The meaning of folk dance as a symbol takes on different meanings depending on the historical period and the social and cultural group. In the Romantic era, the Hungarian national identity came to the fore because of the supposed equality between the *folk* and the *old* (assuming that peasant culture is also an ancient Hungarian culture).

4. The Relationship between Ballet and Folk Dance in Hungary between the Two World Wars

It is due to peculiar historical circumstances that this view has persisted in Hungary in the 20th century. For this reason, the period between the two world wars was also a particularly exciting period in Hungary in terms of the national representational aims of stage dance. In the aftermath of the defeat in the First World War and the annexation of

two-thirds of the country's territory following the Trianon peace treaty, the strengthening of national identity and its expression through modern artistic forms became an important cultural policy programme. The aim was to use elements of popular culture in the same way as a hundred years earlier in the reform era. In Hungary, too, the path of the motifs of the folk and peasant dance language towards autonomous dance art is the result of a complex process of artistic modernisation on the one hand and national aspirations on the other. It is not possible to discuss the issue in detail here, but it should be stressed that behind modernist aspirations—especially in the case of arts that are highly sensitive to the reactions of the contemporary world—there is always a kind of identity crisis (Gyáni 2008, p. 92). There are many historical, social and economic components of this in Hungary between the two world wars. The turn towards popular culture was stimulated—alongside the interest of socially sensitive social groups and political forces—by the need to strengthen and even seek a Hungarian national identity. The Christian-national ideal, which determined political (and cultural-political) life in post-Trianon Hungary from 1920 until the end of the Second World War, supported the deepening of national culture, which was gaining new strength from folk culture, and its representation abroad. The capital of the country, Budapest, became a special arena for the former.

At the turn of the century Budapest (then still one of the capitals of the two-centred Austro-Hungarian Empire) was a symbol of bourgeois modernity, representing both the progress of the Hungarian nation and bourgeois development. After the defeat of the World War, however, this modernity was coupled with a new, often negative, interpretation of cosmopolitanism. In this ideological system, Budapest soon became an *un-Hungarian city*. This was due to the events of 1918 and 1919, when two revolutions broke out in the capital. The political regime that came to power as a result of the 1918 ″Aster Revolution″ broke with the monarchy for a time, while the Communist-Socialist Soviet Republic, which rose in a coup in 1919, broke with capitalist and democratic ideals. The political system that came to power in 1920 (with Miklós Horthy as governor) described Budapest as a ″sinful″ city. (Gyáni 2008, pp. 67–70; Gyáni 1995, pp. 79–80). The controversy over Budapest's Hungarianness intensified in the 1920s, partly as a result of the shock of Trianon. Even in 1939, István Györffy (1884–1939), an ethnographer, expressed a very negative opinion about the Hungarianness of the capital:

> "In our country's capital, popular culture means peasantry. [. . .] Today it is a real international city, without any ancient Hungarian cultural monuments, the kind of city that in America is created in a few decades by a group of people who have come together to exploit a natural treasure that has suddenly appeared. This city must be to make it more Hungarian not only in language but also in ethno-national terms, and I do not consider that impossible". (Györffy 1993, p. 54)

It is no coincidence, therefore, that from the 1920s onwards, the Hungarianisation of Budapest became an explicit cultural policy goal. This intention was helped by the tens of thousands of people who moved from the countryside to Budapest in the decades between the two world wars. They were more closely connected to traditional folk culture because of their former place of residence and origin, which led to the transformation of the cultural identity of the capital, because the cultural needs of a changed population also had to be met. It was in the context of this process that the Gyöngyösbokréta[6] movement emerged. The Gyöngyösbokréta movement was one of the first significant attempts to stage Hungarian folk dance in the 20th century. The main objective of the Gyöngyösbokréta movement was also to rediscover peasant culture and to show it to urban society. Every year between 1931 and 1944, around 20 August (the feast of King St Stephen, the founder of the Hungarian state), the movement was presented in Budapest. At these, peasant groups (in today's terms, folk heritage associations) from Hungarian villages would perform their own dances and customs on stage. However, the staging meant that the tradition was, by definition, constructed and selective. The movement thus both preserved and conserved tradition.[7]

The theatrical debut of the movement was held on 20 August 1931 at the Municipal Theatre in Budapest. The report on this in the daily newspaper *Pesti Napló* is very instructive.: "At last, for once, St. Stephen's Day brings real and truly folk art [. . .] Budapest, this cynical cosmopolitan city, discovered its Hungarianness on this evening." (Published by Volly 2011) It is clear how the article contrasts the "cynical" Hungarianless Budapest with the Hungarianness of rural, peasant culture. Similar aims and interpretations can be observed not only in the case of the Gyöngyösbokréta movement in this period. This includes the premiere of *Háry János* by Béla Paulini and Zoltán Kodály, this time at the Opera House in 1929: "For the first time, within the walls of the Hungarian Opera House, which was then almost half a century old, real Hungarian folk songs were sung, as Zoltán Kodály declared, to 'line the walls' of the real Hungarian operas to come" (Volly 2011). The importance of these efforts at ballet productions should not be forgotten. Three specific processes had a particular impact on contemporary Hungarian ballet:

(1) The programme for staging folk dance: as we have seen above, this endeavour had significant antecedents in the 19th century. The national aspirations of the 1930s saw folk culture as an inspirational source of national culture. The idea of popular culture as a means of renewing national culture was already a century old, but between the two world wars it took on a particular relevance. The Treaty of Trianon, which ended the First World War on the Hungarian side (1920), resulted in the loss of some of the *most original* ethnographic landscapes (e.g., the Highlands were annexed to the newly created Czechoslovakia, while Transylvania was annexed to Romania). The patriotic masses expected ethnography, amateur folk movements and folk art groups to reduce the losses and to *transfer and preserve the folk culture that had been transferred to foreign countries* (Kósa 2001, p. 164). The parade of different regional and ethnic groups of folk culture was meant to symbolise the solidarity of the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin, both in post-Trianon Hungary and abroad. The staging of folk dance also clearly served a representational purpose. In this respect, whether it was a matter of (national) identity-building for political purposes, rescue-conservation of traditions, tourism[8] or a little bit of each, ethnographic authenticity took on a different meaning.

(2) The birth of free dance in Hungary: folk dance culture has also become an important source in the development of the plasticity of Hungarian modern dance, movement or movement art (Felföldi 2001, pp. 242–43). This is particularly true of the work of Olga Szentpál (1895–1968), who was a representative of modern dance but also had a strong interest in folk art. She evoked the funeral rite in her 1935 work the *Magyar halottas [Hungarians lamenting the Dead]*, and her 1938 work *Mária lányok [St. Mary's Daughters]*, for which she collected motifs from performances of the Gyöngyösbokréta in Budapest, was also on a folklore theme.[9]

(3) The intention to modernise the Hungarian ballet art: the character of the ballet works presented at the Royal Hungarian Opera House from the 19th century onwards tried to conform to Western—mainly Viennese—traditions, but at the same time, from time to time, ballets appeared which also strove to emphasise the *Hungarian character.* In the period between the two world wars, Hungarian dance faced the same aspirations and challenges as dance in any other European country. On the one hand, the renewal of the dance language of ballet—on which the example of the Ballets Russes had a fruitful influence in Hungary—and on the other, the composition of ballet works that were suitable for representing Hungarian national culture. The first attempt to do so was the staging of Béla Bartók's (1881–1945) *Fából faragott királyfi [The Wooden Prince]* in 1917. At the same time, the works of the 1920s, such as those by Ede Brada (1879–1955), which were born in the spirit of the creation of a national ballet, had to meet the expectations and tastes of the audience, especially in Budapest. The *Hungarian* ballet was expected to tell an idealised, idyllic, nostalgic story of a national past, and through this to entertain, to strengthen the national identity of post-Trianon Hungarians, and even to serve as a place of remembrance. In this sense, for example, the dance of the *Mályvácska királykisasszony [Princess Mályvácska]* (1921), the bridesmaid's dance and the harvest dance of the wedding, or the classically folk

theme of the *Argyirus királyfi [Prince Argyirus]* (1924) and the sacrificial dance of the táltos (a shaman-like figure of Hungarian ancient religion and folklore) guarding the golden apple tree (See Fuchs 2007, p. 167). can hardly be considered a renewal of the dance language, but rather a modernised practice of earlier, classical, Romantic or even reform-era efforts: They entertained and reinforced national identity in the dance language and form familiar from ballet, working on national themes and stylising folk dances.

In 1925, Miklós Radnai (1892–1935) became the director of the Opera House, and during his leadership until 1935 he strongly encouraged the modernisation of the ballet's dance language, while at the same time strengthening its national character. After the 1917 performance, the Ballets Russes returned to Budapest in 1927 (Felföldi 2001, p. 242) an experience which probably had a great influence on Radnai's decision to replace Brada with Albert Gaubier (1908–1990), a former dancer in the Diaghilev company. His first assignment was to stage *A háromszögletű kalap [The Three-Cornered Hat]* (1928) (Fuchs 2007, p. 168). Radnai, after further changes of personnel, finally asked ballet master Jan Cieplinski (1900–1972) to choreograph. Perhaps the most interesting of Cieplinski's several ballets on Hungarian themes was his 1933 adaptation of a Szekler folk tale, *Árva Józsi három csodája [The Three Miracles of Józsi Árva]* (Fuchs 2007, p. 168). Cieplinksi also collected folk dances among the Matyos and their stylised motifs appeared in his choreographies.[10]

However, Radnai's fundamental aim was to ensure that the *Hungarian* character of the renewed Hungarian ballet would also attract international interest. In addition to modernising the dance language of ballet, this naturally required greater use of solutions that could represent Hungary abroad. In 1929, he dreamt of festive games of international significance in Budapest during the week of the feast of St. Stephen, in which dance scenes (harvest, farewell, wedding, etc.) written to Liszt's rhapsodies would be performed in folk costume:

> "Because, on the one hand, as propaganda, they serve a national ideal worthy of support, and, on the other, they are of such a nature as to benefit the most diverse sections of society, merchants, hoteliers, industrialists. [. . .] Hungarian music, now exchanged for small change, and Hungarian dance, Hungarian costume, which is almost lost, can be a value in our hands for which we need only bow down" (Radnai 1984, pp. 238–41).

It was in the spirit of this concept that the first representative Hungarian national ballet was created in 1933, entitled *Magyar ábrándok [Hungarian Dreams],* to the rhapsodies of Ferenc Liszt (1811–1886). The three *Hungarian* settings of the story are a harvest festival near Lake Balaton, a Matyó wedding and a fair (the latter also set against the backdrop of a typically *Hungarian* scene, the story of a Roma girl and a revived gingerbread hussar). To compile the material, Cieplinski made a tour of the countryside in the interests of a kind of ethnographic authenticity.[11]

The difficulty was undoubtedly that in this period Hungarian audiences still wanted to see a more comprehensible story in ballets, with the consequence that expressive solutions were still less successful. However, the Hungarian theme compensated for any innovations. The work of Aurél Milloss (1906–1988) was part of this trend. Milloss was invited home from Germany by the management of the Opera House. In 1933, he made his debut before the Budapest audience with his adaptation of Fokin's *Petrushka* (Vályi 1969, p. 352). He was then given the task of composing and staging a national ballet. In 1935, the *Kuruc mese [Kuruc*[12] *fairy tale]* was premiered, but he disagreed with its artistic character. The *Kuruc fairy tale* was based on the Marosszéki and Galántai dances by Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967), which Milloss choreographed. However, during the teaching in Budapest, he was also given a pre-written libretto, which was a romantic love story. This was later described by Milloss as simply "rubbish". The libretto and improvisation imposed on the two separate orchestral works led to the failure of the production (Milloss later staged both the Marosszéki dances and the Galántai dances in Rome in the 1940s, in accordance with his original ideas.) (Fuchs 2007, p. 171; Vályi 1969, pp. 352–53). In 1935, however, the production *Karnevál [Carnival]*, an adaptation of Fokin's carnival scene, was a unanimous success. It was therefore clear

that that was the way to go when it came to creating a national ballet, and Milloss only had to wait for Béla Paulini (1881–1945) to ask him to choreograph the *Magyar Csupajáték [Hungarian Fullplay]*.

In parallel with the Milloss productions, the work of Gyula Harangozó (1908–1974) deserves mention. Harangozó met Massine in London, who was attracted to Harangozó's *Hungarian* dances (See Felföldi 2001, p. 245) and visited Budapest the same year (Fuchs 2007, p. 172. See also F. Molnár and Vályi 2004, pp. 243–44). As this was in late summer, Massine presumably saw the Gyöngyösbokréta production. Harangozó then obtained a contract and produced his first ballet, *Csárdajelenet [Tavern Scene],* that same year. The story itself essentially followed Romantic templates and depicted representative genre characters (Roma priest, barmaid, etc.), naturally in a Romantic setting: for example, a Roma camp, a harvest festival. It was therefore essentially a character ballet, but Harangozó, visiting the performances of the Gyöngyösbokréta, had picked up some motifs that could play the role of a national dance motif in a representative way in a character ballet (Fuchs 2007, p. 172; Vályi 1969, p. 358; Vitányi 1963, p. 253). Harangozó also successfully used folk dance motifs in another work, *Polovec Dances* (1938), which was an exceptionally high-quality Fokin adaptation. However, Lívia Fuchs notes that these productions could not necessarily have been successful abroad, as the Royal Hungarian Opera House's productions were expected to be Hungarian compositions that conformed to foreign stereotypes of Hungarian style (Fuchs 2007, p. 173), as confirmed by the success of the Gyöngyösbokréta in London in 1935 (Paulini 2011).

The synthesis and partial transcendence of the processes described here was the *Magyar Csupajáték [Hungarian Fullplay]* of Aurél Millos in the late 1930s. It is a production that pulsates with the decade-long desire to create a national ballet, the quest for the possibilities of staging popular culture, the modernism that pervaded the artistic life of the period, and the equally dominant folklorism. All these developments had a major impact on Milloss. What was ultimately put on stage was, in keeping with the modern aspirations of the time, a stylization of folklore material (the librettos, some of the music, the sets and costumes using folk motifs, the dances), while the Hungarian and national character of the individual images was not open to criticism. Milloss's work, like Russian, European and Hungarian works, did not seek to represent folk dance in *an authentic* form. This is not the point of neo-folklorism: it does not retain the original syncretism of folklore works (see in detail Voigt 2014, pp. 108–9, 273–74, 406–7; See also Liszka 2011, pp. 19–25), since folklore is here more of a formal impulse, which is at the same time capable of conveying identical content.

With *Csupajáték [Hungarian Fullplay]*, Hungarian stage dance embarked on a path which, although it had no direct continuation, would nevertheless fundamentally define both ballet and folk dance in Hungary in the decades to come. Aurél Milloss's Hungarian-themed choreographies had become very successful abroad. By this time Milloss was on his way to world fame.

5. Conclusions

Romanticism, which also began in Hungary in the 1820s, set out to create a unified national culture in the most diverse areas of cultural life, providing the basis for nation-building. In the spirit of the cultural-nationalist conception that was particularly characteristic of East-Central Europe, the ancient roots of national culture were to be found in the village world, among the peasantry. This is the reason why many artistic forms turned to popular culture—or were considered to be so—for inspiration. This approach was also observed in Hungary between the two world wars, when the emphasis on national characteristics was again in the foreground.

In the performing arts, however, this could not be achieved without some minor or major stylization. This phenomenon can be clearly observed in the case of traditional peasant dances on stage. But it must be stressed that the primary reason for staging them was not yet authenticity. There were ideological, political and worldview reasons behind

it, which must always be taken into account when the culture of a particular social class (peasantry) is to be made part of the cultural life of another social class (e.g., the urban bourgeoisie). A dance performance created in a given dance language or a dance art production using the given dance language(s) can become a representative of a social, cultural, ethnic, etc. group symbolically linked to the dance language, displaying the (perceived or real) values and worldviews attributed to that group. The dance of a social class, ethnic group, etc. can thus serve to represent the group itself and the values and worldviews associated with it. This can also lead to a spontaneous or artificial mixing of dance languages.

For this reason, folk dance—like any other form of expression using the body as a vehicle—can communicate a symbolic message, i.e., it has a meaning when it appears on stage. The meaning of folk dance as a symbol is interpreted differently according to historical periods and social and cultural groups. In the Romantic era, the Hungarian national identity came to the fore because of the supposed equality between the folk and the ancient, original Hungarian culture. The same can be seen in the period between the two world wars, when many people in a country that had lost two-thirds of its territory and one-third of its population saw the uplifting of peasant culture as a means of creating national greatness. Folk dance simply symbolised Hungarianness.

Between the two world wars, the aim in Hungary was to strengthen national culture by using traditional peasant culture. This is the reason why folk art became fashionable during the period and became more and more important in the cultural life of the big cities. The use of folk culture as a source of inspiration is an internationally renowned example, with names such as Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály. Many forms of folklorism can be observed in the artistic life of the period, and dance is no exception. We have seen two forms of this above: the question of staging traditional folk dances and the enrichment of the artistic language of ballet with stylised folk dances.

It is within this theoretical framework that the intention to create national dance and national ballet in different historical periods can be understood. This ultimately meant staging folk dance as a result of a stylization process of varying depths. This could mean character dance in Romantic ballets. But it also meant that folk dance became a genre of autonomous dance art in its own right (folk dance art). In both cases, staging meant meeting artistic demands, even at the expense of originality.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

1. See, among others (Foster 1992). See especially pages XVI-XVIII of the preface; and chapter three of the volume (*Readings in Dance's History: Historical Approaches to Dance Composition*): pp. 99–185. (Giersdorf 2021, p. 61). See, among others (Foster 2005, pp. 1–26; Tomko 2005, pp. 159–82).
2. All quotations in the text are from Hungarian texts, translated into English by the author.
3. The systematization of the movements of the human body and their interpretation as sign language can be traced back to the first works of dance theory—in the 18th century. For a discussion ofthis, see (Brandstetter 2009, pp. 71–85; Haitzinger 2009, pp. 87–88; Pintér 2001, p. 40).
4. However, the question of "attribution" must be treated with caution, as it can be used to create or maintain ethnic stereotypes. Joann Kealiinohomoku confronted "Western" anthropologists of the last third of the 20th century with this in an excellent study. See (Kealiinohomoku 1970, pp. 33–43).
5. Hungarian cultural history considers folk dance to be primarily the dance culture of the peasantry. In recent years, social history and dance anthropology research has used the term traditional dance, which is also known in international practice, since the social stratification of dances has changed throughout history. In this study, however, I am concerned with the period when it was considered essential to stage dances that were explicitly considered peasant, i.e., folk dances (even if it was later proved that their folk origins were not so clear).

[6] The Gyöngyösbokréta is an element of Hungarian folk costume. It is a hat ornament made of beads, worn by unmarried men on feast days.

[7] The movement to revive folk traditions and present them in theatre can be seen as a forerunner of later folk art and traditional preservation movements that still exist today. For more on the Gyöngyösbokréta movement, see (Dóka and Molnár 2011; Andor 2020, pp. 5–28; Szente 2017, pp. 141–59).

[8] On the tourism destination potential of Gyöngyösbokréta productions, see (Volly 2011).

[9] For more on the work of Olga Szentpál, see (Vályi 1969, pp. 349–50; Fuchs 2007, p. 109; Ábrahám 2020, pp. 39–50).

[10] On Cieplinski's works on Hungarian folklore see (Vályi 1969, p. 342).

[11] On the play, see (Fuchs 2007, pp. 169–70).

[12] A group of armed anti-Habsburg insurgents in the Kingdom of Hungay between 1671 and 1711.

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