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**The route Russia–Serbia–Macedonia:¹
intercultural communications**

A brief overview of interculturalism in performing arts

The term *interculturalism* began to be commonly used in the 1970s and 1980s by a number of vanguard performance directors and theorists (Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba, Richard Schechner, Ariane Mnouchkine, Patrice Pavis). In his essay ‘Intercultural theatre today’, Pavis notes that there are some changes in the way interculturalism is currently perceived and applied in performing arts, compared to twenty years ago (Pavis 2010). Yet, no matter how the model of intercultural performing modes changes, it still contains some fundamental and fairly constant features. In their essay ‘Toward a topography of cross-cultural theatre praxis’ Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert assert that ‘one of the most popular manifestations of this generative conception of cross-cultural encounter is the idea of the hybrid (art form, culture, and/or identity)’ (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 32).

Contrary to the trend favored by some political, ruling and strategic centres (which have been active in this area even nowadays) to promote the idea of mono-cultures, a concept which is both historically and semantically rather narrow, I wish to talk about a dynamic culture that accepts and makes influences, that is, which is constantly under the impact of an ongoing process of transformation. This tendency has been noticed by an increasing number of cultural analysts. The interaction among various cultures and culture-related phenomena, issues and performers – regardless of whether such interaction occurs between performing techniques, performing media, levels of cultural production (low/high,

¹ In this text I refer to the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, which was one of the six constituent republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia between 1945 and 1991.

global/local etc.) is an inexorable, unstoppable and generally natural process. Schechner, who meticulously studied and theoretically elaborated on this model for his own need of this type of performance, states: ‘There were lots of national exchanges, but I felt that the real exchange of importance to artists was not that among nations, which really suggests official exchanges and artificial kinds of boundaries, but the exchange among cultures, something which could be done by individuals or by non-official grouping, and it does not obey national boundaries’ (Schechner 1996: 42). The essence of an intercultural theatre ‘is a hybrid derived from an intentional encounter between cultures and performing traditions’ (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 36). As a rule, this leads to innovation: ‘Interculturalism is an area of interaction where new forms are created’ (Martin 2004: 2). One may draw a conclusion that the fundamental features of this model are hybridity, interaction and intercommunication, all of them resulting into a new product, the original parts of which are still easily recognisable, visible and present, and yet, they are interwoven into a different context bearing an utterly new and dissimilar semantic capacity.

One might wonder why I elaborate so enthusiastically on a performing model typical for the last quarter of the twentieth century and the present time, to address issues related to cultural events that occurred in the beginning and the middle of the twentieth century. The answer is simple – because the model in question has been implemented as a format in the analysis of the events at the core of my interest and attention. Pavis writes about the nature of the theatre as a place where meetings, influences and constructive confrontations, as well as relations and alliances, all happen: ‘So theatre, whether called intercultural or not, is made of composite materials, is made of body and mind. This is the reason why the intercultural mix happens almost automatically. All theatre production is an intercultural production, which makes its analysis so difficult’ (Pavis 2010: 14). Macedonian theatre features events and happenings that are immanent to intercultural models. Macedonian theatrologist Jelena Lužina observes: ‘The idea of interculturalism which rests predominantly on the issues shared by various cultures, i.e. the things that are bound to and inevitably do happen to these cultures, sounded thrilling and provocative enough to me, at least when talking about theatre-related phenomena, particularly when these phenomena are considered in a Macedonian context’ (Lužina 2004: 276). This interculturalism, implicitly found in

performing arts related to Macedonia in some way, has been initiated by a number of social processes. I will restrict my analysis to the path from Russia to Serbia to Macedonia, and to dance performances only. These relations and influences considerably affected the processes that shaped Macedonian dance arts.

Macedonian cultural context in the early twentieth century

A phenomenon resembling an intercultural project occurred in Macedonia in the years following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1912 until the second half of the twentieth century, and was influenced by a number of separate socio-political processes that complemented each other. One of these processes was the signing of the Bucharest Treaty, as well as permanent changes in the ruling authorities in Vardar Macedonia, which were happening at this quite challenging period.² Simultaneously, but independently from the events in the Balkans, there were drastic geopolitical changes in Russia triggered by the February and October Revolutions in 1917, which resulted in many Russian leaving their country, some of whom found their new home in Yugoslavia.³

The first theatre in Vardar Macedonia was built in Bitola in the year 1894, commissioned by the Turkish ruler Abdul Kerim. Afterwards, the Turkish Theatre of Shefket Pasha was built in Skopje in 1906, and it was aimed at improving the cultural environment in the city. After signing the Bucharest Treaty on 10 August 1913, Vardar Macedonia became a part of Serbia. In this period, one of Serbia's greatest playwrights Branislav Nušić introduced the dramatic arts to the Macedonian region. On 1 October 1913 Nušić was appointed the manager of the theatre, and he remained in this position for the next two years. The theatre operated in extremely unfavourable conditions, lacking appropriate facilities (they had started performing in the ruins of the Turkish Theatre of Shefket Pasha, which

² In the Treaty of Bucharest, the geographical territory of Macedonia was divided into four parts. The current territory of the Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) which at that time was known as Vardar Macedonia, became a part of Serbia. The area known as Pirin Macedonia was given to Bulgaria, and now constitutes the western portion of Bulgaria. The region south of Vardar stretching to the Aegean Sea, known as Aegean Macedonia, was given to Greece. Lastly, a small area west of Vardar Macedonia was given to Albania.

³ Officially: The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (abbr. SCS), 1918–1929; the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1929–1941.

had unfortunately caught fire and burnt to the ground after only forty days of operation), trained staff, equipment and the like. Nušić, who had returned to the Skopje theatre in 1919 and worked there for almost a year, is credited for providing funds for the construction of a new theatre building. The relations with the Belgrade artistic societies from that period were very close and intensive: ‘With the actors, directors and other artistic and administrative personnel who had been brought from the Belgrade National Theatre with the purpose of assisting the Skopje theatre, although the latter had in fact been both artistically and administratively completely independent, the Skopje theatre at that time quite resembled a branch of the Belgrade National Theatre, until it became self-sufficient and strong enough to continue operating independently’ (Mazova 2004: 279). It is obvious that the geo-socio-political circumstances at that time had made such cultural fluctuations possible, such as the transfer of experiences and artistic know-how from Belgrade to Skopje, as well as a return transfer from the young, newly-formed Macedonian theatre to Belgrade, in search for education and affirmation.

In the first decades of the twentieth century there was another very important process affecting directly or indirectly the creation of a majority of European cultural spheres, especially regarding the area of high arts. Namely, as a result of domestic political turbulence, many Russians left their native land, a movement referred to as ‘white emigration’ in the years between 1917 and 1922, when, according to some estimates, 1.5–3 million people emigrated (Polian 2005). Although most of them settled in Western Europe and later in the USA, quite a few found their new home in Yugoslavia. Therefore, affirmation and promotion of dance arts in Yugoslavia at that period is largely attributed to some of these immigrants. Among those involved in ballet were: Jelena Poljakova [Elena Poliakova], praiseworthy for the development of ballet art and education in Belgrade; Margarita Froman (involved in the creation of Zagreb ballet theatre), Nina Kirsanova, Aleksandr Dobrokhotov, Anatol Joukowsky [Anatolii Zhukovskii; Anatolij Žukovski], Yania Wassilieva [Ianya Vasil’eva; Janja Vasiljeva], and many others.⁴ Later, especially after World War II⁵, some

⁴ These artists’ names were spelled differently in the countries where they worked.

⁵ Some of the Russian ballet-theatre staff left Yugoslavia before or during World War II and settled in the North and South America. Among those who left were Poliakova, Joukowsky, Wassilieva and Froman.

of them, and in particular their students, would continue to develop and transfer their acquired knowledge, thus ensuring continuity in the aesthetic forms, educational processes and repertoire of the Russian ballet school.

Dispersion lines

Belgrade was the administrative, economic and cultural centre of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (and later, of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), hence it created and shaped artistic trends and cultural policies for the entire state. Through Belgrade, Macedonian ballet performers kept in touch with current artistic events, made guest performances and received staff support. The impact of Belgrade on Macedonian dance arts can be divided into two spheres of influence: education and artistic production.

Education

The quality of a ballet production is dependent primarily on the type and quality of ballet pedagogy. The significance of proper education was also noted by one of the major Russian ballet pedagogues of all times, Agrabina Vaganova, who said: ‘Whatever type of dance elements are contained in classical ballet, it is the ballet itself and the way of practicing it that is the fundament of the art of choreography’ (cited in Amirgamzaeva and Usova 2002: 47).

The name of Elena Dimitrievna Poliakova (1884–1972) was a synonym for ballet art and pedagogy in Serbia in the 1920s and 1930s. Poliakova is rarely associated with Skopje⁶, for which there is a quite logical explanation. She lived and worked in Belgrade from 1922 to 1942, and after that she emigrated to Chile. Macedonian ballet⁷ was established in 1949, i.e. seven years after Poliakova’s emigration from Yugoslavia. However, she was indirectly involved in the establishment of Macedonian ballet through her connections with the founder of Macedonian ballet Gjorgji Makedonski (1919–1998), who was one of her students in

⁶ Poliakova had a performance in Skopje in 1923, which was reviewed in an article in the daily *Privredni glasnik*.

⁷ As part of the idea to establish operatic repertoire in the Skopje theatre, the ‘Ballet Choir’ was established in 1924. However, this ensemble did not have any independent ballet performances, i.e. its existence was strictly related to a few opera performances on Macedonian stage before World War II.

Belgrade. After completing his education in Belgrade, Makedonski worked as a member of Belgrade National Theatre Ballet until 1941. After the end of World War II and the creation of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (renamed as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1963), he continued his professional career in a few towns, where he held various positions. Gjorgji Makedonski independently choreographed the ballet *Bahchisaray fountain*, and co-choreographed (with Jitka Ivelja) 'The Evening of Opera Arias and Ballet Performances' at the Croatian National Theatre in Split, both events taking place in 1947. From 1953 to 1963, Makedonski worked for the National Theatre in Novi Sad, where he staged, prepared and pedagogically worked on more than ten ballet productions, including *Ballet impression* (1953), *Swan lake* (1955), *Bahchisaray fountain* (1957) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1962), among others.

In the season 1948/9, Gjorgji Makedonski was invited to establish a ballet ensemble for the Macedonian Opera and the newly established Macedonian National Theatre (MNT). He was the first director of Macedonian ballet and he held this position between 1949–1952 and 1956–1957. The first official performance of Macedonian ballet as a professional ensemble was on 29 November 1948 as part of the opera *Traviata*, whereas the first full ballet performance took place on 30 December 1949. Soon afterwards Makedonski established a ballet studio within the theatre. The same year, a Decree by the Education Council of the National Republic of Macedonia transformed the studio into a Primary Ballet School, where the first dance instructors were Gjorgji Makedonski, Analize Asman and Relja Vizner. During the 1951/2 academic year, the Ballet High School was established, thus completing the educational system. By implementing the experiences from his own ballet education, Gjorgji Makedonski soon established relatively high professional standards for Macedonian ballet.

Another extremely important person both for the development of ballet in Macedonia and the Russian immigrant community was Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Dobrokhoto (1909–1983). He was born in Vilnius to a noble family and, after the revolution, his family emigrated from Russia and settled in Belgrade. He acquired his ballet education in Belgrade, and in 1928 he became a member of the Ballet Ensemble of the

Belgrade theatre. His repertoire of *demi-caractère*⁸ roles is particularly striking. In 1938 he was ranked as the first character dancer. He danced as a partner of Nina Kirsanova, Nataša Bošković, Vera Kostić, Mira Sanjina, and others of similarly high caliber. Independently or as a member of Belgrade theatre, he had guest performances in Czechoslovakia, Germany, Belgium, France, and Switzerland.

After dancing for 24 years, Dobrohotov arrived in Skopje in 1952. He remained in Skopje and was professionally active there for the rest of his life, leaving behind his offspring who also developed careers as theatre artists. He was the director of the Ballet Ensemble within Macedonian National Theatre twice: from 1952–1955 and 1958–1959. Alongside these activities, he also worked for a decade, starting from 1952, as a teacher in the ballet school. Concerning Dobrohotov's work, Kirsanova said: 'With his arrival, the Skopje ballet school became a school in a true sense of the word' (Kirsanova 1985: 47). In addition to giving lessons in classical ballet, he devoted a lot of time and effort to upgrading the lessons on character dances. He was the one who initiated the introduction of this subject into the curriculum as a mandatory one. A host of young Macedonian ballet dancers were taught by him. As acknowledged by Lidija Lazarevska in the monograph dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the Music and Ballet School in Skopje, 'Gjorgji Makedonski, Nina Kirsanova and Aleksandr Dobrohotov played a significant role in the education of the first generation of students of the Skopje ballet school' (Lazarevska 1995: 26).

Artistic production

After developing an educational system, the second important element contributing to the development of a ballet ensemble is the choice of repertoire and the involvement of choreographers. Aside from giving instruction to prospective ballet artists, Makedonski and Dobrohotov were also present on the Macedonian ballet stage with their own pieces. Makedonski was choreographer of the first ballet performances on Macedonian stage – *Walpurgis night* (27 January 1949), *Bahchisaray fountain*

⁸ The *demi-caractère* role in a ballet always depicted a 'folk' character and employed traditional folk dance combined with classical ballet technique. This type of roles was especially common in ballets at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

(30 December 1952), *Bolero* (23 May 1951) and others in the early years. In addition to these, he is the author of the first staging of *Swan Lake* (15 January 1958), as well as of one of the versions of *Ohridska legenda* [The legend of Ohrid] staged at MNT. Dobrohotov was developing and working on the improvement of incorporating *demi-caractère* works in the repertoire of Macedonian ballet. He staged the performances of *The second rhapsody* and *Polovtsian dances* (3 December 1952), *A Ballerina and the bandits*, *At the ball* and *Scheherazade* (4 November 1953). He is the author of the national ballet performance *Labin and Doyrana* (11 June 1958) composed by Trajko Prokopiev, into which he masterfully incorporated elements of Macedonian folklore.

With respect to staging classical pieces on the Macedonian ballet stage in its early years, another Russian ballerina, pedagogue and choreographer played a crucial role for Yugoslav ballet in general – Nina Vasil'evna Kirsanova (1898–1989). In her fascinating life and career, she had the opportunity to combine the tradition of the strict Russian performing style of classical pieces, with the innovative approaches of the young choreographers such as Fokin, Nizhinskaia and Pavlova.⁹ In the early years of the Macedonian ballet, Kirsanova staged the most often-performed classical ballet pieces – *Coppelia* (25 February 1954); *Sleeping Beauty* (29 January 1955); *Giselle* and *Straussiad* (7 November 1956); and *Les Sylfides* (3 October 1957). Aside from staging these ballets in their original form, she contributed immensely to the quality of the performances.

The first ballet staged in Macedonia by Kirsanova was *Coppelia* by Léo Delibes, which was, in a way, a herald of the sequence of performances to follow. Regarding this piece, the critics emphasised the role of the choreographer for the quality of the performance: ‘There is no doubt that most of the credit for the overall success of this performance go to the choreographer and director Nina Kirsanova’ (Jovanovska 2007: 158). The following piece staged by Kirsanova, one of the fundamental classical ballet pieces, was a real challenge for the relatively young ensemble. Kirsanova herself had a special affection for this performance: ‘Afterwards I staged *Sleeping Beauty* about which I am deeply convinced that I was able to create the most successful choreography for the ensemble of the

⁹ There are records on Kirsanova performing in Skopje in the prewar period: *Ballet singer-night* (14 May 1935), *Ballet evening with Nina Kirsanova and Anatol Joukovsky* (21 December 1939).

Macedonian ballet. They all danced remarkably, technically perfectly, with an extraordinary stage setting prepared by Cico Popović' (Kirsanova 1985: 47). A major indicator of the significance of Kirsanova's staged performances was the choice of repertoire for the first performances of the Macedonian National Theatre outside Yugoslavia – in Greece in 1955, because the repertoire included both *Coppelia* and *Sleeping Beauty*.

Kirsanova's final choreographies for the Macedonian ballet were staged on 19 March 1960. In one evening, the audiences were able to see two pieces, *Čovek i kob* [The Man and his fate] on the music of the fifth symphony by P. I. Tchaikovsky, and *Fantastičen dućan* [The fantastic toyshop] by Gioachino Rossini. This, however, did not signal an end to Kirsanova's professional career. She returned to Skopje as an archeologist¹⁰. In her words: 'I visited Macedonia on two more occasions, after finishing my ballet career and after becoming a Bachelor of Archeology. In the vicinity of Skopje there is an archeological site which was researched by professor Garašanin. He invited me to join him in the archeological excavations, and I gladly accepted his invitation' (Ibid.: 48)

Inversion of influences

So far I have outlined some major influences on the development of Macedonian ballet and Macedonian high culture in general, which had spread directly from Belgrade, by the activities of Russian and Serbian ballet artists. Nonetheless, as I already pointed out, culture is a dynamic matter that both accepts and 'reflects' influences. 'Interculturalism could be viewed a "two-way" street, based on a mutual reciprocity of needs' (Bharucha 1993: 2). Thus, when talking about one of these directions, we must also consider the other. So, the question is, how much and in which segments did Macedonian culture affect this two-way process? To start with, I must accentuate the fact that folklore has always been a source of inspiration for a great number of non-Macedonian authors, and it had been present in many of their artistic creations. One of those who studied Macedonian folklore, the ballet pedagogue, performer and choreographer Anatol Joukowsky (1906–1998), said:

¹⁰ Nina Kirsanova enrolled at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, Archeology Department and graduated in 1964. In 1969 she received her MA degree.

During my stay in Belgrade, particularly in 1938 when I became the director of Belgrade Opera and Ballet, I was imbued with the desire to enrich the ballet repertoire with national dances, choreodramas from the life of the peoples living in Yugoslavia, in particular the Macedonian people, as I consider their folklore the richest among all the other peoples living in Yugoslavia at that time (Žukovski 1986: 83).

With that goal in mind, he and Aleksei Butakov, Oleg Grebenshchikov and Yania Wassilieva organised field trips throughout Macedonia during the summer. Joukowsky wrote that they had ‘traveled from the Sharplanina mountain to the Ohrid lake, from the Korab mountain to Kumanovo city, down the Vardar river valley to Kozuv mountain, climbing hills, reaching remote villages, looking for a chance to see, to experience, to feel, to admire’ (Ibid.: 84).

Why did these Russian artists so meticulously and passionately study Macedonian, and, more generally, Balkan folklore? Apart from the curiosity related to these folklore pieces, new choreography had in fact necessitated excellent familiarity with the material that would be implemented or remade into the respective ballet performance. One of the creators and the driving force of the great ballet reformation in the twentieth century was Mikhail Fokin, the choreographer of the first ballet performances in Diaghilev’s *Ballets Russes* in Paris, and a contemporary of Poliakova, Froman, Kirsanova, Fortunato, Joukowsky. Fokine promoted the principle of verisimilitude and authenticity of the performances and in his paper titled ‘New Ideas’, he wrote:

In order to be able to create a stylistic image, a choreographer is supposed to study national dances of the peoples presented in the piece, dances which clearly distinguish one from another depending on the people, and which very clearly depict and picture the very spirit of that people; moreover, the choreographer must get acquainted well with the arts and literature existing at the period considered in the performance (Fokin 1981: 312).

Some of the Russian choreographers working at that time were directly involved with and performed in Sergei Diaghilev’s troupe, including Anna

Pavlova and Bronislava Nizhinskaia,¹¹ which means that this way of working was nothing new to them. First Aleksandar Fortunato,¹² later Joukowsky and, according to the composer Stevan Hristić, even Kirsanova herself, studied folklore of the southern parts of Yugoslavia (Šukuljević-Marković 1999). Their research influenced a few of their pieces that contained Macedonian folklore, which will be discussed later.

Their choreographies contained the so-called ‘model of synthesis’¹³ which is equivalent to intercultural aesthetics, and it is particularly applied in the national genre line of choreographic pieces. Namely, the standard classical ballet structure with its clearly defined rules, which strive to introduce specific national and ethnic attributes, is supplemented with material originating from and belonging to national dances. It means that a symbiosis between classical ballet language and national dances exists, whereupon the extent of embedding elements from different systems varies and can range from the domination of ballet aesthetics to an almost complete folklorisation. As a result of this type of approach, some genuine ‘raw’ folk dance materials were implemented in the pieces of ethnic character, such as *Oganj u planini* [Fire in the mountains], *Iz zbirke jugoslovenskih igara* [From the collection of Yugoslav national dances], *Simfonisko kolo* [Symphonic round dance], *U dolini Morave* [In the Morava river valley] and *Ohridska legenda*.

In one of the books dedicated to the problems of reworking folk dance material, *The choreographer’s art*, the author Smirnov insists that the stage interpretations of folkloric dance require its further development:

When staging a piece, the dance language, dance movements and their proper remake are most important. It is one of the most complex and difficult stages of the process, because it involves finding the single and common logic when developing the dancing language and image, an

¹¹ Prior to being hired by Yugoslav ballet, Elena Poliakova and Margarita Froman were members of Diaghilev’s company (Poliakova in 1912, Froman from 1914 to 1916). Between 1927 and 1931 Nina Kirsanova danced in Bronislava Nizhinskaia’s *Grand Compania Lirica*, as well as Anna Pavlova’s company.

¹² In the summer of 1924, Aleksandar Fortunato travelled ‘throughout the villages surrounding the towns of Veles, Skopje and Prishtina’ (Mosusova 1989: 68), gathering material for the next ballet performance with folklore motifs.

¹³ Beside the ‘model of synthesis’, there is also the ‘model of replication’ and the ‘model of transformation’.

artistic approach which will enrich the technical expressions and movements, but at the same time will not harm the aesthetics and character of the original dance; it means selection of procedures and actions that will enhance and enrich the movements (Smirnov 1986: 157).

The ballet *Ohridska legenda* by Stevan Hristić and its symbiosis of a variety of elements with different ethnic and national materials has been discussed many times. Regarding the music itself, Nadežda Mosusova wrote: ‘The two major sources of Hristić’s inspiration were the folklore of the Balkan peoples and Russian ballet music from the second half of the nineteenth century’ (Mosusova 1989: 67). Macedonian folklore has a multi-level presence in *Ohridska legenda* including folk music, stories, costumes and other elements. Because these elements are not the subject of this paper, I shall only discuss the choreography. As for the choreographic composition as an outcome of cultural interaction, a synthetic approach and treatment is obvious. It is, however, almost impossible to reconstruct the choreography from the premiere, therefore I will have to consult the available sources relating to this element.

Regarding the first performance choreographed by Nina Kirsanova in 1933,¹⁴ the critic Miloje Milojević gave the following comment in the Serbian newspaper *Politika* on 7 April 1933, writing that Kirsanova ‘had staged the dances based on our south-Serbian folk dances [...] it gives everybody satisfaction to see new movements and combinations of gestures on our ballet stage’ (cited in Šukuljević-Marković 1999: 37).

In his critical review published in the newspaper *Vreme* (7 April 1933) Kosta Manojlović discusses choreography from a stylistic aspect and asserts that ‘the dance of the stars was the best, as well as the Sun round dance from part one’ (cited in Šukuljević-Marković 1999: 37). Choreography and the manner of applying folkloric elements in this first version of *Ohridska legenda* were also commented on by the leading male character in the ballet, Marko, performed by Anatol Zhoukowsky. He said:

¹⁴ *Ohridska legenda* was first staged on 5 April 1933 at the National Theatre in Belgrade and was choreographed by Nina Kirsanova. At that point the ballet only had one act. The expanded four-acts ballet, choreographed and directed by Margarita Froman, premiered on 29 November 1947. In Macedonian National Theatre *Ohridska legenda* has been staged by four choreographers: Maks Kirbos (25 May 1956), Gjorgji Makedonski (20 December 1966), Franjo Horvat (12 November 1969) and Dimitrije Parlić (12 July 1979).

‘I helped her [Kirsanova] in finding choreographic solutions for the dancing problems, relying on the experience we gathered in the previous years of studying the folklore. Yet, it was the first attempt and it should not be overestimated’ (Žukovski 1986: 84). With the last note, Joukowsky most likely had in mind the degree of stylisation and the input of authentic material.

Judging by the remaining photographs of this performance, which predominantly show the leading dancers, we might conclude that in most cases the choreography applied a standard ballet language. The poses (ex. *pas attitude*) do contain some positions of the legs typical for traditional dances, but they fully meet the standard requirements set by classical ballet dance. In addition, the tiptoeing (*en pointe*) performed by the starring character Biljana (Nina Kirsanova) is very typical for ballet dancing technique. In this case, stylisation primarily takes place by inputting specific positions (particularly regarding the position of the arms) which the choreographer had found to be representatives of national dances. I will digress briefly to give an opposite example where folklore dominates.

The first national ballet *Makedonska povest* [A Macedonian story (21 June 1953)], by the Macedonian composer Gligor Smokvarski, was choreographed by the Serbian choreographer Dimitrije Parlić. He turned to what was seen as a primordial or natural impulse: folkloric material. In addition to the fact that the performance was danced in almost authentic folk costumes, the dancers danced in *opinci*¹⁵ (which is almost unimaginable in a ballet performance). It was assumed that the ballet would be utterly consistent with the unique dance matrices, not diverging from them at all. ‘I had a feeling that the folk dances took too long, there were too many of them (male, female, mixed-gender round dances)’ (Makedonski 1953: 32). With regard to the reconstruction of the original version and its analysis, the critic Milica Zajcev made a significantly critical comment, writing: ‘There were, however, some choreographic inconsistencies. Namely, apart from Macedonian dancing steps, Parlić also inserted elements from Serbian and Bulgarian folklore’ (Zajcev 1994: 11). This example confirms the inclination towards a nearly complete overlap with folk dance aesthetics, unlike the case of the premiere of *Ohridska legenda*.

¹⁵ *Opinci* – homemade leather footwear worn by villagers as part of Macedonian traditional clothing.

Joukowsky himself staged a ballet performance in which Macedonian folklore formed the foundation for further development of the ballet. The ballet performance *Fire in the mountains* with music by Alfred Pordes was premiered on 15 February 1941. The plot, a love story, is set in a small dairy farm on Bistra mountain and in the monastery of St. Jovan Bigorski. This accurate location of the ballet setting was given by the choreographer himself (Žukovski 1986). *Fire in the mountains*, together with other two units, was welcomed by the audiences, and the critics declared Joukowsky ‘to be the best connoisseur and expert of artistic stylisation of our folk dances’ (*Politika*, cited in Šukuljević-Marković 2000: 38). However, despite the fact that Joukowsky had thoroughly studied the folk dances from various regions, among which he had highlighted Macedonian folk dances, he could not transfer the material to the stage authentically enough, as he had other objectives. The critics themselves singled out the moment of stylisation. He confidently mixed the two initial styles (i.e., ballet and folk dance), due to his great familiarity with folk dance. Yet he stayed within the boundaries typical for a ballet performance, that is, the choreographic language of ballet language was the basis for further development.

Elsie Ivanchich Dunin is the author of the best known book on the Macedonian state ensemble of folk songs and dances, *Tanec*, which contains about 50 kinetographies and texts on various Macedonian folk dances. In my personal correspondence with Dunin, she explained some of the relationships between music and dance for Joukowsky, as she had been demonstrator for some of the dances that he choreographed. She made it clear that the folk dances taught by him in his workshops and courses were danced not to the original, initial music, but to recordings available to him in the 1950s that he had been able to obtain after his settling in the USA. This had triggered Joukowsky to make creations based on music available to him. The dances contained a certain degree of stylisation, and, as Dunin says, were ‘with a sense of ballet’. His approach likely had not changed substantially and could not have been drastically different from the way he had created his *Fire in the Mountains*, which is a stylistic, aesthetic and folk symbiosis of ballet lexicology with steps from folk dances.

As the examples listed above testify, Macedonian traditional folk dances have appeared on the ballet stage, but when used for these purposes, they had to be modified.

Conclusion

The aforementioned route – from Russia to Serbia to Macedonia – has had a significant impact on shaping Macedonian ballet. The aesthetics of classical ballet, the teaching methods and the contents of the most well-known classical pieces all formed the foundations on which postwar artistic expression would rest. After World War II, as a result of cultural proximity to the USSR (even if political relations were not always close), these trends continued in the same direction throughout the socialist period. Almost without exception, the activities of the first generation of creators of Macedonian ballet were taken as foundations for further developments, since this first generation of artists were directly or indirectly in contact with the Russian emigrants active in this area (predominantly in Belgrade).

As argued by Hollidge and Tompkins, ‘culture is not an isolated concept of empty sign; rather it is the way in which we construct our sense of self and others. Intercultural performance, therefore, constantly renegotiates this relationship’ (2000: 177). The example of Macedonian culture seen in relation to the others clearly showcases this interactive and dynamic relationship. As previously mentioned, a great number of ballet choreographers used Macedonian folk dances in their choreographies. The model immanent to this type of production is *synthesis*, which fully reflects the intercultural principle. The model applied to the first ‘national’ performances would continue to be implemented in the pieces to follow. The route Russia–Serbia–Macedonia, which was a result of political and social movements, gave birth to a rich, productive and active realisation of its constituents and resulted in a true dialogue and cultural exchange.

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