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ABSTRACT

***NATIONAL FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE BULGARE.
MANAGING AND CREATIVE APPROACHES***

thesis

in fulfilment of the requirements for the PhD educational and scientific degree

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Sofia 2022

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ABSTRACT

Developing a future management model for Bulgarian folk art as a fundamental part of the country's cultural policy in the context of the present day dynamic developments, marked with financial instability and given the established patterns of business management in a market economy is a real challenge. In the global world with its different cultural faces, freedom of interpreting genre diversity and dynamic exchange of creative works, the different public necessity for culture can trigger a transformation of the art of folklore. The State cultural policy is in the process of seeking options to preserve and instil new life to folklore institutes and their associated creative industries. It is important, according to some analysts, for folklore ensembles as cultural institutes, in the opinion of some analysts, to develop in a sustainable manner as their main function is that of a catalyst for traditional folklore in contemporary culture. They are a factor for the preservation and creation of aesthetic values of the individual and of society. Here the basic question arises whether the old approaches can or cannot achieve the desired development?

Thus, this survey turns to searching reasoned solutions to the crisis issues related to management, focusing on the specifics in contemporary folklore-based artistic creation, requiring the creation of a market based model for the functioning of folklore art as a system. The explanation and clarification of the creative product of private professional folk art and the comparative presentation of the production of the existing state and municipal folk ensembles as cultural institutes in the modern conditions of market economy is a current problem. Finding an alternative solution is an ambitious task set for the thesis survey.

Relevance and importance of the theme. The new challenges, the management practices in the field of business management and the contemporary trends of the globalizing world transform the interpretation and the management of folk art and determine the relevance of the topic of the thesis. Apart from the material goods, the economic sphere nowadays can create a cultural and spiritual product with impact on the formation of aesthetic criteria and social values and it can entail optimized management efficiency and better performance of

folk art. Almost three decades after the radical change in the way culture is run, interdisciplinary studies of the relation between the art of folklore and management are lacking and there is no professional education in the field of folk management. There are no present day manuals on the creative approaches in the adaptation of folklore-based music and dance for the stage. Conducting this kind of research would necessitate a change in the management structure of folklore ensembles, it would give new creative tools at their disposal and would enable traditional folk art develop in a constructive way and having it back as part of the foundations of the cultural policy of Bulgaria.

Subjects of this survey are the management, managerial and creative approaches for private professional folklore ensembles as an artistic and creative environment and factor for the creation of contemporary performing art.

The studied **object** is the National Folklore Ensemble Bulgare as a new alternative form of artistic re-creation of the traditional Bulgarian folklore into a contemporary folklore based performing art and as an example of applied improved managerial and creative approaches in the organization of private professional art.

The **research problem** results from the fact that managing and financing folk art requires a market oriented attitude of the private folk ensemble and of the artists. The lack of a Performing Arts Act constitutes a weakness in the legal framework. The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria has adopted the Act on the Protection and Development of Culture, drafted by the Ministry of Culture. This is a framework legal act insofar as it aims to define the principles and means for the carrying of the national cultural policy of Bulgaria. True, it holds several directly applicable texts, but no comprehensive draft law so far regulates the relations between the state and private initiative in the field of culture. The future of Bulgarian spirituality will be more and more directly linked to personal initiative and to the willingness of financial circle representatives to support Bulgarian culture and art. In this sense, the Act should follow a clear logic - define the positions, commitments and rights of the state and of the municipalities in the creation and development of this sector, fostering to a degree a level playing field with private cultural organisations and artists. Moreover, full compliance with European treaties and agreements in the field of cultural development is also necessary, with an emphasis on the specificity of national diversity.

Thesis statement of the candidate. Based on the experience so far in the creating and managing and in view of the artistic results achieved in the private folklore ensemble, the author's thesis stands favours a paradigm shift defining the professional functions of leadership, management and creative adaptation of the private professional folklore ensemble given modern market economy. The meaningful adaptation, the behaviour of the participants in the creative process, at the background of inherited folk values, all these are prerequisites for folk dance art's new positioning, own specificity of functioning and existing within the scope of contemporary dance art of Bulgaria. The creation of a completely new and valuable performing art product, which is not only competitive, but also profitable in the conditions of a market economy, guarantees its functionality.

The main goal of the present thesis is to present the current state of the management and the artistic and creative work in the National Folklore Ensemble Bulgare (NFE) as a model example for the functioning of a private professional folklore ensemble in the conditions of a market economy. On this basis, identify and present the chronotope of managerial and creative approaches in the artistic re-creation of traditional Bulgarian folklore, turning it into a contemporary artistic product. Present the achieved results and propose new managerial and creative forms for the management and organization of artistic and creative production, in accordance with the specifics of classical folklore culture and with the process of creation in a competitive market environment.

Tasks towards the achievement of the set goal:

- To review and analyze the achievements of the NFE and to assess its impact on the development of professional folk dance art in a market economy.
- To present the author's approaches in the interpretation of traditional Bulgarian folklore and in its turning into a product of contemporary dance art.
- To analyze the management structure and the legal framework of the private folklore ensemble and to present the management characteristics of a folklore ensemble of this kind as basis for a creative interpretation of Bulgarian dance folklore.
- To present and analyze the professional managerial functions and the artistic management of the chief artistic director of the private folklore ensemble along the process creating the artistic product.
- To present the different educational approaches in the course of creating the folklore performance as well as the main directions in the field of art management.

Research methods. The specificity of the thesis, namely its interdisciplinary character, implies the need of using a wide range of techniques and methods of scientific research in the process of solving the set tasks. The research approaches fall within the theoretical field of cultural studies, semiotics, aesthetics and sociology of culture; semantic and structural analysis, systematization, classification and typification. **The methods used are:** empirical research, survey of sources with information, observations, probing, sharing main organizational and artistic experience. More specifically, the research methods include:

- A review, analysis and interpretation of Bulgarian and foreign scholarly sources in the field of professional dance folklore, culture and art management.
- Analysis of the inherited and contemporary folklore art as a means of reviving Bulgarian culture.
- Used analyses of information and interviews of prominent Bulgarian choreographers and foreign surveys in the field of culture, dance art and of the respective management.
- The development of folklore performing arts in the period from the establishment of the private professional folklore ensemble Bulgare to the present day is presented.

- In-depth semantic analyses are made of parts of the stage adaptation of some artistic products.

Certain limitations in the scope of the research leave untreated:

- Some of the genres of traditional folklore,
- The amateur music and dance art,
- Some state formations with creative activity on folklore basis,
- The audience as the corrective for quality.

The present thesis does not aim to explore the origins and the development of dance and traditions, but it undertakes at first to review the stages in the development of folklore, reaching its contemporary, already professional, presentation on stage.

In Chapter 1: **Historic overview of the origin and the development of Bulgarian professional folk dance art**, a brief analysis with historical notes on the creation of the first professional folk ensembles in Bulgaria are presented. The analyses highlight the two main periods that influenced the development of folk art - the socialist culture and the transition period. More detailed historical information is provided on the origin and the development of Bulgarian folk dance art, on the main prerequisites for the creation of the first state ensembles, their management and artistic dependencies, the financing and the concert activity. Particular attention is paid to analyzing the role of the chief artistic director in the state ensemble, on the national and regional socialist artistic structures, that influenced his/her overall organizational, economic and artistic activity till the time when the First Private Professional Folk Ensemble Bulgare was created.

Chapter One is organized into four subchapters: 1) Brief historical notes on the first professional folk ensembles; 2) Management, financing, repertoire and concert activity of the professional folk ensembles; 3) The role of the chief artistic director in the state folk ensemble; 4) Development of the professional dance till the arrival of the First Private National Folk Ensemble Bulgare.

Chapter 2: **The Creation of the First Private National Folklore Ensemble Bulgare, Managerial approaches**, includes two sub-chapters: 1) Structure and management of the National Folklore Ensemble Bulgare; 2) Methods for training professional performers of Bulgarian folk dances in NFE Bulgare.

The Folklore Ensemble Bulgare was founded on 1 October, 2002, presenting a new model putting forth our traditional folklore in an impressive and innovative way. By definition the concept "private professional folklore ensemble" is that kind of ensemble that bases its work on the established performing traditional music and dance folklore, in it the performers are professionals in the field of music and choreography and they are not subsidized by the State or the municipal institutions, but only through their own activity.

The following are the similarities between the NFE Bulgare with the other ensembles:

- NFE Bulgare was built on the basis of the other professional ensembles, for all the artists and ballet masters were trained within those ensembles. This influence was inevitable. It is a kind of a DNA of artistry.
- The exercise, the terminology, the staging and rehearsal methodology are based on the methodology in the other ensembles.
- The performers are employed by the ensemble, which is the main source of their revenues, and they are remunerated for their work under employment contracts, they have social and health security, are entitled to fees and travel allowances, as in the other ensembles.
- The activity of the ensemble aims to search, preserve and disseminate Bulgarian folklore by producing performances of high artistic value, where the style and the character of the music, songs, dances, costumes, props, customs, their semantics and the national psychology of the Bulgarians from the different parts of Bulgaria have to be observed.

However, the NFE Bulgare radically **differs** from the other ensembles in the following items:

- It does not receive subsidies for the remuneration of its performers from the budget of the state or from the municipalities.
- All performers, without exception, have secondary or higher musical or choreographic education, which is a condition for working in a professional ensemble.
- This ensemble is different from the dance formations, which make folklore-based performances for commercial and entertainment purposes, without having the task in their performances of preserving the specificity of the traditional folklore of the respective region.
- The ensemble may develop additional activities to finance itself - it can raise funds from private and public institutions, participate as a private institution in public-private partnerships, in European and national projects.
- The structure, management, motivation, artistic process and methodology differ thoroughly from the other ensembles in the state sector, a fact not violating the concept of 'ensemble'.
- The historical model consisting of presence of a choir, an orchestra and a dance ensemble was discontinued. The NFE Bulgare is primarily a dance ensemble with unique soloists, singers and musicians who participate in a dramatic action, i.e. they also perform as actors. The music is recorded and played back. It is enhanced by the participation of a classical orchestra, by computer effects and contemporary sound.
- The NFE Bulgare is a private ensemble - this means complete freedom in the creative process, a different motivation for the performers, different, more flexible employment relationships and forms of remuneration, and most importantly multi-functionality and interchangeability between all participants.
- **The basic difference** is in the new, creative presentation of folklore – the NFE Bulgare, on its own, stages large music and dance forms - two-hour performances with a plot, dramaturgy, acting, stunts, fight scenes, special and visual effects, multimedia, etc.

Apart from the dancers, professional actors, ballet dancers, stuntmen, climbers and others also take part in the performances.

- The NFE Bulgare is extremely demanding for style and character of the dances, despite the choreography abounding in new movements and combinations, which are far from chaotic and follow semantically the story-line.

- The dancers are dressed in folk costumes copying authentic specimens, in line with the social status of the performers, with hand embroidered ornaments, that are typical of the region and are highlighting the context of the performance storyline.

- A primary aim is to achieve synchrony of the performance, the impact of the actors on the audience, the emotion, the folk psychology and, most important - the message to the spectator, for each performance of the ensemble has numerous messages, addressed to the audience.

- Some of the most important aspects of the performances of the NFE Bulgare are lighting, the special effects, the stage design, which have been analysed in advance with the whole team.

Necessity for the existence of such a formation

The creation of such ensembles is imperative. This is probably the only correct formula for the creation of high-quality cultural products in a market economy. We witness the growing trend towards the separation of culture from the state and it is probable that state and municipal ensembles will soon change their structure, their activity and mode of funding, following the example of NFE Bulgare. In most of the countries in the world, state folklore ensembles do not exist. In many countries, there are no professional folklore ensembles at all - neither state owned, nor private ones.

If a check could be carried, it would appear that the former socialist countries hold state-run professional ensembles, i.e. these ensembles are the result of the socialist rule and it is normal, come its collapse, that sooner or later these cultural institutions will be restructured.

The state ensemble is detrimental to freedom of creativity. In it you are obliged to conform to the demands and views of state officials about art and the ways it is presented. This kind of art is subsidized by taxpayers' money. You cannot take liberties, you cannot innovate, or head towards implementing any bolder creative idea of yours, for society's enthusiasts might accuse you of inappropriate spending the funds.

A state ensemble is not flexible in terms of direction. The director is constrained by many subjective and objective factors in selecting his team. Moreover, the position of the director is very precarious. A change of the government or of the power in the municipality can instantly lead to a change of executives. Interference in the management, appointments and even in the work of the state ensemble is also quite acceptable. Apart from that, the new categorization of labour makes the state ensembles a shelter for aging dancers, which impairs the quality of their products.

These state-supported institutions are not allowed to benefit from donations or make their own side income. All the proceeds for the ensemble are paid into the budget of the state or of the

municipality and then are redistributed, and it is possible that a large part of these funds may not reach the ensemble, but be invested in side activities.

These formations create corruption opportunities. The employees receive only salaries, no fees, regardless of the number of participations. This in its turn creates an extremely low cost performance situation. It becomes difficult to prove the amounts paid, given the existing participations in private events. Also, the fixed remuneration of the performers and of the management annuls the incentive for more concerts, for better condition, and the lack of sufficient funds does not stimulate new creativity. The lack of such motivation is detrimental to the artist, to the performer, the ensemble, the audience, and to the culture of the country.

In the private ensemble, things are different. The owner is the one who decides, he is practically unchangeable and he determines the structure, the management, the creative process and everything else. He has a strong interest in motivating the performers, both materially and morally, so that more and more new products can be created, that are of high artistic level, so that the audience remains faithful and the sponsors find their interest in funding the activity. In this private company, the performers have fixed remunerations but also receive fees for each performance and this is an added incentive for them to strive for more and more performances. In addition to the performers, this private form of direction is also an incentive for the management team. Managers receive fees that are a percentage of the revenue they generate through concerts and sponsors. This makes them create new opportunities, seek new opportunities and markets, thus they promote the work of the ensemble throughout the world, as well as the culture and the art of their country.

What is most important in this management structure is freedom and independence in terms of creativity - without censorship, without conditioning and interference. You spend your own money as you decide, without having to answer to or consider people on whom you depend, and if you do well you get the love and money of the audience and of the sponsors. This is the free and democratic way to create culture and art without dependencies and without using taxpayers' money. This is an opportunity to create new jobs, to stimulate creativity and to contribute to the state budget.

Why the number of the private professional folk ensembles is not high

It was already mentioned that the professional ensembles are a product of the socialist rule. There are no such ensembles in countries that did not have such a rule, while the former socialist republics such ensembles still exist because a restructuring has not been carried yet. Many countries have not preserved and developed their folklore. Some of them could not even boast of having a rich and diverse musical and dance folklore. For this reason, one of the largest professional private folk ensembles in the world, the Dutch **DreamTheater**, performs dances of the peoples from India to the USA. If this ensemble had to dance only Dutch dances, its repertory would hardly be so varied and interesting. At what level these dances are performed is another matter. Rhythmically, Bulgaria has the richest folklore on the planet. Unlike the other countries, Bulgaria has two secondary folklore music schools - the National School of Folklore Arts (NSFA) *Philip Kutev* in Kotel and the National School of Folklore

Arts (NSFA) *Shiroka Luka*, one secondary choreographic school with a folklore profile - the National School of Dance Art (NUTI) in Sofia, four higher educational schools for folk arts - in Plovdiv, Sofia, Varna and Blagoevgrad, hundreds of choreographic classes, 15 state ensembles, etc., all these are the prerequisites for the existence of such an ensemble.

Folk art in its pure form is not profitable. Some private formations use fragments of folklore in their show performances - Lord of the dance¹, Anadolu Atesi², Sultan of the dance³, in Bulgaria - the troupe of Neshka Robeva - National Art etc., but these are not folklore ensembles. These are dance troupes that use folk motifs without insisting on the authenticity of the costumes, on the style and the character of dance movements, etc. They are in the show business rather than in art in its pure form. The idea of their performances is not to preserve the folklore of the people concerned but rather to make money through music, songs and dances with folk motifs.

An art of the style of NFE Bulgare is very expensive, both as an investment for the ensemble and in terms of the creation of the respective performance, its execution and its maintenance. Given the fact that it is not commercial, few people would invest in this activity, so such an ensemble should be considered a national treasure.

This thesis focuses on the specific activities in directing the ensemble, on personnel selection, since the most important element in the ensemble are the performers, for several reasons:

-They are extremely difficult to replace. You can replace a performer in no less than a year, while a technician - in a day.

-There is a lack of well-trained personnel, quality dancers, musicians and singers, with responsibility for the profession they have chosen.

-The performers are a well integrated team and they shortly convey the ones to the others the positive and the negative emotions. The dissatisfaction of one performer who exerts some influence can break up the whole ensemble.

-The artistic team is the main unit because it is them who perform the product on the stage. All others work for them and are appointed in the ensemble because of them.

It is extremely important to select very carefully all the personnel in the ensemble, but there is a special responsibility when you select the performing staff. A performer in a private ensemble must have a variety of skills: to dance, to play and to sing, to be a good actor, with stage presence, a good improviser, a psychologist and even a stuntman. Often in larger-scale shows, the performers have to "fly" across the stage suspended by ropes, have to climb hard-to-reach places, participate in fights, fall or "die", work with pyrotechnic effects, etc. In addition, they must be able to work overtime. It is very common to get up early in the morning for a concert and get home late after midnight. Sometimes the trips are very long. When there is a technical problem on stage, very often the performers remain without their foreseen rest and have no time for food or anything else. In the New Year's concert in the city

¹ <https://www.lordofthedance.com/> (visited on 5.3.2021)

² <https://anadoluatesi.com/> (visited on 5.3.2021)

³ <https://www.discogs.com/artist/349024-Sultans-Of-Dance> (visited on 5.3.2021)

central square, nobody cares how cold it is and how you can warm up. Apart from their good stage presence, performers have to be able to cope with posing during photo sessions as well as when shooting videos and films. They need to be able to quickly change their looks, the traits of the characters they play and have their own strong personal magnetism. We describe in details in this thesis the ways these qualities can be achieved.

One of the prerequisites for the existence of a private ensemble is finding quality staff also for the other positions too, especially for the management team. It is difficult to find good staff for activities that are still underdeveloped, new, and in which there is little practice and tradition. In Bulgaria it is particularly difficult to find a good concert organiser for the whole country, in the field of folklore. If there are some such specialists, then they are very few and work at their own expense. Apart from approaching new staff for the non performer positions, it is best to proceed with creating one's own staff. A good director should be able to notice what other qualities his performers possess and, while they are still in actively performing, prepare them to take up important positions in the ensemble structure once they are no longer performing. This is particularly true of dancers, who cease performing much earlier than musicians and singers. Therefore, the right strategy for any ensemble is to retrain in a timely manner these performers in different professions, which will be for the benefit of all at the time when the people will no longer be able to perform with good quality. By acting like that, the director gains several things:

- He keeps important and trusted people on his team, people who were tested over time and on whom, he knows, he can rely.
- These people know the nature of the activity very well and no time is needed for them to get into the specifics of the work and to become close to the team.
- They are committed to the idea, they believe in it and they have dedicated a large part of their lives to this ensemble, i.e. they are concerned about anything happening in the team.
- The director forms personnel in his own image. It is disastrous for a director when all his subordinates have different views on the development of the ensemble or are supporters of approaches that are not his.

A detailed part of the thesis dwells on the shared structure of the NFE Bulgare with a description of the ways, approaches and managerial decisions, all exclusively mine, for each of the departments - administrative, artistic, PR department, advertising, sponsoring, commercial and technical. I paid particular attention to the role of the artistic director in the ensemble. The artistic director is one step after the producer in the hierarchy. That he was trained within the ensemble would be very good, for he would know all the performances of the team and the specificities of each performer. The artistic director is practically representing the producer. He is responsible for the ensemble's overall performance on stage. This gives him the right to make decisions and express views on the selection of the personnel, the organisation of the work, the training in the hall, the distribution of positions, the appointment of the soloists, the amount of the remunerations, etc. He is only responsible to the owner of the ensemble. Except being responsible for the state of the performers, the artistic director is also responsible for the condition of the costumes and props. The props are

under his direction and not under the direction of the head of the technical department, since, unlike the set, the props are directly related to the performers, both during the performance on stage and during rehearsals.

The choreographers are directly subordinated to the artistic director. They are responsible for the rehearsal process, for the maintaining of good physical condition, good dancing and psychological condition of the performers. On their suggestion, the staging for the respective concerts is made. There must be at least two ballet masters, one for the men and one for the women. They must be from the ensemble performers. No other option is possible. They lead the exercise, clear the movements and combinations, work on the composition and take part in the performances themselves. That is, they are actively involved in creating an "artistic team of performers" called an "ensemble."

If the ensemble has a choir and an orchestra, their directors are also subordinate to the artistic director, and they perform accordingly the functions of the ballet masters, but in their units.

The wardrobe is run by an officer who is responsible for the overall condition of the costumes and their accessories. His duty is to supervise the transportation of the costumes to and from the concert venue. Each performer is personally responsible for the costumes assigned to them. The costumes are inspected once every three months and, if necessary, any damage is repaired or the costumes are replaced with new ones. The wardrobe must be dry, free of moisture, and the costumes must be on hangers on the racks. Costumes must not be left in the transport trailers. The Wardrobe Supervisor sees that the costumes are properly used and, in the event of violations, suggests to the artistic director that the guilty may be punished.

The props department consists of one, two or more props handlers, who may also be from the ensemble performers. They are responsible for the condition of the props, their transportation to and from the concert venue, arranging them backstage, and then putting them back to their crates for transport. Prop handlers should have a thorough knowledge of the ensemble's performances and know which performer is playing with which props, where it is comfortable for him taking them and where it is convenient for him to comfortably placing them. Prop handlers should have skills that allow them to maintain and repair the props themselves, thus saving the ensemble money. The wardrobe responsible and the prop handlers are directly subordinate to the ensemble's artistic director.

The most important part of the ensemble's preparation is the methodology for the preparation of professional performers of Bulgarian folk dances in the NFE Bulgare, and these are mainly the rehearsals.

The rehearsals are a must for the regular performers, for the soloists, the technical crew, and even the sponsorship department (the dancers who deal with the sponsors). The achievements during the rehearsals in technical terms are often greater than those during a concert. Many performers think that during the concert they mobilize and their performances are better then, but this is not the case. Practice shows that if you achieve a 100% result in rehearsal, you achieve 90% on stage. The achievements during the rehearsals determine the achievements on stage. It is absolutely unprofessional for performers to say "We will do it on stage". On stage there is lighting, costumes, anxiety, a different setting and these generally interfere with the

performance. Suvorov did not say in vain, "More sweat in the training, less blood in the fight." Therefore, everything happens in the training room. A prerequisite for a successful rehearsal of the dance ensemble is the uniform rehearsal attire. It is very difficult for the choreographer or the ballet master to cover in a glance all the dancers and see their mistakes if they are wearing different outfits.

Another advisable condition is that the dances should be performed in the shoes in which they are performed on stage. A dance that is performed on stage with boots and spurs cannot be performed with clogs in the rehearsal hall. Neither the movement will work nor the rhythm will be felt, and the dancers will have their feet hurt.

A third prerequisite for proper rehearsal is the exercise - classical, characteristic, with barre work or median movements. A proper warm-up prepares the professional dancer's body for the serious rehearsal and protects the performer from injuries. The exercise should be about 45-50 minutes and include stretching, rebounding, speed, coordination and endurance exercises. Generally, the exercise and the technical part of the rehearsal are led by the ballet masters. They monitor the correct execution of the exercises, make the appropriate remarks and give instructions. The big disadvantage is that practically, the exercise consists of uninteresting, monotonous movements without any emotion and style. This leads to reluctance in most of the performers to do the exercises, and they start to lack job satisfaction. That is why ballet masters should regularly change the exercises, should diversify the warm-up in every possible way, should search new, unconventional solutions. It is a good idea for the management to periodically invite new specialists in classical and characteristic exercise to enrich the dancers with new exercises and to offer them new methodology. It is imperative that basic movements and combinations from the ensemble's performances are included, because in this way they are constantly rehearsed and consolidated, regardless of how the rehearsal will be conducted after the exercise. Rehearsals can be several types, depending on the workload - general and daily.

Depending on the purpose of the rehearsal, there can be technical rehearsal, acting rehearsal, compositional or staging rehearsal. A dress rehearsal is usually done before a performance. It is conducted with props and the performers are required to perform everything as they would in a concert. The dress rehearsal is the hardest rehearsal but produces the best results in a short time. When a dress rehearsal is done for opening night, it is done with costumes and necessarily with lighting and scenery. On the other hand, the daily rehearsal is the one that is most common in the work of the ensemble. It may be of varying workload, and it is proper for the direction to name a percentage for the workload so that the dancers dance in approximately the same way. Very often after a combination or a dance is performed at a certain percentage, the director requires a 100% performance to see the achieved results. When the goal of the rehearsal is to achieve precision and uniformity of the dance lexis, the dancers are not required to act, emotionally experience the dance, etc. The choreographer then strives to achieve better technical refinement of the dancing - speed, synchrony, pitch, character. When the goal is to pass a message through the dance, to develop the narrative, to have a strong acting presence, then the director pays greater attention to the acting, and not as much attention to the right alignment and techniques of dancing. A rehearsal may be held to refine the composition and the staging of the performance. Then the dancing is just marked,

acting and emotions are missing. The dancers and leaders mainly look at who passes from where, who dances with whom, who falls behind whom, etc. Very often such a rehearsal is done without dancing - just through walking.

The staging rehearsal is the most interesting part of the dancer's work. In it, the choreographer sets new choreography, new acting or composition. It would be good for the choreographer to have complete clarity about his own requirements. This could be fully achieved in the setting of the choreographic lexis. A good choreographer is one who shows the moves and poses in person, of course if age permits. However, the choreographer may not always have imagined everything in advance when setting the acting and composition. It is impossible to reach full visualisation of one's idea. Things are imagined one way, but in reality, they turn out differently. Then performers need to be patient, because they have to wait for the stager to find the right solution, and they also have to keep absolute silence. The stager has to teach the performers not to give him ideas, advice and suggestions without him having asked for it. They don't know what is in the artist's head so it is difficult to suggest to him the right solution. The involvement of the dancers in the creative process is the subject of the following chapters in which I analyse in detail the training of my dancers. It is a daily, continuous and extremely necessary process that combines the acting, physical, psychological, spiritual and organizational preparation of each member of the team.

In contemporary art, being just a dancer, a singer or a musician is not enough; you have to be an actor as well. The training in acting is an extremely important part of the work of the ensemble. Being able to act with the eyes, with the face, to smile, is as important as being able to dance or sing. The most important part of the actors training is to have the director explain very well what he wants and then during the rehearsal have him demand it as much as possible from the performers. The performer must have a clear idea of what he is playing. For example: he is a revolutionary, but what are his traits - violent, cold-blooded, cruel, tough, foolish, etc. They kill him - he falls and dies, but what they kill him with, where they touch him, does he have to die in one second if he is hit in the stomach, etc. Everything down to the smallest detail is specified during the rehearsal. There is no room for improvisation on the stage (except in case of *reacting* to a committed mistake). ***The best improvisation is the rehearsed one.***

In addition to working with the ballet masters and the artistic director, it is imperative to invite outer acting specialists.

And in this part of the preparation of the performers, concentration, as I already mentioned, is needed twice more than anything else.

A very important part of acting is the emotional state of the performers – seen through shouting, calling, smiles, repartees, etc. The most difficult and most impressive is the characteristic emotional state specific to a particular dance or ritual action (e.g. Dobrudza's ruchenik, Christmas' horo (buenek), how to hammer a black pepper, etc.) The proper* performance with the appropriate emotions guarantees a complete success in front of the audience.

Acting quickly brings emotional and mental exhaustion. Therefore, it should not continue long and be tiring. You cannot make a person cry five times the same way and well. You risk even more if you make him cry every day in the rehearsal room, and at the end, on the stage he may be emotionally broke without being able to cry. Therefore, these things may be done during the dress rehearsal and not be repeated very often.

Chapter 3: **Basic creative approaches in creating a contemporary folk dance performance**, has 4 sub-chapters: 1) Creative Principles; 2) Examples for turning the traditional Bulgarian folklore into contemporary dance art; 3) The performance *The Eighth Wonder* a living example of an artistic recreation of certain fragments of traditional Bulgarian folklore; 4) Contemporary dance art as a means for reviving the Bulgarian spirit and culture.

What I wrote in this chapter is the result of my personal work and of my almost 20 years of experience creating and tailoring the artistic repertory and the successful journey of the NFE *Bulgare* in the cultural field of our country.

During these years I created 8 original performances: *This is Bulgaria*, *Bulgaria through the Centuries*, *Albena*, *Bulgaria in Europe*, *The Last Night of the Apostle*, *The Eighth Wonder*, *How Will the Americans Catch up With Us* and *The Secret Bulgare*, based entirely on the traditional Bulgarian folklore. The ensemble developed its own style and its own character, quite different from the style and character of the other professional ensembles. More than 2500 concerts were held in 24 countries around the world and many successes were achieved. The methods and techniques of bringing the classical Bulgarian dancing, musical, instrumental and singing folklore to the big stage are shared in the thesis.

Central amid my creative principles is the **Idea**. It is the foundation of anything else. The concept stands on the idea and overarches everything - music, choreography, costumes, direction, sound, lighting, etc.

The main idea in the first performance - *This is Bulgaria* was to present the best, the most popular of the music, songs, dances, games, customs and folk-psychology of the Bulgarians in the different, distinct, regions of the country.

In the second performance - *Bulgaria through the Centuries* the aim was, walking through the history of our country, to show the strength of the Bulgarian spirit that has preserved us over the years.

With *Albena*, the third performance, I wanted to reveal the beauty and the greatness of the Bulgarian folk song.

An idea gets "born". There is no way to come up with an idea. Many times in my practice it happened that I was thinking and working on a theme and was half way through, when a great idea dawned on me and ... everything started from the beginning. It comes out of the blue, it was sought but comes unexpectedly, without choosing a time and a place and it is usually quite "insistent". It imposes its own implementation.

Perhaps idea is a gift. You cannot learn to have ideas. There are individuals who are extremely creative and have success in their work.

The birth of the idea in most cases happens when the creator is alone, even if there are also cases when an event, an action or even a mistake triggers it unexpectedly. This also explains the desire of the artists to seclusion.

The idea always matures. It is not immediately implemented. It lives in your mind and, like an embryo, develops until it is ready to come to the light. Strong, complete ideas become strong projects.

On the base of the idea, the concept and the whole script of the performance are created.

Implementing the concept almost always needs associates and partners. At the very least, the project has to be funded. Therefore, it needs to be very well presented to the people who will take part in it in one form or another and especially to the sponsors who will finance it.

The way I work is by creating one part of the performance, and then with the powerful impact of the music and/or dance to attract potential partners among the audience. The power of the impact is my main weapon.

Once the overall concept and the script are drafted, the hardest part of the project begins - creating the music. I name it the hardest part, for several reasons:

- It's very difficult to convey your exact idea and vision to the composer and have him create the right music for it.
- Creating the music takes a lot of time and involves a lot of people.
- It often happens that the music that the composer(s) created changes the original idea, as when the choreographer hears it, he comes up with other ideas. Thus the assignment is changed, which means more time and ... more finances.
- In creating the music, the composer feels its power and impact in his mind, but cannot convey them to the choreographer. If presented the music to him played on the piano or on another instrument, the choreographer can hardly imagine how it will sound with a full orchestra and may not like it. While, to hear the music with a whole orchestra, is a lot of efforts and very costly.

That's why, for me, working with the composer and creating the music is the most important and most difficult part of the project.

When I know what I will require from the composer, I write a script that I divide into three columns.

Actions and props	Lighting	Music
Description of what happens on the stage, description of the props needed for the performance.	The lighting and the special effects are described	Describes the type, style, meter, character of the music, including the instruments to be used for playing the music.

In the first and the second column, the choreographer must be absolutely precise and specific. In the third column he can give freedom to the composer's creativity and expect his musical solution.

Sometimes I am specific and say the exact meter, dance, the number of bars, etc., and I even often set the musical themes, which I insist be the same. Other times I just refer to the style and character of the music and the beat (e.g. 1 - 60 - 80 sec), leaving everything to the composer's imagination.

I have an iron rule: all themes, all transitions, every bar of music is agreed with me before it goes into the recording studio.

In the following pages of the thesis I discuss in detail the ways of recording the music, the choreography and the methods of setting the choreographic patterns with all the technology of staging. How the emotions of each participant are fixed, the creation of the costumes, the scenery, the props, the lighting and special effects - all the details that are part of the creative process of creating a performance are presented.

My principle as an author is, "It's not important what you' will dance, sing or play on stage, but how you're going to verbally introduce the viewer to your concept beforehand."

The performance *The Eighth Wonder* - a created example of an artistic recovery of certain fragments of traditional Bulgarian folklore

Bulgaria owns a great wealth - the odd meters of our folklore. The majority of the Bulgarians, more than 95% in my view, and almost all the people in the world, do not know this.

The project named *The Eighth Wonder* aimed to present in an understandable, accessible, entertaining and educational way this wealth to the world through music, songs and dances. The work is a symbiosis between cinema, theatre and a dance performance, and is played in English (for greater accessibility and credibility). The Bulgarians read subtitles. There are two main characters in this "walk" through the odd meters of the traditional Bulgarian folklore - both are historical figures associated to it.

One of the characters is a great friend of Bulgaria who spent more than 32 years in our country, dedicated his life to the reunification of our country and wished to be buried near the Rila Monastery. This is the Irish journalist James Boucher. He plays the role of the expert of Bulgarian folklore and the storyteller in the show.

The other character is the world-famous Hungarian composer and conductor, who first included Bulgarian odd meters into world classical music. He is the Budapest music professor Béla Bartók. In this performance, he plays the role of the listener - the one to whom James Boucher narrates.

But where could these two people meet – the one fighting for the interests of Bulgaria interests in Paris, the other in Budapest. What would connect in a certain way Paris, Budapest to Bulgaria? The year is 1920. The Orient Express is the link between these three points of Europe and a great place for these two great men to meet. And the smoking lounge in the

carriage is an ideal setting for stories from the not-so-distant past. Stories loaded with Bulgarian folklore.

Two brilliant actors were engaged to recreate this mysterious meeting between the characters in the performance.

The first one was the Hollywood actor Ben Cross (First Knight, The Citadel, Star Trek), who played James Boucher. The other one was the Bulgarian Atanas Srebrev, who has starred in many Hollywood productions, this time he was the Czech composer Béla Bartók. The meeting of the two characters in the legendary train was filmed as a movie and their story from the screen came to life on the stage where dancers, musicians and singers recreated the stories of James Boucher. The audience was brought to the Rhodope Mountains, Macedonia, the Shopluk, Northern Bulgaria, Dobrudza and Thrace and was introduced to the musical meters. It started from the simpler time signatures 5/8, 7/8, 9/8, etc. and reached the compound meters such as 7/8 + 11/16 and the heterometric ranks.

The thesis gives a detailed direction plan with the specificities of the seven parts, (Voyvoda; Ruchenitsa; Laduvane (ritual revealing the future husband of a girl); Gathering; Good Rakia; For Macedonia and Finale), with the lighting for each fragment of the performance and with the bar description of the music of the dances. And fragments of more than 50 of the most attractive authentic horo dances and songs, recorded in situ in all regions of Bulgaria, were used as "basis".

A special contribution of the thesis is the author's semantic analysis of the performance The Eighth Wonder, in the context of the author's direction plan. In this analysis, the main codes and sought signs of the messages in the performance are deciphered stepping on philosophical and mythological considerations:

- The semantics of the space "stage" in the performance The Eighth Wonder.
- The binary semiospheres of the dances in the performance.
- The specific semiotic selection of the dances from the ethnographic areas included in the performance.
- The semantic aspects of the characters, the actions, colours and accessories used in the chronotope of the performance The Eighth Wonder.

The ambition of this part of the text is to trace in the present day how we could see and make sense of some persistent semantic and narrative kernels of folklore related to the space, the stage and carrying of a performance. The grounds for such a reading lie in the relative constancy in the expressions of both the semantic nature of this space and of the projections that associated folklore beliefs and notions find in contemporary artistic stage adaptation, which makes possible to search for inter-textual correspondences. There is one more reason which is the fact that the general basis for the analysis allows examining the mythological and the folklore connection.

The methods of survey are based on an analysis, falling within the scope of contemporary concepts of artistic space typology and are influenced by the specific studies of the artistic modelling of space in the performance, object of this research, The Eighth Wonder. The

interdisciplinary nature of the work is conditioned by the need to consider the issues in a broader socio-anthropological context due to the fact that the artistic stage transforms the folklore re-enactments and representations into a code, governing semantics, enriching the narrative and complementing the stage message. The study of the semantics and of the functions of a particular artistic space brings to light a number of issues related to:

- the space-sign text relation;
- the rightness of perceiving the detail, through the prism of space;
- the place and role of the artistic space in the construction of a work, i.e. to what extent the specificity of the work predetermines the choice and the features of the artistic modelling of space and how space, in turn, influences the other components - characters, composition, props, etc.;
- the possibility for the particular space (an artistic fact per se), because of semantic and sense triggering similarity, to be thought as the basis for searching inter-textual, musical, dancing and other connections.

The interest in the problems related to the functions of the artistic space in the performance is dictated by the fact that the picture of Bulgaria in this artistic work acquires signs of spatial characteristics, where this spatial pattern can be seen as a meta-language per se, and the created space structure is the text of this language.

The paradox of all hierophany (manifestation of the divine) is that in manifesting the sacred, each object becomes something else, without ceasing to be itself, for it continues to exist in its immediate setting. Therefore the divine space does not exclude the non-divine, for one the same place can be both sacred and non-sacred. For example, the home is a functional space, but by its design, structure, and the rituals performed within it, it can take religious significance. It is the same with gift-giving, the table, the warp beam, the drop spindle and crochet hook and many other actions and accessories of everyday life.

On the basis of the considerations so far, it may be concluded that the similarities in the seven main parts of the performance *The Eighth Wonder* are in four main directions:

- Use of the resources of traditional folklore.
- Rethinking the folklore text and integrating it (through renewed function and/or shift within the plan of meanings) for the purposes of its own stage narrative.
- Use of the folklore resources for author's myth-making.
- Explaining and clarifying the idea of the timelessness of folklore culture, reflected on a formal level in the particularities of the composition of the performance.

The results of the presentation of the semantic and functional specificities of the stage space in the performance *The Eighth Wonder* are symptomatic of the way in which the artistic performance deals with the mythology and folklore. The creative process itself is an opportunity to see a certain aspect of the relationship between the *traditional* or the so-called *authentic folklore* and the *artistic performance on the ground of folklore*. The starting point in my views is the creation of a semantic system where the kinetics of authentic folk dance is

interwoven into the notions and beliefs of the Bulgarians. Every gesture, every movement is seen as a means expressing communication and suggestion with their own specific code.

Our country is divided into seven ethnographic regions (Rhodope, Pirin, Shopluk, Thracian, Strandzha, Dobrudzha and Severnyashka), each with its own system of rituals on the calendar and its own music and dance system.

The shared direction plan and script of the performance *The Eighth Wonder* in the thesis shows with details (text by text) the choreographic description of the co-opted dances from the ethnographic regions. The different folklore regions enter in the performance with the most attractive fragments of their characteristic dances (in my view).

The Bulgarian folk dances are extremely diverse in terms of movement, meter and rhythm, as well as concerning the form, the number of dancers and the way they connect. It is difficult to find another art that could express with such subduing power, wordlessly, the inner human sensitivity, the joyfulness and awe, the sense of freedom and commitment. And this specificity of the dances as messengers of our ancestors, affirms the unconditional necessity of their existence and development. There is another extremely important thing - the universal expressive and content qualities of sound as a socio-cultural phenomenon were also sought in the performance *The Eighth Wonder*. Each traditional culture builds its models based on these sound universalia and offers specific aesthetic solutions to the social invariant. The deep dimensions of traditional Bulgarian folklore lie namely here. Such an invariant, with the meaning of universalium, is offered by the structural pair of player/singer-leader, interpreted in this case in the socio-ritual and in the artistic plan of the performance. The function of the player and the singer appears as a "sonic metaphor of the leader" [Zaharieva, 1987:89]. Thus the functional link of the soloist to the leader appears as a functional double and is a sure sign of semantic synonymy between the two persons. I further systematically present some of the organizing semantic analyses of characters, actions and props, used in the chronotope of the performance *The Eighth Wonder*.

In traditional culture the train acquired civilisation value and was linked to "the modern times". Just as in the past centuries the horse and the coach played a role, the train today inhabits the imagination of people, and takes a significant place in the world of symbols. Contemporary science and analysis list trains among the symbols of progress and among the wonders of the world.

"The train from the dreams is the image of collective life, of social life, of the fate of man that fares us through life. It represents the vehicle of evolution. It marks the progress and the awareness of this evolution" [Chevalier J., Geerbrandt Al., 1995, vol.1, p.156]; an awareness of something that has passed, but which drives us towards a rediscovery, to a new life. "Thank God", would we say that we have not yet missed what I call "the eighth wonder of the world". So, quite naturally, I chose the train as a founding narrative line for the performance.

And where is it best to begin the narrative? Of course, at the starting railway station for the trip - "the symbol of the unconscious, where the starting point for development and acquisition of new spiritual activities lies" [Chevalier J., Geerbrandt Al., 1995, vol.1, p.157] or the symbol of somewhat forgotten old values. The possible directions were numerous, but

we had to choose the right one that would lead us through the depths of our traditional folk culture. And it began to lead us with the scene of the welcoming of Captain Petko Voyvoda and, of course, with the next accent - the hand kissing.

In the traditional Bulgarian culture, the following forms are distinguished in greeting with the gesture of kissing: kissing the hand; on the cheeks; on the forehead; on the face; on the lips; on the ring of the hand; on the skirt of a costume; on shoes, steps; on inanimate objects - earth, bread, an icon, a cross, etc. Moreover, semantically we distinguish repeated movements of the kisser's:

-lips, on the reverse side of the hand palm;

- lips, the hand, the touching with the forehead of the kissed place; emphasized in the performance and detailed analysis provided in the thesis of the kinemes (movements and positions not bearing specific information in the process of human communication) and the kinemo-morphemes (which bear a sign, socially important information, active elements of human communication). With these differences in hand kissing, the coded messages, that the kisser sends to the greeted and to the people around him/her are also expressed, for paying homage and giving primacy to the speech/the lips or to the mind/the forehead.

Among the sign systems we use in the performance there is also the language of colour, whose semantic coded messages are deliberately sought, accentuated and are certainly among the most ancient, and the most persistent, even in our time.

The fourth part of the third chapter of the thesis presents my views on "Contemporary folklore art as a means for the revival of Bulgarian spirit and culture"; the contemporary myths in the folklore culture; the song and dance forms of folklore today.

The main cultural characteristic in this sphere too is related to the synchronic existence of diachronic forms, each of which has its own development and also influences the others through content and/or form. The lack of up-to-date works, images and vocabulary that would be understandable to society itself is typical. Some of these works are created "in the spirit of the traditional folk song, and of the folk dance, and there are a number of new moments - new poetic features" (Romanska., Tsv., 1993, 145). Others cover structures and themes from the urban folklore. Syncretism in them, the overlapping of melody, text, dance script and rhythm, contributes to the identification of the lyrical subject with the separate listener-performer. The themes are sorrow, suffering, separation from the beloved; the form is confessional and does not rely on the deeper context but rather on the outward expression of feelings. A productive approach to the artistic product is psychological parallelism; here again the idiosyncratic synthesis between sentimentalism and traditional folklore is manifested.

More generally, some songs and dances parody the script of the official modern music, but keep the musical text - essentially it is a reversal of the norm of 'bringing the forbidden out into the open'. Such works are constantly produced by the young people subculture; by denying the official, they declare the "emergence" of a new generation in public life. These works are retransmitting, they acquire more and more new variants, they switch between different social structures and are sung with enviable pleasure (Dyakov, T., 1993, 74-76). Of course, beside parodies there are also quite original works created among the young

generation, linked to a certain way of spending time. A significant part of these works have a pronounced sexual content. The functions of figurative activation of corporeality (the lower body) are the same as in carnival rituals [Kraev, 2003:251-256].

And probably they are a way to show knowledge, maturity, and readiness to enter adult life. By the way, given certain terms, traditional folk songs are sung, and the specific characteristic horos are being danced. Even now, at the beginning of the 21st century, the traditional folklore is experiencing a renaissance in a way. This is a process determined by the disturbed balance, between the national and the foreign, in which the mass music in English almost completely dominates the cultural space.

At the same time, as N. Georgiev maintains "in the contemporary situation, the capacity of the folk song and folk dances to bind together more firmly the so-called informal groups", i.e. the groups whose gather out of their own free will and choice (e.g. amateur groups at community centres, dance clubs). All this is a contemporary form of preserving the authentic specimens of our traditional singing and dancing folk culture. Seen from a different point of view, mass participation in such formations, enhances the sense of formality. Nevertheless, with all necessary corrections, we can claim that the state of folklore continues to be "... one of the meters of the degree of cohesion and of alienation in contemporary society..." [Georgiev, N. 1991:41].

Even ordinary observation confirms the fact that every group of people who gather on some joyous occasion, at some point of the celebration, starts singing a folk song or joins in a common horo dance. This is also valid for young people, especially during different celebrations (calendar holidays, 8th December, proms, birthdays and name days, excursions, expeditions, team building, parties...).

The most preferred are the Macedonian songs (about voivodes) and the local traditional dances, as well as the interesting horo dances, popular in different regions. The willingness with which everyone joins in the singing and dancing is impressive. Lyrics are written down and passed from one team to the other, the steps of the special horo dances, played at the celebration, are learnt. Playing an important role in the rediscovery and, most importantly, in the preservation of some forms of authentic folklore are the representatives of mass culture - singers, choreographers, and artists who seek originality and popularity through performing folk songs and dances (even if rearranged and updated) [Kaufman, D. BF 1993, №3, 22-27] Of course, massively embracing tradition has many other reasons - the search for national identity; awareness that the contented (European) audience cannot be impressed with imitation and repetition of foreign cultural models, but by highlighting one's own identity; and finally – by the professionally evaluating the great expressive possibilities of traditional Bulgarian folklore.

The means of mass communication greatly contribute to the "folklore renaissance". "The interest in folklore - wrote St. Zaharieva - regardless of the way it is triggered, is deeply culturally motivated". On one side, it is an expression on the part of an ethnic community of self-affirmation through historical self-knowledge; on the side, interest in folklore also has deeper, socio-psychological motives.

"Folklore is conceptualized in its actual cultural value - as an organic part of the cultural self-awareness of the individual, as an awakened ancestral memory of an unbroken inner wholeness, as an impulse, hope and need for harmony between the individual and society, the result of once experienced and again revived skill to enter art in a real, complete and harmonious way". [Zaharieva, Sv., 1991: 84] In the active folklore section of contemporary popular culture, another group of songs is also included, which continue and deepen the popular tune tradition. [Mankova, J., 1984:76]: essential for these songs is the "frank and direct emotion", as the popular tune "White Rose" for example, with the lyrics and the dance steps elementary and easily accessible. The overall tendency here is the sentimental one (Boyadzieva, St. 1979, 100-105), even if there are disparate elements and a different dominant nucleus.

Another general characteristic is the fact that "contemporary Bulgarian ethno-pop music pertains to the Balkan peninsula - in terms of its functionality and of its industrial mechanisms of existence and as a manifestation of musical motifs and ideological and textual themes, characteristic for the similar musical phenomena in the other Balkan countries" (Zhivkov, T. Iv., 2001:56).

Over time culture organizes the course of events and preserves them in the memory of society; thus it ensures the preservation of information related to the survival and to the development of the community and transmits it during long time spans. Time therefore makes adjustments to its identity and at the same time "organizes it in cycles", leaving, of course, for "preservation the needed past and the defined prognostication of the future." [Strauss, Cl. L., p. 37, also p. 247].

The old transforms into the new, which is the forgotten old: "one colour is replaced by another only because the one is old and the other one is new" [Lotman, Uspensky, 1989, 169] Thus the need for constant self-renewal is an essential working mechanism of culture. But at the same time, its inner organisation is diverse and hence the prerequisites for dialogue derive. Still, the basic function of culture is memory, and its main feature is self-accumulation. Both folklore and non-folklore culture use the general cyclical scheme for the functioning of culture, which is linked to folklore and to which, as is well known, Christianity adapts itself just as the city adapts itself to the village. Considering this, a synthesis emerges, which we find most distinctly in the folklore system of the Bulgarian national community.

The Bulgarian musical, song, ritual and dance folklore is unique. This is due, as I have already said, mainly to the odd meters in our music. Diversity is perhaps the only thing in which our country is an unrivalled world leader.

If one commercial company holds a product that its competitors cannot have, it would take over the whole world. Bulgaria has such a product - the odd meters of folklore and this should be used for the improvement of the image of our country and for becoming present in the lives of people all over the world.

India (having a Ministry of Yoga) is taking us over with yoga, China and Japan - with martial arts and national cuisine, Latin America - with dances, Hollywood - with films. Our wealth is

folklore. We need to recreate it in such a way that we can take over the world with our odd meters.

END NOTES

This PhD thesis includes 235 pages, of which 168 pages are scientific text and 67 pages are annexes. Thirty eight unique authentic horo dances from all ethnographic regions of Bulgaria are presented, detailed and arranged, 12 sung horo dances and 8 songs are presented as narrative and singing dialogues for the fully completed performance *The Eighth Wonder*, with a thorough semantic analysis of the author's intentions and creative messages to the audience.

The annexes contain the moral code of the NFE Bulgare, the ensemble's internal regulations for the organization of major performances and a booklet "World PR campaign Made in Bulgaria". Unique and previously unpublished are the interviews with 24 prominent Bulgarian choreographers with reflections on the contemporary state of traditional Bulgarian folklore. Also included are two unique discs with the full version of the performance *The Eighth Wonder* and a disc with the specific Bulgarian traditional horo dances used in the performance.

Quotations from 226 scholarly books and articles, some of them in Russian, French and English, were used in the thesis.

Such a structural survey and presentation of the origin of creative inspiration and of the setting in which it develops, is extremely timely, given the current socio-economic situation in the country and the impasse that overtook existing municipal and state folk song and dance ensembles. The twentieth anniversary, which the NFE Bulgare will solemnly celebrate in October 2022, is a sufficient guarantee for the chosen right path for existence and development, a guarantee for creative maturity in the recreation of the traditional Bulgarian folklore and in its transformation into a contemporary art.

CONCLUSIONS

For the transformation of Bulgarian dance folklore into contemporary dance art, the analyses made in this thesis have shown that the kinetics of authentic folk dances is interwoven into the concepts and beliefs of the Bulgarians. Therefore, in stage adaptation and artistic re-creation, we must carefully refine each gesture and consider each movement as an expressive means of communication with its own specific code.

Gestures and mimics are the precursor of sound and speech, i.e. the expressive form of dance is much more primal and powerful than that of speech and of musical art. That is why the Bulgarian dance symbol system is unique, and is a proof of the cultural idiosyncrasy. And there is one more thing.

The diversification of the artistic work, the product of folklore performing art, implies a flexible management in the dynamic market economy environment. The characteristics of the times - dynamics and instability, directly affect the production, offered by the folklore ensembles as a service in the form of concert activity. This instability, which has emerged after 1989, puts at risk their existence as a cultural institute with a strategic mission in the

preservation of Bulgaria's folk heritage. The efficient management of the folklore ensembles is directly dependent on:

- The attitude of the state and municipal authorities
- The audience as a quality corrective.

The analysis made on the basis of personal observations and contacts with leaders of folklore ensembles in the country and by probing the opinions of experts in the field of art shows that the adequate functioning of a private folklore ensemble requires high competencies, related to the artistic and administrative management. This confirms the relevance of the surveyed issues and the practical applicability of the thesis in a multicultural business environment. With a view of achieving the main goal and the accompanying objectives of the survey, issues related to the state of folk art management are analyzed, the existing problems are identified and, most importantly, valid solutions are provided. The results of the analysis made, support the author's view that the educational paradigm needs to be updated and the professional functions of "director", "chief artistic director of a folk ensemble" and "producer" have to be defined. A change in their approach towards the arts market in the cultural area is necessary. The summed up reasons are:

There are problems in the two main areas of the activity of folklore ensembles – the creative activity and the concert activity. These are problems of administrative and of financial nature. They prove that there is a need to put on professional basis the management of the folklore ensembles and of the municipal cultural administrations, being an essential management component.

A pragmatic proposal emerges - the addition of a new position in the administrative and functional service of the ensembles – a "producer", with delegated responsibilities and duties in the management of concerts, sponsorship and advertising.

The legal regulation of folklore art is based on a currently unstable legal framework, which is at odds with the specificity of culture to organise the course of events over time and to preserve them in the memory of society. This is how folklore culture provides information, which is needed for the survival and for the development of society and it transmits it over long periods of time. Quite normally, time also makes adjustments to its identity, and at the same time splits it into "cycles", leaving preserved the necessary past and foreseeing elements of the future.

Main contributions of the thesis

- For the first time a scientific survey is focussed on private professional folk performing art, its management and creative adaptation during the present period of historical and economic development of Bulgaria. The term "contemporary folklore art" is scientifically defined as a part of the system of artistic creativity and artistic culture today.
- The survey contains an original author's methodology, which effectively combines different creative methods for interpreting and turning the traditional Bulgarian dance folklore into contemporary dance art and for task achievement.

- For the first time, an overall director's plan of a realized performance, *The Eighth Wonder*, is provided – A novelty in the context of the director's plan is the accompanying semantic analysis of the spatial parameters of the performance, of the concept and the message of selected traditional folk actions, movements, characters and accessories
- Carried a whole series of detailed interviews with the most prominent and professional choreographers and ensemble managers in Bulgaria (and beyond, USA). These interviews can start forthcoming surveys of Bulgarian dance folklore and ensemble activity.
- The main functions of the director and chief artistic manager of a private folklore ensemble are identified, and the need to introduce the position of "producer"-manager of a folklore ensemble into the organizational structure is justified.
- Presented methodology for improving the management of folklore ensembles through training and additional qualification in the field of cultural management and through creative work with the empiric forms of traditional Bulgarian folklore. Put forth are some important moments in the organization of large-scale performances, which have been tested in the real setting and have shown their efficiency, an example that could inspire further managerial decisions.

Publications related to the thesis

1. Dimitrov, Hristo, Folklore traditions and customs in contemporary Bulgarian choreography art. In: Young scientific forum for music and dance, Sofia, NBU, compendium 7/2013.
2. Dimitrov, Hristo, Problems in creating and managing a private professional folklore ensemble (1st part) In: Music horizons, N° 9/2013.
3. Dimitrov, Hristo, Problems in creating and managing a private professional folklore ensemble. (2nd part) – In: Music horizons, N°10/2013

Participation in: Seventh Scientific Conference for Doctoral Students with International Participation "Young Scientific Forum for Music and Dance" with a paper entitled: Folklore Traditions and Customs in Contemporary Bulgarian Choreographic Art, 7-19 June 2012, NBU, Sofia.

SHORT CREATIVE BIOGRAPHY

Hristo Ivanov Dimitrov was born on 7th October, 1969 in the city of Varna. He has lived in the town of Shumen and finished there his secondary education. Since the age of ten he has been playing Bulgarian folk dances in amateur groups. After completing his military service in the navy, he turned his hobby into a profession. In 1990 he was enrolled as a regular student with the Academy of Music, Dance and Visual Arts in Plovdiv in major Choreography and Directing. He graduated in 1994 in the class of prof. Petar Lukanov.

On 1st October 2002 Hristo Dimitrov and his sister Elena Anderson founded the National Folklore Ensemble BULGARE. With the financial support of the British citizen Ian Charles Anderson, the choreographer created and trained the largest private professional folklore ensemble in Bulgaria.

On 3rd April 2003 the ensemble made its debut on the professional stage in Hall 1 of the National Palace of Culture in Sofia, with the premiere of the music and dance folklore performance *This is Bulgaria!*, created by Hristo Dimitrov. The performances *Bulgaria through the Ages*, *Albena*, *Sea Stories*, *Bulgaria in Europe*, *The Last Night of the Apostle*, *How Will the Americans Catch Up with us?* and many others followed. In 2015 started the creation of the greatest and most impressive performance - *The Eighth Wonder*, which had a premiere in June 2016.

On the day of his 50th anniversary – 7th October 2019 Hristo Dimitrov presented his performance *The Secret Bulgare*, at the National Palace of Culture.

Since 2018, the artist has been working on the realization of his long-standing idea - the mega show "*Black Sea Pirates*", which will be performed by the NFE Bulgare and featuring as guest soloists popular performers from the countries of the Black Sea region.

Hristo Dimitrov is the organizer and co-author of a number of scientific and patriotic initiatives, a few of which are presented below:

-Founder of the National Movement "*Second Bulgarian Revival*" (2005), uniting many patriots from different strata of Bulgarian society. In seven Bulgarian towns the eternal flames of the movement were solemnly lit.

-Publisher of the luxury patriotic magazine *Bulgare* (2005-2007).

-Co-organizer of the National Campaign "*Let's Fly the Bulgarian Flag!*" (2007).

-In 2013 the Association "*Civil Position*" was established. Hristo Dimitrov was elected chairman of the association, he was the chairman also of the association - "*Guardians of the Bulgarian tradition*".

-In 2015, the patriotic magazine *Bulgare* was restored in a free online version, and Hristo Dimitrov became its editor-in-chief.

-In January 2015 in Plovdiv, on his initiative, the Association of Choreographers in Bulgaria was established and Hristo Dimitrov was elected as its chairman.

-On 19th October 2018, the Children's Folk Dance Ensemble *Little Bulgare* was created on the idea of the producer Hristo Dimitrov and with the generous support of donors.

-On 26th February 2019, the National TV channel "*BULGARE*" was officially launched – a positive poly-thematic patriotic television with the idea for Bulgaria at the core, of which Hristo Dimitrov was the engine and the general director. The studios of the television are located in Sofia, where it broadcasts its 24-hour programme.

Hristo Dimitrov – creator of festivals and cultural feasts, that became traditional fora:

-International Festival of the Folklore Costume in Zheravna - created and organized by the *Bulgare Foundation* with other co-organizers. The festival is held annually since 2008 at the end of August. In 2017 its 10th anniversary edition took place.

-International Festival of the People not in Couple in Velingrad - founded in 2013 with three editions by the end of June 2015.

-National gathering Voyvoda meeting, held in July 2014 in Zheravna.

-**"Golden Muse" annual awards in the field of dance art** with an official ceremony in the National Palace of Culture held on International Dance Day 29 April, annually since 2017.

-**International Dance Art Festival - Kranevo**, co-organized by the BULGARE Foundation. Annual festival held in early June with the first edition in 2017.

-**National mass wrestling tournament "Wild Stage" Chelopech**, co-organized by the BULGARE Foundation; an annual festival in the last weekend of July with a first edition in 2017.

Awards and honours of Hristo Dimitrov:

1. **Honorary badge "Golden Century"** (seal of the Tsar Simeon the Great) and diploma from the Ministry of Culture for his great contribution to the development of Bulgarian culture, on the occasion of 24 May 2014
2. **Honorary Citizen of the town of Kotel** (2015)
3. **Honorary plaque "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" awarded by the President** of the Republic of Bulgaria Mr. Rumen Radev on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the NFE Bulgare (2017)
4. **Golden Badge "Ruse"** - a distinction awarded by the Mayor of Ruse on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the NFE Bulgare (2017)
5. **Award from the Regional Governor of Stara Zagora** on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of NFE Bulgare (2017)
6. **Apostle of the Bulgarianism 2017** - Annual award of the association Guardians of the Bulgarianism on the occasion of the tenth Festival of folk costume - Zheravna (2017)
7. **Honorary Citizen of Shumen** - 1 November 2017
8. **Worthy Bulgarian** - Annual Award of the OOB (Organization of the united Bulgarians), (2018)
9. **Honorary Badge of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria Rumen Radev** (2018)
10. **Order of "St. St. Cyril and Methodius"** - first degree by Decree No 103 of 1 June 2020 of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria Rumen Radev