

Book Review



Ildiko Sandor (2006): Grass can grow on concrete as well – Studies of the Dance-house movement. [A betonon is kino a fu - Tanulmányok a tanchazmozgalomról]. Budapest: House of Traditions [Hagyományok Háza].

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The book entitled ‘Grass can grow on concrete as well – Studies of the Dance-house movement’ was published in 2006 and it presents the past thirty years of the national Dance- house movement. The book was published by the Hungarian Heritage House and it was edited by Ildiko Sandor ethnographer. The book is a collection of studies in the series of the earlier and later publications about the Dance-house movement, which after more than three decades of research results and analyses, not only merely describes the movement and its history, but it also demonstrates the movement’s enormous cultural, scientific and social impact that is inspiring even today. Numerous studies are dealing with the (back then) niche role of the movement in the education of folk dance and folk music. The dance-houses (and their associated camps) can be considered as the initiators of both the institutional and non-institutional (outside the institution) folk music education. Therefore, based on this book, which is used as a basic reference, the cognition of the movement, the exploration of its history and the consequences are essential, regarding my own research. In the introduction of the book, instead of a preface, Jolan Foltin dancer, choreographer remembers to her journey to Transylvania, Szek town and to the start of the movement in 1972. Her thoughts are the lyrical introduction to the subsequent seven studies: ‘Many of us share the miracle that we were part of it...’ (Foltin 2006: 5). The author of the first study is Bela Halmos (passed away in 2013) musician, ethnomusicologist, one of the initiators of the Dance-house movement. One of the most important things of the study is that it summarizes the key characteristics of the ‘modern’ dance- house. These include training, learning and the role of practice so that singing, playing music or dancing could provide a good experience from the very beginning for the participants (Halmos 2006: 8). The author

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considers the social conditions favourable to the development of the Dance-house movement including the development of Hungarian folk music research (Halmos 2006: 13). The instrumental folk music research, collection and scientific results grounded the launch of the institutional folk music education as well. Halmos presents the established and running educational scenes that were parallelly evolving together with the movement. These included courses and camps for example (Halmos 2006: 15). The author imagined the future of the Dance-house movement in an institutionalized form. In his study, he indicates two additional institutional areas, namely scientific research and folk music, folk dance education, besides the movement (Halmos 2006: 17). He explains the necessary changes in the education and the development of teacher training and continuing education in detail (Halmos 2006: 20).

At the beginning of her study, Ildiko Sandor - the editor of the book - describes the dance-house as a folklorist and cultural phenomenon from the very beginning until the early 2000s, and then she presents the audience of the dance-houses in detail, on the basis of sociological studies. The two longer chapters of the book are closely related to the history of folk dance and folk music education. First, the author writes about the activity forms of the dance-houses: in addition to the dance-houses, she marks the summer camps as scenes of education, where instrumental courses were usually featured as well (Sandor 2006: 28). I also investigate the summer camps during my research, as they are determinative from the perspective of both the students and the instructor musicians in the extracurricular folk music education today as well. The other chapter lists the basic dance-house methods of folklore broadcasting. These are as follows: live instrumental music, dance teaching and free dance, teaching singing, informative ethnographic lectures, learning music, crafts, folk games, folk customs and folk tales. Teaching music in camps today is happening the same way as Ildiko Sandor described in her work (Sandor 2006: 34). At the end of the study, the author summarizes the impact of the movement on cultural life. The third chapter of the book discusses the community of the dance-houses. Co-authors, Istvan Fabri and Katalin Fuleki, presents the sociological characteristics, the values and the way of life of the dance-house gathering participants based on the most important research results. The authors examine the age and the place of residence distribution together with the educational background of participants, based on the 2004 data. The results show that the majority of the dance-house gathering participants are between the ages of 20-45 (Fabri-Fuleki 2006: 43). Among the participants, women are present in the majority, and the audience is characterized by an extremely high level of education (Fabri-Fuleki 2006: 44-45). The next chapter of the book presents how the news of the dance-house gatherings is circulated, and the ways of information acquisition. If we look at the research data from the education side, it is conspicuous that among the younger respondents every one out of three has heard about the event in the folk dance class. The authors investigate the interest in the event's programs and the satisfaction with the programs as well. From the side of the instrumental music, it is important to note that the majority of the audience of the folk music concerts is male and rural (Fabri-Fuleki

2006: 51). The next chapter of the book presents the motivations and specific components of going to dance-houses. Based on the data, the authors state that in addition to the love of dance and music, the participants are going to dance-houses because of the community experience (Fabri-Fuleki 2006: 55). The specific place is reserved in the study of values for the dress code and for the electoral residence preferences. The participants of the dance-house gatherings were interviewed by the authors about the clothing styles. It is interesting that women and people with higher education wear traditional clothes (Fabri-Fuleki 2006: 63). The author of the book's next study is Ferenc Kiss, folk musician, composer and the founder of several folk bands and Etnofon Folk Music Publishing Company. Kiss's writing casts an account of the past thirty years of the folk music movement. His study is not the historical summary of dance-houses, but the outlining of a broader picture of the past decades of the dance-houses, the music and dance institutions. He devotes a separate chapter to education and research. He presents the folk music education via the analysis of the various schools. First, he writes about the shortcomings of music education in elementary schools. Kiss mentions several domestic primary and secondary art schools, including folk music schools, as an example. At the time of the preparation of the study, instrumental folk music in higher education could only be studied at the College of Nyiregyhaza, so the author discusses the training plans and the launch of the Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music (Kiss 2006: 75-79). The study also presents the folk music publications, records and the relationship between the co-folk arts and the media. Finally, the author proposes solutions to the raised problems and specifies tasks. Katalin Beszpremy, an employee of the Hungarian Heritage House, demonstrates the relationship between dance-houses and crafts of the seventies and eighties in her study. According to her findings, reformation started in crafts, together with the Dance-house movement, that is continuing even today (Beszpremy 2006: 107). Beszpremy lists the reasons for this and demonstrates the creative camps – including the nearly twenty years long running Teka camps – and other activities, institutions, crafts instructors. The launch and spread of the playhouse movement can be dated to this period and the operation of craft schools starts in the nineties. Katalin Juhasz ethnographer describes the dress fashion of the Dance-house movement and its change. The majority of her study consists of interview details of known or lesser known dance-house participants, musicians and dancers (Gergely Agocs, Marta Sebestyen, Andras Berecz, Eva Fabian, Lilla Javorka etc.). In these, we can read the personal toned confessions of the 'speakers' about their dress habits, its causes, reception and present survivorship. Juhasz lists four kinds of solutions for how tradition can be incorporated into dressing, among those attracted to folk culture. According to Juhasz, the two extremes are: nothing indicates that the wearer of the outfit is in connection with folk dancing and folk music or the person is dressed in an original wear from head to toe day and night. Third solution: clothing appropriate to current fashion with accessories made by original or folk artists; fourth solution: folk-inspired outfits and accessories with modern design (Juhasz 2006: 126). The last study of the book is written by Zoltan Szabo ethnographer. The author analyses a unique phenomenon between 1970 and 2000 in the Carpathian Basin. This

phenomenon is closely intertwined with the Dance-house movement, and it means the special, but mainly tourist trips of people belonging to the Dance-house movement (Juhasz 2006: 162–163). Out of these the collector roads of musicians and dancers stand out, which are directed mostly to the Hungarian-populated regions of Transylvania. The collector trips are linked to education, as they produce scientific results, and they also initiate camps where those interested in folklore can learn from the informants. The author establishes the concept of ‘Dance-house tourism’ (Juhasz 2006: 181). Some of the book’s seven studies are overlapping, but this is for its benefit: the individual subtopics and relations become understandable, clear and comprehensive from different points of views. This way the Dance-house movement becomes a complex, highly influential broad social ‘system’, including the past, present and future of folk dance and folk music education. The rich domestic and foreign bibliography at the end of each study is an additional benefit of the book. The high quality scientific educational study collection can be beneficially used also by professionals and non-professionals interested in the topic. The book is used as basic literature in the historical part of my dissertation.

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