TRADITIONAL DANCES OF KOSOVO AND METOHIJA IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHING OF MUSIC CULTURE AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

(Professional paper)

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Abstract

This paper discusses the traditional Serbian dances from Kosovo and Metohija, with the aim of actualization and preservation of this form of folk musical creativity in teaching music and physical education. The paper’s task is to highlight the importance of using traditional dances of this region in the development of musical and psychophysical capabilities of students, as well as in the development of moral and aesthetic components of students’ personality. Combining knowledge about traditional dances, acquired through teaching music and physical education, with music, movement, teacher’s narrative and visual experience (observation of folk costumes), contributes towards a fuller experience and a more detailed introduction of the traditional musical heritage of Kosovo and Metohija.

Keywords: elementary school, student, psychophysical capabilities, music educators, musical abilities, motor control, methodical approach

I.

Traditional musical heritage in educational process has an inestimable importance and role in spiritual development of pupils and in building a value system and self-respect. Up to the present, the music textbooks has comprised stereotypical examples of traditional songs and dances, which have been used year after year, while the traditional dances and music of Kosovo and Metohija have been noticeably neglected and overlooked in the textbooks, as well as in the curriculum (Pavlović, 2010). The traditional dances of Kosovo and Metohija, with their beauty and singularity, rich melody and rhythm, represent one of the most beautiful dances of Serbian music folklore, but strangely enough, they are not given much attention in elementary schools. This paper will analyze dances of Kosoiov and Metohija accompanied with singing, and suggest some examples appropriate for school program.

Traditional dances of Kosovo and Metohija have been a subject of research of many ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists. In the works of Mokranjac,1966; Djordjević, 1928; Milojčević, 2004; Vasiljević, 1950; Janković, Lj., (Janković, Lj.), Janković, Lj. & Janković, D., (Janković, D.), 1937; we come across plenty of sheet music of dances with singing. Nevertheless, Janković, Lj., (Janković, Lj.), Janković, Lj. & Janković, D., (Janković, D.), (Janković, Lj. 1894 – 1974 and Janković, D., 1898 – 1960), ethnochoreologists and music educators, gave the most detailed study of the dances of this region. In 1937, they gathered 70 dances with singing and described them in the book Folk dances II (Janković 1937). The book comprises dances with singing from Pristina, Kosovska Mitrovica, Vucitrn, Gornje Nerodimlje, Prizren and Pec. Together with the description of the folk dances steps, they noted a lot of details about the dancing tradition of Kosovo and Metohija in the period between the two Wars. In the book Folk dances IV (Janković, 1951), the Janković sisters analyze the dances from Kosovsko Pomoravlje, with the special attention to the songs and dances from Gnjilane and its surroundings, where they gathered 62 dances with singing. In this book they describe folk life itself: the culture of this area, the population, social circumstances, costumes, folk dance style and forms.

Traditional dances and music of Kosovo and Metohija are multi-layered and archaic in terms of certain choreographic components. Besides the Slavonic and oriental elements of dance, and the native dance, the Serbian dances of Kosovo and Metohija incorporate the traits of Montenegrin and Herzegovinian folklore brought by the immigrants (Mladenović, 1973).

The most represented are the traditional dances with singing. Many of them date from ancient times and lean on the Slavic music tradition (dodole, lazarice, procke, koledarske etc.) The dances from Kosovo and Metohija are also performed with instrumental music of various
pipes, mostly duduk, tupan, darabuka (goblet drum), zurula and gajda (windpipes). A baking pan was used as percussion (Mladenović, 1973). At the beginning of the last century, the dances from Prizren were accompanied by Calgije orchestra, consisting of a violin, clarinet, def or daire (tambourine) (Janković, 1937).

In terms of choreography, the forms of traditional dances from this region are versatile and attractive. Inarguably the most prevalent form is a circle dance, which represents the basic form of the Slavonic dance, but an open circle dance, closed circle dance and a circle dance combined with a solo dance inside the circle, are also very popular forms. There are also dances with a determined number of dancers. There is a traditional dance from Vucitrn, which is mostly performed by four girls only, while the other performers are only watching them dance. In some of the dances from Pristina the dancers are divided into two rows opposing each other. These two rows are moving towards each other and then pass each other by. Also, there are dances where a part of dancers form an arch while the others are passing below it. Sometimes, dancers dance in couples. Dodole or lazarice are good examples of solo dance of one or two girls only.

Women folk dance in Kosovo is slow and composed. While the girls are dancing, their eyes are cast down. They move monotonously in the rhythm of the song. The leader of women’s circle dance singles out with different steps. She dances more lively, with a handkerchief in her right hand raised high. The dancers are often held together with the right arm under the left one. They hold a handkerchief in their left hand. If a male dancer wants to dance next to a female dancer, which was not often the case, if she does not want to dance next to him, she offers him a handkerchief, not her hand. If it is a man she wants to dance with, she holds him by the hand (Janković, 1937). Man’s circle dance is more energetic. The movements are livelier, and the dance contains jumps and exclamations. If they dance in a circle, they usually hold each other by the hand, but they also hold each other by the shoulders or waists. In the past, the dancers from Gusterica, Laplje Selo, Gracanica and Kriva Reka were widely known for their skills in dancing oro (Vukanović, 1986).

Dances from Prizren are especially known for their unique style. They are characterized by a calm and dignified attitude of dancers, soft hand movements and steps of different length, performed in a measured and calm way (Janković, 1937). In Prizren dances, girls and women danced separately from man. What characterizes these dances is “dancing closely together in oro, while the arms are clung together from the hands to the elbows” (Janković, 1937: 95). Men sometimes hold each other by the shoulders or waist.

In Gnjilane, as in Prizren, girls and woman danced separately from men. This was, according to Ljubica and Danica Janković, one of the ways of keeping the Turks away from the Serbian girls. “A Serb would restrain himself from dancing next to the girl he loved only to prevent a Turk from dancing next to her” (Janković, 1951: 52). In central Kosovo, the style of dancing also reflects the atmosphere of life of people and their inferior position. In women’s folk dances in Kosovo, the dancing is so calm that at times it seems almost motionless. No matter what a dance, song or a melody demand, women from Kosovo reflect something despondent by the way they dance. The long “i” exclamation seems to be the only vent, but not the real relief from the piled up emotions” (Janković, 1937: 42).

In Metohija, there are almost the same dances as in Kosovo or Prizren. In Pec, there is a combination of dances from Prizren, Kosovo and Montenegro. Ljubica and Danica Janković noted that on Easter, in Patriarchate of Pec, the inhabitants danced their own dances, while the emigrants from Montenegro had their own dances. In the city, on the occasion of marriage proposal or a wedding, some Serbian dances were also danced. Unlike the circle dance in Prizren, Pec had a tradition of mixed circle dance. Also, unlike Prizren dance, Pec dance is noticeably more explicit in expressing a joyful mood. “While women from Prizren bring a composed, dignified posture and nurtured sense of proportion into their dancing, women from Pec express vigour and spontaneity” (Janković, 1937: 125).

There is a wide range of diverse poetic elements in dances with singing, closely connected with social life of people. Love and wedding motifs are predominant, as well as family feelings. In Prizren dances there are elements of humor, which is the main characteristic of a number of Serbian traditional songs. A custom of Serbian people to make jokes and look on the bright side even in the most tragic moments “has its roots in numerous magic rituals and traditional beliefs among Serbs. A lot of different capacities and positive, usable powers are ascribed to humor. It is a kind of “secret weapon” which can be occasionally used to protect a community from evil powers, and which is specially cherished and passed from generation to generation” (Popović, 2008: 120). Country dances are often performed more in dramatic than chorographical way, a trait found among all the South Slavs. The melodies are charged with archaic, Slavic elements. They are simple, short, often containing an exclamation “i” in the middle or at the end of a dance. Urban melodies are more developed and diversified, with elements of oriental music. Occasions for dancing were numerous: church holidays, festivals, births, christenings, weddings etc.

2.

Pedagogues point out the great educational importance of traditional dances with singing in teaching. Introducing this form of folk music to pupils (according to Janković, Lj., (Јанковић, Љ.) & Janković, D., (Јанковић, Д.), 1937), should start as early as possible, “as soon as kindergarten: it should address all the school youth, from elementary school to university. The main point of this is to make a better connection between educational system and life, country, people and to strengthen and develop aesthetic, social, national and ethical feelings. Folk dance can be a powerful means of achieving these
tasks” (Janković, 1937: 18). In the continuation of this paper, the subject of consideration will be dances with singing of Kosovo and Metohija, which can be practiced in classes of music and physical education with various movements of arms and body, depicting a content of song lyrics, as well as circle dances with singing.

Dances with singing with movements

Music education through dancing is of a great importance, especially in the lower grades of elementary schools. At this age, children usually react with movements, and the experience of music will manifest in the same way. This is why it is important to “put to use their spontaneity and the most often reaction, and develop children’s music predispositions in that direction” (Ivanović, 1981: 15).

Dances provide pupils with an opportunity to express their experience of music with movements, as well as the character of a song or its expressive elements: rhythm, tempo, dynamics, melody, lyrics. Active listening, experiencing and expressing emotions with a dance, spur pupils’ creativity. As dances are most often performed with singing, they contribute to development of children’s voices and a sense for graceful and expressive singing. Insisting on harmonious and team performance contribute to development of feeling for beauty. In teaching music and physical education of younger pupils, the appropriate dances offer a possibility of miming with various movements of arms and body, thus developing motor control. Some of folk dances of Kosovo and Metohija, suitable for children of that age are: Da vam kažem bračo moja (Let me tell you my brothers) (Janković, 1937: 166), Čaglavčanke sve devojke (The girls from Caglavica) (Vasiljević, 1950: 181), Pleti, vezi devojko (Knit, girl, and embroider) (Pavlović, 2011: 144). In the song, Da vam kažem bračo moja, the humorous content of the song is illustrated by miming, where all the body parts are involved. Pupils move in accordance to the lyrics of the song. The song Čaglavčanke sve devojke, pupils are introduced to various everyday work and responsibilities of people in the past. The singing should be accompanied with movements of arms and body, to illustrate the lyrics. In the song Pleti, vezi devojko, while singing, the girls imitate embroidering, while the boys are moving in a circle, to the rhythm of the song.

Circle dances with singing

A special place in teaching musical and physical education belongs to traditional circle dances with singing. These dances are of great importance in developing rhythmical sense, motor control and love of tradition. They require a correct body position, natural posture, balanced movements and walk, which make them important for body development of pupils as well.

Focusing on new steps, while listening to music and reacting to it, has its benefits in improving concentration. This form of dancing can also be an excellent relaxation and recreation. Dancing with singing, besides developing musical abilities and motor control of pupils, also contributes to rising determination, solidarity, perseverance, self-discipline, responsibility, dedication, punctuality, conscience, boldness, courage, feeling for harmony and beauty. It is also important for socialization of pupils, and improving communication, giving a sense of stability in a new environment. They make children feel joyful and suppress unpleasant feelings.

The following dances of Kosovo and Metohija are suitable for correlative teaching of musical and physical education in primary schools, taking into consideration musical and psychophysical abilities of pupils at that age: Otvorite nam kapije (Let us through the gates) (Janković, 1951: 177), Zaigra mi divno kolo (A wonderful circle dance twirled) (Janković, 1951: 187), Upali se grad Sofija (The city of Sofia on fire) (Janković, 1951: 175), Tekla mi je ladna voda (Cold water was flowing) (Djordjević, 1928: 137), Oj, Coko, Coko (Oh, Coka, Coka) (Milojević, 2004: 132), Urodile žute kruške (Yellow pears yielded) (Milojević, 2004: 154), Tekla voda tekelija (Water song) (Vasiljević, 1950: 78), Pod noć podoh na vodu (I went to the spring at night) (Janković, 1937: 151), Što mi je merak (I feel fine) (Janković, 1937: 143), Tegnaj mi oro, mori, Bojano (Lead the circle, oh Bojana) (Pavlović, 2011: 130), Pod smiljkom, pod bosiljkom (Among the immortelle, among the basil) (Pavlović, 2011).

Methodical approach in analyzing traditional dances with singing involves listening to a song in music education classes, and then learning steps in physical education classes. The steps are firstly shown by a teacher, with pupils following him. It is desirable to train the dance with a group of more talented pupils, while the others are watching and memorizing the steps. Besides learning steps, a teacher should talk with pupils about the circumstances and places where the dances were performed and about its significance and purpose in folk life. When analyzing traditional dances, the pupils should see the folk costumes of the place the dance belong to. The folk costume of Kosovo and Metohija is analyzed in depth and presented in the book Serbian folk costumes (Terzić, 2008), which teachers can refer to in classes dedicated to introduction of traditional dances of Serbia.

Traditional dances of Kosovo and Metohija have so far been a subject of a number of ethnomusicological and ethnochoreological research. Yet, in teaching musical and physical education in elementary schools, they are not adequately introduced and exploited. The conclusion is that these dances are neglected in the textbooks of musical education in elementary schools, as well as in curriculum of musical and physical education. This paper firstly analyzes traditional dances of Kosovo and Metohija, and then considers the possibilities and importance of their implementation in teaching musical and physical education. It points out their great artistic, aesthetic and ethical values, all of which should be taken
into account when choosing the dances adequate for introducing the traditional dancing heritage of Serbian people. Special attention is given to the choice of dances of Kosovo and Metohija suitable for pupils in secondary schools. There are a myriad of educational and pedagogic objectives and tasks of teaching musical and physical education which can be realized through the given examples. It is concluded that traditional dances of Kosovo and Metohija, performed with moving arms, legs and body, improves creativity of pupils, their aesthetic experience, development of rhythmical sense an motor control. Traditional circle dances with singing are specially emphasized, because they contribute to versatile development of pupils ‘personality in musical, moral and aesthetic sense, as well as in physical sense of improving health.

Folk tradition represents one of the key features of cultural and national identity. Including traditional dances of Kosovo and Metohija in teaching of music and physical education in elementary schools, promotes the preservation of cultural and national identity of Serbian people on this territory. School curriculum for music and physical education should be innovated with this content.

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