

THE EMERGENCE AND FORMATION OF THE SUBJECT OF FOLK-STAGE DANCE

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ABSTRACT:

This article is a historical excursus into the formation and role of folk-stage dance from its origins to the present. It outlines the contribution of the enthusiastic reformers of character dance - A.F. Bekefi, F.I. Kshesinki, A.V. Shiryayeva, A.I. Bocharova and A.V. Lapukhov. Outstanding dancers, and later teachers, they stood at the origins of the creation of a system for teaching character dance, brought up more than one generation of dancers who continued the formation of folk stage dance as one of the main subjects of a cycle of special disciplines in the vocational training system in ballet schools.

KEYWORDS: History of Russian ballet, F. Bekefi / character dance F.I. Kshesinskaya, "mazurist" A.V. Shiryayev, Mariinsky Theatre A.V. Lopukhov, Leningrad Choreographic College Fundamentals of character dance, A.V. Shiryayev, A.V. Lopukhov, A.I. Bocharov Folk stage dance, Folk dance ensemble.

INTRODUCTION

From its very origins folk stage dance has become of the main subjects in the cycle of special disciplines and an important part of the system of professional ballet dance training.

Having gone through a certain path of formation and historical development, folk stage dance has become an academic discipline, an important and integral part of classical ballet education.

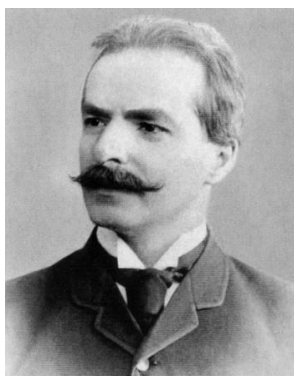
The framework of this discipline centers around the study of the so-called "stage version" – a folk dance that has undergone a ballet master's processing, in accordance with the laws of the stage and requiring special professional training from the performer.

At the beginning of the 19th century the term "character dance", the forerunner of "folk-stage dance", served as a definition of the dance in character, in the image. Gradually, any folk dances staged in a ballet performance began to be called "character dances".

If classical dance developed into a certain system and became the only rule setter in the ballet theater, for character dance it took a long time to earn its right to be considered as an independent type of stage dance.

Many choreographers have included folk dance themes in their ballet and opera performances. The wide presence of character dance was a feature of Mariinsky Theater however. These were czardash, tarantella, Russian and Spanish dances, mazurkas and krakovyaks, lezginkas, etc. They were performed either as afterpieces, or at a time when classical dancers needed a rest. Among balletomanes it was believed to be the "lowest" stage of art.

Almost until the end of the 19th century, character dance in ballet schools was not studied, no one specially trained the performers of this type of dance. Character dance parts were learned from ballet to ballet by memorizing the "text". To continue to the performing traditions, individual actors-performers of the character repertoire passed the character dance as a baton from hand to hand.



The issue of specific preparation and training of dancers was not even raised. Everything was limited to the dancers' acquaintance with the character dance and the memorization of movements from stage pieces. The first to think about creating a special choreographic class was **Aladar Fridrikhovich Bekefi** (Russified name - Alfred Fedorovich Bekefi) (1843-1925), a Hungarian by origin.

Bekefi was born in Hungary to the family of a choreographer Friedrich Bekefi. He was dancing from early age and took part in touring European cities as a child. In 1865 he first came on tour to Russia. From 1876 he already performed on the stage of the Moscow Bolshoi Theater, becoming a dancer with the ballet troupe of the Imperial Theater. In 1883, Bekefi was transferred to the St. Petersburg Imperial Troupe.

Being a brilliant dancer and master of pantomime, enjoyed success with the public in Russia, which was rare for a character dance performer. This was especially true for the various dances of their homeland - Hungarian and Hungarian-Gypsy dances.

He possessed a great technique, strength and temperament. Critics specifically emphasized his contribution to the development of character dance.



A significant contribution to the development of Polish stage dance was made by **Feliks Ivanovich Krzesiński** (a Pole by birth, and also the father of Matilda Krzesińska).

Arriving in St. Petersburg in 1853, he made his debut in the ballet *Peasant Wedding* by Jan Stefani. His success allowed him to be enrolled in the troupe of the Alexandrian Theater. He became famous in folk - character dances and was considered the first and best "mazurist" in Russia. Huge success was the "Polish act" of Glinka's opera *Ivan Susanin*. He had an outstanding acting talent. He has earned the title of artist of the imperial theaters. He gave private lessons in Polish dance.



Almost simultaneously with Bekefi, **Alexander Viktorovich Shirayev** (1864-1941) began dancing at the Mariinsky Theater. He was the grandson of the ballet composer Cesare Pugni and son of the corps de ballet artist E.K. Shirayeva. As a child, he performed on stage, possessed a natural sense of music and an excellent visual memory.

In 1886 Shirayev was admitted to the Mariinsky Theater, where he became not only a leading dancer, but also a tutor under Marius Petipa, and later - the second choreographer of the theater. As a dancer, he was one of the audience's favorites of the time.



His acquaintance with Bekefi, who became for the young artist not only a stage image, but also a like-minded person, played a cardinal role in the development of character dance.

Working in one theater as character dancers, they first raised the issue of specialization, the creation of elementary training exercises for character dance, which would prepare the artists.

They began to look for approaches that would enrich the technique of character dance. Bekefi came to the conclusion that it was necessary to distinguish a group of exercises from the classical training, which he used to “warm up” his legs.

Shiryayev, having borrowed these exercises from his senior friend, progressed further. He created a semblance of a character dance scheme of exercising, which consisted of barre exercise and exercise in the middle of the hall.

He builds his character dance training from barre exercises, based on the classics and necessary for warming up, and in the “middle” he suggested learning movements from the repertoire of character dances.

As such, this lesson was reviewed and approved by M. Petipa. But it did not become a compulsory discipline, being in fact an optional.

By joining efforts, Bekefi and Shiryayev were convinced that the reform of the character dance was necessary for the development of ballet art. They worked a lot on this topic.

Traveling across Europe and Russia, studying and recording folk dances, reworking what they saw, they transferred them to the stage, significantly expanding the range of movements of the characteristic dances of academic ballet.

These developments of character dance formed the beginning of a certain direction in the study and in the performing technique of folk-stage dance.

Shiryayev's extensive performing, tutoring and ballet-mastering activities gave him the opportunity to acquire a great deal of practical material and lay the foundation for the first character class in Russia.

In the early years of the 20th century, Shiryayev proposed introducing character dance lessons into the program of the senior classes of the St. Petersburg Ballet School. From 1891 to 1909 he was a professor at the St. Petersburg Imperial School, where a character class was first opened under his leadership, where he studied with several interested artists. The experience was successful.

Since 1914 Bekefi also switched to teaching. They taught ballet dancers of many generations: Andrei Lopukhov, Nina Anisimova, Andrei Bocharov, Mikhail Fokin, Alexander Monakhov, Kasyan Goleizovsky.

In 1918, Shiryayev's pupil **Alexander Mikhailovich Monakhov** took up the baton from the enthusiastic reformers. From that year on, he taught at the choreographic college, consistently using the experience of his predecessors and improving the teaching method of character dance. From 1918 to 1927, he taught an improvement class that character artists remembered with great gratitude.

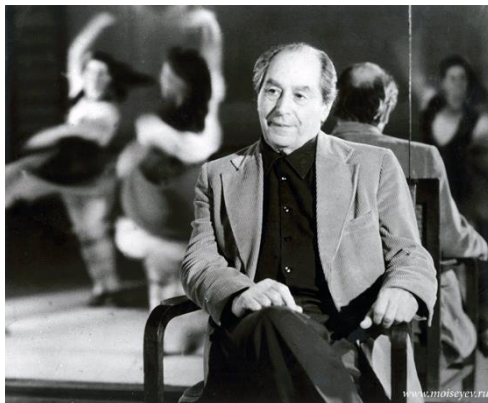
The next stage in the development of character dance pedagogy is marked by the teaching activity of **Andrey Vassilievich Lopukhov**.

In 1927 he began working as a teacher of character dances at the Leningrad Choreographic College. Lopukhov, using Shiryayev's methodology, created his own pedagogical method. During this period, at the Leningrad

Choreographic College A.V. Lopukhov led the senior groups, A.I. Bocharov led the middle groups, A.V. Shirayayev taught in elementary grades.

During the 1920s and 1930s folk-stage dance as a subject has firmly taken its place in the system of special disciplines of professional choreographic education.

This was due to the flourishing of the art of folk dance during this period, the creation of numerous circles, ensembles and studios, both professional and amateur groups.



The "first swallow" was a team created by **Igor Alexandrovich Moiseyev** – the Ensemble of Folk Dance of USSR. "The tasks of the ensemble are to create plastic images of folk dance, to raise the performing skills of folk dances to the highest artistic level." Later, the ensemble "Beryozka" was created under the direction of N. Nadezhdina, the dance group of the choir named after Pyatnitsky, Ukrainian ensemble led by P. Virsky and others.

The emergence of professional ensembles formed a slightly different type of stage folk choreography. Therefore, it became necessary to systematize the accumulated material and introduce it into the practice of schools that prepare not only typical dancers for the stage, but professionally educated leaders of folk dance groups.



Since the weak point in teaching was lack of a firmly established movement terminology and teaching methodology, Shirayayev, Lopukhov and Bocharov, together with Yu. I. Slonimsky, who wrote the introductory article "The Path of Character Dance", published the textbook *Fundamentals of Character Dance* in 1939. This work became the world's first methodological guide on this subject. The appeal to the national dance culture and careful study of primary sources was one of the main principles of the authors' work on the textbook.

The textbook *Fundamentals of Character Dance* contains a harmonious system of character dance training, tested by experience and distinguished by the logical sequence of exercises and the appropriateness of the selection of movements.

This is how a new academic discipline was created – the method of teaching character dance. The textbook *Fundamentals of Character Dance* - a generalization of Shiryayev's many years of pedagogical experience – was the first step towards the creation of clearly established methods, terminology, and a unified system for teaching folk dance.

The manual, for the first time, records and describes in detail the main movements of the characteristic dance; defines the terminology; sets learning objectives; draws up the first program; provides the recommendations for the construction of the lesson and the entire course of characteristic dance; and indicates the connection between character and classical dances. This led to the emergence of several national branches of the Leningrad State Choreographic School, with Shiryayev standing at their origins, who brought up, in particular, the main personnel of many national ballet troupes.

Today, character dance – or as it is called folk-stage dance – is one of the main subjects of a cycle of special disciplines in the system of professional training of ballet dancers. It is closely associated with all special disciplines and, above all, with classical dance, which is its foundation.

Folk-stage dance expands and enriches the performing capabilities of future ballet dancers, giving them the qualities and skills that cannot be developed in the process of teaching exclusively classical dance. "The character dance exercise is a great help for the classic, developing the body in the most unexpected directions, expanding and collapsing it in the process of artistic work" (A. Volynsky). Thus, with the help of exercises of character dance training, the range of technical capabilities of students expands, and coordination of movements develops. The character dance greatly enriches the expressiveness of an artist, colors and fills the performance of classical dance with the emotionality inherent only in live folk dance. As the prominent choreographer **Mikhail Fokin** said, "Folk art is the lifeblood of theatrical dance."

The peculiarities of the school of teaching character dance are aimed at the comprehensive development of the future dancer.

Moreover, the collection, study and processing of folk dance folklore (i.e. subjecting a folk element to a thorough stylization according to the compositional and lexical principles of classical dance) allows preserving and popularizing the elements of genuine folk dances that have not yet been mastered by ballet.

Nowadays, the characteristic dance has acquired its independent meaning, having ceased to be only an ornament of divertissements in opera and ballet.

By means of characteristic dance, technically enriched and renewed by folklore, the image in the ballet performance is revealed.

In conclusion, noteworthy is a quote of the Russian writer Nikolai Vasilyevich Gogol from his *Petersburg Notes* of 1836, which succinctly reflects the very essence of the subject of folk stage dance:

"Look, folk dances appear in different corners of the world: the Spaniard dances not like the Swiss, the Scotsman, like the Tenier's German, the Russian not like the French, like the Asian. Even in the provinces of the same state, the dance changes. A northern Russian does not dance like a Ukrainian, like a southern Slav, like a Pole, like a Finn. One has a speaking dance, while the other has an emotionless one; one is mad and riotous, while the other is calm; one is tense and heavy, the other is the other light and airy. Where did this variety of dances come from? It was born from the character of the peoples, their life and way of living.

A people who has lived a proud and warring life express the same pride in their dance; among a people who are careless and free, the same boundless will and poetic carelessness are reflected in the dances; the people of a fiery climate fill their national dance with the same bliss, passion and jealousy."

Folk-stage dance is a folk dance in all its stage refractions. Under "stage" one should understand a character dance, which is an interpretation of folk dance or the use of its elements in a ballet performance, and under "folk" - its national fundamental principle.

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