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ŠTAJERIŠ (STEIERISCH) AMONG SLOVENIANS

This article analyses the *štajeriš (Steierisch)*, the dance that played an important role in the past within the dance repertoire of the Slovenian people. Today, it exists among Slovenians only when one seeks to present the past. The paper deals with the choreological image and some dance anthropological perspectives of the *štajeriš*, as reflected in the material kept at the archive of the Institute of Ethnomusicology, and from the author's own observations.

Keywords: *štajeriš (Steierisch)*, dance, Slovenia, historical, ethno-choreological and dance anthropological aspects

The *štajeriš (Steierisch)* is a traditional dance, which is (or was) present in the Eastern Alps.¹ The major part of this area is located within today's Austria, but this phenomenon is much broader. The *Steierisch* is a form of the courtship dances of this area that are usually called *Ländler*. The name and the dance *Steierisch* is used not only in Austria and Slovenia, but also in Germany (in Bavaria), Switzerland, Italy (in Friuli), and some parts of Croatia. It is not known to other European nations, although they have dances in which a choreological connection with the *Steierisch* can be perceived, because their courtship dances contain similar elements. In terms of choreology and morphology, the largest number of associations is aroused by the motifs connected with the woman turning under the man's raised arm, or both turning while holding raised hands. In addition, certain dance elements of modern popular dances (e.g., the foxtrot) are reminiscent of the *Steierisch* – of course, not taking into account the musical component of the dance.

¹ The text is based on the author's comprehensive doctoral dissertation "Štajeriš na Slovenskem: Etnokoreološki in plesno-antropološki vidiki", defended at the University of Nova Gorica (2007).

Survey of references to the *štajeriš* in Slovenia

Transformation from one form into another, mutual influence, and borrowing of individual features are typical of the *Steierisch*. Undoubtedly, it originates from old courtship dances; according to Wolfram (1975:25), the *Steierisch* in Austria is an independent form of the *Ländler*. Even the descriptions of the Slovenian *visoki rej* (High Dance) (or some of its segments) suggest that the *visoki rej* is the potential predecessor of the *štajeriš* or a dance similar to it (cf. Ramovš 1988). Because of the historicity and nature of this phenomenon, its dating is vague. In Slovenia, the earliest dating refers to pictorial sources and scant written sources from the 17th century, on the basis of which the existence of the *štajeriš* cannot be confirmed with certainty. The source that is considered as the oldest was published in 1689 in Janez Vajkard Valvasor's *Die Ehre des Hertzogthums Crain* (The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola) – that is, the copperplate depicting Carniolans dancing (see Figure 1). However, most likely this is a depiction of a courtship dance like the *štajeriš*, not necessarily the *štajeriš* itself.



Figure 1: The part of Valvasor's copperplate depicting Carniolans dancing (1689:279)

According to sources, the *štajeriš* was well known among the Slovenians in the 19th and a part of the 20th centuries, when the dance began to die out as a living tradition. At the beginning of the 20th century, the campaign of the *Odbor za nabiranje slovenskih narodnih pesmi* (OSNP, Committee for the

Collection of Slovenian Folk Songs) was initiated; this was part of the project for collecting folk songs that covered all of Austria (Kunej 2006:77-79; Hois 2004-2005). To this end, the "Povpraševalna pola o narodnih pesmih, narodni godbi in narodnih plesih" (Questionnaire on Folk Songs, Music, and Dances) was sent out in 1907 and 1908. A reply from Schiefing/Škofiče provides information that the *štajeriš* is an especially interesting, but also increasingly rare dance. Similarly, in the 1909 book *Vojvodina Koroška* (The Duchy of Carinthia), the historian Matko Potočnik established in the chapter on folk culture that the *štajeriš* "was correctly danced even 30 years ago, but today young people no longer know it because they usually dance too many polkas and waltzes" (1909:164).

It was not until associates of the Institute of Ethnomusicology in Ljubljana started carrying out field research that reliable testimonies about the *štajeriš* were obtained from various parts of Slovenian ethnic territory. Especially people who were born in the 19th or the first years of the 20th century remembered the *štajeriš*, and knew how to dance it or at least describe it. According to the data, it was popular and alive among the Slovenian rural population up until the First World War.²

Most of the dance notations – that is, sufficiently detailed descriptions and notations in Laban kinetography, on the basis of which movement could be reconstructed and analyzed – were created as late as in the second half of the 20th century. They were created using the exploratory method, in which the transcribers made records of the *štajeriš*, based on the memories of those who had danced it or only observed it in their youth. The reasons for the lack of film (and video) material lie not only in the great financial costs connected with the purchase and use of early film (and later video) equipment, but also in the fact that the tradition almost completely died out. The last records (in Laban kinetography) were made in the 1990s. These were not made directly from "former" performers, but on the basis of performances by folk-dance groups. The film or video material is limited to the past two decades, when the *štajeriš* was performed only within folk-dance groups following their own aesthetics. In addition, a few examples were recorded on film for a documentary series titled *Slovenski ljudski plesi* (Slovenian Folk Dances), for which Mirko Ramovš prepared the screenplay.

Initially, Slovenian ethnochoreology (represented by France and Tončka Marolt) rejected the *štajeriš* as a folk dance because they perceived it

² Therefore it has been determined by Slovenian ethnochoreologists as one of the *folk dances* (*ljudski plesi*) – dances that were typical of Slovenian ethnic territory up until the Second World War. The attention of ethnochoreologists focused on the inhabitants of the rural countryside and less on other classes of the Slovenian population, with the argument that, up until the Second World War, the majority of the Slovenian population was rural (Ramovš 1992:7). Today, folk dances no longer exist in their "primary life", but only in their "secondary or imitated life" (Nahachewsky 2001:18).

as foreign and thus unworthy of study. Later researchers' opinions changed. In 1960, Marija Šuštar wrote an article "Oblike plesa štajeriš na Slovenskem" (Forms of the Steierisch in Slovenia), in which six notations of the dance in Laban kinetography were published for the first time. This is the first study dedicated specifically to the *štajeriš*. Today, it is somewhat out of date because it did not take into account numerous data and dance notations, which were obtained in the following years through field research conducted by various experts studying folk tradition. The ethnochoreologist Mirko Ramovš was the first to treat the *štajeriš* in the same way as other Slovenian folk dances. In his anthology of Slovenian folk dances *Plesat me pelji* (Ramovš 1980), six versions of the *štajeriš* were published. In addition, this dance received a place in the author's extensive introduction. After 1980, increasingly more notations of the *štajeriš* were published in various publications on the folk culture of individual Slovenian areas (Korat 1980, Ravnikar 1980, Košuta 1985, Ropoša 1996). It was presented more thoroughly in a seven-volume series titled *Polka je ukazana* (Ramovš 1992-2000), in which it was given attention in the introductory theoretical chapters in addition to 40 versions being published, mostly in their entirety.

In the 21st century, the *štajeriš* is no longer alive in Slovenia as a folk dance, although it can be seen in staged folk-dance presentations performed by folk-dance groups. It also occurs as one of the dances included in the "Slovenska plesna hiša" (Slovenian Dance House) project. As of 2008, the *štajeriš* among Slovenians could be seen only as a representation of the past.

The term *štajeriš*

With regard to the fact that the *štajeriš* also developed in the area inhabited by Slovenians, the naming of the dance is somewhat confusing (i.e., *štajeriš*, *štajriš*); the name clearly points to its German origin (*Steierisch*). A completely Slovenian name for this dance is not known; the closest is the name *štajerc* (Styrian, m.) or sometimes also *štajerka* (Styrian, f.), which, however, is probably only the product of a dance notator. The name *štajerski ples* (Styrian dance) also appears in 19th-century surveys and in some records from the 20th century. In several cases, one can observe that the dance was performed *po štajersko* (the Styrian way) (Germ. *in der steirischen Manier/auf der steirischen Art*). Even today, the people of Resia (Italy) reply in a similar way when asked what they are dancing. The Resians would never say they are dancing a Resian dance, but they say they are dancing *po rezijansko* (the Resian way), which denotes only the manner of performing any dance or the only dance they perform. This leads to the conclusion that folk dance does not necessarily need a name because it is danced "our way" and represents the predominant form of dance in a given community. Accordingly, it can be

assumed that even the *štajeriš* as a widespread dance originally did not have a special name, and that it only later acquired a foreign name.

That this dance was well known among the Slovenians is also demonstrated by the large number of *poskočnice* (Alpine dance quatrains) that were a constituent part of the *štajeriš*. Various Slovenian terms have been used for these Alpine dance quatrains, which usually do not suggest a connection with the German name. On the other hand, the names for the *štajeriš* only rarely indicate a Slovenian word. Such names are *droblan* and *droblanček*, which are, however, also used for the polka or the method of taking small steps, or the name *hwače sukajo* (rolling pants), which is more of a name denoting an individual figure. Slovenians probably borrowed the name *sklava* or *šklava* from the Friulians, who used this name for the dances borrowed from the Slovenians. The predominating use of the name *štajeriš* clearly demonstrates the assimilation of a foreign name, which may also be the result of using German as an official language. On the basis of the material available, it is impossible to establish whether a Slovenian name existed for the *štajeriš*; the name could have existed, but been lost, while the dance was still used and later acquired a foreign name.

About dance – ethnochoreological aspects

The largest part of the material on the *štajeriš* in Slovenia refers to the 20th century, and most of this is kept at the Institute of Ethnomusicology. In addition to various data, the archive also contains 95 dance notations (mostly in Laban kinetography), on the basis of which a morphological-structural analysis of the *štajeriš* was conducted. In terms of its choreological features, it can be divided into three groups – that is, the couple, threesome, and group *štajeriš*. The predominant form in Slovenia was the couple's *štajeriš*, in which its courtship role was at the forefront. With the increasing number of participating dancers, this role has decreased and, at the same time, greater emphasis is placed on the dance skills.

The couple's *štajeriš*

In the couple's *štajeriš*, the initial positions of the dancers are front, sideways, or one after the other. In combination with holding hands, whereby a couple can hold one hand, both hands, not hold hands or uses a handkerchief instead, these moves can form combinations of initial dance positions. The number of possible dance positions is the largest in the couple's *štajeriš* – that is, eighteen. By analyzing the notations, 89 motifs of the couple's *štajeriš* were determined; these were divided into three groups. The largest share is represented by the motifs of turning an individual dancer in a couple, or both dancers, while holding raised hands (57 motifs, or 64%). The second group

consists of the motifs of a couple turning around a common axis (15 motifs, or 17%). The last group is approximately the same size (17 motifs, or 19%) and contains all the other motifs that do not belong in the first two groups. The structural analysis revealed that, as a rule, the *štajeriš* is multi-figural.

In Slovenia, the number of figures is smaller than in Austrian versions, which can have even twenty or more figures (even up to 37). According to Wolfram (1975:33), these were a product of folklorism. Slovenian notations demonstrate that the *štajeriš* is most often composed of four figures; the largest number of figures known is twelve (*štajeriš* from Zgornji Tuštanj, archive of the Institute of Ethnomusicology, sign. GNI PI 261). International ethnochoreological literature primarily contains notations of individual examples of the *Steierisch*, whereas a choreological analysis can be found only in Austrian literature. Wolfram (1975:31-32) defines the *Steierisch* only at the morphological level, where he distinguishes between continuous figures (as the older form) and interrupted figures, in which movement is no longer continuous (as a more recent form that was created mainly under the influence of stage performances). International literature provides no detailed analysis of the existing motifs used in the *Steierisch*, although the motif as a unit is used when describing the *Steierisch*.

The analysis of the Slovenian material demonstrated that the couple's *štajeriš* is composed of one or several figures. An individual figure can be composed of repetitions of one motif (a single-motif figure), or the performance can also contain a sequence of various motifs (a multi-motif figure). Single-motif figures are usually easier to perform and their movement appears continuous in contrast to multi-motif figures, which are more difficult to perform and whose movement is often less fluid. In terms of the structure of the *štajeriš*, this division indicates certain similarities with the Austrian division made at the morphological level.

Except for Croatian sources (Ivančan 1963:272), available international sources do not mention the performance of the *Steierisch* using a handkerchief, and therefore it can be claimed that its use is specific to Slovenia and Croatia. The handkerchief was used when performing certain figures in order to make their performance possible or to avoid too much physical contact during the dance. In terms of choreology and morphology, the Slovenian *štajeriš* is similar to the *Steierisch* danced elsewhere. Following a comparison with international material, it can be established that a large number of single-motif figures is typical of the Slovenian *štajeriš*.

In Slovenia, the primary and secondary life (cf. Nahachewsky 2001:18) of the *štajeriš* was usually not simultaneous, but successive, which resulted in the fact that it died out in archaic forms in some places. In this way, the stage life of the dance did not influence its existence and form within traditional folk-dance frameworks; when its transfer to the stage began it had mostly

already been forgotten in the folk-dance tradition. The same or similar motifs in complex multi-motif figures of the Slovenian *štajeriš* can also usually be found in the Austrian examples; this is why it seems that these are more a result of borrowing than innovation by Slovenians themselves. Although the motifs of the couple turning around a common axis also appear in the international material – that is, in multi-motif figures – Marija Šuštar's assumption that this simplified version of the *štajeriš* could be specific to Slovenia (Šuštar 1960:87) is being borne out.

The threesome *štajeriš*

Two initial positions are typical of the threesome *štajeriš* – that is, the low closed circle position ("nizka medsebojna drža v zaprtem krogu"; dancers form a circle holding hands held low) and the threesome side-cross position ("bočno-križna drža v troje"; position in which the man holds the women's outside hands, and the women hold inside hands behind the man's back or in front of him). Fourteen different motifs were defined with emphasis on a comprehensive overview of the motif's performance. The threesome *štajeriš* is mostly single-figured, and the figure can be single- or multi-motif. Compared to Austrian threesome forms, the Slovenian ones are simpler; in addition to the assisted flip, the passing of a dancer under the raised held hands of the other two dancers and turning at the end (*previjanje*) is most typical. The "capturing" of couples is unknown in the Slovenian form of the threesome *štajeriš* and, similarly, the opening of a closed circle of three dancers appears in only one out of thirteen examples that were analysed. On the whole, the Slovenian forms are simpler and less sophisticated than the Austrian forms.

The group *štajeriš*

With regard to the notations of the *štajeriš* in which more than three dancers participate, it seems appropriate to form a special category of the group *štajeriš*. This involves dance elements that are performed to the *štajeriš* melody and do not belong to other types of the dance. International literature usually does not discuss these elements as a special type of the *Steierisch*, but, for example, classifies them as *Treffner Tanz* (Fillafer 1997:201). That there is some sort of delineation between the two dance types is also demonstrated by their role: group forms primarily aim at displaying the skills of an individual and the group, whereas the courtship character of the *štajeriš* that is typical of the couple's forms can no longer be observed. The separateness of the group forms is also demonstrated by the name, because these forms are often no longer called *štajeriš*, but have different names, such as *vrečo šivat* (sewing the bag) and so on.

Performance style

The performance style does not influence the structure of the *štajeriš*, but has an important effect on the dance performance. The biggest differences are in the steps. In a specific motif, steps can include regular steps, light running, steps using the front part of the foot, running using the front part of the foot, rocking steps, jumps using bended knees, steps in which the first one in the beat is accented and already changing to the waltz three-step, all the way up to the waltz step. Usually the style does not change during the dance, even in the multi-figure *štajeriš*; deviations are connected only with extremely different movements of a couple in a given figure, which alters the style. Foot stomping is typical of the *štajeriš*. In the material analyzed, it occurs in three out of five notations; at the same time, it occurs almost without exception in all the figures or, on the other hand, not at all. Stylistic differences between some couple's versions also lie in the hand movements.

In general, stylistic variety decreases with an increasing number of performers. In some notations of the threesome *štajeriš*, the tendency to approach the typical waltz step is still visible. However, this is no longer typical of the group forms because their style is reduced to light running or walking. In the threesome and group *štajeriš*, there is no foot stomping at the end of a melody or figure, because the duration of a figure depends on the number of participants. However, its typical feature is the foot stomping of the lead dancer or couple at the beginning of a figure, when the direction of the movement (or path) changes for some of the participants. In the threesome and group *štajeriš*, weaker stylistic variety is also evident in the hand movements.

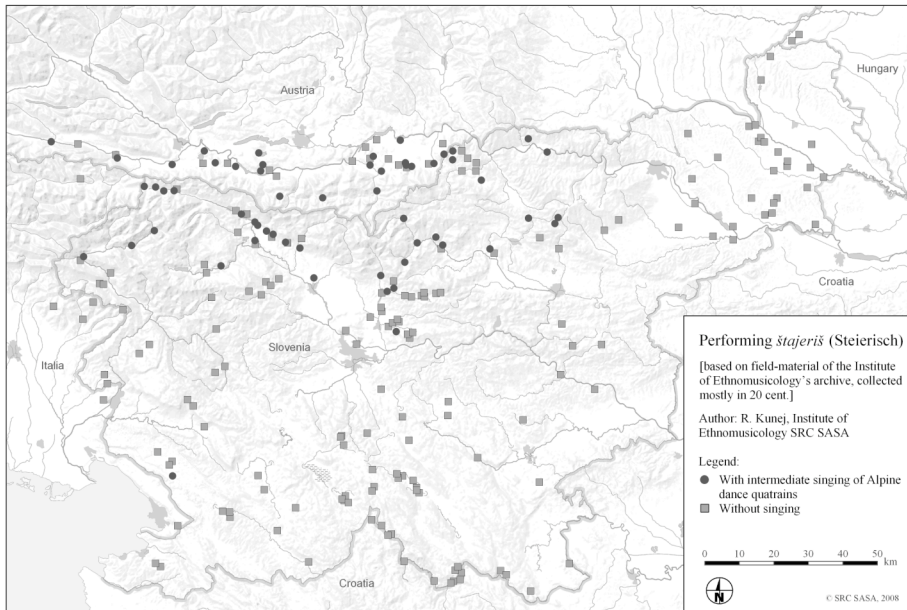
From dance to dancer – some dance anthropological perspectives

According to the classification by Ewa Dahlig (1990), the *Steierisch* as a couple's folk dance belongs to the group of partial syncretism, because dancers and musicians participate in its performance. However, with regard to the inclusion of Alpine dance quatrains in performance practice, one could speak of pure syncretism, because the dancer is at the same time the singer of these Alpine dance quatrains and, in some cases, he or she must even move around the circle in addition to singing.

The *štajeriš* without singing of the Alpine dance quatrains is classified (like most other Slovenian folk dances) under dances with instrumental musical accompaniment. If the performance also includes the singing of Alpine dance quatrains, the dance is classified under alternating sung and instrumental dances. In the future, an in-depth study of the syncretism of the lyrics, melody, and movements in the *štajeriš* would demand the multidisciplinary cooperation of folklore specialists of various profiles,

because only in this way could a clearer picture of the syncretism of this phenomenon be provided.

So far, Slovenian ethnomusicologists have not devoted much attention to the *štajeriš* in their studies, although it has been relatively well known among folk musicians and the Institute's archive keeps several audio recordings of its melodies. It is known that, in a specific area, only one, or in some cases, two *štajeriš* melodies have been established. Their typical feature is the pickup measure, during which the dancers prepare to dance or shift their weight from the foot with which they start the dance. The melodies usually consist of eight measures that can form a 16-measure whole through repetition or modulation.



Map 1: Performing folk dance *štajeriš*

Štajeriš with Alpine dance quatrains

In some places, singing Alpine dance quatrains was a constituent part of the *štajeriš*. Map 1 takes into account the archive information and shows where the *štajeriš* with or without intermediate singing of Alpine dance quatrains was performed. The map confirms Valens Vodušek's thesis (1960:59) about the area in which Alpine dance quatrains once had the function of proper dance songs. As an alternating sung and instrumental dance, the *štajeriš* was preserved the longest – that is, until the late 1960s – within the wedding context.

Regarding its textual aspect, an Alpine dance quatrain represents a complete whole, used to provide a single complete idea. This is basically a creation by an individual intended only for a single performance, but it could have passed into more frequent use and thus become everyone's property – that is, fixed and shared among a wider group. More than pure improvisation of a text to a specific melodic base, this involved selecting appropriate formulas within already existing Alpine dance quatrains and adapting them to the given situation. Folk songs were part of people's lives and, at the same time, reflected the image of these lives, which is also evident from these songs' content. This is so strongly expressed by the Alpine dance quatrains probably precisely because of the interplay between the individual and the collective, which is a marked characteristics of Alpine dance quatrains.

In Slovenia, the ritual function of dance has been preserved the longest at weddings. Concordantly, even in the 20th century, performing the *štajeriš* with Alpine dance quatrains was part of the wedding ritual in some parts of Slovenian ethnic territory. Its role was most distinctive in Carinthia, but it was also used in part in western Pohorje and Paški Kozjak, as well as the Mislinja, Šalek, and the Upper Savinja Valleys. The opening wedding dance and removing the bride's garland played a special role.



Figure 2: Wedding *štajeriš* at Kajžar's in Šentanel, 1959.

During the opening dance, when the *camar* (the unmarried organizer of the wedding) danced with three female dancers – the *mati ta šroka* (the wife of the *starešina*; i.e., the older organizer of the wedding), the bride, and the unmarried bridesmaid – the *štajeriš* was performed with Alpine dance quatrains in which the content was fixed, but the lyrics were not. As regards choreography, the *štajeriš* with a ritual function was relatively simple because of emphasis on Alpine dance quatrains, as well as because the dancers were determined by their function in the wedding – namely, they were defined according to their relationship with the newlyweds as the most important figures of the event. The only performer who was not selected according to this principle was the *camar* (the bridegroom's representative), who had to be single as well as a skilled singer and dancer, because he was some sort of a wedding organizer in charge of socializing. In addition, his task was to teach the bridesmaid to sing so that they could successfully lead the ritual dance together.

When the importance of this ritual began to decrease, its form and structure also started to collapse, which led to a phase in which the dance was opened by the bride and groom themselves, and the *štajeriš* could be replaced by the waltz. According to sources, the opening dance in an eight-like figure was mainly performed with the mazarurka step, but the intermediate singing suggests that the mazarurka could also have been substituted by the *štajeriš*. This is confirmed by sources for Solčava and Železna Kapla/Eisenkappel, which, however, do not discuss the dance itself. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that this kind of *štajeriš* was simple because, during the performance, the couple had to move around the circle in order to trace out an eight-like figure on the dance floor. In the choreographic sense, there is not much data on the *štajeriš* as a ritual dance. The notators were more interested in the sung (or conceptual) part and the ritual role of the dance than in the dance (or movement) alone.

The position of the *štajeriš* as the opening wedding dance also reflects the Christian cultural environment of Slovenians. Crossing the dance floor before the dance starts is perceived as a distinctly Christian feature, emphasized by the opening Alpine dance quatrain that informs the people that everything begins and ends with God. However, it seems that this act reflects even older, pre-Christian elements – that is, some sort of apotropaic acts used to avert bad luck and protect the newlyweds. This is why the bridegroom's representative opens the dance. However, he does not dance with the bride, but with the *mati ta šroka*, who in some way symbolizes the bride's new status of a married woman. He also dances with the bridesmaid, who was usually single and of the same age as the bride, and can be recognized as a symbol of the bride's previous status. Through the *camar*'s three dance partners (*mati ta šroka*, bride, and bridesmaid), the ritual of passing from one life stage to another (from single life to marriage) is manifested in reverse.

The most important wedding ritual that has always been connected with dance, in some places also with the *štajeriš*, was removing the garland, which usually took place at midnight or at the end of the wedding. It was called *krenc dol rajat* (in Rosental/Rož, Podjuna i.e. Jaun Valley, and the Mežica Valley), *krenc dol rajat* (in the Mislinja Valley), *krenčk dol rajat* (in Solčava), and *krencl dol plesat* (in Paški Kozjak), where all these names refer to "dancing the garland off", while *krancples* (in western Styria) means "the garland dance". This dance was usually carried out in the form of a sung dialogue between the *camar* and his dance partner (the *mati ta široka*, bride, and bridesmaid), during which they danced the *štajeriš*. The major part of it was taken up by the singing and dancing of the *camar* and bridesmaid as a couple, but at the same time the bride and the groom also danced the *štajeriš*. However, they did not participate in singing the Alpine dance quatrains, whose main content was the *camar*'s efforts to gain the bridesmaid's garland. This ritual also demonstrates the twisted chronology that ritual events can have because three women dance with the *camar* and they all have different status, through which the symbol of the rite of passage can be seen.

We can conclude that the reason for the relatively long presence of the *štajeriš* in folk practice lies in its inclusion (together with the Alpine dance quatrains) in weddings and, on the other hand, in its relatively simple and uncomplicated performance forms used on this occasion. However, it seems that it was mainly its ritual function that kept it alive for so long. Of course, we cannot overlook the importance of Alpine dance quatrains that bore hidden messages (concerning norms and religious character), but also entertained people and remained in their memories longer than the dance itself.

Nonverbal communication of the štajeriš

In the Slovenian folk dance tradition, the *štajeriš* that included the singing of Alpine dance quatrains represented an exception to the rule, because it enabled verbal communication between the participants. With regard to the large number of recorded Alpine dance quatrains and their content, it can be concluded that this form of communication was popular and widespread in the area where the dance was performed in the alternating sung and instrumental form. However, like any other dance, *štajeriš* also conveys messages at the nonverbal level. These messages originate from its individual figures, the relationship between the participants, and movement through space. The *štajeriš* can become a medium through which a person's personality and understanding of themselves, others, and the world around them is reflected.

One of the clearest nonverbal messages is the dance position. The *štajeriš* offers a diverse range of positions, from very formal ones that do not allow any special physical contact between the dancers (or there may even be abso-

lutely no contact) to those in which close contact is already made possible by the initial dance position. The positions are only a starting point for further development of dance moves and figures. In addition to rare Slovenian folk dances – that is, *kovtre šivat* (sewing quilts), *tkalečka* (the weaver), and *Aj zelena je vsa gora* (Oh, the Mountain Is All Green) – the use of the handkerchief also occurs in the *štajeriš*. The handkerchief is used to make certain figures possible, or to avoid overly close body contact in certain figures. However, affection between a couple, the desire for physical closeness, and sex appeal can also be suggested by the closeness created by a look.

With its movement, the *štajeriš* also enabled a display of power, dance capabilities, and skills. The man displayed his skills by leading the woman through skilful and complicated turns, whereas her skills were displayed by reacting correctly to this, and by allowing the man to lead her. An exclusively male figure that demonstrated the man's skills was the assisted flip, whereas dancing with a litre or glass of wine on her head was an exclusively female figure.

In the *štajeriš*, the dancer's temperament and character was expressed best in the performance style; the foot stomping in particular expressed the performer's vivacity, and sometimes also whooping or whistling. Nothing is known about how (if at all) social differences within a community were reflected in the *štajeriš*, because there is no information on this subject in sources. With regard to folk dance in general, Ramovš (2003:125-126) establishes that social differentiation was expressed much less than expected. Of course, it must be taken into account that this involves social differentiation within one ethnic group that generally belonged to the same social class – the rural population.

In Slovenian couple's folk dance, the man normally leads the couple; this is why a good female dance partner is one who allows the man to lead her. However, the structural analysis of the *štajeriš* shows that, as a rule, the woman is the one who first makes a certain figure to which the man responds with the same or a similar figure – as if the woman is inviting and seducing him by turning, to which the man responds in the same way. Proceeding from the analysis of the *štajeriš*, Slovenians prefer right turns or walking right in a circle, whereas left turns or walking left represent exceptions and opposition to the right turns.

Couple's forms of the *štajeriš* seem especially well-suited to the Slovenians. In the *štajeriš*, a dancer was able to perform individually and collectively at the same time. By selecting his own order of figures, he (and a couple) was able to function as an individual, but at the same time to create a collective whole, tuned by joint foot stomping at the end of figures, and by participating in the Alpine dance quatrains, which were performed standing up or by simultaneously moving around the circle. In addition, the dancers

could even sing together, although characteristic Slovenian part-singing only rarely appears in the Alpine dance quatrains.

Between tradition and innovation

The primary purpose of the *štajeriš* as part of spontaneous or planned social occasions transformed into a presentation of the "former tradition" on stage in many of the programs by numerous Slovenian folk-dance groups. Therefore, for this kind of dance, the use of the term *folklore dance* is more appropriate. The *štajeriš* as a staged folk dance has been transformed from a dance "serving its own purpose" into a dance "for others", in which it has had to yield to the demands of public performance on stage. We cannot overlook the fact that the *štajeriš* is one of the folk dances that folk-dance groups most frequently include in their programs today.³ The change in the dance context demanded certain adaptations; therefore, because of its specific features, the staged folk dance can no longer be authentic, but only an approximation of its original. Borrowing the proto-text (i.e., the original or folk dance) and creating a metatext (the folklore dance) can be active or passive. When a folk dance is planned to be presented as the closest possible approximation to its original and is imitated in all of its original elements and the relationships between them, this kind of attempt can be defined as a *passive* manner of borrowing. On the other hand, the *active* manner is characterized by using only certain components, while the others are noticeably altered.

The method of presenting a folk dance on stage depends more on the producer of the performance than on the performers themselves. Generational differences are evident, primarily in the method of transferring the folk dance onto the stage, because younger producers do not have any reservations regarding the presentation and staged reshaping of the dance, and tend to be more liberal and open-minded. Their performances contain a considerably greater degree of the active manner of transfer, whereas the passive manner is used much more by older producers. In folk-dance groups, singing of Alpine dance quatrains is done almost without any textual or melodic changes; the dance is subjected to transformations a great deal more, but to a lesser extent than some other Slovenian couple's folk dances (e.g., the *zibenšrit* or the *nojkatoliš*). The result of stage rules and public performance in general is that the couples face the audience or are turned in such a way that the audience can see the dance, which demonstrates its transformation from a dance for the performers' own pleasure into a dance to be admired and enjoyed by the audience. In addition, on stage, the dance experiences tempo transformations because the performances are usually faster. The speed of performance also

³ Folk-dance groups that do not include the *štajeriš* in their repertoire are relatively rare and mainly involve groups with a program that presents the dances of their local environment.

depends on the dancers' age. The *štajeriš* performed on stage reflects a much more uniform image than what it had as a folk dance; in addition, it has become more fixed. Regardless of the active or passive method of transferring the *štajeriš* onto the stage, the producers of the performances within the framework of folk-dance groups wish to highlight its motional variety, whereas, to date, the great variety of Alpine dance quatrains has been largely overlooked.



Figure 3: *Štajeriš* with handkerchief by the "France Marolt" Student's Folk Dance Group, photo: M. Krivic, 2005.

Today, the *štajeriš* also appears as one of the folk dances taught and danced in the "Slovenska plesna hiša" (Slovenian Dance House), a project established several years ago by the "Folk Slovenija" Cultural Society, which seeks to promote Slovenian folk dance and instrumental music. The Society organizes several dance workshops per year, where dance teachers teach different Slovenian folk dances to audiences to live music (usually played by one of the ethno-revival groups). Dance teachers often also teach the *štajeriš* because it seems simple enough even for not well-skilled dancers. At the same time, the *štajeriš* allows combination of different melodies with different dance figures that do not originate from the same area. In such cases, a local identity is taken away from the *štajeriš* and a new one is created. In my opinion, the aim of dance workshops to "introduc[e] folk dance steps and other dance

knowledge and their applications to non-stage situations such as weddings parties and other festive parties" (Pettan 2004:95) is not achieved, because the *štajeriš* is not visible outside of dance workshops and stage performances. It appears that this project does not have a considerable effect on the dance revitalization of the *štajeriš*, although a new role has been assigned to it in this way – a cognitive, cultural, and national role.

It can be concluded that the *štajeriš* in Slovenian ethnic territory was a dance that allowed improvisation: through the free choice of figures (except in certain cases, when it played a ritual role) at the nonverbal level, and through Alpine dance quatrains as its specific feature at the verbal level. The possibility of free choice that adapts to the movement of an individual is a factor that has had a decisive impact on its popularity. Through social and cultural changes over time, the context of the dance has been transformed, because in its imitated secondary life in the second half of the 20th century, this following its primary life, the dance that used to play an entertainment or ritual role appeared in the new context of presenting "former" Slovenian folk dance "for others", and no longer "for itself".

Instead of a conclusion

Although the *štajeriš* was a well-known dance among the Slovenian population in the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, it has never been considered as a part of national identity. It has never become a "typical Slovenian dance", which in the past happened with the *potrčani ples* (stomping dance) or which still applies to the polka. Perhaps this is the result of the fact that it was too European and thus could not be a specific Slovenian feature. Or perhaps it was too Slovenian, too general, widespread, and well known to be able to meet the criteria to place it on the national pedestal, although, through it and in it, Slovenians expressed themselves and their relationship towards the world, society and culture.

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ŠTAJERIŠ U SLOVENACA

SAŽETAK

Autorica analizira ples *štajeriš* u Sloveniji. Započinje s pregledom izvora, a potom predstavlja koreološke značajke ovoga plesa. S obzirom na broj plesača razlikuje tri tipa *štajeriša*: parovni, u trojkama i skupni. Za svaki od tih tipova iznosi koreološke posebnosti, a potom analizira raznolikosti stilova izvođenja. Predstavlja usto i sinkretičnost plesa, glazbe i pjevanih tekstova u *štajerišu*, čime se ovaj ples smješta u skupinu plesova s izmjenjivanjem vokalne i instrumentalne pratnje. U nastavku autorica analizira obrednu uloga *štajeriša* u nagdašnjim svadbenim običajima. Pozornost posvećuje i njegovoj komunikacijskoj funkciji na verbalnoj i neverbalnoj razini. Na kraju ocrtava sliku današnjeg fenomena, kada *štajeriš* više ne živi među ljudima nego se oživljuje kako bi se prikazala prošlost i popularizirala slovenska narodna plesna baština.

Ključne riječi: *štajeriš*, ples, Slovenija, povijesni, etnokoreološki i plesni antropološki aspekti