

OPINION

by **Prof Anelia Yaneva, PhD**

South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Institute for Arts Studies at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

on dissertation work for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor

Professional field 8.3 Music and Dance Art

Doctoral program "Choreography"

Author: doctoral candidate Ventseslav Mihaylov Nedelchev

dissertation title: **Characteristic Features of the Hartsoy Dances and Games**

Academic supervisor: Prof Daniela Dzheneva, PhD

The doctoral student Venceslav Mihailov Nedelchev was enrolled in the Department of Choreography of AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" with a period of study from 21.10.2021 to 21.10.2024. He was discharged with the right to defense on 04.12.2023.

The candidate Ventseslav Nedelchev began his professional career as a dancer in the folklore dance theatre "Nayden Kirov" (1991-1995) and in the dance ensemble of AMDFA, where he also completed a Master's degree in Bulgarian Folk Choreography. After graduating, he was a choreographer of folklore ensemble "Ruschukliycha" at the Municipal Children's Center for Culture and Art - Ruse, and in 2011 he established the Bulgarian Folk Club "Nashentsi" in his hometown of Ruse. He has realized 14 stage works, some of which have been awarded national prizes. He also works as a sound engineer at Radio Ruse and at BNT-Ruse, where he helps digitize the film archive and still consults on the inventory of folklore archives.

His dissertation – *Characteristic Features of the Hartsoy Dances and Games* – is dedicated to a little-studied topic. It consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, contributions, a bibliography, an list of field observations and appendices with a total volume of 205 pages, of which 178 pages are main text and 3 tabular and photographic appendices, including his earlier work on Babinden. The bibliography includes 97 printed sources, 38 digital video archives (some of which are comparisons between different dance styles) and 27 field studies.

The dissertation work is very well structured, from the general to the particular – he traces the way of life, mentality and customs of the Hartsoy ethnographic group (chapter 1) and analyzes the influence on the dance folklore of the Hartsoy in two directions – on the one hand, the refugees from South Dobrudzha (chapter 2); on the other – the immigrants from the Balkan, who introduced the Kapan and the Thracian dances and games to the dance folklore of the Hartsoy (chapter 3).

The migration processes from Southern Dobrudzhja (around the First World War and the Balkan Wars), which influenced the dancing methods of the Hartsoy, are analyzed in the second chapter, tracing in detail the interrelationships and influences on the dance folklore of the Hartsoy - "Brazaya"; "Kukove"; "Buyonets"; the Rachenitsa as a ring-dance, considered "*the clearest evidence of the influence of Dobrudzha refugees in the dance folklore of the Hartsoy*". The author comments on

"Rachenitsa with 3-time repetition phrase" and **"Rachenitsa in 7-time phrase"**, their specifics of performance and how much it is influenced by the Dobrudzha Rachenitsa as a ring-dance. The author also analyzes the "Shumenska" wedding game from the village of Trastenik, commune Ivanovo, where figures brought by refugees from Southern Dobrudzha, such as "fins"... "Rachenitsa in threes" can be found, as well as the ring-dance "Chergiloto" brought to the Hartsoy village of Staro Selo by Grebentsi. Important are the conclusions of the doctoral student that *"However, in order to make them local, the Hartsoy interpret them. They omit the final headlong movement typical for Kukove, or Danetsa for the Lazarka, change the hand grip or the size of the accompanying melody from the "Kokonska", turning it into a 7-time rachenitsa"*.

The third chapter discusses the migration processes at the end of the 19th and the first 4 decades of the 20th century, when the Balkanjiy from Veliko Tarnovo, Elena, Gabrovo and Sevlievo, as well as a population from southern Bulgaria, arrived in the Hartsoy villages around Ruse, Byala and Razgrad. The author seeks interrelationships between the different specifics of dancing, which is also supported by the appendixes presented in tabular form. This leads to the conclusion that "Kutsata", "Katarinkinata", "Kostensko", "Oh, left - oh, right", the game of song "Kavo soi horo izvilo" and in particular "Zelena buyna morava" are Balkanjiy and additionally brought into the Hartsoy ethnographic group. The influence of the Kapan ethnographic group and the Thracian settlers is also discussed. These analyses and comparisons are valuable both for their careful attention to detail and for the compelling evidence that the PhD student presents.

In the Conclusion, the doctoral student emphasizes similarities and differences in the musical material, in the dance phrases and figures, in the different ways of dancing, distinguishing the Hartsoy from the rest. To arrive at the statement that *"The Hartsoy take what they like and what corresponds to their character, but they interpret it, making it their own, local. In this way, they create a specific repertoire of dances and games, with characteristic marks of samples from the Balkans, Southern Dobrudzha, Ludogorie and Eastern Thrace"*.

Up to this point, the dance folklore of the Hartsoy ethnographic group has not been the subject of special research. There are individual attempts, such as the TV show "Luturki", in which it is only hinted at, and two author's productions based on the dancing methods of the Hartsoy ethnographic group – they are by the choreographer Rumyan Zanev in the production "Hartsoy Dance" of the Kapan Ensemble, Razgrad and to the doctoral student Bogdan Donev from AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" in the production "Hartsoy get married".

That is why the comparative analysis made by Ventseslav Nedelchev with samples from neighboring ethnographic groups, as well as the inferred influence of the newcomers on the dances of the Hartsoy, is particularly valuable. This is also one of the main contributions of the dissertation work.

Among the other contributions is the field study of the dances of the ethnographic group in the villages around Ruse, Byala and Razgrad, as well as their origin – local or adopted. The doctoral

candidate convincingly proves that a large part of the existing dances in the Hartsoy groups were imported, but interpreted through the prism of the local customs, which is reflected in the style and character of their performance.

The **abstract** corresponds in meaning and content to what is written in the dissertation.

Four articles have been published on the subject of the dissertation:

1. Nedelchev, V. (2022). *The path of the Dobrudzha rachenitsa in the Hartsoy villages of the region of Ruse and Byala*, Spring Scientific Readings 2022, AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, ISSN 1314-7005., pp. 227-235
Available at: <https://bit.ly/3PIYbaP>
2. Nedelchev, V. (2022). *Consolidation in the dance folklore of the Hartsoy and Balkanji people from the region of Ruse and Byala*, Cultural seminar "Strangers" - Plovdiv, AMDFA "Prof Asen Diamandiev" - Plovdiv, Nepoznatite Association [in print]
3. Nedelchev, V. (2022). *Dances and Games of the Hartsoy Ethnographic Group*, Multifaceted Science – Disciplina Variabilis, UNIBIT - Sofia, ISBN 978-619-185-571-1, pp. 449-472
Available at: <https://bit.ly/3riEX2s>
4. Dzheneva, D., Nedelchev, V. (2023) *Influence of the refugees from Dobrudzha on the dance folklore of the Hartsoy*, Challenges of the past, transformed into the future, RB "Lyuben Karavelov - Ruse, Ruse University Academic Publishing House, ISBN 978-619-7404-44-9, pp. 110-122.

By analyzing and systematizing the dance folklore of the **Hartsoy ethnographic group with its characteristic features, the doctoral student not only discovers the interactions between the Hartsoy and other ethnographic groups, but also helps to preserve information about this little-known ethnographic group.** The inferred interactions between **Hartsoy, Grebentsi, Kapantsi, Sartovtsi, Shikovtsi, Glavantsi, and the communities of Balkanjiy and Thracians**, are one of the general contributions of the dissertation.

I would like to especially congratulate the academic supervisor Prof Daniela Dzheneva for the skilful guidance of the doctoral candidate and for their overall success.

I believe that Ventseslav Nedelchev's dissertation is valuable for the preservation of knowledge about ethnic groups, which in our modern society could be blurred, and I confidently propose to the highly respected Scientific Jury to award Ventseslav Nedelchev' the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional direction 8.3. – Music and dance art.

12.02.2024

Prof Anelia Yaneva,

South-West University "Neofit Rilski"

