

The Principles of Building of the National Institution *Ensemble for Folk Dances and Songs* “Tanec” - Basic Program Policy

Considering that the notion “culture” also means one people’s way of living in all its material and spiritual values, it is only understandable that the traditional, folklore values appear as the most crucial to the creation of their cultural mentality.

Since it was established in 1949, the Ensemble for Folk Dances and Songs of Macedonia “Tanec” is an institution which, by its status and its activities, is the bearer of the greatest identification of a nation: its folklore. The Ensemble’s status features its basic activities, meaning: preservation, cherishing, and upgrading and stage presentation of the Macedonian folklore. This position distinguishes “Tanec” as the only national state institution, which requires consistent cultural policy in building its program, with a primary task to cherish the folklore inheritance. Therefrom, the existence of this ensemble and its professionalism is one of the crucial points of the state cultural policy.

In spite of the transitional changes through which Macedonia went during the past decade, “Tanec” managed to preserve its basic activity and to timely adjust to the various social and political changes. “Political” is emphasized since during the 55 years of its existence this state ensemble often created its program policy according to certain governmental criteria.

The building of the program policy of the state national ensembles is often based on two basic factors:

1. Factors that correspond and are dependant on certain folklore – stage rules, and
2. Factors that correspond to the basic state cultural policy and social situation

“Tanec” in the relation folklore – stage

In their program concept for stage performances, the professional ensembles for folk dances and songs should always preserve the three basic criteria of setting the folklore on stage:

1. Adaptation of the folk dance to the stage: in this case, the dance is presented in its original form, characteristic to certain region. There are minimal alternations, necessary for the stage performance, meaning that the original folk dance is not altered, but simply presented on stage, preserving its folklore and stage standards.

2. Arrangement of the folk dance for stage: the folk dance is preserved as much as it is possible, but certain changes are made in accordance to the regional folklore material.
3. Theatre presentation of the folk dance by a choreographer: in this case the folk dance is a source and an inspiration to the choreographer's creative work, who tries to preserve the traditional lines and the style of the folk dance within his/hers choreographic composition.

Luckily, "Tanec" managed to preserve these basic criteria, setting both, original and choreographic folk dances based exactly on these principles. There was a period, especially during the 70's and the 80's of the last century, when the third principle of choreographic settings was preferred. This policy may be justified to certain level by the fact that during the period of former Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia the professional ensembles got the task to present in one entity the folklore of their republic, without paying attention to the basic expert and personal issues, creating choreographies which included several regions with different folklore characteristics.

The concept of "Tanec" today's program policy is largely based on the tendency to preserve the basic folklore characteristics of the Macedonian folklore. Since 1995, its repertoire increasingly involves more original dances and choreographies, presenting on the stage the primeval Macedonian folklore, paying in the process attention to all elements of both, the musical and the dancing folklore, but also to the authenticity of the folk dresses of the region from where certain folk dance originates. Such changes brought "Tanec" to the highest level of professionalism. By realizing this strategy, these choreographies became part of each and every "Tanec" performance. The stage presentation of the archaic, authentic folklore gradually begins to change the criteria of the audience, which increasingly begins to respect the original folklore, recognizing in it its national identity. This policy, of course, preserves the three basic principles of the relation folklore – stage. During the past two years, the program concept is made by experts, who did not allow deviations from the established rules and principles in the creation of the choreographies, principles which weren't as consistent in the past, often leading to confusing and non-authentic choreographies with almost no scientific backgrounds. Today "Tanec" repertoire is, perhaps, closest to its basic activity since the time it was established. Not only the most original folk dances and songs were set on stage, but also the artistic criteria was preserved during their creation, not allowing any disturbance of the basic "folk" concept. On the other hand, the thematic concerts are designed by the needs of the very performance, accordant to the audience and to the occasion of a certain concert.

"Tanec" and the basic state cultural policy

In all its activities, "Tanec" builds its own cultural policy, which is primarily in accordance to the state cultural policy. The return to the roots, the stage presentation and

shaping of the archaic forms and their artistic upgrading is realized carefully and professionally. The establishment of "Tanec" as National Institution in 2004 started the changes in its program policy. Regarding that "Tanec" is now the only state ensemble which represents the entire folklore of Republic of Macedonia, it has the responsibility to present, cherish and preserve not only the Macedonian folklore, but also the one of the ethnic groups living in Macedonia. Following these criteria, "Tanec" establishes and preserves a continuous professionalism and quality regarding its repertoire, under the permanent supervision by the state culture policy. As an institution directly under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, "Tanec" has to follow the directions set directly by this Ministry. The situation was same during the former SFRY, when "Tanec", alike the other ensembles of the federation, beside the local folk dances also featured folk dances from all around SFRY. A good example of this is the fact that, until the independence of Republic of Macedonia, "Tanec" concerts always ended with the choreography called "Yugoslavia", a combination of several characteristic folk dances from all regions of the former federation. Part of the repertoire and next direction in the development of "Tanec" program policy is also presentation of original elements of the archaic folklore of all ethnic groups living in Macedonia, preparing dances of the Albanian, Vlach, Turkish and Romani folklore. Considering the delicate situation in Macedonia, "Tanec" basic idea is to present the differences, but also the similarities that all ethnic groups' folklore contains. We consider that such "Tanec" policy could realize a truly quality cultural mission in the state, which will bring closer all basic postulates of the state cultural policy. The field researches, the careful setting and the creation of expert teams that will work on these performances and their final presentation on a joint concert will present the persistence of this ensemble and the realization of its unique mission, since "Tanec" is often regarded as a cultural ambassador of Macedonia. Our cultural policy is to stick to the basic artistic and traditional postulates as much as it is possible, not disturbing by that the basic concept of the unique folklore, created during the past centuries.