


The First Works of Albanian Ballet			Choreography
			Keywords: ballet, choreography, artistic, tool, national, dance, performance, dancer, classical, subject, truth, vocabulary.
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Abstract			
<p>The article, “Beginnings of Albanian Ballet”, sheds light on the choreographic elements of the three national ballets: “Anusha”, “Halili and Hajria” and “Highland Maiden”, composed in the 60s. The first is treasured as the earliest composition in the chronology of the art, the second as the first complete ballet with an elaborate concept of form and high artistic values, whereas the third as a ballet that introduced innovations in artistic composition through the interweaving of elements of traditional and contemporary ballet. Although they are products of the social realism movement, in which, from our modern point of view, the restrictions of the times emerge, they also demonstrate a new artistic level, as well as an important stage in the development of the art of ballet as an original national art form. The talent and creative control of Albanian composers, librettists, choreographers and ballet dancers was confirmed in these ballets, which, along with their interesting subject matter, beautiful music composed of authentic Albanian motifs, offered beautifully choreographed numbers, which harmonized the vocabulary of classical ballet with other modes and forms of expression originating from the abundant Albanian tradition of dance, thus creating a unique and interesting new style. These ballets laid the foundations for the further development of authentic Albanian ballet, thus enriching the burgeoning art form, which had been established with great efforts, talent, dedication and love.</p>			

Introduction

A national ballet would be incomplete without authentic works of art created by local artists. From the outset, communist leaders in Albania, who had adopted puritancial policies, sought to enrich repertoires with the oeuvre of Albanian choreographers and musicians. This primarily meant, in addition to the development and support for authentic Albanian composition, a clear ideological orientation within the esthetical traditions of social realism, thus fulfilling a certain propaganda objective. The exploitation of art, including ballet, as a tool to propagate certain political ideas that were in line with the interests of the government at the time (by creating illusions of happiness, beauty, concealing ugly truths, creating political cults and fetishes, etc.), had an adverse affect by the imposition of a multitude of cliches.

Despite social realism’s restrictive and destructive affects on authentic Albanian choreography, the emergence of several works by Albanian authors, musicians and choreographers created greater opportunity for the ballet to flourish. The new trend emerges in the beginning of the 1960s, initially timid and limited such as the ballet “Anusha”, with music composed by Cesk Zadeja and choreography by Skender Selimi, which was followed with the premiere of the first classical Albanian ballet on 13 January 1963, “Halil and Hajria” in three acts and seven performances based on Kole Jakova’s beautiful play of the same title, with a score by Tish Daija and choreography by ballet-master Panajot Kanaci. Other ballets were to follow: “Delina”, “The Partisan”, “History of a Song”, “Choreographed Rhapsodies”, “Courageous Eagle”, “The Fisherman’s Sons”, “High Revolutionary Spirit”, “Highland Maiden”, which are the focus of this study.

Notwithstanding some of the well-known thematic and ideological restrictions imposed on the compositions that emerged between 1950-1973, it is necessary to highlight the contributions made to musical composition, in addition to the choreography and performances. This study also focuses on the plastic and rhythmic appearance of the choreography in the abovementioned ballets, the mosaic of the movements and the original structure of the performances, which rationally and carefully employed Albanian dance motifs, original elements borrowed from the rich tradition of Albanian folklore. A rich choreographic vocabulary was cultivated and tastfully executed in the various performances of choreographers and dancers, by transfiguring and adapting it to the specific structures and characteristics originating from the choreography of classical ballet. This is

specific to our ballet, which is this study's main focus. The efforts of our best choreographers of the time (P. Kanaçi, S. Selimi, A. Aliaj) to harmonize the two types of dance, folk and classical, while respecting the codes of the latter alongside the experimentation and challenge displayed another dimension of the originality of their works. They conveyed original Albanian choreographic nuances, shades and connotations.

Chronologically, the ballet 'Anusha' may be considered the first attempt at establishing a national ballet with genuine Albanian motifs, by librettist and choreographer Skender Selimi, and score by Cesk Zadeja. In fact, the libretto was written in 1957 and was awarded a prize in the national literary-artistic competition held at the time.⁴¹ Whereas, the first performance, completed with the original score by Cesk Zadeja, came in 1961. The theme centers on the resistance of the Albanian people in the first half of the XV century, which is linked to the Ottoman occupation and the abduction of young girls to supply the harems of the empire's military leaders and powerful feudal lords. The ballet opens with a group of girls taken captive by Turkish soldiers. Armed highlanders appear before them led by a tried fighter, Agim, who overpowers the Turks and saves the girls from humiliation and the long road to Istanbul and the pashas' gates. Anusha, the main character, has known Agim from childhood and this awakens a deep sympathy for him which had burgeoned in her soul some time ago. The girls thank the courageous Albanians for saving them and leave. However, Anusha decides to join Agim and fight alongside him in the highlands. Thus, a sublime love blossoms between them, which is fanned by their freedom and the fight to defend their freedom at any cost.

The subject matter, is naturally very simple, and even infuses well-known elements of the literary and artistic scenes of the time, without attempting to delve into the complicated and overly dramatic situations of the heroine. A lyrical and poetic spirit runs through the ballet, thus it could not have expanded its dramatic or psychological dimensions, which are less visible. Its significance rests on the fact that it is the first Albanian ballet in all of its components. Moreover, 'Anusha' made possible a superb performance and a careful mixture of traditional and folk with symphonic music, of traditional choreographic form borrowed from folklore with the cultivated vocabulary of classical ballet, with the plastic of professional dance of a range of artistic tools that are difficult to execute.

Halili and Hajria

"The first classical Albanian ballet 'Halil and Hajria' premiered at the National Theatre of Opera and Ballet in its entirety on 13 January 1963. Kolë Jakova's beautiful play, 'Halil and Hajria', was put on stage enmeshed in classical ballet by the renowned composer Tish Daija and the balletmaster Panajot Kanaçi. The ballet 'Halil and Hajria' is in three acts and seven scenes".⁴²

Thus, composer and conductor Abdulla Grimci begins his article about the ballet published in the daily 'Drita' on 20 January 1963. In his article published in the daily 'Puna' entitled 'Bravo! The ballet 'Halil and Hajria' – a sublime artistic performance', Simon Gjoni writes: "The premier of the first national ballet was a wonderful surprise. The music of 'Halil and Hajria' was written by composer Tish Daija, based on the libretto of the balletmaster Panajot Kanaçi (based on Kolë Jakova's historical drama). Audiences welcomed the performance, whose sincere ovations were well-deserved by the authors and performers".⁴³

The staging of the first national ballet coincides with the ten year anniversary of the establishment of the National Theatre of Opera and Ballet.

⁴¹ Libreti "Anusha", the daily "Bashkimi", 6 November 1957.

⁴² Grimci, Abdulla, "Baleti i parë nacional "Halili dhe Hajria" vepër serioze e kompozitorit Tish Daija", gazeta "Drita", 20 January 1963.

⁴³ Gjoni, Simon, "Ju lumtë! Baleti "Halili dhe Hajria" – një çfaqje me dinjitet të lartë artistik", gazeta "Puna", 22 January 1963.

“Two years ago, recounts the ballet’s composer Tish Daija, Panajot Kanaçi showed me his libretto, based on Kolë Jakova’s play. I was immediately impressed. Fortunately, we knew who would perform the main characters, which helped me adapt the music to their skills. Such was the case with the role of Musta, which was performed by the talented ballet dancer Miltiadh Papa. With the music, we tried to highlight his wonderful *prizhok*, grand pirouettes and other technical capabilities. How could we have not made the most out of such an opportunity? We did the same thing with the other characters such as Hajria, Halil, Sokol, Rasha, Bektash Aga etc. I tried to give the music not only the atmosphere of the north, where the events take place, but of the south as well, since both of these areas have the same roots. If in the first two acts we used more *divertissements*, in the performances of the last act more of a laconic vocabulary was needed because the drama required a resolution, everything had to come to a conclusion. The first national ballet taught me a lot.”⁴⁴

“Our dream had finally come true, - said choreographer Panajot Kanaçi, who brought to the stage as a librettist and balletmaster ‘Halil and Hajria’. – Why did I choose ‘Halil and Hajria’ as the subject of the first national ballet? It seemed to me as if I would be able to show the characteristics of our highlanders – courageous, noble, strong, rugged as our mountains, but at the same time affectionate, compassionate in their intimate relationships as well as in their daily lives. In this ballet, I wanted to feature the characteristics and virtues of Albanian women, their loyalty, generosity, capable of loving, but also of hating.”⁴⁵

In terms of its structure, the ballet ‘Halil and Hajria’ was complex, with solo, duo, trio and quartet movements with numerous interacting ballerinas, culminating in large groups of dancers. The subject portrays certain essential ethno-psychological characteristics of the Albanian people such as courage, love for one-another, resistance against Turkish invaders, heroism and the defense of liberty with their lives. Additionally, attention is also focused on the fate of Albanian women, who overcome the many difficulties they face while maintaining their honor and love for their country, as is evident in the character of Hajria. Treason and the placing of ambition above the great interests of the nation and freedom are additionally addressed, which are embodied in the character of Selim Bajraktari.

Compositionally, the ballet was divided into three acts and seven scenes. In terms of constructing dramatic collision the choreographer relied primarily on two types of dances or measurements: a) those with expressive Albanian folk dance motifs and b) those with dance motifs from Oriental and Arabic countries. In addition to these two types of dance, a large part, naturally, involves genuine classical dance, in terms of the use of the universal vocabulary of ballet, of its movements and arsenal of expressive tools it has consolidated throughout the centuries. On the other hand, it must be said both the dance types mentioned, i.e. the Albanian and oriental, truko-arabic, have been adapted to the vocabulary and traditions of classical ballet, while generally retaining only their ‘nuance’ to portray the ethnic and social mediums they represent in the ballet.

The choreographer uses quite nicely the opening of the arms of the Albanian dancers, with Halil at the forefront, to imitate the wings of an eagle; the steps are powerful, energetic, the battle scenes with swords and shields are powerful and fierce, thus recreating the scenes of a great battle. A fierceness can be seen in the Turkish soldiers as well, fighting a life or death battle. The *mise-en-scène* has eliminated any superfluous details, thus avoiding any confusion or incoherence of motions, steps, leaps and all other dance elements.

The choreographic vocabulary used in the ballet ‘Halil and Hajria’ includes the interaction of several styles, which, although unique and retain their artistic integrity, are nonetheless combined harmoniously with one another. A classical style is noticeable for example in the intimate, lyrical and poetic episodes in the *adagio*, producing appropriate choreographic movements, expressive details conveying profound meaning, such as the

⁴⁴ Dibra, Fatmir, “Në bisedë me artistët”, gazeta Puna, dt. 22. 01. 1963.

⁴⁵ Dibra, Fatmir, “Në bisedë me artistët”, gazeta Puna, dt. 22. 01. 1963.

adagio of the second act when Hajria and Bektash Aga both stoop over the cradle of their sleeping infant and he cunningly caresses Hajria's hair playing on his duality as a hypocrite, rogue and knave. Another style, which emerges in the intertwining and blending of classical and folk movements in certain numbers and adagios, such as in those of Hajrie, Halil, Sokol, Musta, Rusha etc., or the other dancers used in Kanaçi's choreographic view as a supportive backdrop to the action while accompanying the emotional state of the heroes and central ideas. A different style can be seen in the construction of the massive dance numbers, intermediate with an overlaying of themes and juxtaposition of artistic vocabulary. Despite the folk elements, the massive dance numbers are constructed in a loftier form than that of basic folkloric form, which significantly surpasses the rusticness of folk dance. In the variations of Musta, the choreographer has opted for a specific dance vocabulary, which is fused with popular dance motifs, thus giving it a classical and significantly elaborate hue. The diverseness of the styles, their intertwining and the creation of an original and unique choreographic format has given Panajot Kanaçi's concept the most beautiful solutions, beyond any plagiarism or schematized forms. The musical themes, historical and social contexts of the action, individualized characters, wealth of detail, expressive details and choreographic adaptations for each character or group of characters, including the large groups of dancers, all harmonized and interacting with one another have resulted in a unified tone for the entire choreographic idea, vision and figuration.

“Set out with the aim of giving a performance with a national spirit, - underscores Dedin Suli, - the choreographer initially brings to the stage a group of highlanders who decide to fight against the Turkish military stationed in the outskirts of Shkodra. Subsequently, the choreographer, relying on the epic-combative spirit of the Great Highlands, offers episodes of the ‘Sword Dance’ in this case, ‘with yatagans’.”⁴⁶

The conception, composition and mise-en-scene of the dances were another achievement for Kanaçi and the ballet company. They fulfill three artistic goals:

- a) they create an entertaining atmosphere in the performance, *divertissement*,
- b) they become support for the conceptual decomposition of the various scenes, choreographic actions of the specific characters through the monologues, variations, dialogues etc.,
- c) they serve a semantic function, clarifying the meanings and meaningfulness of the episodes of which they are an integral part,
- d) they emerge as beautiful and genuine dance compositions, marking a large volume of work.

According to the researcher and ethnochoreographer, Nexhat Agolli, “the most appropriate dances include: the drum accompanied dance, the sombre dance of men, typical of the setting in which it is performed, Sokol's variation, Musta's variation (Act I, scene II); Zyle accompanied dance, slave-girl dance, dance of janissaries (Act II), dance of Halil, Sokol, Musta before his execution etc. In terms of its choreography, the dance of vetim and the dances of Act III, scene I, which exhibit features of folklore, leave much to be desired.”⁴⁷

In his book on Panajot Kanaçi, Albert Janku seems to have rightfully defined the esthetic character of the artistic vocabulary used by the choreographer in this ballet. He writes: “The tools of expression, and especially the choreographic vocabulary used by Panajot in this ballet, are not simply a blend of folk and traditional-classical vocabulary, nor a careless intertwining of these elements, but rather the result of a delicate and intricate process in which talent and craftsmanship are creatively developed until the necessary expressions are achieved. Subjected to a deep pathology and operation, the vocabulary is transformed into a general plastic expressed in the massive scenes and characters. The choreographic vocabulary of the popular masses and

⁴⁶ Suli, Dedin. *Artistë të shquar në interpretimin koreografik shqiptar (1950-2012)*, Tiranë, 56.

⁴⁷ Agolli, Nexhat, “Rreth vënies në skenë dhe interpretimit të baletit “Halili dhe Hajria”, gazeta “Zëri i Popullit”, 16 March 1963.

characters, resembles and differs from one-another with representative individualities and primarily in the definition of the character which arises from the actions.»⁴⁸

Delina

The ballet 'Delina' in two acts and a prologue, with a score by Çesk Zadeja, libretto by Çesk Zadeja and Panajot Kanaçi, premiering on 17 May 1964, is the second original Albanian musical-choreographic composition. He chooses a subject dealing with love, but that also involves dramatic and heroic events, placed in a setting in the highlands during the Turkish occupation. Love, in addition to its poetic and lyrical functions, becomes a vehicle for conveying opposing views of love, especially its defense or violation, respect or coercion, further infused with political backdrops, especially the fight to defend liberty and oppose occupation.

Beyond the noted values, Çesk Zadeja and Panajot Kanaçi's libretto did not achieve the level of the score also by Çesk Zadeja, which resulted in a discordance between the two corresponding art forms and a synthesis in a choreographic piece such as a ballet. As a result, genuine values were not achieved in the ballet 'Delina'. Compared to the ballet 'Halil and Hajria', it failed to effectively utilize dramatic and tragic motifs inherent in Albanian folklore, in songs and legends pertinent to its subject.

"Çesk Zadeja and Panajot Kanaçi gave us a flawed libretto, which lacks logical development, - wrote the ethno-choreographer Ramazan Bogdani, - and does not do justice to the deep, meaningful and beautiful music. It lacked character development, who oftentimes seem dull and do not justify the ballet's links to drama."⁴⁹

Inspired by the famed legend of the 'Maiden's Boulder' located in the Mat area, from which the lovely Delina jumped in order to preserve her honor and not fall into slavery, encompasses elements of drama and tragedy, as a harrowing drama of love and loyalty.

From the prologue, the love between Delina and Arban is depicted in a poetic light, tender and brimming with lyricism. In the libretto's text, this is depicted in a fine sentiment, sweet and romantic, totally acceptable, within a natural setting, an imaginal spirit and tender music.

"The subject matter is naive and unconvincing, - writes composer Kozma Lara. - By and large, the qualitative discordance between the action and music is regrettably noticeable on the stage. The libretto's shortcomings, with its naivete in a series of scenes, are not reflected in the music as the composer rightly chose a unique path, avoiding a simple illustration of the libretto, touching on its finer points, which allowed him to create a truly musical tale."⁵⁰

As a dramatic text, the libretto suffers from prolixity and superfluousness, namely from the lack of a dramatic literary function of certain characters or episodes, which were unable to translate into quality or lofty artistic values. Although the choreographer's proclivity to blend universal classical elements with local Albanian elements is evident, in many cases this has not been adequately achieved, and has even been neglected, which has created stylistic discordance. In the Delina-Arban adagios in the prologue and in the second act, the Zoga-Shpend duet or Bojrot's variation in the first act, the Delina-Shoti adagio in the second act, Trina's tale also in the second act, generally involve the elements of expression of choreography's classical vocabulary, without including elements of Albanian folk dance through a cultivated vocabulary that corresponds to the codes of classical ballet.

⁴⁸ Janku, Albert. Kështu e njoha unë Panajot Kanaçin, Toena, Tiranë, 2009, pp. 162-163.

⁴⁹ Bogdani, Ramazan, Shfaqja e baletit "Delina" dhe disa probleme lidhur me karakterin nacional, Drita, e diel 13 Shtetember 1964.

⁵⁰ Lara, Kozma, "Mendime mbi baletin "Delina" të kompozitorit Çesk Zadeja", "Nëntori" magazine, No. 10, 1965, pp. 118.

Compared to the classical adagios and variations, “the character dances” attained a clearer stylistic cohesion. In particular, “the highlands dance”, “the protest dance” of the first act, or “the warrior dance” etc., in which the dance trails a beautiful vocabulary allowing it to profile essential traits and features of the characters and groups of characters thus becoming a vehicle for certain important concepts in ballet such as the pledge, joy and objection. The dances are used to convey certain ideas.

Violent Political Influence in the Art of Ballet

propaganda, appeasement, euphoria

On 6 February 1967, communist leader Enver Hoxha gave a speech in which he criticized the further ‘revolutionarization’ of daily life, focusing in particular on the de facto liquidation of religious institutions, banning the practice of religion in the country and declaring Albania an atheist, i.e. heretical, nation as the only such country in the world; similarly, archaic and anarchonic customs and traditions were fiercely targeted, especially the repressive, degrading, neglectful and oftentimes violent treatment of Albanian women and girls, and the need for their emancipation, inclusion into the workforce and other social activities etc. To top off this entire radical political operation, cultural and artistic institutions and all artists were ordered to depict the ongoing social process enthusiastically, the destruction of religious institutions, youth initiatives and the participation of women and girls from the remote areas of the country, “the triumph of the new over the old” etc. In this vein, many literary and artistic works emerged which dealt with subjects concerning “the great heroism of the people”. This subject appeared extensively in poetry, painting, sculpture, music, as well as in the art of ballet. A number of works of minor genres portrayed the thousands of young men and women, in the countryside and in the city, marching with pickaxes and shovels in their hands, demolishing and building, vowing with raised fists, warning enemies who would dare threaten the country’s borders, as well as other gestures full of pathos accompanying a staged event feigning “enthusiasm”.

The following ballets were composed precisely in this spirit and prevalent style: Agron Aliaj and Adriatik Metuli’s “Five Soldiers” (or “The Five Heroes of Vig”) with a score by Avni Mula, Panajot Kanaçi’s “Operatives”, “In the Barricade”, “The Graduates” and Skender Selimi’s single act ballet “High Revolutionary Spirit”, the choreographic miniatures “Facing Prison” with a score by Tasim Hoshafi and choreography by S. Selimi, Adriatik Metuli’s “The Party has made us Unyielding”, P. Kanaçi, A. Aliaj and Z. Haxho’s “Fatos the Partisan”, as well as other numbers and choreographic miniatures.

Some single act ballets and especially choreographic performances dealt heavily with the liberation struggle. Even with the dramatic, tragic, heroic and epic elements of this difficult struggle for survival of our people and country, its artistic portrayal left much to be desired. The dramatic, tragic, heroic and epic were mostly portrayed in their external and at times staged forms. It was those same movements, the same mise-en-scene in its essence, alignments and movements of the masses armed with rifles, positioning for battles, running, jumping, standing shoulder to shoulder in ‘unity’, withdrawing wounded comrades, vowing to fallen comrades to continue the struggle etc. This created a schematization that was extremely detrimental to the vocabulary of ballet. It had nothing to do with the use of a new vocabulary, as was often claimed, by veering away from the traditionalism and romanticism of classical ballet. In fact, this ‘new vocabulary’ that was being served was a meager choreographic vocabulary imposed by social realism with its propagandistic requirements. The new vocabulary in ballet would require new artistic parameters, a new way of treating movements, plastic, figuration, lexicon, symbols, meanings, overall choreographic semantics, which the miniatures and complete ballets cited above were not able to achieve. Yet, in this same spirit some ballets of professional quality were staged, of which three are noteworthy: “The Partisan”, “High Revolutionary Spirit”, “Fearless Eagle”, “History of a Song”, “The Fisherman’s Sons” and “Highland Maiden”.

Highland Maiden

Plays which gained a reputation from the official critics of the time and public opinion, praised by the Party's censors, often passed from one genre to the next with the necessary modifications, such as Loni Papa's play "Highland Maiden" written immediately after Enver Hoxha's 'programmatic' speech on 6 February 1967. It was put on stage in Shkodra's "Migjeni" theatre under the direction of Mihallaq Luarasi and later at the National Theatre under the direction of Pirro Mani, where it was championed as one of social realism's model plays. Later, in 1976, the filmmaker Dhimitër Anagnosti made it into a film. Loni Papa also wrote the libretto for the ballet "Highland Maiden", with Agron Alia as choreographer, the score by Nikolla Zoraqa, orchestra conductor Rifat Teqja, chorusmistress Rozmari Jorganxhi and painters Hysen Devolli and Ali Oseku. The ballet, in two acts and six scenes, premiered on 31 January 1969.

Overall, the libretto retained the chronology of events of the play with only minor exceptions, such as the resolution. In the ballet version, the Maiden is not killed by Gjeta and the saboteurs, but rather survives bringing the action on the stage to an episode laden with political and propagandistic overtones as she enters the church, tearing Father Mark's cassock revealing a concealed knife in the place of a cross. The optimistic and jovial tones, similar to the futuristic ideas about the future of education, along with the final triumph and the enthusiastic expectations have diminished the dramatic elements of the "Highland Maiden's" plot. As a result, the tragic element arising from the pain over the loss of the heroine is tempered. However, according to the critiques, it had "a powerful dramaturgy and, from a musical standpoint, the leitmotifs of the characters were well developed."⁵¹ L. Pipa and A. Aliaj's libretto dealt with an important issue developing its dramatic elements and preserving its monumental style.⁵²

The libretto's decomposed platform has rendered it as a ballet-drama, due to its utilization of the entire dramatic content of "Highland Maiden". More or less of a balance has been struck between the two opposing forces in the conflict, the Maiden and her supporters on the one hand and Father Mark, Gjeta and others who oppose, slander and want to kill the Maiden on the other, since she arouses the dormant consciousness of the highlanders and encourages girls and women to learn to read and write and to get an education. Even though the dramatic action represented by the Maiden and the others evokes emotions and is proportionately balanced in relation to the negative direction of the opposing forces in the conflict, the latter, as the critiques of the time noted, was nonetheless more powerful. It left a greater and more enduring impression because the depiction of the characters brought about certain truths and expressed more graspable, concrete, believable interests, thus creating "vivid and concrete action, which the actions of the positive characters lack as they tend toward a universal reach and horizontal scope."⁵³ According to another critical opinion of the time, in addition to the potency of these antagonist characters, in addition to the importance that has been placed on them in the libretto and performance, "mystical nuances have often needlessly been employed in their movements".⁵⁴

The prologue includes several dances that create a sombre and dramatic atmosphere. The most striking figure here is that of Gjini, the Maiden's father. As Ēngjell Tërshana writes: "The prologue to the ballet "Highland Maiden", with choreography by Agron Aliaj, impresses on us the need to enter the world of a character such as Gjini, the Maiden's father".⁵⁵

The composition has other shortcomings in terms of its segmentation and fragmentation. A prime example of this is the Maiden's vision of the future. This vision, although a dream and of a lyrical and oneiric

⁵¹ Guli, Gastër, "U dha me sukses çfaqja e baletit "Cuca e maleve", the daily "Mësuesi", 7 February 1970, pp. 4.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Bogdani, Ramazan, "Koreografia në baletin "Cuca e maleve", "Drita, 1 March 1970, pp. 2.

⁵⁴ See, Kaceli, Gëzim-Dhimitri, Petro, "Baleti "Cuca e maleve", një krijim i bukur i baletit tonë", Bashkimi, 8 March 1970.

⁵⁵ Suli, Dedin. *Agron Aliaj artisti që thuri legjendë*, Tiranë, 2005, pp. 278.

nature, fragments the action and disrupts rather than unifies the ballet's internal unity.⁵⁶

The third performance conveys a tender lyrical emotion to the audience. The Maiden teaches the women and girls of the village to read and write. They repeat the first letter of the Albanian alphabet in chorus "Aaaaa". In the second performance, choreographer Agron Alia further develops the aforementioned subject, the letter "A", having the Maiden imagine the expected developments in the country, when pupils, youngsters and students will inundate schools to receive an education. This creates a poetic backdrop. There are beautiful and natural movements, complementary actions that impress on the audience the spectacle of education and learning, primarily by groups of dancers, but also in localized actions.

Researcher and choreologist Ramazan Bogdani has also noted the performance's artistic quality, writing: "The third performance is outstanding, when the Maiden teaches her friends to write in her own home. In the episode of the letter "a" a warm atmosphere is created, which evokes the audience's emotions."⁵⁷ – He adds – "The moment in the second performance when the fantasy of the balletmaster has the Maiden read a book is memorable and transports the audience for a moment in the much anticipated and prosperous future, with schools and joyful children."⁵⁸

Choreographer Agron Alia has introduced an artistically expressive vocabulary, with beautiful tropes and figures perceptible in the unfolding events and characters, relationships and the overall ideo-emotional content. He has meticulously utilized the vast wealth of Albanian folk dance, as well as "character dances" with the variations, adagios, the characterizing plastic in the stances, the steps etc., rendering each character distinct and original.

"The composition in itself retains the traditional form, - choreographer Gëzim Kaceli and journalist Petro Dhimitri write in their article, - This is evident in the many variations such as duets, quartets, dances of young girls and children, the mixed dances, which include massive scenes"⁵⁹

The choreographer has researched abundant material relating to the means of expression originating from the constructs of folk dance with the well-known marks of classical ballet, which is especially evident in the dance of the Maiden with her friends in the first scene. The Maiden introduces the motif and is then joined by the girls. They express the joy of sharing the land. There is optimism, joy, exuberance, brightness. A dialogue begins among them which develops naturally, freely, unhindered thus significantly enhancing communication with the audience. The simple and comprehensible vocabulary makes this scene all the more pleasant. The character type dances in this scene were composed based on the typology of dances of the Great Highlands and Tropoja. Although the motifs of these folk dances were previously used in other ballets by choreographers, Agron Alia was able to give it a different form and dynamic by unifying them as naturally as possible with the nature and psychology of the characters, as well as with the overall tone of the scene.

"One of the finest achievements in this ballet is the 'Dance of Maidens' in the first scene. Initially in the dance, the Maiden 'speaks' and the girls 'respond'. The structure takes the form of a dialogue, which, by way of the movements and choreographic figures of speech, communicates with the audience to the extent that, at one point, it appears as if the artists are speaking in a common language and not in one that is specific to ballet. The purely Albanian choreographic vocabulary, permeating the numerous dances in this scene creates a festive and optimistic atmosphere.

⁵⁶ See, Kaceli, Gëzim-Dhimitri, Petro, "Baleti "Cuca e maleve", një krijim i bukur i baletit tonë", *Bashkimi*, 8 March 1970.

⁵⁷ Bogdani, H. Ramazan. *Koreografi & Art i kultivuar*, Shtëpia Botuese "Mësonjtorja, Tiranë 1998, pp. 66-67.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Kaceli, Gëzim-Dhimitri, Petro, "Baleti "Cuca e maleve", një krijim i bukur i baletit tonë", *Bashkimi*, 8 March 1970.

These character type dances are composed based on several folk dance motifs of the Great Highlands and Tropoja”.⁶⁰

In this scene, in addition to the dances from the northern areas of Albania, the balletmaster includes motifs from dances of southern areas, thus creating a coexistence and stable balance between the artistic codes of classical ballet and the codes and choreographic vocabulary of Albanian folk dance, “whereby every classical detail composed carries an original nuance professionally made with art and beauty”.⁶¹

One of the finest examples of this intertwining of elements of classical art and the choreographic vocabulary of Albanian folk music was the scene in the home of the highlander Zef, which efficiently makes use of the monologues created with artistic truth by the balletmaster. “Although they belong to classical ballet in form, the intonations of the monologues are ours, Albanian”.⁶²

Such a course, which has the advantage of having a unified motif in “Highland Maiden’s” libretto, treating a single subject, was not taken in the other scenes and episodes so as to “avoid any needless protraction or complication, such is the case with the second scene of the first act and the scene with the soboterus in the forest of the second act”.⁶³

⁶⁰ Bogdani, H. Ramazan. *Koreografi & Art i kultivuar, Shtëpia Botuese “Mësonjtorja, Tiranë 1998, pp. 68-69.*

⁶¹ Bogdani, Ramazan, “Koreografia në baletin “Cuca e maleve”, “Drita, 1 March 1970, pp. 2.

⁶² Kaceli, Gëzim-Dhimitri, Petro, “Baleti “Cuca e maleve”, një krijim i bukur i baletit tonë”, *Bashkimi*, 8 March 1970.

⁶³ Kaceli, Gëzim-Dhimitri, Petro, “Baleti “Cuca e maleve”, një krijim i bukur i baletit tonë”, *Bashkimi*, 8 March 1970.