Ethnologies

Remain True to the Culture?
Authenticity, Identity, and Association of United Ukrainian Canadians Sponsored Dance Seminars, 1971 to 1991

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See table of contents

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Article abstract

A series of dance seminars was held in Ukraine and Saskatchewan from 1971 to 1991, hosted by a left-wing political and cultural organization, the Association for United Ukrainian Canadians. These seminars heavily influenced the development of Ukrainian dance in Saskatchewan and Canada by introducing new dance techniques, choreography, and costuming from Soviet Ukraine. They were also very controversial, challenging the definition of Ukrainian Canadian identity in Canada during the Soviet era.

Remain True to the Culture?
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Ukrainian dance is a popular activity among Ukrainian Canadians in Saskatchewan, and by the end of the twentieth century, it had become one of the most prominent and recognized Ukrainian cultural markers in the province. Both the dances and their place in Saskatchewan Ukrainian identity have changed considerably over the past century, revealing a complicated relationship between authenticity, tradition, and innovation in Ukrainian dance. This article will begin by providing an outline of Ukrainian Canadian organizational culture in the Cold War period and briefly summarizing the development of dance in the 1970s. It will then focus on the influence that a series of summer dance seminars, begun in 1971, had on the artistic development of Ukrainian dance in Saskatchewan, before exploring how this influence related to broader issues surrounding the definition of Ukrainian identity within the province.

Ethnic identities are dynamic and can be debated within communities; as such, there is no single unified Ukrainian Canadian cultural identity, and no individual or organization can speak for all Ukrainian emigrants and their descendants. Elements used to distinguish internal groups include religious affiliation, language ability, and political leanings. The latter had a direct influence on the development and spread of dance in Canada, while being deeply divisive among Ukrainian Canadians. Throughout most of the twentieth century, the Ukrainian Canadian community was divided into politically right-leaning

nationalists and politically left-leaning progressives. By 1950, two groups had emerged as representative of their political ideology. The Ukrainian Canadian Committee (UCC, later renamed Ukrainian Canadian Congress) was an umbrella containing many smaller nationalist-leaning organizations. The Association for United Ukrainian Canadians (AUUC) represented many of the leftists, and had grown out of farmer and labourer associations. The Cold War was all but declared, and Ukrainian Canadians were on both sides.

These two groups, or their member organizations, were involved in nearly every dance club that formed or seminar that was held through the early Cold War period. The AUUC and UCC member organizations often provided instructors, practice space, and performance forums. In exchange, the dance groups' parent political organizations often hoped to encourage group cohesion through the presentation of dances which both formed and reflected a Ukrainian Canadian identity. This background informed my analysis of various archival documents, letters, dance programs, newspaper articles, and interviews conducted with leaders in the Saskatchewan Ukrainian dance community. These sources in turn outline a conflict between fulfilling the needs of a growing Ukrainian dance community — by creating or attending dance seminars, for example — and defining Ukrainian Canadian identity in a way that supported one political ideology to the exclusion of the other. The seminars held in Ukraine and Saskatchewan from 1971 to 1991 changed the pattern of Ukrainian dance in the province, and sparked formal and informal debates over the nature of authenticity, tradition, and the acceptability (or lack thereof) of innovation in Ukrainian dance.

Although there is a need for including pre-defined identifiably Ukrainian elements in each dance, the dances performed today are different both in composition and purpose than those "first existence" folk dances danced in villages a century ago (Nahachewsky 1997: 146). Ukrainian dances performed today are categorized as "second existence" theatrical folk dances, which are distinct from "second existence" recreational and "second existence" national dances (146). Theatrical Ukrainian folk dance, while rooted in the national folk dance traditions introduced by the balletmaster Vasyl' Avramenko in the 1920s, developed considerably in the postwar period.

The Avramenko dances defined Ukrainian dance in Saskatchewan until the postwar era, with only a few notable attempts at original

choreography before the 1950s. Starting with the Shevchenko festivals of 1961, however, Ukrainian dances quickly moved away from the more traditional patterns and repetitive steps of Avramenko's dances and toward new choreography designed with a greater emphasis on artistry and creativity. While Ukrainian dance experienced several developmental stages, there remained — and still remains — a strong desire to present the dances as an authentic representation of Ukrainian culture.[1] This has, in turn, influenced how Ukrainians are represented through dance. By accepting or rejecting dances and dance styles presented under the broadening frame of "Ukrainian dance," audiences, choreographers, and dancers were able to influence the presentation of Ukrainian culture, which in turn defined Ukrainian Canadian identity.

As choreographers started developing their own dances in the 1960s, they combined their personal understanding of traditional culture with their artistic vision for Ukrainian dance. These creations were based on the individual choreographer's experience with and exposure to Ukrainian Canadian culture and broader Canadian artistic and dance movements, such as mainstream ballets. With the introduction of ballet training, details such as head movement were developed among Ukrainian dancers, enabling a wider emotional characterization from them while still maintaining Ukrainian character, thus preventing the new dances from becoming completely analogous to classical ballets. For example, the dance suite "Legend of Kupala," choreographed and performed by the Yevshan Ukrainian Folk Ballet Ensemble in the mid-seventies, was thematically based on the traditional summer Ivano Kupalo Festival as celebrated by Hutsuls in Ukraine. By invoking these cultural references, Yevshan was able to borrow existing cultural legitimacy while introducing a new artistic performance standard and defining a new style of ballet-influenced theatrical Ukrainian dance in Canada. The introduction of new ethnographic regions and expanded ballet training for Ukrainian dancers further challenged the relationship between Ukrainian dance, Ukrainian traditions, and the demands for artistic growth.

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1. For instance, a program from the Yevshan Folk Ballet Ensemble in Saskatoon proudly claims that, through excellent artistic leadership, their dance is "true to the culture it represents while still forging new developments in choreography" (Yevshan 1980).

A greater challenge to Ukrainian Canadian identity, however, came from Soviet Ukraine. From the first tour of a Soviet Ukrainian dance troupe in 1959, the influence of Ukrainian dance developments on Canadian Ukrainian dance was a divisive issue. While there had been some interaction with Soviet Ukraine prior to the 1960s, the increasing cultural exchanges in this time period fueled existing conflicts. Disputes between various Ukrainian Canadian factions surrounding the nature and desirability of ties with Soviet Ukraine have divided the Ukrainian Canadian community politically between progressives and nationalists since World War I.[2] With regards to dance, the conflict was primarily expressed through debates about authenticity, particularly as choreographic and costume innovations from Soviet Ukraine were adapted by Canadian dance clubs.

The existing tensions were exacerbated when the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians (AUUC), the progressive organization, begun arranging dance seminars in Kiev, Ukraine and Saskatchewan in the 1970s. These seminars were eventually opened to participants from across Canada and the political spectrum, and exposed dancers and choreographers directly to Ukrainian dance methodology, Ukrainian choreography, and contemporary Ukrainian culture, often for the first time. They were held for most of the next twenty summers, varying widely in popularity and constantly adjusting to political and cultural changes in Ukraine. By examining how and why these seminars developed, insight will be provided into their influence on the development of Ukrainian dance and their relationship to broader issues surrounding Ukrainian Canadian identity.

Society Ukraina and Forging Ties to Ukraine

Debates surrounding the necessity and legitimacy of ties with the Soviet Ukrainian government divided Ukrainian Canadians through the Soviet era. These divisions tended to follow the major political split, with the AUUC actively seeking connections to Ukraine while the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and its nationalist member organizations actively campaigning against them. The AUUC hoped

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2.   The terms "nationalist" and "progressive" are used by each group to identify itself and define its own political position. Both organizations had different terms to describe the other; however, how they identified themselves is most important to this article, so those terms will be used.

to develop new but authentic dances using their connections to Ukraine, whereas the nationalists claimed that the culture in Ukraine had suffered too much "Russification"[3] in the Soviet system, making it dubiously Ukrainian and potentially destructive to a Ukrainian culture which had been preserved beyond the Russian sphere of influence. The Ukrainian refugees who immigrated to Canada following World War II added a new dimension to the nationalist protests. In general, these immigrants adamantly protested against any involvement with the Soviet Ukrainian government, fearing any relationship would legitimize its control and destroy any possibility of an independent, democratic Ukraine (Marunchak 1982: 604-5). In Saskatchewan, however, these third wave immigrants had little direct influence, as they had predominately settled in major cities such as Toronto and were not heavily involved with Ukrainian dance in Saskatchewan. Instead, the most direct influence from Soviet Ukraine in Saskatchewan was felt through tours of dance troupes from Ukraine and the dance seminars, both of which were supported by the official Ukrainian government agency for foreign relations, *Society Ukraina*.

The 1946 AUUC National Festival in Edmonton featured a small delegation of Ukrainian diplomats, including officials from *Society Ukraina*. The AUUC further developed these ties with *Society Ukraina* over the ensuing years, which heavily shaped the activities of the AUUC, often leading to the introduction of artistic innovations and resources from Ukraine into their cultural programming. Their relationship provided the AUUC with access to music, instructors, and information from Soviet Ukraine, all of which was heavily in demand by the Canadian cultural forces and very difficult to obtain. As they were the only group allowed to arrange visits to Ukraine, *Society Ukraina* essentially controlled access to the country's cultural resources (Krawchuk 1984: 392). Through *Society Ukraina*-awarded scholarships, several members of the AUUC were able to travel to Ukraine to study

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3.   Within Ukrainian Canadian culture, this tends to be a catchall phrase encompassing the idea that Ukrainian culture under the Soviet system was forced to subsume itself to a broader pan-Soviet and dominantly Russian identity. There was particular concern both in Canada and Ukraine about the loss of the Ukrainian language during both the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. For the purposes of this article, it will be used primarily as a descriptor of anti-Soviet sentiment within the community, where applicable. For more information about russification concerns in Ukraine, see Catherine Wanner 1998.

dance, music, and history as early as the mid-1950s. In *Our Stage: The Amateur Performing Arts of the Ukrainian Settlers in Canada*, the English translation of the official history of the AUUC performing arts in Canada, Peter Krawchuk claims that this relationship was so significant that

> If the Ukrainian Canadian community had not had access to this living and inexhaustible source, our cultural heritage would have been very poor and insignificant. That is why today… more and more Ukrainians in the performing arts, born in Canada, are drawn to the rich creative source which is constantly being replenished by new and generous talents in Ukrainian lands, now united into the great Ukrainian Soviet Republic. And it is precisely this that strongly guarantees that our song, music and dance will not die or fade away on Canadian soil (1984: 395).

While this is somewhat overstated, it outlines how the AUUC saw their needs for the development of Ukrainian Canadian arts met through *Society Ukraina*.

Society Ukraina also arranged all tours of Ukrainians to Canada, including folk dance ensembles such as the Moiseyev State Ensemble of Folk Dance and the Pavlo Virsky State Folk Dance Ensemble. These dance groups usually traveled across North America, with stops in centres such as Saskatoon, Winnipeg, and Edmonton. Their programs usually presented Ukrainian dances, featuring staples such as Cossack and *chumak* (salt-trader) dances alongside new Soviet-realist choreographies, such as workers' dances featuring embroiderers and collective farmers. These groups also often presented dances from other ethnic groups within the USSR, including Byelorussian and Russian dances (Virsky State Folk Dance Ensemble 1962). Through their performances, the Ukrainian dancers were, according to Pavlo Virsky, trying

> to tell about the life and work of the Ukrainian people in the historic past and nowadays. Our Company fosters the national characteristics and traditions of Ukrainian folk dance for they are sacred to us. …. The main principle of our work is not just to copy ethnographic patterns of national dances, but to give them creative interpretation and enrich them (AUUC 1979).

To create this new interpretation, Virsky and the other choreographers blended folk dance themes and characters with classical ballet training to create a "high technique of performance and harmonious beauty of presentation" (AUUC 1979).

Arts critics generally responded positively to these ensembles' performances. However, both the selection of dances and their presentation were cause for concern to some audiences. As all folk dance groups were state-sponsored, they were viewed by some as potential mouthpieces for the Soviet Union. An editorial published in the 10 May 1958 edition of the *Globe and Mail* outlines those concerns, placing them firmly in their Cold War context. While praising the talent of the dancers and recognizing a positive story on the Soviet Union as a welcome change, Andrew Gregorovich of Hamilton, Ontario, reminded the audiences at such performances that

> [a] cool war continues to be waged, however, and it is important for Canadians not to forget the Soviet Government is benefiting from the publicity of the visit. Although Igor Moiseyev in "Folk Dances of the USSR" has adapted to his work the well-known meaningless phrase, "Choreography, like all categories of Soviet art, is national in form and Socialist in content,» we can be certain the "Socialist" content of the dances will not influence us as greatly as a more subtle idea. This idea is that the nationalities represented are free nations having the power of national self expression…. It is a paradox that just those national differences in costume, music and dance which distinguish the Russians from the other nationalities are flaunted here in the freedom of North American, while in their native lands they are being suppressed (1958: 6).

This editorial was reprinted in *MYHbeams*, the monthly publication of the Ukrainian National Youth Federation, a member of the UCC, to ensure nationalist youth would see it. However, audience reaction was not always negative. As the Regina AUUC Poltava Ensemble worked with Ukraine-trained instructors, those instructors provided the ability for the dance group to expand in new directions. The introduction of the dance "On the Cornfields" by the Poltava Ensemble in Regina was hailed as a success by the AUUC, noting that it was an audience favourite because they "related to it".[4] In contrast, Bohdan Zerebecky from Saskatoon, along with other nationalists, viewed a dance about cornfield workers on a collective farm as Soviet socialist-realist propaganda.[5]

Beyond such controversy, the Canadian choreographers and instructors who attended these concerts were impressed by the

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4.   Interview by the author 4 February 2006.
5.   Interview by the author 16 April 2005.

production. Although some choreographers initially dismissed these dances as heavily "Russified," many dance ensembles often adopted the new dances anyway, occasionally even rejecting the fledgling Canadian innovations in favour of the new Ukrainian style. The most widely adopted dance was Virsky's "Bread and Salt Welcome," based on a traditional village welcome and used to open the concert. Variations of this dance remain a popular feature of the repertoire of ensembles today.

The Dance Seminars

As students returned from the *Society Ukraina* sponsored studies, they often became very influential within the AUUC's cultural activities. For instance, Alex Lapchuk from Regina studied in Ukraine for several years in the 1960s, and upon returning to Saskatchewan he was able to choreograph new dances for the group based on the Soviet Ukrainian style. Inspired by the success of students who had studied choreography in Ukraine and positive reviews of the Ukrainian dance troupes, the AUUC decided to work with *Society Ukraina* to develop several Ukrainian dance seminars. The first seminar was held in Kiev in August 1971. Ron Mokry, the director of the AUUC School of Dancing in Winnipeg, was heavily involved in the planning. He told *Society Ukraina* to expect dancers between sixteen and twenty years old. He chose students who studied under instructors who had studied in Ukraine, ensuring that they were familiar with the character dance curriculum used in the choreography institutes. He also requested instructors who had taught amateur dancers, who would teach character subject dances rather than *hopaks* and *kolomyikas*,[6] and who were able to choreograph for more female than male roles, as most Canadian dance groups had more female participants than males (Mokry 1971a). These requirements were met, and the seminar was considered a great success.

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6. These dances are both common in Ukrainian Canadian dance. A *hopak* is a spectacular finale dance, often featuring Cossack acrobatics from the males and many turns from the female dancers. This is performed in Poltava costumes, including wide pants for the men and a tunic, skirt, and a wreath of flowers with ribbons flowing from it for the women. A *kolomyika* is generally a circle or semicircle dance very similar to the *hopak*, featuring acrobatics and solo, duet, trio, and small group performances within the dance. For further information, see Andriy Nahachewsky's dissertation "The Kolomyika: Change and Diversity in Canadian Ukrainian Folk Dance" (1991).

The students returned with "an enormous amount of technical knowledge regarding Ukrainian Folk Dancing," which they were able to apply in their dance ensembles and incorporate into their own performances (Mokry 1971b). However, there were also a few changes recommended, including that the seminars in the future be open to dancers and instructors from across Canada, that they be extended (as three weeks was too little time), and that they explore the possibility of inviting instructors to come to Canada instead of having students pay to travel to Ukraine. These suggestions were implemented, with varying degrees of success.

The 1974 Kiev seminar marked the first time the camp was opened to nationalist dancers. The dancers were taught ten dances together, and the feedback on the course offerings was generally positive. However, some of the young AUUC dancers responded extremely negatively to the nationalist dancers. For example, a letter from Donna Machuik and Joanne Laslo, both of Regina, described that they

> felt that during this seminar the five individuals from the National Federation had [disappointed] our organization and the representation of our country, Canada, by not being present at most of the scheduled tours, appearing late at meals, being late for the occasional tour they did come on, and last but not least one individual from Winnipeg delayed our flight from Paris to Montreal. It may just have been their individual personalities and really just noticed under their organization (1974).

While there were no responses on file from the nationalist participants, judging by responses submitted following later seminars, it is probable that the dancers from the nationalist organizations experienced similar issues and concerns.

Possibly due to these difficulties, combined with the cost of annual travel to Ukraine, the AUUC decided to hold their 1975 seminar in Saskatchewan instead of Ukraine. Although feedback on the Ukraine seminars had mentioned the importance of seeing Ukraine for the young participants (Mokry 1971b), by hosting the seminar in Canada the cost of the program was reduced considerably, allowing more dancers the opportunity to participate. "Dance Seminar' 75"was a joint project of the Saskatchewan Arts Board and the Poltava Ensemble. It was held in conjunction with the Saskatchewan Summer School of the Arts at Fort San, Saskatchewan, 80 km northeast of Regina, and marked the

first time dance instructors from Soviet Ukraine visited Canada to teach. There were five people in the Ukrainian delegation: three instructors, led by Kim Vasylenko; one accompanist; and one representative from *Society Ukraina* (Alex Lapchuk 5 May 1975). Another letter from Alex Lapchuk to the AUUC NEC dated 10 April 1975 noted that the local Secretary of State

> suggested to play down idea of instructors from Ukraine, as Feds. [*sic*] don't like to spend money on out of country people. We mentioned this was the importance of the whole seminar and that funds received from them would be used for the purposes stated on the grant. This was not the only anticipated protest, as the letter goes on to say: "question also came up about possible boycott by other Ukrainians as with Ukrainian singers. We stated that it might be possible, but that the quota would be filled without them and irrespective of calls by *KUK* [the Cyrillic acronym for UCC] not all cultural forces will head" (Lapchuk 1975).

Their prediction was accurate as, of the forty participants, only twenty of them were from AUUC groups; two others were from St. Peter and St. Paul's Church of Saskatoon, and the rest were from Ukrainian National Federation (UNF, a member of the UCC) or formerly UNF-associated dance groups (AUUC 1975b).

The general information package from the seminar stated that the course mainly involved teaching contemporary Ukrainian choreography (as opposed to teaching primarily dance technique or a wide variety of steps), enabling participants to bring that choreography to their schools (AUUC 1975a). They were also given information on music, costuming and Ukrainian dance terminology (AUUC 1975b). The three-week seminar cost $75 per week for in-province students and $100 per week for those out of province, and was held from August 10-31 (AUUC 1975a). As with the earlier seminars in Ukraine, the dancers were "without exception, Canadian born youth, mainly secondary school or university students" (Krawchuk 1984: 366). They came from British Columbia (Vancouver and Kelowna), Alberta (Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, and Rycroft), Saskatchewan (Saskatoon and Regina), Manitoba (Winnipeg and Dauphin) and Toronto (AUUC 1975b).

The 1975 seminar was an "unqualified success" according to the Report and Evaluation submitted to the AUUC NEC. It also received excellent press coverage including four articles and photos in the *Regina Leader Post*, a CBC Radio interview for the nationally broadcast

"Identities," and the creation of a videotape. Notably, the Canadian Press story was written "emphasizing the lack of Federal funding for the Seminar" (AUUC 1975b). By September 1975, planning had already started for Dance Seminar '76 and, although there had been some discussion of the Saskatchewan Arts Board handling the seminar (Lapchuk 1975a), the AUUC remained heavily involved. Alex Lapchuk was also hired on as a coordinator for the program (Lapchuk 1975c). The 1975 program incorporated a few changes, such as moving to Fort Qu'Appelle for its larger rehearsal space. As well, there were fifty participants, with thirty-three from the AUUC and participants from Regina and Porcupine Plain. There were also dancers from locations outside Saskatchewan, but no participants from Saskatoon (AUUC 1976). This may be related to the creation of the Verkovyna Dance Seminar in Saskatoon that same summer, although Verkovyna was predominately designed as a summer stock group. Due to the success and popularity of both the Ukraine and Saskatchewan seminars, the seminars began alternating between Saskatchewan and Ukraine starting in 1977. They continued to be held until the early 1990s, by which time the Ukrainian borders had begun opening up and more dancers from Ukraine began coming to Canada to teach. Throughout their existence the seminars attracted participants from across the province, including Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, Wynyard, Swift Current, Fox Valley, Esterhazy, and Estevan (AUUC 1983).

Yet, not all feedback was completely positive. The inability for many participants to understand Ukrainian caused some difficulty in understanding the steps themselves and slowed down the seminars due to the necessity to translate the instructors' comments. Some discussion ensued about creating a Ukrainian dance terminology dictionary to aid communication and educate the participants; however, none was produced (AUUC 1976). The instructors themselves were concerned that if the dances were not perfected by the end of the seminars, there might be a loss of authenticity as "the way the dance goes home will inevitably be the way the dance will be performed" (AUUC 1976). These concerns were not without justification, as the nationalists, in an attempt to address their concerns about the Russification of the dances they were taught at the seminars, tended to "filter" these changes, keeping only the most expressive elements rather than the full dances (Zerebecky 2006). The AUUC workshops, however, flooded the province with so much new choreography that most groups, particularly the newly formed

ones that may not have had the experience to choreograph their own dances, quickly adopted them (Zerebecky 2006). This entire experience, several nationalist sources claimed, stifled the early creativity and choreographic potential of Ukrainian Canadian dance (Zerebecky 2006; Drebot 2005).

Although letters from participants generally complimented the seminars, they also contained a few notable criticisms. For example, Marcella Cenaiko from the Yevshan Ensemble in Saskatoon attended the 1977 seminar in Kiev. She liked the conditioning and ballet exercises and appreciated the regional dances, including Lemko, Volyn', and Poltava regions. However, she was unimpressed with the Russian Kalinka dance, as she had not intended to study Russian dances (Cenaiko c. 1977). These sentiments were generally echoed by Andriy Nahachewsky, who added that he would have liked more background on the dances and the regions because he "had stressed before that there was a desperate shortage of literature on this topic which would be very valuable in Canada" (1977). Although more Ukrainian ethnographic regions were introduced at the future seminars — represented by dances from Bukovinian and Transcarpathian regions taught at the 1983 seminar, for example — the instructors also continued to teach non-Ukrainian dances, including a Moldavian duet that same year (AUUC 1983).

There were also some concerns from AUUC members about whether the seminars should be open to non-AUUC participants. One AUUC participant wrote after the 1976 seminar requesting that the seminars be closed to the nationalists and that the AUUC "turn inward for a period of time" to strengthen itself.[7] She claimed that until the AUUC participants fully understood the political position of the AUUC, they were not equipped to withstand the constant onslaught of politics from the nationalists. In particular, she objected

> to taking classes with people who seem to find the verification of the Russification of Ukrainian dance in every movement which they are shown. And I object to ludicrous discussions with such people which lead to the assertion that in the Ukraine, the headpieces (vinke) are now being made in the shape of the Russian kokoshnik.[8]

7.   Confidential Letter [T. Polowy] to National Executive Council 14 September 1976.
8.   Confidential Letter [T. Polowy] to National Executive Council 14 September 1976.

She was also disappointed that the instructors did not defend Soviet Ukraine as much as she had anticipated, only hearing one whispered comment that an instructor appreciated knowing "that sympathetic supporters of Soviet Ukraine did exist in Canada".[9] This attitude, she felt, demonstrated a general lack of political understanding among the instructors. These comments and observations, although made by one dancer at one seminar, reflect some of the issues preventing collaborative efforts between the nationalist and the progressive Ukrainian Canadians.

Consequences of the Dance Seminars

The seminars, particularly the earliest ones, had a long-term impact on the development of Ukrainian dance in Saskatchewan, although the choreography that was taught at the seminars is rarely if ever performed today. However, the teaching methodology, the incorporation of ballet training, and the introduction of new ethnographic regions of Ukrainian dance — essentially the complication of Ukrainian dance that resulted from these seminars — is still visible today.

Ballet instruction provided excellent physical training and development for the dancers, enabling them to practice more often and for longer periods of time, while minimizing their injuries. This was particularly important for the male dancers, since their role became increasingly acrobatic and therefore more physically stressful and dangerous throughout this period. As well, turns for both women and men became spotted, [10] allowing for faster, cleaner, and more impressive turns.

Ballet technique and training also assisted with the adoption of new ethnographic regional dances by teaching basic dance techniques that were applicable to all regions. The original Avramenko dances were generally broadly classified as either central or western dances, ignoring much of the ethnographic diversity within these areas of Ukraine (Lapchuk 2006). With the introduction of new regions to Ukrainian Canadian dance through these seminars, this diversity moved to the foreground. As these regional dances were introduced via ties with

9. Confidential Letter [T. Polowy] to National Executive Council 14 September 1976.
10. To turn with a "spot" means that the head faces one direction while the body rotates beneath it. Once the head needs to move, it almost instantaneously rotates, resting once more at its original position (if it is a full turn) or 180 degrees off its original position (if it is a half turn).

Soviet Ukraine, they were generally taught in the Soviet style. This style approached Ukrainian dance much like character ballet; it reduced each ethnographic group into specific regional steps and styling, such as hand placements that were typically Hutsul, Bukovinian, Volynian, or Poltavan, and taught this style on top of common steps. Both at the Ukrainian seminars and in the published material, explanations behind each region's style were presented. For instance, the Bukovinian region dances are danced with close, high steps because they live in wooded areas near the Carpathian Mountains, and the women wear long tight wrapped skirts. The Soviet instructors also created a character barre system, which further developed the style for certain characters, such as gypsies or soldiers, while providing different physical conditioning.

The introduction of some of these regions and characters was controversial, generally for historic or cultural reasons. While some regions, such as Volyn', Lemko, and Transcarpathia were adopted with little hesitation even though their costuming, movements and style were considerably different from the mainstream regional dances, other dances were not so quickly accepted. The greatest controversy was over the suitability of gypsy, sailor, worker, and non-Ukrainian dances introduced from Soviet and post-Soviet Ukraine. The nationalists often denounced the worker dances as Soviet propaganda and Soviet Realism, so they did not adopt them (Zerebecky 2006). Despite these associations, they were popular with audiences when the Regina Poltava Ensemble performed them. The military dances, particularly sailor's dances, and dances of other ethnic groups in and around Ukraine, most commonly gypsy dances, were also introduced into the dance system. None of these dances are considered Ukrainian, but they have been performed by Ukrainian dance troupes in Saskatchewan since the 1970s. As well, some ethnic variants on popular dances have very similar steps to Ukrainian dance regions. For instance, the Poltava Ensemble began dancing Russian dances after learning a Kuban Cossack dance. Although these Cossacks are often considered Ukrainian, they are a separate group, with a separate style from the more commonly emulated Zaporozhian Cossacks, and the Kuban dance is similar to Russian dances (Lapchuk 2006). Some Ukrainian folk tales that have been adapted for the stage, such as "Marusia," feature Persian and gypsy roles, providing an introduction to the dance style for the dancers.[11] Neither gypsies nor

11. This dance was mentioned in the Zerebecky interview, in comparison to a similar dance Yevshan choreographed and performed, but no name was given for the Yevshan dance. The "Marusia" dance in question was performed and choreographed by Shumka, originally a UNF dance troupe, from Edmonton.

Persians are considered Ukrainians by Ukrainian society. However, as these dances are performed in Ukrainian forums, such as the Ukrainian pavilions of the multicultural festivals, they imply close and possibly friendly ties between the cultures — ties which may not exist. This can negate a history of problems between the ethnic groups and can confuse the audience's understanding of Ukrainian culture as presented through dance, particularly if they are unaware the dances are not Ukrainian (Drebot 2005; Zerebecky 2006). Such concerns have recently led the Kiev Ukrainian pavilion at Saskatoon's annual multicultural festival, Folkfest, to ban gypsy, sailor, and military dances (Zerebecky 2006). Lapchuk, however, maintains that these dances were not introduced for ideological reasons, but for their artistic merit and "because [the Poltava dancers] are not narrowly nationalistic" (Lapchuk 2006). As well, the Russian and other cultural dances have persisted because they are unique and "audiences can't get enough of it."

Concerns about the Russification of Ukrainian dance, however, were more difficult to address, as they went to the heart of the innovations introduced by the seminars. As the dances changed in the postwar period, nationalists were particularly critical of any evidence that Ukrainian dances were being modified to become closer to Russian dances and costumes. This criticism was particularly evident in discussions about the development of women's *vinok*, flowered headdresses worn as part of the national dress. If they became too tall or too pointed above the forehead, they were considered by some informants to be too similar to the Russian headdresses. Concerns about Russification were also present with relation to developments in the dances. For instance, as more movements involving stamping and slapping were introduced, accusations developed that these were done in a non-Ukrainian, more Russian way. This concern is tied to Avramenko's original instruction that students do not pound their feet because, as his former student Drebot explained, "why would you pound if you're dancing on the grass, walking through wheat fields and mountains?" (Zerebecky 2006).

Conclusion

Although ties with Ukraine were controversial within the Ukrainian Canadian community during the period under discussion, they were also clearly influential. The introduction of a new performance standard brought by the Ukrainian dance tour groups helped transform Ukrainian dance concerts from their folk dance roots to a more professional show. The seminars held in Ukraine and Canada in the 1970s and 1980s were an essential part of these changes in the dance performances. The ethnographic regions, ballet and character dance techniques, fresh choreography, and unique teaching style of the Soviet era in Ukraine were often incorporated into dance schools and ensembles across Canada. These ties, however, also highlighted existing concerns about the authenticity of dances and costumes from Canada and Ukraine.

As Ukrainian dances were reinvented in the postwar period, concerns about the authenticity of the culture that was being presented were raised with increasing frequency. Challenges to a dance's authenticity, such as through accusations of Russification, were often more damaging than challenges to their artistic merits. This discrepancy ultimately results from the nature of folk dance, which necessarily draws much of its legitimacy from its claims to represent an authentic culture. As several informants reported, the Ukrainian cultural values were found in the regional variations in steps, music, and costuming, including details such as hand placement, head movements, and the colours and techniques of embroidery used in the costumes. It was important for such details to be preserved and maintained. Although all the dance groups were concerned that the culture they presented through their costumes and dances be authentic, it was difficult to determine what was truly authentic due to the dearth of information on Ukrainian dance. These seminars partially addressed this need, while at the same time creating their own controversy within the community.

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