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# *Czechoslovak Folk Music and Dance Ensembles and the World Youth Festival in the 1950s: An Ethnomusicology and Oral History Perspective\**

ABSTRACT: One of the most significant mass manifestations of the state-subsidised cultural expressions of the Socialist Bloc in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was “Red Woodstock”, the World Festival of Youth and Students. The first edition took place in the summer of 1947 in Prague. Incidentally, this festival featured Czechoslovak amateur and professional folk music and dance ensembles in a preliminary line-up, which later became the most important established ensembles in the country. Some of these ensembles then appeared regularly at Youth Festivals. Such festival performances were considered very influential performance opportunity for ensembles of folk music and dance in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s. The present article, based on data gathered through interviews grounded in oral history and archival research, explores the role of the World Youth Festivals in the process of foundation of Czechoslovak ensembles of folk music and dance and their repertoire negotiation of the traditional music and dance within the vague framework of socialist realism on the one hand, and an everyday-life perspective and ordinary desire to perform pronounced by the ensembles’ members on the other.

KEYWORDS: folk music and dance, folklore revival movement, World Youth Festivals, Czechoslovakia, 1950s

## Introduction

In 1952, a film *Tomorrow, People Will be Dancing Everywhere* (*Zitř se bude tančit všude*) by Czech director Vladimír Vlček was introduced in Czechoslovakia. It retells the story of the beginnings of the so-called “folklore revival

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movement” (*folklorní hnutí*) in the after-war communist Czechoslovakia and its first key home as well as international performances. At the end of the 1940s, many new ensembles referring to various regional forms and expressions of local traditions of folk music and dance were being founded. Such ensembles drew on the example of Soviet model and fulfilled guidelines, which were formulated by Czechoslovak state’s institutional apparatus and eminent representatives of choreography, pedagogy of dance and ethnochoreology of the time. These guidelines concerned organisation, repertoire, music accompaniments, choreography as well as ideology. The film depicts the foundation and beginnings of one of the most prominent ensembles Soubor písní a tanců Josefa Vycpálka, or the Vycpálkovci. One of the ensemble’s first successful performances took place at the “Red Woodstock”, the World Festival of Youth in Budapest (1949) and Berlin (1951). However, reality and fiction alternate in the shots of Vlček’s film. While the authentic footage captures cheering crowds on the real stages of the 1951 Berlin festival<sup>1</sup>, the scenes depicting the performance of the Vycpálkovci folk music and dance ensemble at the festival do not feature its real members, but actors who appear in other scenes throughout the film.

The World Festival of Youth and Students became probably the most significant mass manifestation of the state-subsidised cultural expressions of the Socialist Bloc and its key official representatives. Especially in the 1950s, the festivals were considered a very influential performance occasion of high importance for Czechoslovak musicians and dancers engaged in the folklore revival movement, which was booming in Czechoslovakia on the threshold of the 1950s. The present article discusses the multi-layered role of the World Festivals of Youth and Students (WFYS) in the process of foundation and first decade of existence of new Czechoslovak ensembles referring to elements of various local folk music and dance traditions. It is possible to ask how specific settings of the WFYS influenced the conceptualisation of the music and dance repertoire, which was negotiated within the vague framework of socialist realism and performed under the conditions of the authoritarian rule in Czechoslovakia. At the same time, the aim of the article is also to reflect nostalgic remembrances and individual everyday-life perspective of ensemble members, where the multifaceted experience of active participants of the WFYS is evident.

## Notes on methodology

This paper points to a selected topic from a broader project called *Weight and Weightlessness of the Folklore: The Folklore Revival Movement of the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Czech Lands*<sup>2</sup>, involving scholars from several Czech academic institutions<sup>3</sup>. The project was realised in the years 2017–2019

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Festival míru. III. světový festival mládeže a studentstva za mír* (1951).

<sup>2</sup> Project GA ČR GA17-26672S 2017 – 2019.

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and its main publication output represents a voluminous monograph (Stavělová et al., 2021). The monograph's main purpose is to explore the ambivalence of the Czechoslovak folklore revival movement: the conflicting perception of the phenomenon by the ruling regime on the one hand and participants of the movement on the other (Stavělová, 2018). While the research was also based on long term collection and study of archival sources deposited in the Czech National Archive, other institutions and personal estates, the core data draws upon about 230 interviews grounded in the method of oral history (Vaněk, 2018). The interviews – life stories and dialogical interviews – were conducted with almost 70 narrators, involving both leading and ordinary members of 25 folk music and dance ensembles in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia.

The phenomenon of the World Youth Festivals was examined by different scholars mainly regarding its significance in the period of late Stalinism and the Cold War<sup>4</sup>. My objective here is thus to outline performances of Czechoslovak folk music and dance ensembles at the WFYS in the 1950s in a dual perspective. On the one hand, there are data present in archival records, text publications and the socialist state's official propaganda outputs including audiovisual materials or news referring to the festival's preparations and its progress. Therefore, it is possible to analyse the official depiction of the festival's events and their subsequent impact on ensembles and their activities in Czechoslovakia. However, a certain problem in research is the lack of unambiguous facts in archival sources<sup>5</sup>, from which it is not possible to determine how many and which individual folk music and dance ensembles and soloists were sent to specific years of the festival. It is significant that the archival materials of the Czechoslovak Youth Union, its propaganda publications and other printed document sources concerning the various editions of the WFYS always emphasise the massiveness of the event, mentioning the total number of delegates sent and the tens of thousands of people in the audience. Specific performers are nevertheless rarely mentioned. In addition, according to archival documentary sources and oral reports of witnesses (c.f. Klementová, 2019), individual folk music and dance ensembles were often not delegated to the festival as a whole, i. e. with full members. A certain exception was the festival in Berlin in 1951, for which there is the most evidence and which was attended by a total of 7 complete music and dance ensembles, 4 of which had a repertoire of folk music and dance. In the other cases, starting with the first edition in Prague in 1947, it was a selection of cadre-like and "politically reliable" individuals (meaning members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Czechoslovak Youth Union) coming from various ensembles across the country who were allowed to go to the festivals. They then played, sang and danced in widely disparate formations that did not normally perform together at home in

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<sup>4</sup> See Krekola, Mikkonen (2011), Koivunen (2014), Taylor (2003) or White (2018). For a special significance of the 1957 Moscow WFYS see Koivunen (2009, 2016) or Peacock (2012).

<sup>5</sup> National Archives Czech Republic, funds "Československý svaz mládeže – ústřední výbor, Praha" NAD 1026, "Ministerstvo informací 1945–1953" NAD 861, "Ministerstvo kultury 1953–1956" NAD 867, "Ministerstvo školství a kultury 1945–1967" NAD 994 and "Socialistický svaz mládeže – ústřední výbor, Praha" NAD 356.

Czechoslovakia. The repertoire was then created spontaneously and, in the moment, just before the performances on the stages. This article therefore focuses on the World Youth Festivals of the 1950s, as there is probably the most evidence of performances by specific ensembles from this period, as well as the recollections of surviving witnesses, even if they are individuals. From press reports, as well as other documents and archival sources from the following decades, only increasing superficiality and constant repetition of contentless phrases in the spirit of the typical discourse and language of the communist regime are evident. Instead of mentioning individual delegates, the emphasis is on the mass and total numbers of delegates and spectators watching countless cultural programmes, as well as many competitions in sporting disciplines.

Despite the lack of some clear facts, the issue can be considered worthy of attention. The aim of this article is not to present an exhaustive overview of the performing troupes in their entirety, but rather to highlight the multi-layered level of the ensembles' performances here from a dual perspective, firstly "from the outside", from the sources of official regime propaganda, and secondly "from the inside", from the perspective of the selected participants. It should be mentioned here that today only a few survivors – participants of the WFYS in the 1950s, who were also narrators in the Czech research on the folklore revival movement, are alive. Such individuals still retain their own personal and subjective perspective of participants, who performed folk music and dance at the WFYS.

## World Festivals of Youth and Students

The concept of the World Youth Festival was defined by the two socialist-leaning non-government organisations – the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) and the International Union of Students (IUS). The event was to become the major influential tool of propagating the idea of "peaceful" socialist internationalism and Soviet culture and lifestyle, being designed in the format of the "cultural Olympics" (Koivunen, 2014, p. 125). Until the fall of communism in the Eastern Bloc, 13 editions of the WFYS were organised. Initially held every other year (1947 Prague, 1949 Budapest, 1951 Berlin, 1953 Bucharest, 1955 Warsaw, 1957 Moscow, 1959 Vienna)<sup>6</sup>, WFYS represented probably the most prominent and media-watched "mega event" of the socialist "peace camp" in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was attended by tens of thousands of delegates and watched by as many as one and half million participants<sup>7</sup> in the audience, mostly young people. The festival was definitely associated with leftist ideology and propaganda of the Soviet Union, which was spread to and shared by its satellite states. The event was intended as the most visible manifestation of the "struggle against imperialism, fascism, (neo)colonialism and militarism" of the USA and the West in general. Therefore, the festival was mostly attended

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<sup>6</sup> From the mid-1960s, the WFYS became less frequent. Until the end of the 1980s, festivals were held as follows: 1962 Helsinki, 1968 Sofia, 1973 Berlin, 1978 Havana, 1985 Moscow, 1989 Pyongyang.

<sup>7</sup> This is the case of the Berlin WFYS, see also Kotek (1996, p. 195).

by participants coming from the Eastern Bloc countries with different kinds of socialist regimes. However, by the 1960s, there was a strong intention to feature also independent states from the decolonised global South (White, 2018, pp. 589–590), nevertheless, the number of delegates from the Third World countries usually used to be rather modest<sup>8</sup>. A number of delegates from Western capitalist states such as France, Italy, Finland, Great Britain or the USA were present at WFYS, especially at its largest edition, which was held in Moscow in 1957 (Peacock, 2012). While the festivals were mostly hosted by the capitals of socialist countries, in 1959 and 1962 the event was organised outside the Eastern Bloc in Vienna, Austria and Helsinki, Finland: the Helsinki festival was attended by an exceptional number of US citizens and the event made Helsinki a centre of Cold War operations (Krekola, Mikkonen, 2011). However, the USA and other Western countries never sent an official delegation to the WFYS (Koivunen, 2014, p. 130). Participants from non-communist countries lacked any kind of state support and unlike the socialist states, their delegations consisted of amateur collective formations or “deviant” artists, individuals devoted to socialist ideology, such as Americans Paul Robeson and Dean Reed, who participated in the Berlin festivals in 1951 and 1973 and their performances were regarded as the festival highlights. The number of delegates representing each country ranged from dozens to hundreds of representatives of official culture, sport, as well as numerous young people –both workers and intellectuals and mostly members of local communist parties and youth organisations. Czechoslovakia itself usually sent some few hundreds of delegates including members of political, cultural and sports delegation. After the first few festivals in the 1950s, to which sources with some concrete information are still linked, the Czechoslovak delegations to the WFYS from the 1960s onwards were characterised in only summary terms<sup>9</sup>, highlighting the many hundreds of delegates, among whom were “boys and girls, the best workers from factories and fields, students and young artists and leading sportsmen, cultural ensembles of all kinds”.

From its very beginnings, the festival had a profound political connotation, grounded in radical leftist ideology and propagandistic proclamations praising communism and socialist ideology, from 1947 to 1951 especially Stalinism. The program included keynote speeches of prominent state political representatives and “political education” lectures, mass demonstrations and parades. All festival events were intended to communicate several messages of “anti-imperialism struggle”, which were repeated each time: it was rejection of a new world war and condemnation of colonial exploitation. Besides this, the festival programme

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<sup>8</sup> The 1957 Moscow was the biggest Youth Festival ever held. The Third World was represented here by fifty-one delegations consisting of only between one and ten delegates (Koivunen, 2009, p. 50).

<sup>9</sup> Both in the archival documents and the texts of promotional materials or press releases of the time, phrases such as “our best soloists”, “our best ensembles”, or “artists and ensembles from Czechoslovakia received many prizes from the festival” appear, but without specifying which ensembles or soloists they were. It should be stressed that even in the 1950s there is no reliable list of folk music and dance ensembles that participated in WFYS in this period. Especially for the years 1949, 1955 and 1959 there are no specific data on the ensembles involved.

included commemoration acts of the fascist horrors as well as pointing to severe societal problems, which were to originate from the “unjustly” class-divided world and socioeconomic consequences of capitalism. A special language and terminology appearing either on banners or in the texts of promotional materials, prospectuses and pamphlets were to reflect the festival’s leftist ethos: phrases and idioms such as “fight for peace” and combat against the “world’s reaction” were associated with the festival for decades. Finally, the political programme included spectacular introduction of heroic fighters against imperialist aggression, whether they were engaged in the war in Korea or Vietnam or claimed for “peace and justice” in the Middle East.

Besides the political programme, the festival became the arena of international contest both in the domains of sports and culture. Numerous sports Olympics-like competitions and cultural events, such as theatre and film shows or art exhibitions were held. Music and dance represented omnipresent and indispensable part of the WFYS programmes. Of special importance in the 1950s were politically committed mass songs composed by Soviet authors and other regional composers. *The Song of Democratic Youth* by Soviet composer Anatoly Novikov<sup>10</sup> and poet Lev Oshanin, the winning song of the competition preceding the 1<sup>st</sup> festival in Prague, was sung collectively during both opening and closing festival ceremonies. The piece became the festival hymn, which was heard in the languages of all delegations, the song’s melody and lyrics appeared in festival programmes and other promotional materials. However, other folk and newly composed mass songs or compositions by various Soviet and other composers were usually sung during the festival<sup>11</sup>. E.g., the waltz song *Meeting in Vienna* with Czech and German lyrics was composed by the Czechoslovak composer Bohumil Macák (1959, pp. 150–151) especially for the 7<sup>th</sup> WFYS in 1959. Dozens of venues from big theatres and concert halls to smaller clubs became the places of festival’s programme. The spectrum of genres and styles of music and dance was very broad, ranging from classical to traditional folk and modern popular music; performers then appeared both in classical chamber music settings and spectacular estradas [stage settings] more typical for the domain of pop music of the time. An essential domain represented traditional or folk music and dance from around the world: the wide variety of “national folklore” was here to represent the ethos of socialist internationalism.

Last but not least, an indispensable part of the festivals were many competitions of soloist and ensemble interpretation of music and dance by amateur as well professional performers up to thirty years of age. The competitions were attended by classical music composers, singers, instrumentalists, ballet and mime show dancers. Another domain represented the mass song contest, and traditional or “national” folk music and dance competitions<sup>12</sup> including both soloists

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<sup>10</sup> Composer Novikov and choreographer Moiseyev, both connected with the beginnings of the WFYS, sat on the juries of festival competitions in later years, for example in Berlin in 1951.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., the song by Arkady Ostrovsky and Lev Oshanin *Long live the Moscow Festival!*

<sup>12</sup> Musicians and dancers mostly from Asian countries were intended to participate the “Songs and Dances of the East” category of the competition. However, in the 1940s and 1950s, numbers of contestants from the so-called Third World were small and usually they succeeded in folk music and

and ensembles. Over the course of several decades, members of Czechoslovak delegations received many awards<sup>13</sup>, however, regardless of the category it was usually the Soviets who received the first prize (Koivunen, 2014, pp. 131–133). In general, ensembles from socialist countries were attributed a higher performance level than those from capitalist states<sup>14</sup>.

### Czechoslovakia and its folk music and dance representation at the WFYS in the 1950s

The First WFYS was organised in summer 1947 in Prague<sup>15</sup> on the initiative of the IUS and WFDY<sup>16</sup>. Jan Masaryk, the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs, agreed that the festival would take place in Prague on condition that it would be strictly non-political. However, the IUS and WFDY were already under communist control at the time. According to archival records and witnesses' accounts, the event was nevertheless full of enthusiasm and aspirations to build a new post-war world. In Czechoslovakia, the first WFYS was preceded by two competitions organized at the beginning of 1947 by the festival committee and the Czechoslovak Youth Union (Československý svaz mládeže). The festival's programme consisted of many various events, including musical performances and concerts. Among the foreign delegates coming from several continents, the performance of Edric Connor, British singer from Trinidad and the Korean female dancer An Son Chi attracted attention. Founded soon after the war by Vladimír Úlehla, it was the Moravian Dance Ensemble and Choir and its choreomusical repertoire referring to traditional music of South Moravia and Moravian-Slovak borderland (Pospíšil, 1974, p. 9) which gained special attention among Czechoslovak folk music and dance performers<sup>17</sup> delegated to the festival. However, the most appreciated festival performance was the one of the Moiseyev Ensemble of National Soviet Dances, which received the first prize in the category of soloist and ensemble interpretation of folk dances (JR, 1947, p. 141). It should be noted that especially Moiseyev's ensemble and a few other Soviet ensembles<sup>18</sup> became the most important influencers for the so-called folklore revival movement

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dance category. Cf. Koivunen (2014, p. 140). One can consider the marginal position of the so-called Third World countries and their spectacular and "exotic" music and dance performances, which seemed to represent their only jury-awarded contribution.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., in Vienna 1959 WFYS, delegates from Czechoslovakia received 10 gold, 6 silver and 4 bronze medals. See Kajanová, Štefančík (1989, p. 75).

<sup>14</sup> See cf. Kröschlová (1953).

<sup>15</sup> According to official data, a total of over 100 000 Czechoslovaks and 17 000 delegates from 72 countries around the world attended the festival. Cf. Glückauf, Lajka (1981, p. 68).

<sup>16</sup> International Union of Students, World Federation of Democratic Youth.

<sup>17</sup> In addition to the aforementioned Úlehla ensemble, party individuals, or the preliminary line-ups of later established ensembles, were delegated to the festival. Nevertheless, the first Prague Youth Festival was a formative event for the later main Czechoslovak professional ensemble – the Czechoslovak State Folk Song and Dance Ensemble. Cf. Leszkowová (1985, p. 3), Pavlicová, Uhlíková (1997, p. 146).

<sup>18</sup> Piatnicky, Osipov, Beryozka or the State Ensemble of Georgia.

formation in Czechoslovakia on the threshold of the 1950s (Stavělová, 2017, 2001, Pavlicová, Uhlíková, 2018, 2008a, 2008b, Kosíková, 1998). The so called “folk art creativity” (*lidová umělecká tvořivost*) (Franc, Knapík, 2013, pp. 27–28) referring to the Soviet concept of “amateur artistic activity” (*khudozhestvennaia samodeiatel'nost'*) (Olson, 2004, pp. 46–49) acquired significant state support: besides the transformation of previous folk music and dance ensembles with pre-war traditions, new ensembles of folk music and dance were founded within many state enterprises, factories, and other institutions. Their repertoire, performance practice, state institutional support and directive style of leadership were designed to follow the Soviet model (Urbanová, 1953). The regime also intended to use ensembles of folk music and dance as a suitable platform for spreading “political education” and propaganda both on the level of repertoire and mutual social interactions of the members (Pavlicová, Uhlíková, 2018, Bonuš, 1951, Laudová, 1954, pp. 9–25).

Besides a few early concerts in the Soviet Union, the Czechoslovak folk music and dance ensembles' participation in the WFYS was regarded as a unique and prestigious opportunity to perform abroad in the 1950s. Performers delegated to the festivals were preliminarily selected during district and regional levels of local Czechoslovak youth festivals and competitions. The repertoire of such ensembles at the time was supposed to mix the aspects of traditional folk culture with new creations and newly composed politically committed “folk” songs as well as dance choreographies, the so-called “*nová tvorba*” (Uhlíková, 2018, pp. 41–55). This trend was subsequently reflected in the repertoire presented at the WFYS in the 1950s. For example, the Folk Music and Dance Ensemble of the Czechoslovak Union of Youth (*Soubor lidových písní a tanců ČSM* – later the *Vycpálkovci*, one of the leading Czechoslovak ensembles<sup>19</sup> – performed the vocal music and dance suite called Carnival Jamboree at the New Czech Village (*Masopustní veselice na nové české vesnici*)<sup>20</sup> at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Berlin Youth Festival in 1951. The piece was an adaptation of Czech *Masopust* or Carnival scene and included a “politically current” topic of the time: former rich men and representatives of capitalist exploitation are being expelled by working class heroes from the new socialist village. Thus, besides the traditional masks of the Czech Carnival, there were figures of tractor drivers, *svazáci* – members of communist youth association and village rich men – landowners, who were also presented as warmongers or enemies of peace, as well as a hopeful future for the village. This kind of performance became an important inspiration for a few other Czechoslovak ensembles during that time, who used similarly eclectic mixture of regional folk choreomusical materials and created a dance scene that praised the new Soviet-like transformation of the countryside in the sense of collectivising agriculture (*združstevňování*).

Two years later, another ensemble, namely the Czechoslovak State ensemble of folk songs and dances (Československý státní soubor písní a tanců), performed a similar piece, the three-part suite called May Day (*První máj*) at the 4<sup>th</sup> festival

<sup>19</sup> For more on this ensemble, see Vondrušková (2000, pp. 87–88).

<sup>20</sup> Choreography František Bonuš in cooperation with Jarmila Kröschlová, music by Ludvík Poděšť.



in Bucharest in 1953. However, such performances soon started to be criticised for the so called “contradiction of styles”: traditional regional choreomusical elements and costumes appearing together with figures wearing workers’ clothes became perceived as too disparate (Kröschlová, 1953, pp. 370–374). Critiques also emphasised the low level of body movement stylisation and simplified psychological characteristics. It can be assumed that a degree of situational improvisation, superficiality, and reliance on showy musical and dance elements without regard for their deeper content and meaning in the overall context of the performance, were probably characteristic not only of folk music and dance ensembles from Czechoslovakia, but also of many others. As Theresa Jacobs (2018, pp. 223–242) mentions in connection with the Sorbian ensembles’ performances at the 1951 WFYS in Berlin and elsewhere, Sorbian ensembles have also been criticised from the position of Sorbian critics for “construction of forms behind which there is no content”, and for usage of “new dances” with “cheap external effects” instead of old folk dance. In Czechoslovakia of the 1960s, the critique of the so called “new creativity” concept (*nová tvorba*) was even more pronounced: folk dance was believed to be no more a live tradition and its artificial and eclectic mixing with elements of various origin was rejected as inadequate. Additionally, it was in the 1960s that both traditional and newly composed folk music and dances came to be strongly repudiated when used as an expressive tool for political and ideological reasons<sup>21</sup>.

Data both from interviews with narrators and archival records reveal the ethos of preliminary repertoire selection and conceptualisation of performance; however, the actual form of many pieces performed at the festival finally looked different. First, the number of performers was limited, because only “politically reliable” members of the ensemble were chosen as festival delegates. For this reason, the festival repertoire and its interpretation were arranged to fit specific conditions. According to witnesses and some reports (Kolomazníková, 1962) the festival preparations were full of chaos, hurry and temporal bricolage and improvisations. Often it was not clear which repertoire would be finally performed, with whom and in which musical arrangement and how many dancers would feature in the performance. Musicians and dancers who normally never performed together now appeared within one formation: for example, a bagpipe ensemble from Western Bohemia was to accompany dancers from Eastern Silesia. In this sense, the colourful presentation of “national folklore” really became a Potemkin village-like spectacular show, mixing unrelated choreomusical materials and presenting them in decontextualised and random way. Therefore, the main objective of the festival performances was their “representative” character and especially aurally and visually attractive impression. This attractiveness

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<sup>21</sup> E.g. an important figure of the Czech folklore revival movement, Zora Soukupová, (1967, p. 13) wrote: “Folk dance is a historically finished category and definitively complete in its development... Attempts in ensembles for so-called new pieces were only reproductions of variants or choreography for their own needs... it was pointless to use elements of folk dance to depict today’s topics... dance is an artistic discipline only... it does not need to be mixed with other disciplines or used as a means of expressing other goals.”

was to be reached through an eclectic combination of choreomusical material of various age and regional origin.

### World Youth Festivals: unique performance opportunity or just a Potemkin village?

We must not forget the World Festival of Democratic Youth in 1947, which was already a powerful event for the victory of folk art of all nations of the world, and where the art of all nations has become the most powerful means of mutual understanding for young people around the world. (Laudová, 1954, p. 17).

Ensembles of folk music and dance represented the most innocent instrument of political power due to their seemingly apolitical appearance and they became an advantageous export item, which represented the state ideology abroad in a form that is understandable all over the world (Stavělová, 2017, p. 419)<sup>22</sup>. For this reason, Czechoslovak ensembles were also considered such an attractive export item for the WFYS for decades after the first festival edition in 1947<sup>23</sup>.

According to witnesses who attended some festivals as active participants of music and dance performances, the event was interpreted in an ambivalent way. On the one hand, the WFYS were considered a very representative and promising performance opportunity, which significantly helped to raise the ensemble's prestige on the musical scene in Czechoslovakia and subsequently even abroad. For example, Zdeněk Bláha, a well-known bagpiper and editor of Radio Pilsen, attended the Moscow festival in 1957 as a member of bagpipe music ensemble, whose founder was the Czechoslovak Youth Association (Československý svaz mládeže). Together with another player, Antonín Konrády, Bláha received the silver medal as a bagpipe duo, but the whole bagpipe ensemble received the gold medal (Konrády, Fliegelová, 2012, pp. 112–113). According to Bláha, the participation of the bagpipe ensemble at the WFYS in Moscow had a significant impact. The ensemble gradually became very influential in the region of Western Bohemia and was then invited to realise a studio recording of regional folk music. Additionally, it was the Moscow 1957 festival success which led to subsequent invitations and enabled the Konrády's bagpipe ensemble to perform at different international festivals around Europe, both in the Eastern Bloc and in the West (Konrády, Fliegelová, 2012, p. 137, Bláha, Nedorostová, 2017, pp. 62–63). Finally, according to Zdeněk Bláha, the Konrády's bagpipe ensemble success was a motivation for increasing activities within the Czech folk revival movement in the sense of encouraging the foundation of new ensembles of folk music in the respective region:

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Shay (2002) and Roy (2014).

<sup>23</sup> E.g., in later decades, the Slovak semi-professional ensemble *Lúčnica* with its aurally and visually highly attractive and perfectly mastered rendition of the Slovak folklore was never missing at the WFYS (for more on *Lúčnica*, see Roy, 2014). However, in the 1970s and 1980s, Czechoslovakia was increasingly represented by local popular music singers and bands.

The first ensemble, which realised professional recording of West Bohemian bagpipe music at the time were the Konrádyovci, so this was our ensemble [...] In 1957, we participated in the World Festival of Youth in Moscow, where we received the gold medal. And our bagpipe duo – me and Tonda Konrády – obtained the silver medal. You know, this was a big success, which determined the foundation of many other ensembles in the region of Chodsko, or even in the whole area of Western Bohemia.

Both positive and negative memories reflect the character of daily progress of the festival: some people naturally remember the joy of collective musicking and dancing, as well as warm socialising. According to archival sources and witnesses' accounts, ensembles mutually exchanged their repertoire from time to time: in fact, musicians and dancers sometimes learnt songs, music and dance choreographies or their elements from each other, even fusing different genres and styles of music<sup>24</sup>. However, attendance at the WFYS also had many downsides. Some delegates mention obtrusive propaganda and control from the State security police, including restrictions of movement and interpersonal contacts. Mariana Klementová, a young member of the Czechoslovak Pioneer<sup>25</sup> youth organisation, who was also delegated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> WFYS in Berlin, recalls as follows:

I was a young member of the Pioneer youth association and I was chosen to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Festival of Democratic Youth, it was in Berlin, 1951. And this was because I came from a family of very active communists with good credentials and I had good results at school, so I was chosen quite soon [...] But in Berlin we had very limited space to move, it was an area delimited by wires [...] It was a completely destroyed city, but in this area they cleared the ruins [...] all the time something happened, parades [...] performances [...] we had to smile and sing something all the time [...] they showed us the Soviet War Memorial Treptow [...] but you know the propaganda during the festival [...] sometimes this was really disgusting, as for example they ordered us to use drinking water only from cisterns distributed by soldiers, because the imperialists poisoned the other sources of drinking water.

## Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to outline the multi-layered impact of performing at WFYS, which manifests itself both in the archival sources, official documents, and individual witnesses' memories. On the one hand, performing at the WFYS especially in the 1950s was considered an important musical career milestone, that could significantly enhance the reputation of an ensemble and pave the way for new performance opportunities. Ensembles striving for respect and recognition attended regional and national levels of music and dance competi-

<sup>24</sup> Several similar repertoire "exchanges" were described. Based on participation in WFYS and meetings with other ensembles there, the Czechoslovak State Ensemble of Songs and Dances also included several Bulgarian dances and dances of Soviet nations in its repertoire. At the 4<sup>th</sup> WFYS in Bucharest, the members of the ensemble got acquainted with several Asian dances. Similarly, the Hungarian State Ensemble of Songs and Dances learned the Czech dances potpourri after the meeting with the Czech ensemble Vycpálkovci at the 3<sup>rd</sup> WFYS in Berlin. See *Za mír a přátelství mezi národy* (1955, pp. 156–157) and Konrády & Fliegelová (2012, p. 113).

<sup>25</sup> Pioneer Organisation of the Socialist Youth Union was a youth Marxist-Leninist organisation in communist Czechoslovakia.

tions in Czechoslovakia, which were organised before the WFYS as its pre-stages, both in artistic and political sense. The National Festival of Folk-Art Creativity (*Národní festival lidové umělecké tvořivosti*) in Brno 1953, which was preceded by the two-year Folk Art Creativity Competition (*Soutěž lidové umělecké tvořivosti*) from 1950, was of key importance<sup>26</sup>. Following the Soviet model, the Brno parade was divided into performances of ensembles being founded and associated with factories, villages, schools, armed forces or vocational schools, to demonstrate the “massive development of socialist competition of workers” and to be “evidence of the attachment of folk art to production tasks”<sup>27</sup>. For example, soloists and ensembles delegated to the 4<sup>th</sup> WFYS in Bucharest were selected from these two events held in 1953, culminating in the Song and Dance Festival (*Slavnost písní a tanců*). In general, the winners of such competitions simply had to accept the invitations to participate in WFYS as a kind of peak of their previous efforts.

On the other hand, the participants were conscious of the state’s regime pressure, although it was not always apparent at the time and at the moment of their festival engagements. Therefore, they developed a strategy to displace, suppress or reinterpret negative aspects related to the occasion and circumstances of their delegation to the WFYS. When remembering various festival experiences, the participants tend to mention positive aspects and mention the bright side of these memories first<sup>28</sup>. This also refers to the phenomenon of reflective nostalgia (Boym, 2001, pp. 49–56) and nostalgic remembering in general as a kind of defence mechanism. Musicians or dancers therefore remember the joy from collective travelling, musicking and dancing experience, emphasising the unique opportunity to join many other performers at the event, which was considered influential and respected at the time, even though there was omnipresent chaos, and the repertoire was arranged or modified to fit the specific concept of the festival programme. However, as individual accounts of the witnesses demonstrate, the Janus-faced nature of the WFYS is reflected in the comments of those festival delegates who were conscious of its previously mentioned negative aspects, including organisational disorder, intrusive propaganda, and its various manifestations. In sum, while some memories are full of positive nostalgia and joyfully refer to nice travelling, performance experience and enjoyment of the collective ethos of festival events, others mention negative aspects as well, such as the omnipresent propaganda and organisational disorder. Their personal experience is therefore very different from the official accounts and public image of the World Youth Festival.

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<sup>26</sup> The Folk Art Creativity Competition was supposed to be a “great political mobilisation” for the next WFYS. See Urbanová (1953, p. 181) and LGF (1953, pp. 182–183).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> This refers to the mechanism in which maladaptive memories are updated through a positive emotion-focused strategy. Cf. (Speer, Ibrahim, Schiller et al., 2021).

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