Labanotation of Latvian Folk Dance:
Tracing the Story of *Cūkas driķos* Through the Notation Process

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Abstract

The historical and cultural complexities of Latvian folk dance make the issue of deciding upon what to notate, determining what is essential about a particular dance, a challenge. Many variations on the same dance can be found in archival materials and folk dance publications, and contemporary versions are even more diverse as seen in their participatory and presentational contexts. Tracing the story of the dance *Cūkas driķos* [Pigs in a Buckwheat Field] for notation purposes became as valuable as the Labanotation score that resulted. This particular dance was selected based on its widespread popularity in the last few decades, as well as its rich and varied history. The investigation began with a presentational, modern version of the dance, which led to examining the related contemporary, participatory versions. These were then compared to descriptions in field notes and historic folk dance publications to try to discern any consistencies across time and place. In this journey, Labanotation helped illuminate distinctions between the presentational and the participatory versions of *Cūkas driķos*, as well as clearly define standard participatory variations and their relationship to related documented dances. In this manner, the search for what to notate was aided by the notation process itself. Ideally, the Labanotation scores developed through this research process can then become another, perhaps clearer and more precise, primary source for understanding and documenting Latvian folk dances.

Keywords

Labanotation, dance notation, ethnochoreology, Latvia, folk dance

Introduction

The first problem to solve when notating Latvian folk dances[1] is deciding what to notate. This holds true for any notation process, as notating a dance is never as simple as transcribing given movements into symbolic form; human choice and decision-making is implicit. However, the historical and cultural complexities of Latvian folk dance make the issue of deciding what to notate, determining what is essential about any given dance, particularly challenging. A methodology for reconciling some of these complexities is needed, as the folk dances of Latvia are recognized as cultural artifacts, and they continue to evolve.

Traces of other cultures are evident in the dances, songs, and music found in Latvia. When Latvian ethnochoreologists analyze the various manifestations of Latvian folk dances, they often mention similar dances seen in other nations. As a result, many questions arise. Is it possible to identify the origins of any dance? How has the movement of people through time and place influenced dances? Have dances from different cultures blended with one another, resulting in the many variations seen in any one folk dance? Has the creative license taken in choreographing presentational dances influenced contemporary knowledge of participatory dances?[2] If the goal is to determine and document the essential characteristics of a dance, the development of any particular dance must be traced as best as possible: its specific steps, the rhythm and sequencing of these steps, the structure of the dance, its floor patterns and melodies; when and where it was

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1. From an emic perspective, the authors have decided it is appropriate to use the term "folk dance" when referring to tradition-based dances of Latvia. The territory of Latvia was inhabited by Baltic tribes and Livonians when German crusaders invaded in the 13th century and introduced its inhabitants to Christianity. The Latvian people remained isolated in rural areas for several more centuries while foreign rulers resided in cities and landlords' estates. Latvians resisted attempts to connect their pagan rituals, dances, and songs with Christian celebrations. Thus, there are no "court" or "religious" dances in Latvian cultural heritage that might also fall into the category of traditional dances. Furthermore, the terms "folk dance," "folk art," and "folklore" have been, and still are, used by influential Latvian ethnochoreologists and ethnomusicologists since the end of the 19th century; there is no stigma associated with the term "folk" in Latvia.

2. For the purposes of this article, participatory, as opposed to presentational, folk dances are age and gender inclusive, they blur the dancer-audience boundary, they do not require virtuosity, and they are danced in a variety of social contexts. In general, participatory folk dances are learned informally and/or passed from generation to generation, as opposed to being taught through organized educational or professional settings (i.e. dance schools or companies). Presentational folk dances are works utilizing the basic vocabulary of participatory folk dances, but they are adapted for the purpose of performance. This is not to suggest that folk dances exist only on one end of this binary description or the other, or that this is the only way to categorize folk dances. See: Andrily Nahachewsky, "Participatory and Presentational Dance as Ethnochoreological Categories," *Dance Research Journal* 27, no.1 (1995), 2–3.

described, and how it developed; how it adapted to, and was assimilated into, what is considered to be the tradition of Latvian choreographic folklore.

Another notation issue involves determining how much detail to include in the score. While participatory versions of dances exhibit variations as a result of geographical location, development over time, occasion, etc., variations also occur due to individual performance. The notation should leave room for this freedom of interpretation while still specifying necessary details. Thus, the notation needs to be prescriptive, not descriptive.[3]

When investigating primary source material, written evidence is helpful in determining the history of a dance, but field notes are often subjective and vague. There is no way to determine the accuracy of the people interviewed, and the descriptions recorded are frequently not precise, so there are many possible interpretations. For example, there may not be any indication of whether to start with the right or left leg, how to finish a movement before starting the other side, how high to jump, how high to lift the gesture leg in polkas or skips, or who joins hands first in a "mill." Even detailed field notes and published historical research reveal contradictions and/or several different versions of the same dance. The migration of people throughout Latvian history no doubt contributed to these different versions, but it is another issue to try to determine the direction of travel.

All of these questions, discoveries, and decisions arose in the process of recording one Latvian folk dance, *Cūkas driķos* [Pigs in a Buckwheat Field], in Labanotation. *Cūkas driķos* was selected as a starting point for researching and notating Latvian folk dance based on its current widespread popularity in both participatory and presentational settings and because of its rich and varied historical background. Tracing the story of this dance was not a linear process, as the investigation actually began with a presentational, modern interpretation of the dance, which led to examining the related contemporary, participatory versions. These participatory versions were then compared to descriptions in field notes and historic folk dance publications to try to discern any consistencies, or the most prevalent variations. In this journey, Labanotation helped illuminate similarities and distinctions between the presentational and the participatory versions, as well as clearly define standard contemporary, participatory variations and their relationship to related documented dances. In this manner, the search for what to notate was aided by the notation process itself. Ideally, the Labanotation scores developed through this research process can then become another, perhaps clearer and more precise, primary source for understanding Latvian folk dances.

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3. According to Nahachewski's model of participatory and presentational dance, describing participatory dances from a prescriptive perspective reveals clear, simple steps and patterns. A descriptive analysis accounts for every performative discrepancy and individual idiosyncrasies, making the notation of participatory dances much more complex. See: Nahachewsky, "Participatory and Presentational Dance as Ethnochoreological Categories," 6.

Folk Dance in Latvia Today

Latvian folk dance was once a part of traditional social life, work, and festivities, but it has now stepped outside this frame and developed into a theatrical, presentational performance form as well.[4] A unique genre of dance performance has developed, combining traditional folk dance steps, sequences, floor patterns, and music with new, creative ideas and stylizations inspired by other forms of dance, including ballet, show dance, and modern dance. However, it is understood that these new choreographies, resulting in a folk dance hybrid of sorts, should retain features considered specific to each dance being presented. In this manner, the dances continue to create and reflect a sense of unity and nationalism historically associated with folk dance.[5] While many of the participants in presentational dances are amateur, the dances are precise, virtuosic, and highly rehearsed.

The amateur dance movement involved in presentational folk dance events is vast, and it reaches its culmination at enormous song and dance festivals involving tens of thousands of performers from Latvia and beyond.[6] To make it possible for such a big dancing "family" to be represented in these festivals, a number of large-scale dance performances are created. New interpretations of folk dances are developed by choreographers in part to account for the large dance floor for the performances (frequently with arena-style viewing) and the great number of dancers, as well as the desire to continually innovate and meet changing "aesthetic expectations."[7]

A Latvian verbal-graphic notation system developed to ensure the quality of these song and dance festivals and to facilitate the creation of such large-scale performances showcasing these original, presentational folk dance choreographies.[8] In preparation for the festivals, both notation and word descriptions are used alongside video materials, facilitating staging and helping

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4. Ilze Mažāne, *Latviešu tautas dejas vēstures ceļos* [Historical Road of Latvian Folk Dance]. (Riga: VISC, 2016), 9.

5. Emilija Karina Grinvalds,"Latvian Folk Dance: Sustaining Cultural Heritage in the Context of Christianity and Communism," *Undergraduate Honors Thesis Collection*, (2012), 32.

6. Every five years Latvia celebrates the Song and Dance Festival, which was declared a UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2003. In alternate years there are other large festivals like the Youth Song and Dance Celebration. See: *Helper for visitors to the Song and Dance Celebration*, (Riga: UNESCO Latvijas Nacionala komisija, 2007), 1.

7. János Fügedi, "Notating Dances from Films: A Method in Hungarian Ethnochoreology," *Journal of Movement Arts Literacy* 4, no. 1 (2018), 3.

8. Rita Spalva, "Dance Notation: A Historical Fact or a Necessity," in *SOCIETY, INTEGRATION, EDUCATION Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference* 2 (May 2014), 505.

regional directors understand the vision for the dance's structure.[9] These forms of communication are a necessity, as dancers from all over Latvia (and diasporic communities) with different degrees of dance training participate, and there is minimal time to coordinate the groups, let alone teach the steps, movement sequences, and floor patterns.[10]

Figure 1. Older (1956) depiction of folk dance.[11]

The verbal-graphic system, which has become the Latvian system of dance notation, has helped standardize dance terminology and preserve dances.[12] In older folk dance books, realistic drawings were the primary means of illustrating precise positions in dances (see figure 1), but graphic signs are now used along with

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9. Rita Spalva, "Dance Notation: a Historical Fact or a Necessity," 505.

10. The system that is still used today evolved under the guidance of Center of Latvian National Culture. See: Maruta Alpa, comp. *Tēvu laipas repertuārs, XXV vispārējie Latviešu dziesmu un XV deju svētki deju lieluzvedums*, (Rīga: Kultūrizglītības un Nemateriālā Mantojuma Centrs, 2012).

11. I. Grabovska, *Vissavienības padomju jaunatnes festivāls: Dejas* [The Soviet Youth Festival: Dance]. (Latvijas Valsts izdevniecība,1956), 85.

12. Rita Spalva, *Latvian Dance and the Dance Festival in Latvia* (Saarbrücken: LAP LAMBERT, 2011), 19.

pictures and word descriptions to more accurately and concisely depict facings, positions, and formations, as well as different holds and clasps (see figure 2).[13]
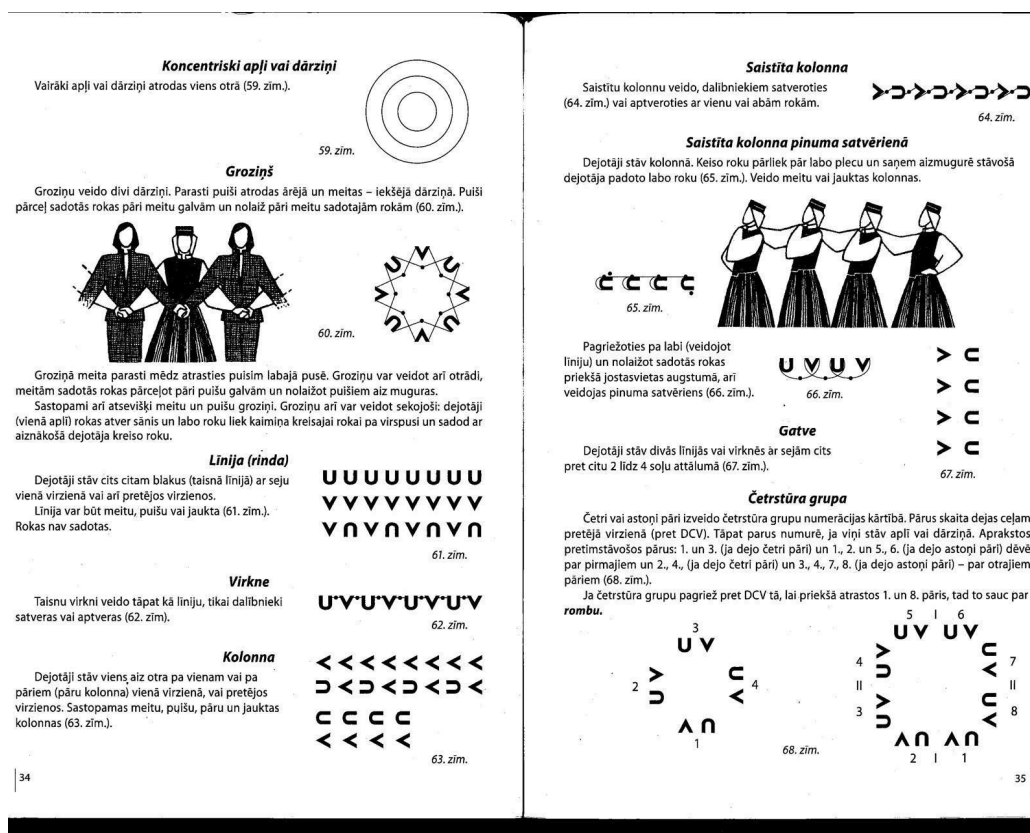

Figure 2. Example of current Latvian verbal-graphic notation[14] (with permission from Maruta Alpa).

Latvian folk dance vocabulary has also become increasingly codified in academic and presentational settings. Positions of the feet correspond to those in ballet character dances, and there are also specific arm and hand positions (e.g. hands on waist, hands crossed in front of the chest, arms alongside of the body, one hand lifted). Many guidelines have been established for clasps and holds as well. Typical static formations in Latvian folk dances include circles, circles with joined hands, punnets, lines, alleys, columns, and rows. Terms like spiral, clew, knotting, and garland describe designs created by group movement through space. These terms are updated frequently in texts using verbal-graphic notations, along with

13. Rita Spalva, *Latvian Dance and the Dance Festival*, 19.
14. Ingrida Edite Saulīte et al., *Latvieu dejas pamati,* 34–35.

descriptions of the specific dance steps (i.e. how to perform *gājiena solis*, *galopa polka, valša trīssolis*, etc.).[15] Precise definitions of terms and accompanying symbol usage indicate the rigor of folk dance technique, establish standards for performance quality, and assist with clear communication via the verbal-graphic system.[16] While highly effective for the purpose of staging festivals, the Latvian verbal-graphic system precludes access to those unfamiliar with Latvian folk dance technique and/or the Latvian language. Furthermore, the Latvian verbal-graphic system is not typically used to document the participatory versions of dances still seen in social venues.

Presentational Versions of *Cūkas driķos*

Notating and tracing the story of *Cūkas driķos* for this project began with the Pērle folk dance company, and their performance of the presentational stage dance called *Nerejat(i) ciema suņi*. In rehearsal, one dancer explained that some of the source material for this dance, choreographed by Jānis Purviņš, was derived from the basic jumping step pattern of a social folk dance, *Cūkas driķos* [Pigs in a Buckwheat Field]. Upon request, eight of the Pērle dancers demonstrated a version of *Cūkas driķos* for notation purposes. While the dancers explained that this version "can be seen in bars," it was still clearly the arrangement of professional dancers. Video footage of this dance, shown in figure 3, can be viewed at this link: https://youtu.be//M7EaxKdaWhs.[17]

     The Labanotation score that resulted from this performance reveals the complexity and virtuosity in comparison with participatory dances performed by non-dancers. A person familiar with Labanotation will notice the virtuosity in terms of the leg gestures, as the feet are lifted all the way to the hips on the jumps and the runs. It does not require Labanotation training to discern the complexity of the patterns exhibited in the floorplans. Dancers would need some training and/or guidance prior to attempting to execute the shifts from one large circle to two smaller ones, to couples, as depicted in the floorplans. See the Appendix for the complete Labanotation score of this Pērle version of *Cūkas driķos*.

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     15. [Walking step, gallop polka, waltz in three]. See: Ingrida Edite Saulīte et al., *Latvieu dejas pamati* [Latvian Dance Primer]. (Rīga: Kultūrizglītības un nemateriālā mantojuma centrs, Dizains un Druka, 2011), 17–31.

     16. See: Ingrida Edite Saulīte et al., *Latvieu dejas pamati,* 34–35.

     17. Video footage used with permission of the performers: Elīna Buivite, Juris Gogulis, Kristaps Kovaļevskis, Magdalēna Liekmane, Elīna Meijere, Juris Ruseckis, Guntis Salna, and Marija Sintija Vītola.

Figure 3. The Pērle folk dance company in rehearsal, performing a semi-presentational version of *Cūkas driķos*. Photo used with permission of the dancers.

Nerejat(i) ciema suņi is only one example of a presentational dance built upon the basic jumping step pattern of *Cūkas driķos*. Even more ornate stagings of *Cūkas driķos* have been utilized in some of Latvia's large-scale festival performances. Arta Melnalksne's dance titled *Cūkas driķos* was part of the concert Līdz varavīksnei tikt [To Reach the Rainbow] in the 2015 XI Latvian School Youth Song and Dance Celebration. Her version of *Cūkas driķos* was performed by 1760 dancers from 110 dance groups.[18] To better illustrate the magnitude of such a production, an excerpt of the dance can be seen at this link: https://youtu.be/Y7mDoMvFgPo (footage shared in compliance with Fair Use practices). Melnalksne elaborated on the basic steps, two-part dance structure, and floor patterns of *Cūkas driķos*, merging them with the music and movement of another Latvian folk dance, *Mazais kamoliņš* [Little Clew]. Interestingly, the lyrics for *Mazais kamoliņš* are about pigs in a rye field. Jānis Purviņš also utilized *Cūkas driķos* in his 2014 choreography of a folk dance suite titled *Līgo danči*, which was presented as part of the larger festival piece *Lec, saulīte!* [Rise the Sun!].[19]

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18. See: Ilze Mažāne, *Valsts izglītības satura centers:* https://visc.gov.lv/intizglitiba/dokumenti/dejas/old/2015_tautdejas_rezultati.pdf. *Koncertā un deju lielkoncertā "Līdz varavīksnei tikt" rezultāti* [Folk dance collectives, participation results in the laureate concert and dance concert "To Reach the Rainbow"].

19. *Lec, Saulīte!* was performed as part of summer solstice celebrations, bringing together annual traditions with contemporary means of expression. Choreographers: Jānis Purviņš, Jānis Ērglis, and Agris Daņiļevičs.

Cūkas driķos in Contemporary, Participatory Settings

The search for more participatory versions of *Cūkas driķos* revealed some standard variations in contemporary renditions of the dance. In social settings, there are individual variations in the performance of movement, consistent with dancers having freedom to improvise and be expressive. When the basic steps and step sequences appeared consistent for the whole group, these descriptive variances were not notated as they were not considered relevant to this project. However, recurring prescriptive differences discerned across various participatory settings were considered significant, and they were identified and notated.

Similarities and differences in the supports and gestures, the rhythmic patterns, and the structure of the dance are readily visible when viewing the scores, even without training in Labanotation. For example, the dance is clearly in two parts, with the first part involving jumps changing feet and the second part consisting of circling. Figure 4 illustrates how notation helps accentuate common deviations in variations. Close inspection of the first part of the dance reveals that the number of jumps changing feet varies between three and four in the third and fourth measures (notation B vs others). There is also variation in whether the jumps land in a 4th position (notation A), in lunges (notation B and C), or consist of a spring to one foot with the heel of the other touching the floor (notation D). In some renditions, bounces replace the small jumps not changing feet (notation C). There is also variation in the arms, as the dancers may hold hands (notation A and C), or perform the jumps with hands on hips (notation B and D). Thus, the process of creating the prescriptive notation of the dance documents and highlights significant variations in this one folk dance. Searching for the source of these variations led the investigation back in time.

Following Traces of *Cūkas driķos*

While notations of contemporary, participatory versions of *Cūkas driķos* begin to provide insight into common variations, information from field notes, folk dance publications, and music resources further clarify essential components of this dance. Historic information about *Cūkas driķos* is documented by Sniedze Grīnberga, a choreography student at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, who researched the social choreography of the Maliena parish in the Alūksne district.[20] Grīnberga's thesis project provides detailed notes about different versions of *Cūkas driķos*, as well as significant information about the music and lyrics accompanying the dance.

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20. Maliena is a remote parish in the Alūksne district of northeast Vidzeme (Vidzeme is the north-central region of Latvia), close to the borders with Russia and Estonia.

Grīnberga discovered field notes at the Archives of Latvian Folklore indicating that *Cūkas driķos* was originally accompanied by two different songs.[21] Although the lyrics are not thematically connected (one verse is about pigs in a buckwheat field, the other is about a wife who is a good dancer), these verses are now combined. Both songs were recorded separately in the 1920s, providing evidence that the dance was practiced in the beginning of the 20th century.[22] In addition, both verses were recorded in the Alūksne district in the northeastern part of Vidzeme, suggesting that the dance might originate from the Vidzeme region.[23] The musical accompaniment is in 2/4 meter, and the melody consists of two parts, defining the two-part structure of the dance.[24] Several variations of the dance *Cūkas driķos* are recorded:

Variation 1:

Respondents: Elfrīda Sināte in Beja and Veļķeru couple in Alūksne, recorded by S. Grīnberga, 1990.[25]

Description: Dance in groups of four. Dancers form a square facing center; hands on waist. 2 slow jumps, then 4 fast jumps on two feet, alternating putting one then the other foot forward. Repeat all actions one more time; on the last jump put both feet together. Refrain—clap own hands, then join right hands in the center forming a star, and skip to the left. When the music repeats, repeat all actions in the opposite direction. Note: Originally when hands were joined in the star, the other hand was placed on the front partner's [star] arm, on top of the forearm.[26] Singing occurs while dancing.

Lyrics: Pigs in buckwheat, pigs in buckwheat
With all piglets
Go children and chase them away
Not to spoil the grain!

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21. Provided by Timāns (1923) and Nīders (1928), and notated accordingly in 1923 [F 41, 17] and 1928 [F 179,473]. See: *Latvijas folkloras krātuve* [Archives of Latvian Folklore].

22. The ages of the respondents also indicate that the dance is from the late 19th or early 20th century. See: Grīnberga, *Malienas novada horeogrāfiskā folklora* [The choreographic folklore of Maliena parish], trans. Valda Vidzemniece, (Rīga: JVLMA, 1992), 76

23. Grīnberga, *Malienas novada horeogrāfiskā folklora,* trans. Valda Vidzemniece, 74.

24. Most Latvian folk dances have a two-part structure that corresponds with the musical verse and refrain. See: Rita Spalva, *Latvian Dance and the Dance Festival in Latvia,* 11.

25. Grīnberga, *Malienas novada horeogrāfiskā folklora*, trans. Valda Vidzemniece, 75.

26. This two-arm formation of the arms in the skipping part is a modified version of a grasp called a *tītaviņas. Tītaviņas* means "little *tītavas.*" A *tītavas* is a four-pronged spool for a loom. The dance formation resembles the design of the yarn weaving around the prongs.
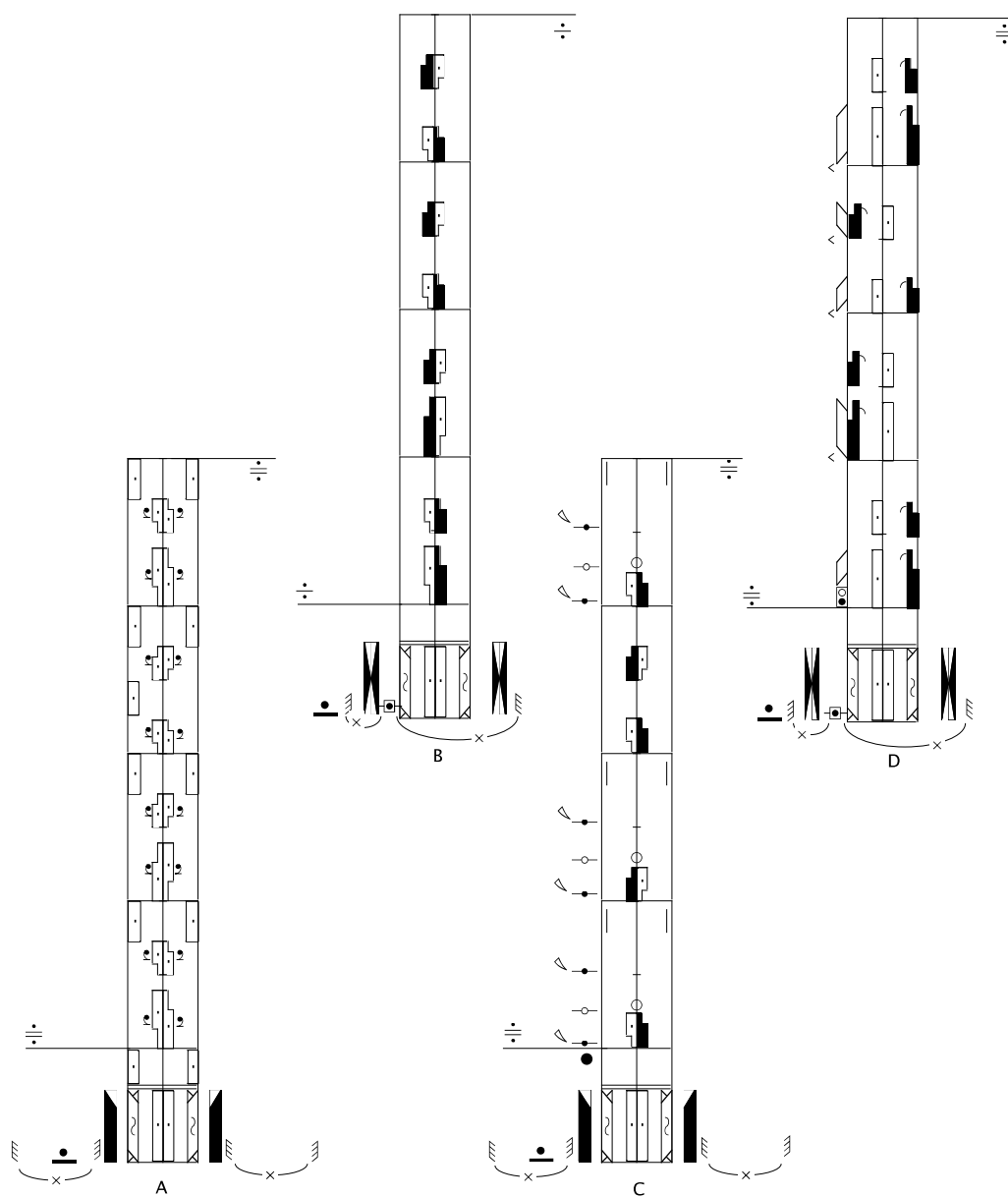
Figure 4. Standard variations in the first part of contemporary, participatory versions of *Cūkas driķos*.

Variation 2:

Respondents: Edmunds Dambis in Balva and Berķu couple in Beja, recorded by S. Grīnberga, 1991.[27]

Description: Dance in groups of four or in pairs. If dancing in pairs, partners join hands facing each other. 2 slow jumps, then 4 fast jumps on two feet, alternating putting one foot forward, then the other (jumps changing feet). Repeat all actions one more time, but on the last jump put both feet together. If dancing in groups of four, then all four join hands facing center and perform all actions as described above. In the second part: Dance in couples, round polka[28] or rotate in a circle right and left with hands joined.[29] Note: The slow jumps changing feet may be performed with resilience in the legs (lightly bending and straightening knees), i.e. make little up and down bouncing movements after each jump. Singing while dancing.

Lyrics: Everybody says, everybody says,
My wife is a little lazy
Let her be lazy as long as she is beautiful and a good dancer.

Variation 3:

Respondent: Rūdolfs Irbe (1901) in Mārkalne, recorded by S.Grīnberga, 1991.[30]
Description: Couples in waltz position[31] perform eight gallops in one direction, then change clasp and repeat eight gallops in the opposite direction. Chorus—round polka.

Music Resources:

Music resources reveal two other similar descriptions of *Cūkas driķos*. One is from the brochure accompanying the music CD *Latviešu danči* [Latvian Dances].[32] There is no record of the year or the person interviewed, but the respondent was from the same general region of northern Latvia—the city of Valka that lies on the

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27. Grīnberga, *Malienas novada horeogrāfiskā folklora*, trans. Valda Vidzemniece, 76.

28. A round polka is a turning polka done with a partner. It is usually performed counterclockwise in Latvian dances.

29. No details are provided about the specific steps used in the circling. The alternate use of round polka with a partner suggests the polka could be utilized here as well, but the rotation in a circle could also be accomplished with simple runs.

30. Grīnberga, *Malienas novada horeogrāfiskā folklora*, trans. Valda Vidzemniece, 76.

31. Waltz position in Latvian folk dance entails a man and a woman facing one another, man's left hand holding woman's right hand to the side. Woman's left hand is on the man's shoulder, and the man's right hand is on her waist. See: Ingrida Edite Saulīte et al., *Latvieu dejas pamati,* 15.

32. *Latviešu danči*. Brochure for CD *Latviešu danči* [Latvian Dances]. (*Rīga: Upe tuviem un tāliem*, 1999), 5.

border of Estonia in the Valkas district. This description is very similar to Grīnberga's second version: The dancers are in a square holding hands, and partners stay opposite each other. However, it is only described as a quartet; there is no option to pair off. The second part of the dance moves in a mill, but the notes specify that the dancers run instead of skipping (as in Grīnberga's Version 1) or doing the polka or an unspecified step (as in Grīnberga's Version 2).

The second source is another brochure from a music CD describing Latvian dances and games.[33] This version of *Cūkas driķos* was told by Tekla Cinglere (born in 1936) from Brenči in the Maliena parish of the Alūksne district, and by a Veļķeri couple from Alūksne; notated in 1991. It corroborates the Grīnberga description of jumps with hands on the hips and the use of a *tītaviņas* in the first variation. Running steps in the circling part are specified in this version as well. The translation is as follows:

> Dance in a group of four—two couples. Stay in a square, a boy facing a boy, a girl facing a girl. Hands on waist. Jumps on two feet, putting forward one then the other foot by turns: On the first two measures doing two slow jumps, on the second two doing three fast jumps (waiting a little at the end). When the music repeats, repeat all jumps one more time. In the second part - clap own hands, then join hands and form a "*tītaviņas*:" first join right hands in a mill, then put the other hand below the front partner's elbow. "*Tītaviņas*" or rotate to the left by running for 4 measures; on the next 4 measures move to the right, clapping own hands before joining others' hands. Dancers are now "too lazy" to join both hands in "*tītaviņas*," so for this second part they join hands in "a mill."

Analysis

In Grīnberga's account of variations one and two, the basic step pattern of the first part of the dance can be distinguished: jumps changing feet. The second part of both variation one and two involves rotating in a circle. However, in this second part, the supports differ—skips (the first version) versus polka or some other unspecified locomotor step (the second version). Execution of the polka step suggests that the second version is the newer one, because, according to Latvian ethnochoreologists, polka, gallop, and waltz steps were assimilated in Latvian folk dance in the nineteenth century.[34] The steps included in the third version—gallop and

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33. *Maskačkas spēlmaņi: Ļipa kust*. Brochure for CD *Maskačkas spēlmaņi: Ļipa kust.* (*Rīga: Maskačkas spēlmaņi Ludantoj de Maskačka, Vosteto moviģas*, 2009), 49–50.

34. Latvian dance researcher Elza Siliņa suggests older Latvian folk dances had steps similar to the polka, but that it was not until the 19th century, when polka, gallop and waltz steps became popular, that these steps were widely accepted in Latvian folk dance. See: *Latviešu tautas dejas izcelsme un attīstība* [Origins and Development of Latvian Folk Dance]. (Rīga: Avots, 1982), 72–74.

polka—as well as the designated use of partners and the waltz position, implies that this choreographic variation appeared even later. All versions of the dance have a binary form.

The first variation of the dance appears to be older, not only because of the steps themselves, but also because of the structure of the dance in general. In this version dancers stand in groups of four, there is no couple dancing, and any number of quartets can participate. The dance has figures of a square and a star; dance in place and dance in motion. According to the Latvian ethnochoreologist Harijs Sūna, dances in which everyone can participate belong to the oldest layer of choreographic folklore (Layer A). He classifies dances in which participants are dancing in groups of four and that do not incorporate couple dancing into a specific type of choreography (Type IV), i.e. four dancers/group. Sūna labels dances where the groups are freely located around the room as the first subtype (Subtype 1).[35] He further divides the first subtype, recognizing dances that are based on jumps changing feet as a distinct variation.[36] It can be concluded that the first variation of *Cūkas driķos* corresponds to one of the oldest Latvian choreographic types: (A IV 1).

However, some Latvian ethnochoreologists, including Harijs Sūna, question the origins of *Cūkas driķos* based on similarities between *Cūkas driķos* and *Kaera jaan*, a dance performed in Estonia.[37] There are, indeed, similarities in the musical accompaniment, basic step patterns, and structure of both dances, but the performance of the jumping steps and the means of circling differ. Like *Cūkas driķos*, *Kaera jaan* is danced in groups of four, and it has the same structure of dancing in place for the first verse, then joining hands and moving in a circle. However, the character of the jumping steps is slightly different. In the first part of *Kaera jaan*, the jumps are low springs to one foot with the other foot touching the floor. In *Cūkas driķos* the jumps are performed on both feet, making the movements faster and jumps higher. The rhythm of the jumps also differs: *Cūkas driķos* typically has been described with 2 slow and 4 fast jumps, whereas *Kaera jaan* has

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35. Harijs Sūna was an authority on Latvian folk dance for over three decades, publishing the 1966 *Latviešu rotaļas un rotaļdejas* [Latvian Games and Game Dances], the 1989 *Latviešu ieražu horeogrāfiskā folklora* [Choreographic Folklore of Latvian Customs] and the 1991 *Latviešu sadzīves horeogrāfija* [Latvian Social Choreography]. In the latter one, Sūna carefully analyzed and systematized Latvian folk dances, dividing them into layers (A, B, C), types (A II–V, B I–III, C I–XXIV), subtypes (A, B 1–5), groups, sub-groups etc. In Layer A, everybody can participate; the number of groups is not specified, and dancers mostly do the same movements (with exceptions in the 4th and 5th subtypes). Layer B includes mainly dancing games where one or more people are "odd" and do different steps. Layer C applies to dances with a specific number of dancers, from one to twenty-four. Type indicates the number of dancers in a group. Subtypes apply to the formation of dancers: freely located, forming a circle, a chain with one person leading, lines, etc. See pages 220–23.

36. See Harijs Sūna, *Latviešu sadzīves horeogrāfija*, 222.

37. See Harijs Sūna, *Latviešu sadzīves horeogrāfija*, 222. A similar opinion was also expressed by Latvian folk dance specialist Ingrīda Saulīte. Personal communication: March 1, 2015.

2 slow followed by 3 fast jumps. Furthermore, the second part of *Kaera jaan* is performed with a low, sliding chasse.[38]

Contemporary video footage reveals different variations of *Kaera jaan*, just as different versions of *Cūkas driķos* were identified through this project. For instance, unlike the 1933 Rinka/Ošs description, the jumps changing feet are now sometimes performed with the weight on both feet. Interestingly, aspects of the original *Kaera jaan* (jumping with the foot kicked forward and the rhythm of the jumps) correspond with Variation D in the notated contemporary, social variations of *Cūkas driķos* (see figure 4). The *Kaera jaan* jumping rhythm can also be seen in other versions of *Cūkas driķos*, including the *Maskačkas Spēlmani* description and the Pērle rendition. The Alūksne district's geographic proximity to Estonia supports the possibility of cultural bonds, as well as influences and interactions between the two regions.[39]

Folk dances from different regions of Latvia also exhibit jumping step patterns and compositional structures similar to those observed in *Cūkas driķos*. One of them is *Rupumdeja* [Grits Dance] recorded by Jēkabs Stumbris in Nīca, the western region of Latvia. This is a pair dance, in which dancers face each other with hands joined and perform jumps changing feet. The jump pattern is complemented with oppositional forward and backward hand movements. The rhythmic pattern of the jumps is: two slow, three fast, and then seven fast jumps. In the second part a round polka is danced in a Latvian style clasp.[40] *Rupumdeja* was also danced in Vidzeme (places: Ķeipene, Plātere, Lielāmuiža).[41]

Several dances performed with towels and with steps resembling those in *Cūkas driķos* have been recorded in different parts of Kurzeme (also in the western province of Latvia). *Dvieļu deja* [Towel Dance], recorded in Nīca by Milda Lasmane, is a dance for a group of four women. The dance is performed holding towels that are two meters long.[42] *Vadžu deja* [Hook Dance], was recorded by J. Stumbris in Alsunga. The number of dancers is unlimited, and they use towels which are hung on hooks. It can be performed by men, women, a mixed group, or

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38. Johanna Rinka and Jānis Ošs, *Citu tautu nacionālās dejas* [Folk Dances of Other Nations]. (Rīga: A/S Valters un Rapa, 1933), 3–4.

39. Several respondents mention that "Estonian musicians arrived to Latvian villages to perform at parties and vice versa. As a result, respondents themselves could not remember which dance was Estonian and which Latvian." The Estonians, in turn, had close cultural communication with the Finns and the Swedes, and, in this respect, the authors suppose that many dances could have come to Estonia from these countries. See: Grīnberga, *Malienas novada horeogrāfiskā folklora*, 111.

40. Latvian style clasp (an old name) is now called "clasp with the left hand on the waist." Dancers face each other. Boy takes girl's right hand with his left hand and puts it on his waist; girl's left hand is on boy's shoulder, and boy's right hand is on girl's waist. See: Jēkabs Stumbris, *Dejosim Latviski. 1. Burtnīca* [Let's Dance in Latvian Style. The 1st Notebook]. (*Rīga: Romana Liepiņa izdevniecība,* 1938), 12.

41. Milda Lasmane, *Latviešu tautas dejas* [Latvian Folk Dances]. (Rīga: *Latvijas Valsts izdevniecība*, 1962), 53.

42. Milda Lasmane, *Latviešu tautas dejas*, 155–56.

by a solo dancer.[43] *Wedding Dance with Towels*, another *Dvieļu deja* from Nīca, was recorded by Jānis Kūlis. This dance encompasses patterns of an ancient wedding ritual, and its ornamental composition has symbolic meaning. It is performed by eight dancers (four couples). All towel dances have common features—jumps changing feet are performed in the first part, followed by polka steps in the second part.

In tracing the evolution of *Cūkas driķos* and trying to prove or refute its Latvian origin, it can be concluded that the jumps changing feet are a specific feature frequently exhibited in Latvian folk dance choreography throughout time. As J. Kūlis mentions: "In Latvian folk dances jumps changing feet are iconic. These jumps are included in a wide range of mummer's, wedding, and funeral dances, i.e., in all occasions when a man's life, lifespan, and fertility is praised."[44] There are many examples of the use of this same step pattern (sometimes with a different rhythm) in the dances that are performed in different regions of Latvia. The circling with runs, skips or polka steps performed in the second part of *Cūkas driķos* is also characteristic of Latvian folk dances.

Comparing the Pērle presentational rendition of *Cūkas driķos* with historic descriptions, folk dance research, and participatory versions seen today brings this investigation full circle. The Pērle rendition of *Cūkas driķos* corresponds with aspects of both the first and second variation in Grīnberga's research. The first (jumping) part of the Pērle dance follows Variation 2: The Pērle dancers in the whole group, quartets, and pairs hold hands during the jumps, and there are bounces between the slow jumps.[45] However, the rhythm of the jumping is different. Grīnberga recorded two slow and four quick jumps changing feet; the Pērle choreography has two slow and three quick jumps changing feet. The second (circling) part of the Pērle performance matches both Variation 1 and 2 on different repeats. When the circling is performed as a whole group (8 dancers), it corresponds with Grīnberga's Variation 2. The dancers continue to hold hands, and if the unspecified step in the Grīnberga version is a run, the Pērle supports match in this regard as well. When the Pērle dancers break into quartets, the choreography follows Grīnberga's Variation 1, with the exception that runs have replaced skips in the star formation.

The Pērle dance is even truer to the descriptions of *Cūkas driķos* found with music sources, including the use of three fast jumps changing feet and the use of running steps in the mill formation.[46] This is also consistent with the rhythmic

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43. Jēkabs Stumbris, *Dejosim Latviski. 2. Burtnīca* [Let's Dance in Latvian Style. The 2nd Notebook]. (*Rīga: Romana Liepiņa izdevniecība*, 1940), 16.

44. Jānis Kūlis, *88 Latviešu tautas dejas un apdares* [88 Latvian Folk Dances and Interpretations]. (Toronto: *Latviešu Dziesmu Svētku Biedrība Kanādā*, 1973), 153.

45. In the Pērle rendition, the bounces between slow jumps are performed as two jumps that do not change feet. This reflects the more presentational, virtuosic nature of this version of *Cūkas driķos.*

46. When asked about the origins of his version of *Cūkas driķos* performed in *Līgo danči,* Purviņš referenced the *Latvišu danči* CD. Personal communication with Valda Videmniece,

pattern of *Kaera jaan* and variations in the contemporary, participatory versions of the dance notated in figure 4. The choreography performed by Pērle is more complicated in terms of composition and design, as presentational dance should be, yet it adheres to the ideal that contemporary, presentational folk dance "ensures the inheritance of the tradition in all generations, it enhances the interest of the society in traditional culture and, in these globalized times, maintains the national peculiarities of a small nation."[47] Thus, while it may not be possible to identify one definitive version of *Cūkas driķos*, or any folk dance for that matter, the following notated versions capture consistencies seen through time and in different settings (see figures 5 and 6).

Conclusion

Cūkas driķos exemplifies that Latvian folk art is alive and continuously changing. This dance became popular within the last few decades, manifesting as a social dance with many variations and inspiring choreographers to create new presentational versions. It is possible that the frequent use of *Cūkas driķos* in presentational choreography and the widespread participation in festival interpretations may be influencing how the participatory *Cūkas driķos* is executed. For example, the high leg gestures utilized in standardized, virtuoso festival dancing can sometimes be seen in young people and children dancing *Cūkas driķos* in social settings today. Deviations in the number of jumps changing feet or the manner in which the jumps land might also be attributed to the artistic license taken in festival stagings.[48]

The opposite influence might also be at play. The rise in popularity of *Cūkas driķos* in participatory settings could mean that Latvian choreographers wanting "jumps changing feet" might utilize *Cūkas driķos* over another dance like *Rupumdeja*. Furthermore, Pērle's dancers knew *Cūkas driķos* from Purviņš' Līgo danči and from "dancing at bars." Thus, they may have defaulted to the steps for *Cūkas driķos* when, at the onset of this project, they were asked to identify the step patterns in *Nerejat(i) ciema suņi*. Had they known *Rupumdeja*, this paper might have been about a different dance.

November 1, 2019. Many of the Pērle dancers were involved in this festival, so their knowledge of *Cūkas driķos* was informed by this experience.

47. Spalva, *Latvian Dance and the Dance Festival in Latvia,* 77.

48. This possibility is supported by Nahachewsky's observations of a participatory version of a Ukranian folk dance that "descended back down from the proscenium to become part of social dance again in a new dance form." See: Andrily Nahachewsky, "Once Again: On the Concept of 'Second Existence Folk Dance'," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 33 (2001), 19.
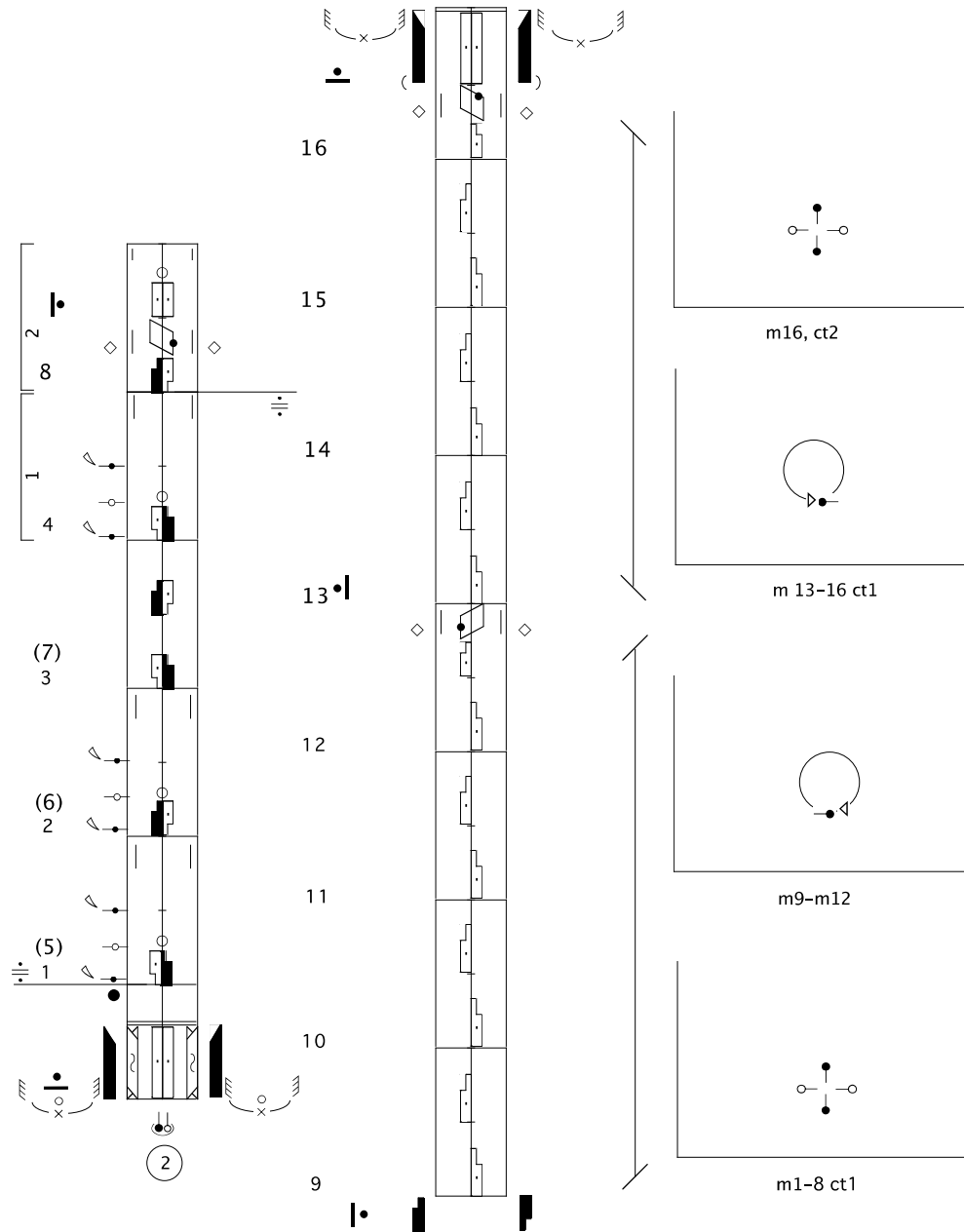
Figure 5. *Cūkas driķos*; Version 1.
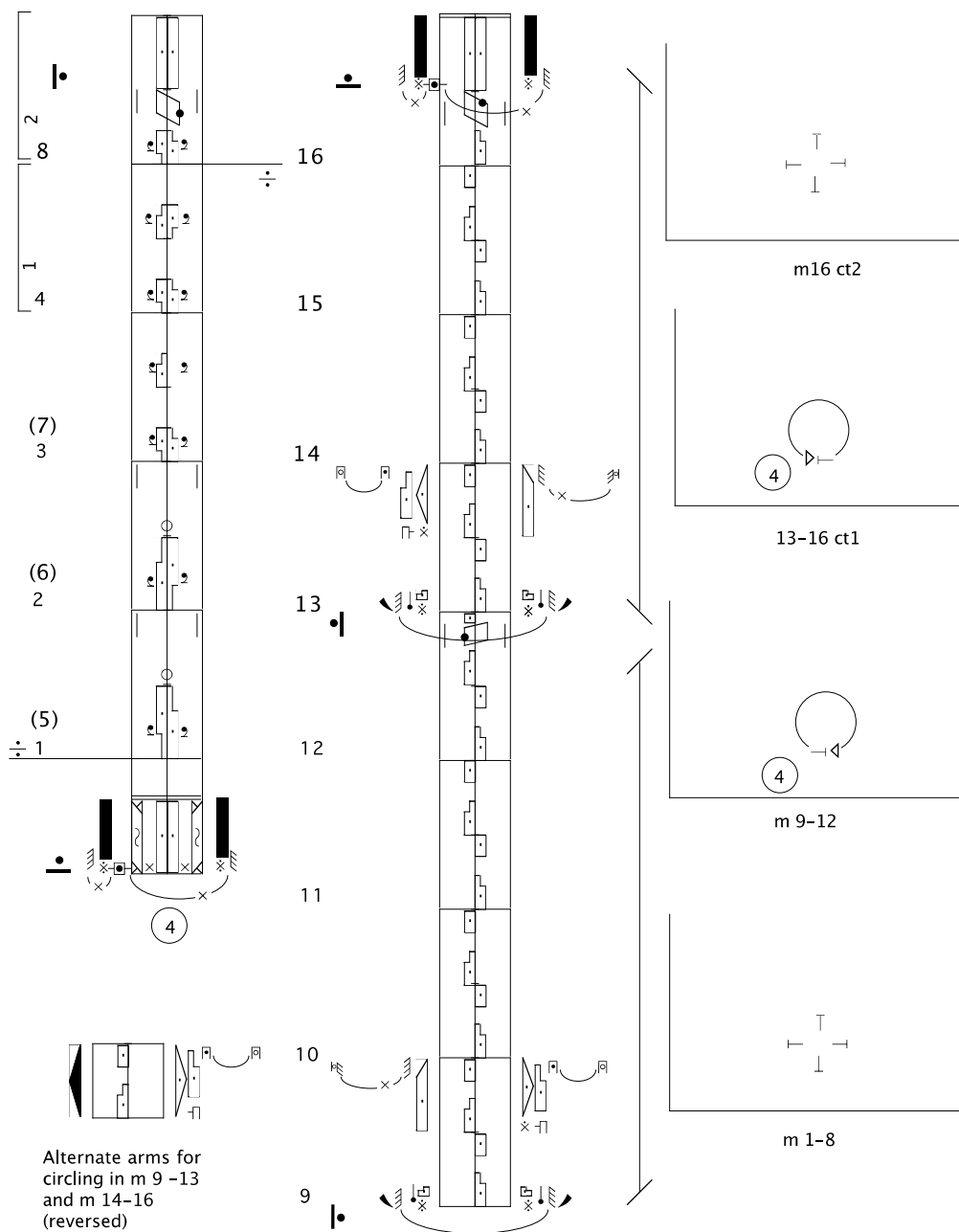
Figure 6. *Cūkas driķos*; Version 2.

It is worth considering the role that musicians play in promoting different versions of folk dances. Some folk and contemporary folk music groups ("Iļģi" for example), are very popular in Latvia. They play for different events and festivities and teach dances. If the musicians' interpretation of *Cūkas driķos* (as reflected in the CD brochures) is being taught, it may explain why this rendition of the dance is popular "in bars" and other social settings.

Deviations in participatory renditions of *Cūkas driķos* might also reflect variations of jumps changing feet found in other Latvian folk dances, or the dances of neighboring countries. Whether or not the influence can be proven, contemporary, participatory variations of *Cūkas driķos* are congruent with versions of the dance traced back to different regions of Latvia and beyond—to Estonia in the case of *Cūkas driķos*.

The various interpretations of this one dance (both participatory and presentational), concerns about the diluting of the original, the ambiguity of remaining verbal descriptions, and a lack of historic film footage all highlight the importance of determining and recording traditional dances. While video is readily accessible and a good complement to notation, it captures the idiosyncrasies of individual performers, especially in participatory settings. Labanotation requires a determination of the essential aspects of each dance in order to accurately document them. It also provides a visual representation of significant similarities and differences between variations of a dance. Thus, the notation process itself aids in the quest to determine the identifying characteristics of each dance. Although deciding upon any one representative version of a dance is not possible, this process brings traditional renditions and standard variations to the surface, revealing adaptations and their possible correlations to time and place.

Latvian folk dance has changed through the centuries as it has assimilated new dance steps, new compositional structures, and adapted musical materials from the dances of other regions. The process of assimilation and modification is so deep and wide that, from a contemporary point of view, specifically Latvian folk choreography (or dances of any country, for that matter) cannot be imagined without these borrowed means of expression. Rita Spalva paraphrases an early dance researcher, Jēkabs Stumbris, as saying "the dance is like a golden thread that connects us with the past."[49] This thread was confirmed through the act of recording *Cūkas driķos* in Labanotation.

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49. Spalva, *Latvian Dance and the Dance Festival in Latvia*, 8.

Appendix: *Cūkas driķos,* Glossary

Choreography by Jānis Purviņš, from Līgo danči,[50] as performed by the
     Pērle Dance Company.
Direction by Raimonds Dzintars, Rīga, Latvia, May 2016.
Notation by Julie Brodie and Hannah Russ (2019).

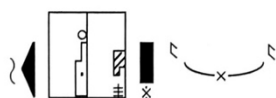**Glossary**

● = Focal point is the center of the circle

P = Partner
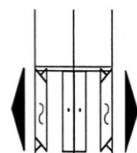
Natural rotation of the legs is present throughout.
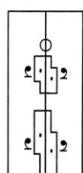
Middle level for supports throughout: The legs are not specifically bent, but the knees are pliant and bend as needed for resilience, weight on the balls of the feet.

The side low arms in the pinwheel are relaxed and rather ad lib (m 41-48).

The couples break from the group of 4, men following women to indicate facings and locations. All end two lines facing each other (m 32).

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50. Permission to publish notation granted by Jānis Purviņš, October 10, 2019.

Appendix: *Cūkas driķos,* continued (measures 1–8)

4

3

2

1

8

7

6

5

m2

w2   w3

m1   m3

w1   w4

m4

m1–8

ALL

4

2/4
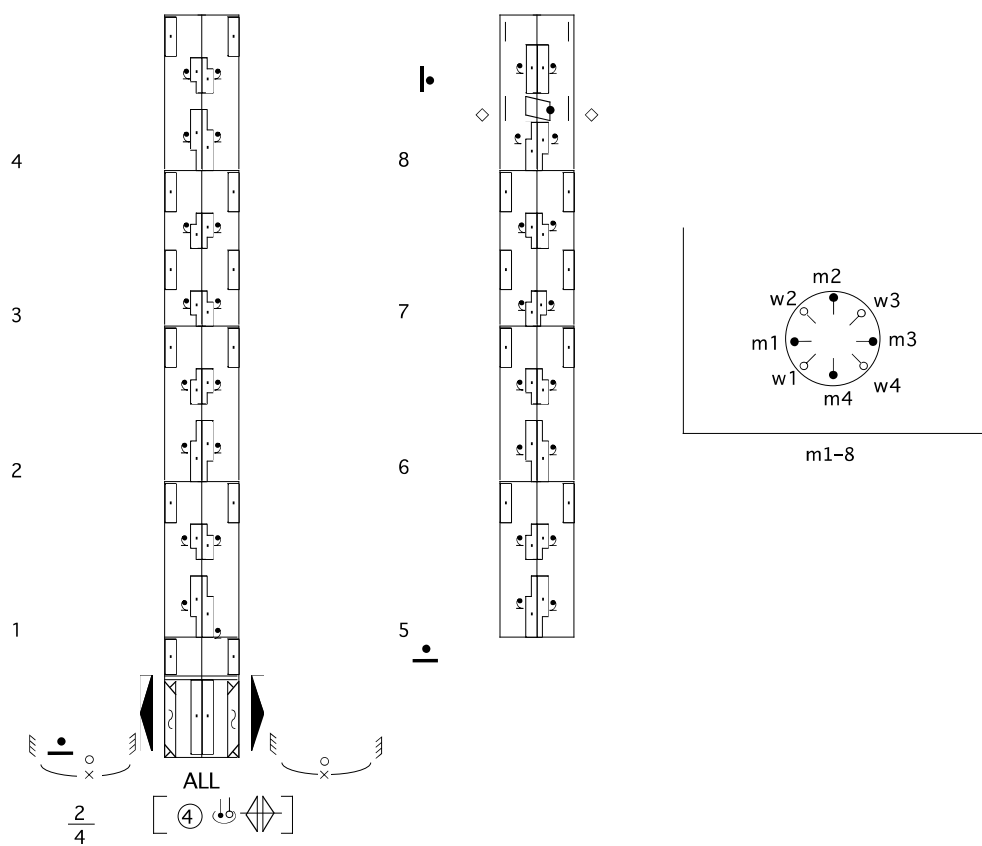
Appendix: *Cūkas driķos,* continued (measures 9–16)

m15–m16

m13–14

m9–12
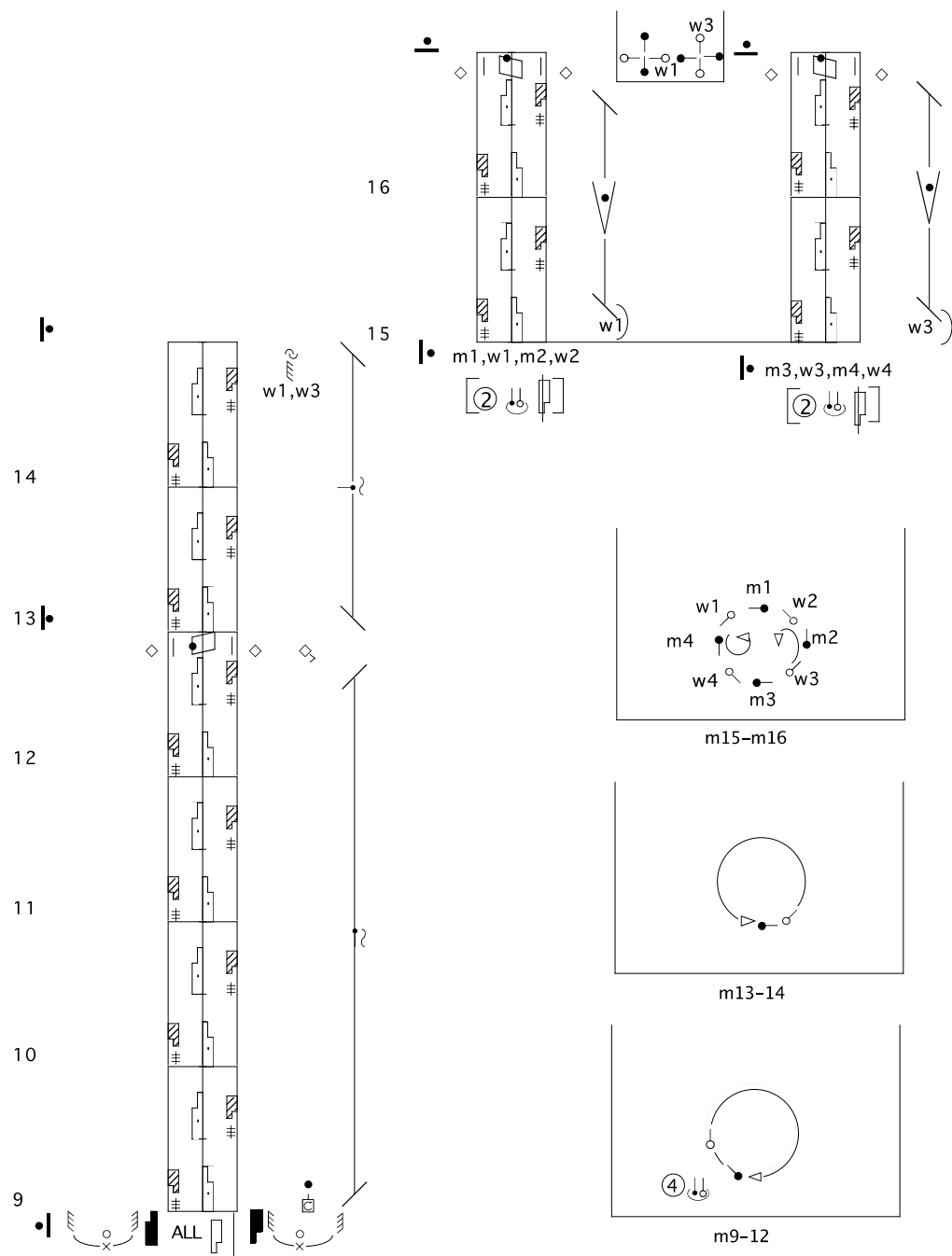
Appendix: *Cūkas driķos*, continued (measures 17–24)

m24 ct 2

m17–24

Appendix: *Cūkas driķos,* continued (measures 25–31)

m32 ct 2

m32

m29–31

m25–28

Appendix: *Cūkas driķos*, continued (measures 33–40)

m40 ct2

m33–40

Appendix: *Cūkas driķos,* continued (measures 41–48)

m45-48

m41-44

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