Abstract:

This dissertation deals with ritual and its connection to music. The objective of the research and the studies of selected rituals is to describe the relations between ritual and the music-dance elements within it. The dissertation focuses on musical expression. In the dissertation we describe a few traditional rituals from the European cultural heritage, and also some selected examples of secular ceremonies in relation to them.

Sources of information include field research, studies of authentic ritual (filmed by Lubomír Tyllner), as well as specialist literature.

The concept of “ritual” means, for us, a performance, a symbolic activity, the aim of which is to create and to consolidate social bonds, and to regulate, conserve and transmit social habits and manners. It prescribes behavior which should help an individual to win favour with supernatural powers, or which could have a positive effect on achieving an intended goal. The important part of the ritual is the concept of “liminality”, and in addition “The communitas” status of the community. Victor Turner, who studied these aspects of ritual in detail, distinguished the term “ritual” from “secular ceremony” by the existence of liminality.

In ritual and secular ceremony music performs many functions, and seems to be a very essential part of them. Its most significant functions are aesthetic, ritual, mental stimulation, social, communicational, organizational and utilitarian. Within individual ceremonies, we observe all audio components (music, singing, musical instruments, other phonetic and relative unmusical manifestations), which create their specific aural environment.

As emerged from our research, in the European area the musical components contained in ritual and secular ceremony have a relatively privileged position. They substantially participate in the creation of “communitas”, help to unite the community and to restore its social structure. Music has the power to influence individual’s feelings and behavior. Consequently, it could be a means of regulating social norms and values.