

# Irish Night at Hamilton International Folk Dance Club

By Leon Balaban

I've heard that the Hamilton folk dance club, run by Stefania Miller, is a good and dynamic dance group. I planned to visit one day, but it was always so much easier to go downtown Toronto to IFDC (International Folk Dance Club) <sup>1</sup> than to drive an hour from my home in North York to Hamilton.



I found the opportunity to visit on Friday March 24, 2006 to participate in a special event featuring Irish céilí\* and set dances with guest teacher Maureen Mulvey-O'leary <sup>2</sup>.

The dance location was at St Paul's Anglican Church (1140 King St. W., Hamilton) in a very spacious and well lit hall. There were decorated tables with cakes, fruits, beverages and snacks.

After some introductory Balkan dances Maureen started demonstrating and calling her dances. First were reel based dances like "Walton limerick" and "Two hand reel" (a reel is a very rhythmic and quick dance which has two, eight bar parts - which are repeated). Next set dances (with four couples per set) were taught. I enjoyed "Clare Lancers" in particular. Maureen followed with Jig based dances (two eight-bar parts, each of repeated): "Harvest time jig" and "Haymakers jig".



I was very pleased Maureen taught a Canadian dance "Canadian barn dance" <sup>3</sup>, a simple couple formation dance where after a few back, front and sideways steps, the inside partner moves ahead to assume a ballroom hold with the next new partner and do an eight bar waltz.

Maureen ended the session with "The St. Bernard's Waltz" a couple dance in a circle formation which also has a beautiful melody. Between the Irish dance segments Stefania lead a few lively international folk dances where everyone joined in.



I was not able to participate in all dances as I was taking video and pictures for this site but through the lens I could see that the 30-40 dancers who attended during the evening were really enjoying the occasion. Mostly were from Hamilton and area but a few came from Guelph or Kitchener.

The evening ended with a slow circle dance where Stefania placed a red candle lamp on the floor in the middle while the lights were dimmed in the hall. It was a very appropriate ending to a most enjoyable evening where the time seemed to pass very quickly. It was my first visit to the Hamilton international folk dance club and I was very impressed with the energy and enthusiasm of the dancers.



\* refers to an Irish social dance event with set dancing and possibly other types of dance like Waltz or Quick step.

OFDA (Ontario Folk Dance Association) web site: [www.ofda.ca](http://www.ofda.ca)

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.johnduncanrose.com/ifdc/information.html>

<sup>2</sup> [www.expage.com/maureensreelirishdancing](http://www.expage.com/maureensreelirishdancing)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.geocities.com/Colosseum/Midfield/3705/CanadianBarnDance.htm>