

Folk Dancer

The Magazine of World Dance and Culture



Samba Squad in Sitges, Spain (see p. 8). Photo: Kevin Budd.

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Post-Multiculturalism in an Evolving World

By Kevin Budd

Culture changes, and is now thought to be a “socio-historic” construct. That means it is not defined or fixed. It’s always changing. This whole multi-cultural thing that is Canada’s official policy is often referred to as an idea whose time has come and gone, not that multi-cultures are a bad thing, but that the policy, as such, has had a tendency to lock immigrant cultures into a certain mold from which it has been very difficult to break free.

People move here and bring with them certain traditions. As they live here they become something else, cultural hybrids if you like. They may adopt a hyphenated identity, for example, Afro-Canadian, or Indo-Canadian. Their children may adopt yet another identity that in some way blends what they were, or what their parents were, with what they are now. If you ask yourself what you are, are you pure Canadian? Is there such a thing? Was there ever?

Multi-culturalism tended to define cultures by their folk traditions, and as such it has promoted

such traditions, and still does, at the expense of what the practitioners may have become since they, or their parents or grandparents first arrived upon our hallowed shores. The promotion of folk traditions, is, of course, the pet specialty of folk dancers and folk musicians everywhere, and as such cannot be faulted. The challenge lies in allowing and encouraging the development of those cultures and individuals as they live here, intersecting with local practices, being influenced by yet more “other” cultures, and being affected by what is evolving back home in the “old country”. The old country, after all did not stop developing when these particular people emigrated. Their departure, by choice or by force, did not slam the door on further social and cultural evolution. Even so-called “folk” culture is all about influence. Some say that’s all it is, influences, and so one often hears discussions about the way we do a dance here, and the way they do it “there”. And the all-encompassing explanation for the differences? “That’s the folk process.” Yes, even folk culture changes. And yet, we still do dances unchanged from 40 years ago. In our tiny dance world they have been deep-frozen, and of course, we love them that way.

IN THIS ISSUE

REGULAR

<i>Editorial</i> 3
<i>OFDA Events</i> 11
<i>Dance Calendar</i> 12
<i>Dance Classes</i> 16
<i>The Back Page</i> 26

FEATURES

<i>Explorations in Folklore</i> 5
<i>Samba in Sitges</i> 8
<i>Rhoda’s Greek Seminar</i> 20
<i>40th Anniversary Banquet</i> 22



The OFDA has established an e-mail list in order to communicate timely information of interest to folk dancers. If you would like to add your name to the list, send an e-mail request to: ontariofolk dancers@gmail.com



Please do let us know about special events!

Let someone try to introduce a new version of an old chestnut and there shall arise a hue and cry to awaken the dear departed.

So now, you see, artists are moving into what could be called post-multi-culturalism. Inter-culturalism is the newer buzzword. Artists do not wish to be limited to a defined folk tradition in their work,

but seek to be simply artists. Not hyphenated artists, like an Albanian-Canadian dancer, but simply a dancer. Not an Italian-Canadian painter, but simply a painter. Cultures are not “monolithic”, not one large same thing. Rather they are made from individuals creating and practicing and learning and teaching. And maybe, in a few years, the government policies will catch up to this reality, and jump on the new bandwagon. Or maybe not.



*Birdie having corsage pinned
at Cecille's 90th Birthday Party*

Condolences to Cecille Ratney,
whose younger sister,
Birdie (89 years old), died in
October after a half year struggle
with pancreatic cancer.

Our thoughts are also with
Brian Walker, whose 92 year old
father passed away peacefully
in early November.

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Explorations in Folklore 2: A Childhood in Brittany

By Karen Bennett

For my second column in these pages I'm going to do more excavation from a mouldering old book, in this case something I discovered at AbeBooks.com when doing a search for "Brittany": Anne Douglas Sedgwick's *A Childhood in Brittany Eighty Years Ago*, published in New York in 1919. Says the foreword: "This little sheaf of childish memories has been put together from many talks, in her own tongue, with an old French friend." The extracts are from pages 62 to 67 and 185 to 186.

Anne Douglas Sedgwick (1873-1935) was an American whose family moved to London when she was nine. She was a prolific and popular author whose fiction (published from 1898 to 1929) observed European and American cultural differences. *A Childhood* is the only non-fiction she wrote. Despite the simple prose of *A Childhood* (the kind that could be read to children at bedtime), there's much of interest for folklorists, including descriptions of food, costumes, and a vanished way of life.

The book's pen-and-ink drawings are too dim to reproduce, so I've provided illustrations from my modest collection of old French postcards (and there's not a single naughty one in the lot, so there).

The narrator is a child named Sophie Kerouguet, born in the town of Quimper, Brittany, to a well-off middle-class family.

To celebrate the later birth of a sister for Sophie, their father organized a *fête* at one of his country houses, which he used as a hunting-lodge. "It was among the lower meadows, in a charming, smiling spot planted with chestnuts, poplars, and copper beeches, that the table for the thirty huntsmen was laid in the shade of a little avenue. Already the *crêpe*-makers from Quimper, renowned through all



Children from the town of Vannes, Brittany, on an early-20th-century postcard. Vannes is southeast of Quimper.

the country, were laying their fires upon the ground under the trees, and I must pause here to describe this Breton dish. A carefully compounded batter, flavored either with vanilla or malaga, was ladled upon a large flat pan and spread thinly out to its edge with a wooden implement rather like a paper-cutter. By means of this knife the *crêpes*, when browned on one side, were turned to the other with a marvellous dexterity, then lifted from the pan and folded at once into a square, like a pocket-handkerchief, for, if allowed to cool, they cracked. They were as fine as paper—six would have made the thickness of an ordinary pancake, and were served very hot with melted butter and fresh cream, of which a crystal jar stood before each guest, and was replenished by the servants when it emptied.

"The *crêpes* were eaten at the end of the luncheon as a sweet, and among the other dishes that I remember was the cold salmon—invariable on such occasions, salmon abounding in our Breton rivers—with a highly spiced local sauce, *filet de boeuf en aspic*, York ham, fowls, Russian salad, and the usual cakes and fruits....

“After the feasting two famous *biniou* [bagpipe]-players took up their places ... and played the *farandol*, the *jabadao*, and other country-dances.... The players wore a special costume: their caps and their stockings were bright red; their jackets and stockings and waistcoats bright blue, beautifully embroidered; their full white breeches of coarse linen. Like all the peasants at that time, they wore their hair long, falling over the shoulders.... The women’s skirts were of black or red stuff, with three bands of velvet, their bodices of embroidered velvet, and they all wore a gold or silver Breton cross, hung on a black velvet ribbon, round their necks.... Among the coifs I remember several beautiful tall hennins. What a day it was!....



Tall coiffe (“hennin”) from the village of Pornic

“*Crêpes* seem to be present in nearly all my Breton memories. The peasants made them for us when we went to visit them in their cottages, and it would have hurt their feelings deeply had we refused them. We children delighted in these visits not only on account of the *crêpes*, but on account of the picturesque interest of these peasant interiors. The one living-room had an earthen floor and a huge chimney-piece of stone, often quaintly carved, and so large that chairs could be set within it about the blazing logs. The room was paneled, as it were, with

beds that looked, when their sliding wooden doors were closed, like tall wardrobes ranged along the walls.... A narrow space between the tops of these beds and the ceiling allowed some air ... to reach the sleepers, and, within, the straw was piled high, and the mattress and feather bed were laid upon it. It was quite customary for father, mother, and three or four children to sleep in one bed, several generations often occupying a room.... The beds were climbed into by means of a carved chest that stood beside them. These were called *huches*, and contained the heirloom costumes, a store of bread, and the Sunday shoes!”

When Sophie was aged about 10, she and her family moved to Paris, where the “novel” ends. Her Breton memories dated from the late 1830s and early 1840s.



Children from the town of Lorient cluster in and around the huge piece of Breton furniture that served as a bed. The postcard was mailed in 1917.

Samba in Sitges

By Kevin Budd

We were on a day trip out of Barcelona and had decided to visit the nearby town of Sitges. The area is in Catalonia, and so Catalan, (another Latin language) makes its appearance regularly. Sitges (pronounced “seat-jay-s”) is a charming seaside town, known for its beaches and its summertime influx of gay tourists. About a third of its 26,000 inhabitants are foreigners.

Some people say it is a Spanish St Tropez, and some say it is a mini-Ibiza. We did not make a comparison.

One notable place to visit is the Cau Ferrat Museum: Cau Ferrat was the house-cum-studio of artist and writer Santiago Rusiñol, (1861-1931). He was a Spanish Catalan post-impressionist/Decadent painter, author, and playwright. “Cau” means cape, as in a cape of land, jutting into the sea, and that is what the property does. It is a lovely old house.



The old town is very pretty, with its white houses on steep streets, and it is a pleasure to wander through them. While doing this very thing, we heard



the sound of drumming, and following it, up and down streets, tracing the echoes, came across a samba squad, producing a remarkable amount of noise in these narrow thoroughfares. As you may know, a samba squad is group of percussionists all hitting drums and noisemakers of various kinds, intending to produce music for samba dancers. This is a Brazilian tradition, but it has spread, both to Toronto, and to Sitges. Apparently there was a festival or competition going on at that very moment. It's a high-energy mash-up of banging beats and one whistler and you cannot stand within twenty metres of the squad without being forcibly enthralled by the rambunctious coordination of its many-layered rhythms. Clearly drawing on African traditions of percussion, with the coordination of many people, hitting anything from cowbells, to tambourines, to large drums, each in a different pattern, the rich sonic texture built up is fascinating to experience.

Along the main waterfront street there are a few very large feet. That is, there are a few very large sculpted feet, clearly intended as art. I would not wish to encounter the folk dancer with such impressive appendages.



Photos by Kevin Budd

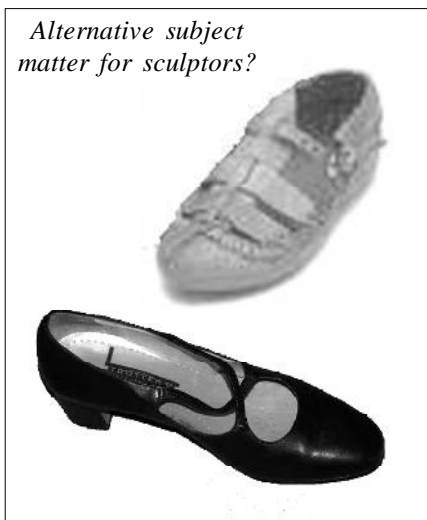


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Rhoda's Greek Seminar, 2009

By Rhoda Bodnoff

In the last issue of the magazine, Rhoda described the beginning of her Greek trip. She continues here with a description of the Seminar/workshop which inspired the month-long trip to Greece.....

Dear friends

I was delighted to receive a special email in November, 2008. It was from a wonderful Greek Dance teacher....Kyriakos Moisidis. I first met him in Toronto at workshops (Klironomia.....for Greek dancegroups to keep their beautiful heritage) as well as a workshop in Ottawa.

Kyriakos taught in many countries, and cities. He had classes over the years at the island of Ammoulianni at Chalkidiki. Many of the Ottawa Odyssey Dancers attended his workshops and they all raved about how wonderful it had been there.

Since ten years had passed, Kyriakos decided to organize a very special event, his tenth Seminar of Greek Dances, from Aug 18th to Sept 1st, 2009. This was to be a tour in Northern Greece. I thought, "this is a once in a lifetime event" so I decided then and there to book the trip.

There were sixty-five people from eighteen countries; totally amazing!

Kyriakos somehow found a wonderful double decker bus for us to get to and from hotels, classes, villages, and fantastic scenery!

We all met in Thessaloniki, at the Statue of Venizelos at the square at Egnatia Street and Aristotoulou Street. Somehow all sixty-five people arrived and we boarded the bus. Kyriakos was outside counting to make sure we were all on board. Two hours later we were going into our designated hotels (three of them) at our first destination Loutraki of Aridea.

We just had time to open the suitcases and were to meet at one hotel for the official welcome, explanations about the programme and to be given materials about the seminar.

An hour later, we went on our yellow bus to Aridea for our first welcome feast.

We were fed awesome Greek food, ate, drank, mingled and met Petros Selkos, another teacher with participants from his class. We then danced with live musicians which was fantastic! This lasted till midnight! We were bussed to our hotels, and since the rides were pretty long, "Bessie from Vegas" announced that people who wished to sleep, should stay on the upper level, while the people who were still in the mood to dance, should stay on the lower level! It was hilarious, most people on the lower level kept dancing in the aisle. By the time we were at our hotels it was almost time to get up for breakfast!

Wednesday (second day), we went to Giannitsa, and were taught dances out in a huge park by Oresti Stiannou. Later we were taken to a museum there. Next was a presentation about the local costume at the village of Greek feast and we were able to dance with the brass band. The band played us right to the door of the bus. That was so nice! Thursday (how quickly each day went) we were learning more dances from the village Papagianni of Florina taught by Dimitris Skenderis. Then we went in our bus to Papiagianni Village. They had a costume presentation, and then we walked in the village.

Of course the next feast was with more live musicians, so we danced and danced some more! Friday, the teacher was Petros Selkos and dances were from the village Mesimeri of Edessa. After the classes, we departed to Edessa, to visit the old town (Varosi), then to the ethnological museum and to the famous waterfalls there. We had to go up and down in elevators to see the falls at different heights. It was totally breathtaking! The next night's feast was as amazing as all the others; home made Greek Food prepared by the wonderful ladies of the villages! We ate, danced and drank again! (no time for sleep)

Saturday, we left Loutraki and went to the



village Lefkopigi of Kozani. More dances were taught by Nikos Kamperis. He also taught dances from Ipiros. The women sang beautifully and we danced as they sang. It was really a treat! We moved on to three new hotels at the village of Sibus, with our driver Christos (note.....driving on those mountainous roads was quite something. The scenery was breathtaking!).

At Kozani we visited the ethnological and archaeological museum of the town.

Then another Greek feast, (marvellous food) and we danced with music from Ipiros; clarinet/klarino, violin, lauto, played by wonderful musicians.

Sunday we visited Ai-Giorgis of Grevena with our only woman teacher; Evaggelia Nikou. She was lovely and a great teacher. Some hours later....we went (yes...in the bus) to Ai-Giorgis village, and we had another costume presentation!

Of course, more music, with the wonderful musicians, eating and drinking and then, yes, back on the bus, still dancing in the aisles!

Monday, dances and songs of Siatista with Dimolas Naum, and another costume presentation. Night feast at the central square, live music, (another brass band) very exciting! Tuesday, 9 a.m. we leave Siatista and go to Veroia to two new hotels.

10:30 a.m. lessons re dances of Rumluqi, taught by Achilles Tsiaras. A little later we are at Ksexasmeni Village to see more costumes and visit the village.

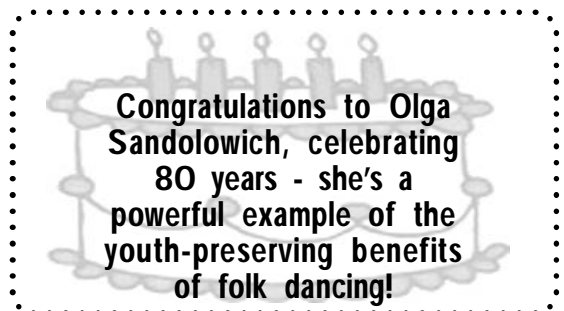
Night feast; music with zourna, and dauli (big drum) we dance, eat, drink and are very merry! Wednesday. What day is it? Where are we? What dances will we do now? We have been very, very busy! What a pace. How did Kyriakos ever organize this magnificent seminar?

Thursday; dances from Pontos with Vasilis Asvestas. We visit the old town and ethnological museum of Veroia. This night we feast at the village Komninio with live Pontian lyra, tulum and dauli with local musicians. Friday we leave Veroia and on our way to Thessaloniki we visit the archaeological site and museum of Vergina. Later we visit the ethnological museum of Thessaloniki. The costume collection there is absolutely fantastic. They have some life size mannequins, in beautiful costumes and they are turning in a circle with wonderful music playing! Saturday; some people are on their way home, but the rest of us are on the way to Ammoulianni Island. We arrive at the Sunrise Hotel; at last some sleep! Some people were at the a.m. dance review, I however slept for several hours and then just enjoyed walking around this gorgeous place. I did manage the evening dance class. Kyriakos reviewed all that we had learned.

My trip went on to Thessaloniki, then eight days on the island of Samos (to recover) I also went to Patmos then had three days in Athens, and I went on a day cruise to Poros, Hydra and Aegina. It was a spectacular month. I am enjoying hearing from many of the participants. Many, many thanks to Kyriakos.

Hope you enjoyed this story as much as I enjoyed the Seminar.....

Happy Dancing to All!
Fond regards, Rhoda



OFDA's 40th Anniversary Banquet



Photos by David Trost and Bev Sidney

Approximately 140 people purchased tickets to this celebratory Banquet and Dance evening. The Estonian House in Toronto proved to be a great hall for such an occasion, and their caterer provided delicious food for our supper meal.

We danced to the energizing Bulgarian and Macedonian music provided by the "Karamfil" band, and with the leadership of Helen Winkler, were able to dance the klezmer set played by "West of Odessa".

MC Sandy Starkman was well occupied, as she kept the evening's activities moving along: calling tables up to the buffet, introducing bands and speakers, conducting draws (four lucky people won a bottle of the OFDA's finest wine - made specially for the occasion)





Thanks to Roz and Al Katz, and to the Harbord Street Bakery for the (as always) delicious cake!

Table settings were fashioned by Maya Trost, ballast being provided by specially selected rocks from her home's hillside property on Lake Muskoka. As the number of tickets sold increased, more and more table settings (rocks) were required. Happily, the house did not slide into the lake before the rocks were returned to their



Riki Adivi admires table settings

original locations.

The Special Edition wine for the evening was produced by Maya and Bev Sidney (and no natural structures were compromised in the process).



What it takes to get good sound!



MC Sandy in action

T e m e Kernerman is directly responsible for the creation of the Ontario Folk Dance Association. Around 1969 Teme returned from a trip to Quebec where she had observed the benefits of forming an association to unify the many dance groups that had been established. It was her feeling that Ontario should also establish such an umbrella organization and so she inspired the creation of what became the OFDA. Asked to say a few words at the Anniversary Banquet , Teme remarked that when a person sets something in motion, they can never be certain whether it will be a successful venture or not. In the case of the OFDA, she was pleased to see that forty years later, it is still alive and well.

Among others who contributed to the success of the evening, are (in no particular order): Nora Brett, who kindly responded to a last minute request to say a few words, telling in her witty, engaging way about her tentative introduction to folk dancing at the University Settlement House; Karen Bennett for sharing items from her costume and poster collections; Walter Zagorski for running the music; Dorothy Archer for stellar ticket-selling activities; Walter, Olga Sandolowich, Paula Tsatsanis and Judith Cohen for billeting our out-of-town musicians.

Many more photos of the evening can be seen by visiting the "Photos" page of our website. Thanks to Allen Katz for sharing his photo album. There is also a link on that page, which will connect to videos taken of the musicians and dancers. Thanks Leon (Balaban)!

Folk Dancer



**Elizabeth
Lumley
modelling
one of
Karen's
collection**



*Balkan Band
"Karamfil"
playing for
our dancing
pleasure*



Reflections on the 40th Anniversary Banquet

.....some of the comments received in the aftermath of the party.....



"The 40th anniversary party was a wonderful idea! It was a pleasure to see so many dancers from the past and to spend time with them. The meal provided by the hall was excellent with a good choice for everyone! I was very surprised to see that you had only charged \$15.00 for members - \$25.00 would not have been out of order and still an excellent bargain."

"Congratulations for organizing a fabulous celebration marking the 40th OFDA anniversary. The setting was just right, the food was terrific and plentiful, wine flowed, and the music was fresh and alive."

"...I immensely enjoyed the banquet last night. It was beautifully put together: stately yet fun, upbeat and celebratory, colourful and generous (that excellent wine flowed all night!). Thank you for creating this memorable event."



And from the musicians:

"Thanks to all of you for the opportunity to participate—it was a wonderful evening!"

"I had a great time! Thanks for allowing me to be a part of the festivities."



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