

Folk Dancer

The Magazine of World Dance and Culture



OFDA Balkan Café, with York University's Balkan Ensemble (see more photos p. 24).

PUBLISHED BY THE ONTARIO FOLK DANCE ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 41 NUMBER 2

March 2010

The Flexible Mosaic of Recreational Folk Dancing

By Kevin Budd

Because recreational folk dancing does not represent one source, one ethnic group, or one historical lineage, it is, therefore, not necessarily tied to one way of doing things. There is no specific history to uphold or maintain. In theory, it should be extremely flexible. Darwin did not say the strong shall survive, but rather that the adaptable will survive. In one sense that would be true of folk dance communities. The large communal bodies of recreational dance are always shifting in emphasis, and nature, evolving and mutating. Hybrid by nature, they are able to learn new dances or learn old dances, from just about anywhere in the world, though locally, that is, in North America, the great preponderance of repertoire springs from the so-called Balkans, Eastern Europe and the north-east Mediterranean. Western Europe is less appreciated. Especially loved are Macedonian, Bulgarian, Greek, Israeli, Serbian, Romanian, Turkish, Roma, (Gypsy) and a few Hungarian. Albanian, Armenian, Czech, Slovak or Slovenian are under-represented. There are a few dances from France, especially Brittany, and maybe the U.K., (though I can think of only one Welsh

dance). Several Scottish pieces are old chestnuts, but Ireland is rarely encountered. Now and then a Scandinavian dance rears its charming head, a lone Portuguese Malhao, one pop Spanish delight, and one Mexican are done in the Toronto area. Despite Toronto's large Italian community, one tarantella rounded out the Italian contribution for a long time. Now, even that dance has been largely forgotten. Japan gives us one rarely done dance. China? Vietnam? Thailand? Myanmar? India? None that I can think of. From giant Russia comes "Troika" and a very few others. These are our token representatives from many parts of the world. Notably absent are Central and South America, (is there one Brazilian dance we do?) and very absent is the continent of Africa, with its, roughly sixty countries. We do one South African dance; "Pata Pata". Many of the world's cultures, are, to use a very academic word, lacunae in the community of recreational folk dance.

Recreational dancing is simply about the enjoyment of traditional social movement, and so we are happy to learn whatever a peripatetic

IN THIS ISSUE

REGULAR

<i>Editorial</i> 3
<i>OFDA Events</i> 11
<i>Dance Calendar</i> 12
<i>Dance Classes</i> 15
<i>The Back Page</i> 26

FEATURES

<i>Explorations in Folklore</i>	3 5
<i>Going Back in Time</i> 17
<i>Photos - OFDA Balkan Café</i> 24
<i>OTEA Scholarship 2010</i> 25



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: ontariofolkdancers@gmail.com



Please do let us know about special events!

instructor will offer. Like the English language, we can accept influences from many sources. And therein lies both a strength and a weakness on our system. A teacher may love one particular culture, and become such a specialist in it that the teacher will travel through many communities and teach the same set of dances to thousands of recreational dancers. We benefit from such an expertise. On the other hand, we are also limited to what those teachers have picked up in their travels. These cultural ethnographers and terpsichorean anthropologists are our foreign collectors, and thus, also the first line of filters between us and the original culture. Certain dances are picked up and certain others, or the less certain, are left behind. Then, when brought here and taught, only certain dances catch on. Over time some of these drop away as well, perhaps as too challenging. Some even change, as teachers seek to use the pedagogical technique of simplification to instruct the middle dancers. This tendency implies that these are either the best or the most important dances and cultures. Others, therefore, are not so good, or not so important. However, as one of my early ethnomusicology teachers suggested, we do not judge quality in folk arts by record sales.

Still, on the whole, we are exposed to a large number of cultures and have sampled many movement styles. Years of recreational folk dancing does teach one a good level of competence, such that visiting teachers, especially from specific ethnic groups, are often surprised at what we are able to accomplish. Each ethnic community tends to have blinders on, in the sense that its own dances are seen as very challenging to outsiders, and very different from any other, and yet, if you have danced folk for some years, you can probably pick up almost anything. The common elements of timing, movement, rhythm, steps, stamps, lifts, brushes, touches, claps, shoulder, basket, and hand holds, pauses and jumps are shared by all in various combinations. Many dancers and dance teachers report tales of joining a line or circle dance and surprising the ethnic locals with how easily they can do so. "How do you know our dances?", some might ask in astonishment. And there is another strength of folk dance training. We know the elements of many styles and traditions, and can therefore fit in with many cultures. And that, perhaps, is very Canadian.



OFDA APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

YEARLY MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES SUBSCRIPTION TO THE *Folk Dancer* MAGAZINE

☐ SINGLE \$24 ☐ FAMILY* \$30 ☐ ALL U.S. AND OVERSEAS \$24 CAN./\$22 U.S. FUNDS

* **FAMILY CONSISTS OF 2 ADULTS & ALL CHILDREN UNDER 18**

MEMBERSHIP TO:

OFFICE USE ONLY:

NAME (Please Print)

ADDRESS

CITY

PROV/STATE

POSTAL CODE

COUNTRY

PHONE: ()

GROUP/AFFILIATION

e-mail:



Explorations in Folklore 3: My Albanian Journey

By Karen Bennett



Dressed in an Albanian costume, I taught Albanian wedding dances at a workshop in Toronto on November 28, 2009. I also fielded questions such as, “Is your background Albanian? Have you ever been there? Where did you learn the dances? Where did you get the costumes? How did you come to be interested in Albanian culture?” I

promised to write a comprehensive answer to their queries and, for friends who’d been unable to attend, to tell the tale of the journey I’d taken to arrive at the workshop. What follows is excerpted from a 6,700-word essay posted in January 2010 on karenbennett.ca (look for the page “Other Writings”). Also on my website are other recent folklore articles, as well as the entry on my “News” page that appeared on p. 20 of the February 2010 issue of the *Folk Dancer*.

I’ve been collecting original folk costumes almost as long as I’ve been dancing ... so, for more than 30 years. In 1999, I joined eBay. And most of my costume purchases since that time have come from eBay, where there are pictures of what’s being sold as well as a description of the size and where the seller thinks the costume is from. I have an eBay search that eliminates Hallowe’en and belly dance costumes and has turned up some wonderful stuff. And one day in 2007, it turned up a piece of Albanian costume.

My costumes were mostly from the Balkans, but there was nothing from Albania. And what was listed on eBay was really beautiful, with gold embroidery. The seller sounded like he knew his stuff. Eventually I collected an entire costume from the

region of Elbasan from him. The seller’s name was Dritan Seda, and he was living in Colorado. He’d emigrated to the United States from southern Albania in 2006, and he collected costumes as well as engraved distaffs, spindles and whorls. He was tickled pink that I was interested in his culture. Pretty soon, I was finding out how many costumes Albania has (hundreds). Pretty soon, I was owning a second costume, one that looked like others from the Balkans rather than one from a Turkish harem, as the Elbasan costume does.

I wore the Elbasan costume to the Annual General Meeting of the Ontario Folk Dance Association in Toronto on May 2, 2009 and attracted a lot of interest: “Where is this from?” At that meeting, I also joined the executive of the association. One of the topics at the next executive meeting was ideas for upcoming cafés. I had learned while doing research on Albanian costumes that November 28th was Albanian Independence Day (November 28, 1912 being the date that independence from the Turkish Empire was declared), and one of the café dates happened to be November 28. So I suggested that we have a café to celebrate Independence Day, taught by a local Albanian teacher I’d find or, if all else failed, by me. This idea was accepted.

What does the average folk dancer know about Albania? Not much. (This is related to the fact that Albania was closed off to the West for many decades after the Second World War while in the grip of a Communist dictator, Enver Hoxha.) Over the years, I’ve learned the occasional Albanian dance from teachers such as Dennis Boxell, Ciga Despotovic, Elsie Ivancich Dunin, Željko Jergan, Atanas Kolarovski, Steve Kotansky, Ron Leibman, Lee Otterholt and Ron Wixman. As a culture, Albania has been served out in dribs and drabs. Just once, I’ve been to an all-Albanian cultural presentation: in Lachine, Quebec, organized by Yves Moreau in 1997 as part of the annual series he called “Heritage” (now, sadly, defunct). A professional group from Tirana, the

capital of Albania, showed us costumes; they taught us some dances; they had a band with them to play various kinds of music. I wanted to do something along the same lines: present all-Albanian material. The culture deserved a champion, I felt.

I'd already been working on a dance called Valle Jarnana (VAL-eh YAR-na-na). I'd learned Valle Jarnana from Steve Kotansky in 1995 as part of a weekend international workshop he did in Toronto at the International Folk Dance Club. I wanted to revive the dance but I couldn't find the VHS video (I'd lent it to somebody and never got it back). I had the notes, but the notes didn't convey the style. I Googled "Valle Jarnana," and up came links on YouTube [youtube.com]. One video was of teacher Roberto Bagnoli doing the dance under the name "Jarnana." (Roberto lives in Italy and frequently comes to North America to teach, and he knows many Albanian dances as well as Italian because of the large Albanian minority in Italy.) And under YouTube's "Related Videos" feature was a video consisting of a still photo from something called *Elveda Rumeli*; playing over it was a different version of the music. (Segue to the Internet Movie Database [imdb.com] to discover that *Elveda Rumeli* ["Farewell Rumeli"] was a drama about a village of Turks in Macedonia in 1896 and 1897; it aired on Turkish TV in 2007–08.) The new version, although with the same melody and words (it's a courtship song) as the familiar one, was absolutely irresistible when the band kicked in after the first verse by the singers. I played it over and over again. "This is great!" sez I. "Gotta go on eBay to order the CD of the *Elveda Rumeli* 1897 soundtrack!"



Then I discovered the Albanian brass band Fanfara Tirana, which had a recent CD out. I was galvanized by their music, "Apocalyptic Kaba" in particular. "What dances do they do to this?" sez I, bouncing in my computer chair.

Near the end of July 2009 I went to the first week of Stockton Folk Dance Camp in California, where among the dances Lee Otterholt

taught were two Albanian ones, both choreographed by him. (The other Stockton teachers in 2009: Roberto Bagnoli, France Bourque-Moreau, Bruce Hamilton, Jerry Helt, Željko Jergan, Roo Lester and Yves Moreau. It's a great camp; I'm going in 2010 as well, for both weeks.) Soon after I came back from Stockton, it was time to settle the details of the November 28th Albanian café. It was going to be me teaching, as I hadn't come up with a real live Albanian in Toronto to do the job. Feeling inspired by the title of the Fanfara Tirana CD, *Albanian*



Wedding, I settled on the theme of dances done at Albanian weddings by the guests: fun and unchoreographed dances. So I had to give myself a crash course in Albanian culture and get to work to compose a dance program, as all I had was Valle Jarnana as well as Ani More Nuse, taught by Lee at Stockton. (The other Albanian dance Lee taught didn't suit my purposes.) Although both Valle Jarnana and Ani More Nuse are choreographed dances, they have only two

figures, and in Valle Jarnana in particular, the line's leader can decide how many times and when to do each figure. And I was delighted to read in Lee's notes that "Ani More Nuse" was a song done at

weddings. Now I was cooking with gas!

I could see that YouTube could be an enormous resource for folklore if one had time to wade through it. I'd already called up all the *Elveda Rumeli* material on YouTube and discovered numbers not on the "1897" CD (they were on the "1896" soundtrack, not available to me). The site also came up with other Albanian dances, some of it performance stuff that can be done with ease only by 20-year-old guys and therefore not so suitable for the current crowd in folk dancing, and some of it done at weddings—and the latter looked familiar. "Hey, that's a walking Pravo," sez I, "but with lots of bounce in the knees and arms!" With the Fanfara Tirana CD in hand, I had music that would work with some of the dances but not all of them, so over I went to Amazon to find more music.

So far so good, but I still needed the *names* of the dances. Surprise: Wedding videos don't name the dances they show. And in ethnic communities, people often don't even *have* a name for their own dances done on social occasions. When they recognize the music being played, they get up and dance. So what is someone like me, doing research from outside the culture, to do?

I do not speak Albanian. I've never been to Albania (Bosnia is the closest I've been, in 1988). I don't have any Albanians in my ethnic background (my family came to Canada from various parts of Great Britain), and I inherited no language but English. And Albanian is a language that's unique in the Indo-European family. It has no relatives. But it has a lot of loan-words from such languages as Latin and Macedonian and Turkish, and it's phonetic, so standard pronunciation can be learned without difficulty for someone like me who has an ear for languages and has done a lot of singing in South Slavic tongues, and it uses the Latin alphabet, praise be, so I can read it. All I had to do is figure out what to call the dances I was researching.

Meanwhile, I kept watching YouTube videos. As long as they were tagged "Albanian" somewhere in the title or comments, I followed to see where

they led. And I'm here to tell you that stumblesome and numberless like unto stones on the shore are bad videos—in particular those lasting 30 seconds and shot on cellphones. Frequently to be heard from me as I watched were such futile pleas as, "Will you for God's sake point that thing at their feet? I can't see what they're doing!"

Remember Dritan Seda, the guy in Colorado who'd sold me two costumes on eBay? Well, he came up trumps. I told him what I was researching and he gave me contact info for a young woman in Toronto with whom he'd gone to school (to train in social work) in Albania. Her name was Klara Qato, and she very kindly came over to my place one day. I showed her the costumes Dritan had sold me. She demonstrated some dances done at weddings and, hallelujah, told me what their names were: Pogonishtë (also called Progonishtë, with an extra "r") and Napoloni! We also went on YouTube and found good videos I could bookmark and refer to later! Was I cooking or was I cooking?

Alas, Klara wasn't willing or able to lead the November 28th dance café. But I could build on what she showed me. I was off and running. I had four dances for my program now: Valle Jarnana, Ani More Nuse, Pogonishtë and Napoloni. And Dritan also told me in what *order* the dances should be done at a wedding, information which proved indispensable when I agreed—get this for chutzpah—to be a DJ at a wedding with an Albanian groom on November 14th, of which more later.

I had four dances! Well, I had four *names*, but three of the dances were related to each other in belonging to the Pravo family of line dances, with the possibility of throwing in improvisational solos when the melodies switched to what I think of as "Turkish": the *čoček* rhythm (2/4). And I discovered from watching YouTube that at social events, Albanians do two or three or four dances to the same piece of music. One line does one dance; a second does another; a third line does something different. And there may be a men's line too. The energy and skill levels differ, but everybody is having fun, especially those who are dancing solos in the middle.

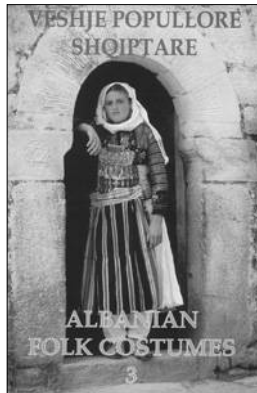
(They're never out there all by themselves; somebody always comes out to dance with them.)

Okay, the thought of dancing solo was "a moment of quail" for me. Making a spectacle of myself in the middle of the floor is something I don't find easy at the best of times, and I was going to ask other people to do this on November 28th? Huh. I began to practise the style Albanians do solos in, which turned out to be similar to the way other Balkan ethnicities, including the Rom and the Turks, do it. I began to watch YouTube videos of solo dances, in particular of an Albanian Kosovo dance called Shota (a version of which has been taught by Željko Jergan, among others), and to practise prancing around my study rotating my wrists in the air and waving a red scarf. I went on to observe that from my experience in Armenian dances, I was already good at rotating my wrists; I needed to work on manipulating a scarf Albanian-fashion.

Jump back to Stockton camp, where I'd already done a bit of inhibition-shedding. At the Wednesday evening party, the theme was French-Canadian (France Bourque-Moreau was teaching French-Canadian dances at camp). But during the live-music part of the evening, with the band Chubritza playing, up sprang a dynamite cocek number. I spied a number of women dancing solo, including a superb dancer from the Netherlands: Sibylle Helmer. I left the line and started rotating my wrists in my best Armenian style, and Sibylle said something like, "All *right*, Karen." All I had to do was ignore the incongruity of twirling my hands in the air while garbed in French-Canadian costume.

I shed the inhibition some more at a Toronto wedding where fellow teacher Walter Zagorski and I had been hired to be the DJs. In September, I'd told local folk dancer Adrienne Beecker that I'd be doing an Albanian café on a wedding theme in November. She had subsequently turned to me and to Walter for help with music at a dinner and dance at the Old Mill

after the marriage of a friend, Roberta Laking, to an Albanian-Canadian, Robert Kananaj, on November 14th. I wasn't able to amass hours' worth of all-different Albanian dance music, but I had a respectable amount (some of it downloaded from dunav.org.il), and after all, only recreational folk dancers know dozens of dances; at Albanian weddings, the same dances are done many times. (I'd also been hoping that the groom's family would bring a promised CD of their own music, but they forgot. What can you do?) However, most of the guests in the small party were Canadians, and some of *them* were non-dancers.



Four relatives of the groom had flown in from Italy (Albanians have been in Italy for 500 years, I'd recently learned). Some of them now got up to dance when I put on Albanian music. The groom's brother asked for "Progonishtë," and as I'd been told by Klara Qato that this word was a variation of Pogonishtë, I wasn't flummoxed. I put it on. Things seemed to be going OK. I was wearing a costume from the region of Kruja, central Albania, that I bought on eBay, though not from Dritan Seda, and I'd persuaded Walter to assume the hat, vest and belt from the southern-Albania fustanella costume, this one purchased from Dritan. The Albanians recognized the music for Valle Jarnana and just followed what I did as the leader. And when I put on the music for Napoloni, the groom's brother said "Napoloni" with a big grin, and soon went into the middle of the floor and started doing a solo. I abandoned the lead of the line and went to join him.

I'd never seen quite that expression of joy on someone's face before. He was delighted I was there, that's all. "So," sez I to myself, "this is what we should be feeling! Here's something you can try to show to other international folk dancers!" (What if the groom's *other* brother, the one whom the bride had told me was the *really good* dancer in the family, had been able to come to the wedding?)

It had been a long day for the wedding party

and the Canadian members of it were drooping or drifting away by 10 o'clock. But when I told the groom that I wished we could have danced more and kept the party going late, he said, "There are only five Albanians here. What can you do?" Okay. Right. What I'd seen on YouTube videos was roomful of Albanians, some of them drunk, having a whale of a time. Although I'd been hoping to generate that mood for many hours (the sobriety of the guests being outside my control), what I'd done on this occasion was still highly worthwhile: help a minority group feel more at home amidst an alien culture whose language most of them didn't know. The groom translated a compliment from his mother: that I'd danced like a beautiful young girl. I'm no longer remotely young, but it's still gratifying to hear something like this. And although I hadn't learned any new dances, I was definitely on the right track in terms of coming up with a program for the OFDA café two weeks later. I'd had positive reinforcement from genuine Albanians! Yay!

Having taken the plunge, I stayed in the water. (I'm "off and running"; I'm "cooking with gas"; I'm diving in and swimming? What kind of Iron Woman/mixed-metaphor marathon am I in here?) At the 80th-birthday party that the Hamilton folk dancers held for Toronto teacher Olga Sandolowich on November 27th, a *čoček* was played, and out I came to do a solo. This time, I was the second person out instead of sixth. I'd already learned I could do this without feeling like a deer in the headlights, and besides, I wanted to keep Olga company. And I was wearing a lush Turkish jacket, so people were *already* looking at me.

A day later at the café, my program consisted of:

1. Pogonishtë, using "Pogonishtë," Track 19 from *Anthology of World Music: Music from Albania*;
2. Napoloni 1, using "Lonte Beu Mi Hankon," Track 11 from *Anthology of World Music*;
3. Ani More Nuse, using Track 1 from Lee Otterholt's Stockton 2009 CD, *Balkan and Beyond*;
4. Valle Jarnana, using "Jarnana," Track 4 from *Elveda Rumeli*;
5. Napoloni 2, using "Napoloni," Track 7 from *Fanfara Tirana*; and
6. Napoloni 3, played instead of Napoloni 2 when redoing the dances without teaching, using "Apocalyptic Kaba," Track 3 from *Fanfara Tirana*.

Lord, it was fun. And the applause I received was loud and enthusiastic and a reminder of what I'd missed since I gave up performing in a Croatian dance group in the 1980s.

I enjoy doing original folklore research for many reasons, including intellectual stimulation. (Here, I must trot out an expression that my eye and ear find esthetically unappealing, but it's accurate: I'm an auto-didact, or a self-directed learner.) I never know where I'll end up and what I'll have learned along the way. (For example, I discovered the travel journals and watercolours of Edward Lear, who did a whole lot more than write and illustrate nonsense verse for children.) And at the end of this journey, I'd passed along the joy of the music and the dances and the costumes to a whole roomful of people who, as it turned out, loved what I was doing as much as I loved doing it.



Mainewoods Dance Camp 2010

~ in Fryeburg, Maine ~

World famous
teachers!

Wooden dance
floor!

Dance
parties!

Live music!

Cultural
theme days!

Ethnic food!

Jam sessions!

Binge dancing!

DVD available!



Singing!

... plus the splendors of western Maine — tall pines, star-filled
nights, private cabins, swimming, lobster picnics, and more ...

NEW IN 2010:

DISCOUNTS for first timers, long absent returning alumni campers,
youth and young adults, and sponsors. Village Harmony singers and youth
emphasis in Week 1. Four per cabin option. All 3 sessions start on
Sunday. Our Website has more details.

SESSION ONE, Aug 15-21

Tom Bozigian ARMENIAN, Anne Smith SCOTTISH, Loui Tucker ISRAELI
Barbara Pixton INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSICIAN

SESSION TWO, Aug 22-28

France Borque-Moreau FRENCH CANADIAN, Ahmet Luleci TURKEY, Yves Moreau BULGARIAN
Susan Anderson/Carol and Bill Wadlinger INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSICIANS

SESSION THREE, Aug 29-Sept 4

Mihai David ROMANIAN, Lee Otterholt BALKAN & BEYOND, Richard Schmidt POLISH
John Matulis INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSICIAN

AT EVERY SESSION Sandy Starkman INTERNATIONAL

www.mainewoodsdancecamp.org

Going back in time

By Mirdza Jaunzemis



Hattusas - carving in stone

Turkey, October, 2009

Helen Griffin and I travelled to Turkey for two marvelous weeks at the end of October on a Jim Gold International Folk Tour. It was like going back in a time machine – and our machine was a comfortable bus piloted by Sonmez, our intrepid driver, who negotiated curves and tight spots with skill and panache. On the cloth behind his seat he had pinned about a hundred amulets, shaped like tiny blue eyes, to protect us on our journey. (We were to come across these charms everywhere, protection against the evil eye, and bought a few ourselves to take home as souvenirs – just in case...) Guiding us along was Selim (Shalom); Jim Gold kept us all entertained and on track, and Lee Otterholt led us in dance sessions virtually every evening, including several spontaneous and joyful eruptions of dancing wherever opportunities occurred. He also worked hard to arrange four separate groups of Turkish instructors to teach us local dances. There were 20 of us, an optimum number, good for cohesiveness and sharing of experiences.

After an overnight in Ankara, the capital of Turkey, our adventure began with a drive to Hattusas (pronounced Hattushas), the capital

of the Hittites, founded about 1900 B.C., and now a UNESCO Heritage Site. It was called “the city of 100 gods” for the multitude of gods and goddesses who were worshipped here. Lots of ruins and foundations of buildings, temples, fortifications (some of which were still standing). A dry, desert-like landscape, (since it was October) with here and there spots of green incorporating small villages, like oases.

Our first of many serendipitous dance occurrences: We stopped for lunch at a roadside restaurant in Bogazkale (Boazkale) and a member of our group began speaking to one of the local people, who turned out to be the teacher of Turkish at the



neighbourhood school – but also, the Turkish dancing teacher! We joined in an impromptu dance, with Lee holding his laptop while dancing, like some techno music genie. Then on the way back from exploring Hattusas, we saw the same instructor and his dancing students practising in the courtyard of the local school. Jim asked our bus driver to turn the bus around and back we went. The teacher and students welcomed our request to watch them dance and then invited us to join them. Some of the children took the opportunity to practice their English with us, and we were invited to tour their school. These dancers were about 10-12 years old, and their dancing was delightful; they had recently won first prize in a competition, and they often performed in their village for weddings, etc.

On the way to our next stop - the area of Cappadocia (sometimes pronounced “Kapadokia”) we paused to look at the Agzikarahan Karavanserai, which was one of many stops for caravans on the old spice and silk trading routes in ancient times. We also stopped at a salt lake where salt is harvested and processed. Cappadocia is known for its stunning and



unusual terrain, the result of lava formations and erosions from thousands of years ago. Its other claim to fame is its underground cities. Early Christians used them as homes in order to hide from their Roman and Byzantine oppressors. We explored the city of Kaymakli; it had been built on eight levels,



Kaymakli - Helen inside underground dwelling

with air shafts, stairs, and a honeycomb of kitchens, bedrooms, storage rooms, stables, chapels, wine processing rooms, etc. The area was surprisingly spacious. We also explored Uçisar (Uchisar) – more volcanic formations. Then on to Göreme (Goereme, “oe” as in the French word “soeur”), another UNESCO Heritage Site, the town of 1000 churches – built into volcanic rock mountains and cliffs during the 9th – 11th centuries A.D., many with Byzantine art and paintings on the walls, from the early, simpler and primitive to the more ornate and modern, depicting Christ, his mother and other saints. This whole site is considered an open-air museum.

Avanos was our next stop, an ancient city from the fourth to the first centuries B.C., which had religious, political and economic importance at that time. The two of us visited a mosque in this town. We were lurking around the entryway, wondering whether it would be respectful to look in, when an old man gestured that we were welcome to go in, showing us where to take off our shoes before we entered. We indicated that we had no headscarves (often a requirement for women in a mosque), but he graciously waved us in, saying “it is not important”. This mosque was quite simple in its decor, except for an enormous circular chandelier. A few men were inside, going through their prayers, and we just sat quietly and took it all in. It was a tranquil, sacred and intense feeling.

Our first Turkish dance teachers were two performers of Turkish dance, who showed us some

steps, and got us to try some belly dancing moves. As a result of this session, we were able to attend a Turkish evening performance the next night, where we saw whirling dervishes, belly dancers and Turkish folk dances. The audience was invited to take part, so of course we jumped at the chance! Our “instructors” from the previous evening made a point of showing us that they were happy to see us, and to dance with us. It was a heart-warming connection through dance.

We then travelled on to Konya (saw a sign saying “Konyali” – perhaps this dance comes from there?) where we visited the mosque where the Sufi sect originated, founded by their leader Mevlana, the beloved and celebrated mystic poet known in the west as Rumi. The Sufis are associated with the whirling dervish ceremony, considered to be a “remembrance of God”. The mosque is now a museum, and we were told that the Sufis, although banned for political reasons, are still allowed to practice their religion because they are a tourist attraction.

The next stop was Pamukkale, famous for its hot springs. This city was built on the ancient city Hierapolis, again a UNESCO Heritage site, and some ruins still remain. In the evening many of us went for a mud bath and soak in the hot spring pools attached to our hotel. The next day we explored the sacred pool area and the famous calcareous (containing calcium) hot springs with their white terraces and basins, went walking on the travertine



Helen & Mirdza at Pamukkale hot springs

(the white terraces made of sedimentary rock), and enjoyed the waters, the setting and the marvelous view.

On we went to Aphrodisias, a very well-preserved open air museum which had beautiful marble ruins. This city was a Greco-Roman settlement with a temple dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. We walked the ruins of an open-air amphitheatre built into a natural valley which seated about 20,000 people, and an open-air stadium larger than a modern football field, both with stone seating arrangements. After a ride up a stomach-churning narrow road at the edge of a mountain, we arrived at the site where it is believed the Virgin Mary lived out her last years. We were told that an old nun had visions about Mary residing in this spot (she had never been there, and was not well-educated), but there were also other clues that pointed to this conclusion. Pope John XXII proclaimed this house to be sacred. A wall in the garden was festooned with thousands of fragments of paper and cloth, with petitions to the Virgin Mary written on them.



Ephesus - the library

Ephesus was our next stop. This is the best-preserved Greco-Roman city in the world, well worth a visit. It had the feeling of a real city. (It is now called Efes). The pillars of a great library are still standing, as well as many other everyday structures such as elegant communal toilet facilities (picture marble seating with a row of toilet-shaped holes), natural springs and a conduit system which provided running water for “flushing”. There were also other architectural marvels of the time, and again, a huge amphitheatre. In the first century B.C. it was the second largest city after Rome (pop. 250,000), and it was famous for its temple to Artemis, goddess of fertility and the hunt, among other things. It is also mentioned in the book of Revelations (one of the seven churches of Asia). Nearby was the Basilica of St. John, who is believed to have written the Book of Revelations, and who is buried on this site.

Both in Izmir (ancient Smyrna) and Kusadasi (Kooshadase, pronounced like the French le) on the Aegean Sea, Lee arranged for local Turkish dance instructors to teach us some dances. It was a treat to watch these experts, and one of the dances (Zeybek) was VERY complicated!

The next day we visited the site of Pergamon (or Pergamum), perched on a hill and once the cultural centre of the Aegean during 200 B.C. More ruins: the Altar of Zeus, the Temple of Dionysus, and down the road from there, the Asclepium – a famous health centre where methods of treatment included blood transfusions, music therapy and meditation. (Again we indulged in some spontaneous dancing at edge of the amphitheatre). The Pergamon library once contained over 200,000 books; however, its claim to fame for most of us would be that it is considered to be the birthplace of parchment (a type of paper made from treated and split calfskin, sheepskin or goatskin).

Our hotel that night was in Çanakkale (Chanakkale) a hotel located in a pine forest on the Strait of the Dardanelles. A lovely spot; we both got up early to stroll on the beach; saw some fishers (including a woman in a headscarf) setting out to check their nets from the overnight catch. Our next stop: Troy, the fabled city of Homer’s Iliad, another UNESCO site. A German businessman had analyzed

Homer’s writings, decided Troy was a real place, and plotted where this city might be. After much wrangling with government officials and changes of archeological crews, the city was unearthed; however, it was discovered that there were nine cities that had been built one on top of the other, and that Troy IV was the one involved in the Trojan War.

Once more some spontaneous dancing! While waiting for the others to assemble at a certain meeting-place, some of us began to dance some new dances Lee had been teaching us, with Lee singing the melodies! In the shadow of the Trojan Horse!

We then drove to Bursa, one of the capitals of the Ottoman Empire, and an industrial city today. We visited the Ulu Cami (Ooloo Jammie, the Great Mosque), a huge airy space. The rugs on the floor indicated the direction in which one should face when praying (always towards Mecca). One must always remove one’s shoes, and many of us women wore headscarves, although this last was sometimes optional for tourists. We all went to the Old Silk Market in a covered bazaar. Colourful displays, lots of interesting goods, including some sumptuously extravagant wedding outfits. We stayed in the Kervansaray Hotel, to which is attached a hot springs, and therefore houses a Turkish bath which had been built during the Byzantine era. Some of us went swimming in the warm waters in an outdoor pool, others went for a Turkish bath.

The next morning we drove to Yalova where we took the ferry across the Sea of Marmara to Istanbul. This is the one city on this planet that sits astride two continents: Europe and Asia. It was once called Constantinople by the Romans, and was an important city during three great empires: the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman. Its population today is approximately 13 million. We had a brief ride through the city to its highest point where we got a good view of this metropolis and of the Strait of the Bosphorous. Our ferry had landed on the Asian side of Istanbul; our hotel was on the European side; two continents in one day...

The Blue Mosque, the most famous mosque in Turkey, is renowned for its interior blue tiles, and its six minarets (most mosques have one or two). It



Istanbul - The Blue Mosque at dusk

is a huge building, built for Sultan Ahmet between 1609-1616, and is considered to be the last great mosque built during the classical period. It contains a madrasah (a school where one studies the Koran) and a hospice, as well as areas for prayer, men usually front and center, women at the back and sides, behind a carved wooden screen. At the other end of a long open space, once a hippodrome, is the Aya Sophia (Hagia Sophia – Roman, Saint Sophia – English. The Greek actually means “The Holy Wisdom of God”). It was created during the 6th century by Emperor Justinian, and was the largest cathedral in the world for 1000 years. In 1543 the Ottoman Turks came into power and it was converted into a mosque. In 1935 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, (Atatyrk, like the French tu) the Turkish leader, decreed that it be a museum. Thus, its architecture and interior decoration reflects both its Christian and Muslim periods. It is a massive building, and has undergone much restoration and repairs throughout the centuries.

Nearby is the Dolmabahçe (Dolmabache) Palace, residence of latter-day sultans of the Ottoman empire, now a museum. It is a blend of many European architectural styles, and was built between 1843-1856. Its interior is opulent, with beautiful crystal chandeliers, fireplaces, paintings, and collections of precious objects. Atatürk used to stay here on his visits to Istanbul, and died here in 1938. In addition to visiting this palace, we went to Topkapi

(Topkape) palace, built in 1479, which is now also a museum. It has many courtyards and seems to have a more functional arrangement than Dolmabahçe. There are many displays of porcelain, furniture, clothing, tiles, jewels and the famous Topkapi dagger (as in the movie). The richly decorated Harem contained within its grounds is made up of 400 rooms, and was the private quarters of the Sultan and his extended family, servants and eunuchs.

We had a boat ride on the Bosphorous, a unique sea-river, from which one could see old seaside mansions, mosques, palaces, restaurants, as well as two fortresses on opposite shores. This waterway has been the most sought-after strategic location in the world during the last 2,500 years. It is a natural border between the two continents, and its narrowness facilitated trade and other relations between civilizations in Europe and Asia. Again, some unplanned dancing on the water’s edge, led by a food vendor of roasted cobs of corn, who was beating out a familiar rhythm with his stick on the edge of his food cart. We joined in for an impromptu number, and the elderly gentleman had lots of fun leading us in the dance; some onlookers enjoyed this too.

That night we went to a restaurant called Safron for supper. This was arranged for us by Lee, who had been there before. We sat on low cushions, and some of us were given Turkish harem-style headgear to wear. There was a three-piece band playing, and before our meal arrived, we began to dance to this music; because of the lack of space, we danced out into the street, with the musicians following us. Some local people joined us, and a small crowd of people gathered to watch, some to take pictures. We stopped the traffic – including a tour bus! Afterwards we went inside, had our meal, and went upstairs to witness a whirling dervish ceremony. It was introduced by some solemn singing to musical instruments, then the twirling by three men began, and it lasted about one hour, with some breaks in between. It was all quite serious, peaceful and moving.

During the rest of our time in Istanbul we

were able to do some shopping at the bazaars, and had some free time. Helen and I decided to try out a Turkish bath, and we chose Çemberlitas (Chemberlitas), a traditional Hamami built in 1584. There were separate sections for men and women, and the main room was circular with holes in its dome letting in light. A huge heated circular marble slab (which could hold about 50 women lying down) was in the middle on which one would lie. Lots of steam, a soap massage, then hot and cool baths. Cleansing, relaxing.

Some general comments: Food: most of the hotels served buffet-style meals, so that we could sample various offerings. Breakfasts were sumptuous, with eggs, meat, yogurt, olives, cucumbers, tomatoes, fruit, breads, cakes, lots of honey, cereals, etc. Suppers in some hotels were absolutely amazing with a great variety in their selections, and hot or cold: salads, vegetables, meat and fish dishes. The desserts were also delicious, with many, many varieties of honey-soaked cakes and breads, and always baklava. One irritant: in most hotels drinks were not included, so we ended up paying even for water at a meal. Turks actually drink more tea than coffee, but in restaurants we could always get Turkish coffee (the coffee comes from Brazil – go figure!)

Prayers: Muslims are called to prayer five times every day; at dawn, at mid-morning, at high noon, at mid-afternoon, and at sundown. One must try to pray (but not necessarily in a mosque if one cannot get there) when one hears the muezzin's call (it is now a recording). And one must perform ablutions before prayer. There are public cisterns outside with taps where one can see men washing their hands, faces and feet before going to prayer. Women wash too, but do so in the (out of sight) public washrooms. Friday noon is the most important time to attend prayers, and at this time the imams (leaders) recite verses from the Koran. The mihrab in a mosque symbolizes Mecca, and everyone must face in this direction when praying.

Clothing: Many women in Turkey wear headscarves, but not all. A few women in burkas could be seen, but this was rare. Most women who are

Muslim wear clothing that covers them from head to foot. There is a concern that the current laws regarding dress, the relative equality of opportunity for women and tolerance of religious diversity will become restricted, and the liberalization of attitudes to these customs that were instituted by Atatürk will be reversed and become more conservative, as they are in bordering countries, such as Iraq.



Mirdza, blending in

All in all, we thoroughly enjoyed our visit to Turkey, and we would recommend it to others. We would also like to return, and explore in more depth some areas we touched on. The weather was excellent, but we would not recommend coming here in the heat of the summer. We danced almost every evening, either with our guest teachers, or with Lee. In many hotels, the staff and other guests would watch what we were up to, would join us in the dance, or would just enjoy our “performances”.

Turkey is a vast and beautiful country, full of history. In our opinion it should be included as another one of the countries (Greece, Italy) that are considered to be the cradles of western civilization.

p.s.: To view some of our dancing or photos, etc. that others in our group have posted, go to www.jimgold.com, or go to YouTube and type in Jim Gold Tours Turkey.

p.p.s: Thank you to Helen for her input and help with editing.



Travel
broadens
one!

Jim Gold International Folk Tours: 2010-11

www.jimgold.com

Bulgaria! Greece/Crete ! Hungary! Norway! Poland! Israel/Jordan, Sicily/South Italy, Eastern Turkey

**Travel with international folklore and folk dance experts:
Jim Gold, Lee Otterholt, Adam Molnar**

Tours for 2010

NORWAY ! . . . June 12-22. Led by Lee Otterholt.

Norwegian and International Dancing with breathtaking scenery in the Land of the Mountain Kings! Midsummer in Norway! Oslo, Bergen, Hovin (Telemark), Fjord Cruise, and Voss.

HUNGARY ! . . . July 27-August 4. Led by Adam Molnar. Magyar adventures in Budapest, Eger, Jaszbereny Folk Dance Camp! (Can be combined with Bulgarian tour!)

BULGARIA ! . . . August 3-15. Koprivshtitsa Festival Tour! Led by Jim Gold.

The one you've been waiting for! Sofia, Bansko, Plovdiv, Veliko Turnovo, Koprivshtitsa.

POLAND ! . . . September 3-17. Warsaw, Krakow, Zakopane, Torun, Malbork, Gdansk.

GREECE, Crete, and the GREEK ISLANDS! . . . October 10-24.

Led by Jim Gold and Lee Otterholt.

Hasapicos, syrtos, markets, mountains, archeological wonders! Mycenae, Sparta, Byzantine Mystra, Olympia, Delphi, Meteora. Four days on Crete! Cruise extension to Mykonos, Crete, Rhodes, Patmos, Ephesus, Santorini. Oct. 24-29. Santorini extension: Oct. 28-31.

Tours for 2011

ISRAEL/JORDAN ! . . . March 7-19, 2010. Led by Jim Gold and Joe Freedman.

Dance with Israeli, Arab, Druze, Balkan, Yemenite, Bedouin, and Kurdish cultural groups. Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Galilee. Jordan extension: March 19-22. Amman, Petra, Jerash, and more!

SICILY and southern ITALY ! . . . April-May, 2011. Led by Jim Gold

Palermo, Agrigento, Siracusa, Taormina! Amalfi Folk dancing with local Tarentella groups. Ext. to southern Italy: Naples, Pompeii, Herculaneum, Sorrento, and Capri.

EASTERN TURKEY ! . . . October 9-27, 2011. Led by Jim Gold and Lee Otterholt.

Urfa to Ataturk. Enjoy Turkish hospitality, history, and unforgettable adventure! Turkish and international folk dancing. Istanbul, Adana, Antakya, Gaziantep, Mt. Nemrud Urfa, Mardin, Diyarbakir, Van, Dogybeyazit, Kars, Ani, Erzurum. Oct. 27-31: Ext. Istanbul.

For itineraries and details: Visit www.jimgold.com

TOUR REGISTRATION: I can't wait to go! Sign me up. Enclosed is my \$200 per person deposit.

Tour(s) desired _____

Name _____ Address _____

No. of people _____ Phone (____) _____ Email _____

Jim Gold International, Inc. 497 Cumberland Avenue, Teaneck, NJ 07666 U.S.A.

(201) 836-0362 www.jimgold.com Email: jimgold@jimgold.com

OFDA's Balkan Café - January 29, 2010

For our first café of 2010 we had the pleasure of live music in the form of York University's Balkan Ensemble.



Photos by A. Katz, and L. Balaban

Lead by their professor, Irene Markoff, the talented and enthusiastic group of seventeen provided folk melodies and singing, while the roomful of café participants watched, listened and danced..

Some of the dances were: Sukacko Kolo, Eleno Mome, Jovane Jovanke, Pravo Horo, Paidushko Horo, Daichovo Horo, and Ruchenitsa. As well, because Fethi Karakecili was in the crowd and able to lead us, two Kurdish pieces were included.





Nedyalko, Judith and Fethi

Lucky for most of us, we also had the leadership skills of Judy Silver, Karen Bennett, Terri Taggart and Walter Zagorski to help kick-start the dances. And the presence of Nedyalko Tilev and Judith Cohen, both of whom donated their drumming skills to the mix, added to the lively, kinetic atmosphere.

The following is part of a message that Irene sent, following the café evening. Read it and smile.

"Thanks once again for inviting us. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed performing and your warm hospitality.....Although I was born in Canada and grew up in the Bulgarian/Macedonian community (both my parents are Bulgarian), I think that it is wonderful when people can come together and appreciate one another's musical cultures or musical and dance cultures that aren't their own at all. That is what Canada is all about and that is what your organization is all about - celebrating differences."



Request for Submissions

2010 OTEA SCHOLARSHIP FUND



Each year the OFDA Executive Committee accepts applications for the OTEA (Olga Sandolowich, Teme Kernerman, Ernst Krehm and A Gladstone) Scholarship.

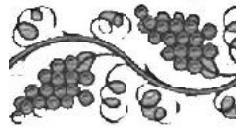
The deadline for submissions for 2010 will be May 31.

The purpose of this fund is to assist people involved in any folk-related activity to further their studies, attend workshops/courses, etc., and thereby enrich themselves and benefit the Ontario folk dance community.

The applicant should specify: (a) what the gain will be for him/herself and the folk dance community; (b) a proposed timetable, including time required to complete the project; and (c) a proposed budget (maximum ~\$200 this year)

*Please forward OTEA Scholarship Fund applications to OFDA Steering Committee
c/o Beverley Sidney, 35 Touraine Avenue, Downsview, Ontario M3H 1R3
or bvsdny@gmail.com*

The Back Page - - Tidbits



Recent losses: Condolences to Richard Hummel, whose wife Mary Ann died in mid-January. Athan Karras, an icon of Greek dancing in the United States, passed away in February. And, finally, our sympathy to Teme Kernerman, whose husband Barry passed away in mid-February.

A different kind of milestone: Hamilton's International Folk Dance Group celebrated its 26th anniversary on January 29. It was a great party! They're moving into the next quarter century and still going strong!

Having read Karen Bennett's Albanian article on her website prior to this issue going to press, Yves Moreau sent her an e-mail, which is excerpted with his permission:

"France and I were in Albania this past September. We went there for one week to attend the big National Folklore Festival in the town of Gjirokastrë (near the Greek border). It is a big festival, sort of like Koprivshitz in Bulgaria,

held every five years. We flew to Italy and from there took the ferry from Ancona to Durrës. We travelled by car with our friend Roberto Bagnoli.

Gjirokastrë is a beautiful heritage town (Unesco heritage site) with typical Balkan architecture built on a mountainside. There were performers from all parts of Albania including Albanian groups from Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, Greece and Italy (Arbëreshë people who settled there hundreds of years ago). We stayed in a lovely hotel, a 250-year-old house with much folk art inside. I filmed eight hours of stuff including dance groups, singers, musicians, etc. I should write an article for Ontario Folk Dancer (if I can find the time...)."

Announcing a new English Country Dance class in Kitchener-Waterloo - it is being run by Bridget Whitehead on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Thursdays of each month, from 7:30-9:30 p.m. at United Church, 32 Weber Street West, Kitchener. Info: timelesspleasures@gmail.com



PICK YOUR OWN
Strawberries - Raspberries
Currants - Gooseberries
Fresh Vegetables
Tomatoes - Peppers
Fall Raspberries

COUNTRY MARKET & FARM YARD FUN

- Whit's Own Strawberries & Raspberries
- Preserves, Ontario Honey, Maple Syrup
- Bakeshop. Seasonal Giftware
- Fresh Ontario Produce
- Barnyard Animals
- Wagon Rides
- Pedal Tractors
- and MORE!

BIRTHDAY HOE DOWNS
SCHOOL TOURS - PUMPKINLAND

www.whittamoresfarm.com
905-294-3275 - 8100 Steeles Ave., E., Markham, ON

SHANGHAI*NANJING*THREE GORGES DAM*LESSER GORGES*XIAN*BEIJING*HUANGSHAN*YICHANG

*LESSER GORGES*XIAN*BEIJING*HUANGSHAN*YICHANG*SHANGHAI*

DANCE ON THE WATER

26th ANNUAL FOLK DANCE CRUISE

June 10 (or 13) to 26, 2010 from \$2,779

DANCING LED BY SANDY STARKMAN

Yangtze River Cruise & Classic China tour

YOUR CRUISE/TOUR INCLUDES

eight night luxury cruise from Shanghai to Chongqing

fly from Chongqing to Xian & Xian to Beijing

seven nights in five star hotels

group private cocktail party

almost all meals

all shore excursions

all tours and entrance fees

insightful lectures

English speaking guides

frequent dance lessons

all request dance sessions.

dance sessions with many local & professional dance groups

Mel Mann, folk dancer & organizer c/o Berkeley Travel

1301 California St Berkeley, CA 94703 (510) 526-4033

meldancing@aol.com www.folkdanceonthewater.org

SHANGHAI*NANJING*THREE GORGES DAM*LESSER GORGES*XIAN*BEIJING*HUANGSHAN*YICHANG

*LESSER GORGES*XIAN*BEIJING*HUANGSHAN*YICHANG*SHANGHAI*



SHAN SHOES

Manufacturer of Multicultural Dancing Shoes

Handmade 100% Genuine Leather with Coloured Stitching
U.S. & Group Orders Welcome



- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Croatian: Šestinska Style | 11 Macedonian / Shopski/Bulgarian |
| 2 Slavonia A | 12 Serbian-Flag |
| 3 Croatian: Pokuple | 13 Serbian-no Flag |
| 3+ Slavonia B | 14 Greek |
| 4 Croatian | 15 Ukrainian |
| 6 Dubrovnik | 16 Polish |
| 7 Croatian (white) | |
| 9 Boot (smooth) | |
| 10 Boot (textured) | |

Inquiries/cheques payable to:

SHAN NECESKI

462 Birchmount Rd. Unit 28

Toronto, ON CANADA M1K 1N8

Bus: 416-693-4039 Cell: 416-427-1066

e-mail: snecski@hotmail.com

PRICES:

European size 34 shoes cost \$44.

Add \$1 per size, to size 50.

Plus 8% PST (ON residents only).

Plus handling/postage \$9.

Inquire for other sizes, or for boots.