

Folk Dancer

The Magazine of World Dance and Culture



Cover from the October 1973 issue of the Ontario Folkdancer - see article on p.5

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Folk Dancing - Looking Back

By Stefania Szlek Miller

When Bev Sidney asked for volunteers to fill in for Kevin Budd while he is taking a well-deserved sabbatical from editing the **Folk Dancer**, I suggested writing a series of articles on folk dancing as reflected in the magazine's continuous publications since 1969. This issue begins with my coverage of OFDA's early publications culminating with the 25th anniversary celebration of folk dancing in Toronto in 1973. Ruth Ostrower's article in a forthcoming issue will provide an insider's perspective on the challenges of producing very professional publications, especially before the onset of computers. We hope these articles will stimulate readers to contribute their recollections.

My review is a highly impressionistic account of events and trends, and my apologies in advance to individuals and groups who were not mentioned but who contributed to the folk dance scene during this period. Articles with more detailed information are noted in the text, and my subsequent overviews will include references to historical accounts published in OFDA's publications.

I have tried to balance the seriousness of this

endeavour with some humour, and it certainly is not my intention to make fun of dance etiquette and its proponents. Folk dance traditions, nevertheless, raise questions about gender roles as well as other issues. Some of you may recall Richard Schmidt's humorous instructions (shades of Yul Brynner in *The King and I*) about the woman's deferential role in bowing to her partner in the elegant *Polonez Royale* which he taught at the 2011 Ontario Folk Dance Camp. We laughed, especially since so many women were dancing the male role. Subsequent articles will address the complex question of "authenticity" of folk dances, and how they are presented and danced in contemporary social groups.

Why bother looking back? It is intrinsically important to record the past and trace the evolution of folk dancing in our area and elsewhere. As leader of the Hamilton Folk Dance Club for many years, I have recorded the club's activities over some 27 years, in my annual and other reports to members. These records show the influence of club members, guest teachers as well as OFDA, in the club's evolution and success. Each club has its own dynamic, and I hope in my review of OFDA's publications to find out more

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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!



about other groups – including those who are no longer in existence – to discover what attracts us to folk dancing, and how can we sustain an activity that continues to give us so much joy.

This project is also a voyage of discovery for me. The death of my father in 2008 has made me more retrospective about the past. My regular visits with my 87-year-old mother, who lives in a nursing home, have made me even more conscious of the fragility of memory and the importance of written records. Virginia Woolf in *To the Lighthouse*, her most autobiographical novel, stresses the lasting virtue of words and images. Her motto: “We are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself.” (Cited in Julia Briggs, *Virginia Woolf* [Harcourt, 2005], 354)



Thank you to Isabelle Persh, whose recent donation to the OFDA came with the following note: “This is to honour Kevin Budd, and in memory of Bob Moriarty, my life partner.”



Taking up the spirit of Stefania's editorial comment, the OFDA would like to start collecting material on the history of international folk dancing in Ontario.

Volunteers to write segments such as the history of a group, or interview teachers and others who have danced for a long time, or trace special events such as the cafés, are welcomed.

Please contact Dorothy Archer at darcher@interlog.com with your ideas and your enthusiasm.



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Folk Dancing: Then and Now

By Stefania Szlek Miller

Long after memories fade, words and pictures live on. Anyone interested in folk dancing is beholden to the hard-working editors and staff of the publications of the Ontario Folk Dance Association (OFDA). These include: issues of the *OFDA Newsletter* from 1969 to March 1973, and the *Ontario Folkdancer*, as it was called from April, 1973 to 1996 with some changes in the title presentation. The current title *Folk Dancer* was adopted in January 1997 (Volume 28), with the subtitle: Magazine of the Ontario Folk Dance Association. These publications remain the main source for the history of recreational or social folk dancing in our region.

This article focuses on the first few years of OFDA's publications. It is a highly impressionistic review, but I hope that it will stimulate others to write about their recollections. Heidi Fiebig and Ruth Ostrower, who between them have decades of experience editing and producing OFDA publications, sent me helpful comments on the article, for which I am very grateful. I am solely responsible for any errors, glaring omissions and other sins.

OFDA's Early Years: 1969-73

OFDA was established in June of 1969, and the first issue of the *OFDA Newsletter* (September/October 1969) was launched with enthusiasm by editors David Youngs and Bob Kenigsberg (also first chairman of OFDA). They invited submissions for a symbol for the organization as well as for "black leather jackets" – one has images of folk dancers competing for attention with the Hell's Angels. A very striking logo, created by Hans Sanders and embellished by Hy Diamond, was soon adopted, and the newsletter was circulated in stapled pages of 8 to 10 sheets until the adoption of the current folded booklet format in 1972. The major focus was on Toronto dance groups, and announcements included: upcoming workshops and parties, teacher training courses directed by Teme Kernerman, as well as

participation and performances by folk dancers at events such as Toronto's Caravan. Contributors submitted glowing reviews of dance camps, including the annual May Ontario Folk Dance Camp, then held at the University of Western Ontario, in London. There were dance notes of recently taught dances, and Karen Kingstone's "The Kook's Korner" with recipes for such delicacies as Finnish "Liver Pudding, yecch!"

There was a considerable turnover of editors in the first few years, and a lot of soul-searching about the purpose of the organization and its publication. Hans Sanders and Al Gladstone were mainly responsible for issues beginning with the May 1971 newsletter. By then there were many more announcements about dancing in Canada, the United States and Europe. By March 1972, Dorothy Sloan was editor, and her passion for folklore was reflected in her instructive articles focusing on a specific country or culture.

After a very good start, OFDA was in danger of collapsing by the fall of 1972. Chris Bennett reported in the December 1972 issue that the organization was not receiving "support and co-operation from the various groups and leaders." The report of the January 27, 1973 revival meeting in Toronto, attended by some 100 dancers, indicated that there was consensus to reactivate OFDA. Chris and Barb Bennett took over as editors of OFDA's newsletter in March of 1973, with Dorothy Sloan continuing as folklore editor. The April issue, under the new title *Ontario Folkdancer*, included a sharp rebuke from Barb Bennett to folk dancers to pay the \$3.00 OFDA membership fee. Heidi Fiebig assumed the newsletter editorship in September, 1973 (a position that she was to hold until 1983), with Dorothy Sloan continuing as folklore editor and Hans Sanders in charge of publishing. By then some 100 dancers had paid the membership fee, and OFDA had the support and financial resources to fulfill its mandate.

25th Anniversary

The big event of 1973 was the celebration of 25 years of folk dancing in Toronto. The October 1973 issue included a very informative article by Nancy Leslie and Heidi Fiebig on Ivy (formerly Krehm) Wittmeyer's role in starting recreational folk dancing in Toronto in 1948, and her influence on teachers such as Teme Kernerman, Olga Sandolowich, Jack Geddes, Al Gladstone and Frank Morrison. Homage was also paid to Ernie Krehm, the dance director of the University Settlement groups, who (with Ivy) fostered the folk dance movement in Toronto. In the same issue, excerpts from Ivy's 1959 "The University Settlement Folk Dancers' Story" provided more background information along with a picture of the 1948 performance group at Hart House at the University of Toronto. Ivy acknowledged the influence of Mary Ann and Michael Herman from New York for serving as inspirational models for the Toronto dance scene.

The 25th anniversary festivities demonstrated the robustness of OFDA, the official sponsor of the events. Dancers from across Canada and the United

States participated in the celebrations in Toronto, and this included Ivy (she had moved to California in the mid-1960s). On Saturday, 20 October, Ivy along with Mary Ann Herman and Vyts Beliajus led very successful workshops. About 200 people attended the "Grand Ball" that evening. It was a real community celebration, as the stories and pictures in the November and December issues demonstrate.

Impressions

The folk dance movement was certainly vibrant during this period. Compared to today, there were many more young people dancing, and this included a fair number of



Ivy (Krehm) Wittmeyer, 1973

men. There were many couple dances along with line and circle dances from Europe, North America, Israel, and other regions. While Olga Sandolowich and out-of-town instructors, like Yves Moreau (his first Toronto workshop was in April 1971), introduced much-loved dances from Macedonia, Bulgaria and other regions, dances from the Balkans did not appear to dominate the repertoire as much as when I started folk dancing some 30 years ago. But the balance between couple and line dances was already shifting as Lanie Melamed from Montreal lamented the decline of "sociable" couple dances "which moved slowly and graciously and gave people a chance to look at each other and say a word or two." (Letter in December 1973 issue.)



THE HAPPY GANG 1971

The University Settlement Performance Group

There was also greater stress in the past on etiquette and proper dress. The May 1971 *OFDA Newsletter* reprinted Ernie Krehm's "Dance Etiquette," a collection of mostly sensible rules for dancers. This includes good advice when visiting



Ernie Krehm, 1973

other dance villages: "When in Rome, do what the Romans do." The admonitions about proper dress are rather quaint. Krehm recommends that "girls" wear full skirts or dresses, and chides: "Slacks for girls are taboo for many reasons." "Men" (reference is to men, not boys) are advised to wear "comfortable sport shirts" with long or short sleeves. The

wonderful people who made it all happen. It is a testament to the staying power of folk dancing that so many of the instructors and dancers in the 1960s and 70s continue to teach and dance to the present day.

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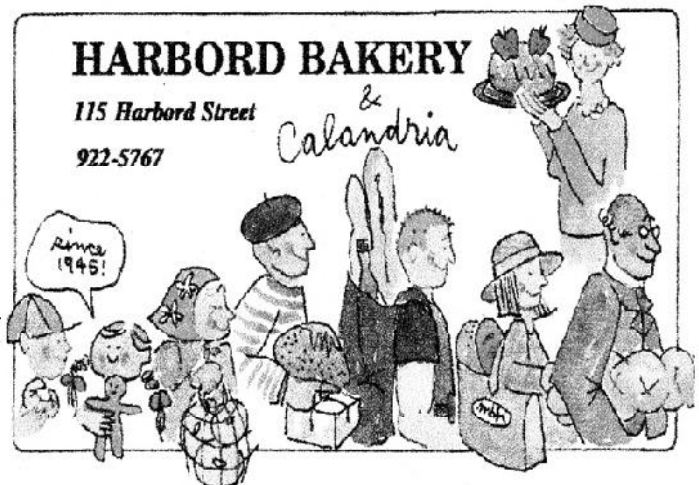
Stefania Szlek Miller is a long-time OFDA member, and leader of the Hamilton International Folk Dance Club. She recently retired from McMaster University, where she taught international human rights and the politics of East Europe.

*Her next article will focus on 1974–1983: Heidi Fiebig's editorship of the **Ontario Folkdancer**.*

September 1973 issue of the *Ontario Folkdancer* also reprinted an article by the editor of **Let's Dance** about "proper dress." While gently suggesting that men wear long-sleeve shirts rather than showing "hairy arms," the author is unequivocal about what "ladies" should **not** wear on the dance floor: pant suits, "hot pants," or "walking shorts." Apparently there was no need to scold men about showing their hairy legs in shorts.

Reviewing the 23 issues of OFDA's publications from 1969 to 1973 whetted my appetite to learn more about the various Toronto and other groups in our region, including the McMaster folk dance club, which emerged in 1972 under the leadership of Chris Bennett. I joined the McMaster folk dancers in 1977 when Chris was no longer teaching, and I would like to know more about the precursor of our current Hamilton International Folk Dance Club. The history of the recreational folk dance scene since 1948 was also very illuminating, but I am still curious about its roots in Canada and elsewhere. There probably was a lively tradition of folk dancing in Ontario prior to 1948, but this would entail a different line of inquiry from the objective of this article.

It was a pleasure to read about folk dancing in Toronto and region, and the



Keeping Kathak Current

This article originally appeared in the August 16 issue of the online publication Live With Culture. It is reprinted here with the permission of Christopher Jones, the author, and the Editor of livewithculture.ca.

Rina Singha claims she'll take a step back and focus on herself after Kathak Mahotsav Canada this weekend (August 18 – 20), but I have my doubts. The 74-year-old founder of the Rina Singha Kathak Dance Organization is indefatigable, still teaching – albeit less than she once did — and still dancing, despite wearing braces on both of her knees. She takes blood pressure medication and has lost an inch in height these past few years due to osteoporosis but I found the dynamo in a St. Paul's Trinity rehearsal studio Monday afternoon, sharpening her chops before this weekend's performances.

"I have to be careful," she tells me. "I can't do pivots anymore so I have to adjust the movements to make sure my weight transfer is done carefully. After this show I'm going to take my doctor's advice and have injections in my knees but I wanted to wait until after the performance because I don't know how I'm going to react to the medicine."

Singha abides by the "use it or lose it" philosophy of Toronto's famous jock doc, Michael Clarfield, and so she keeps dancing, a form of self-expression with deep spiritual significance for her.

"In the early 1970s I collapsed with a herniated disc," she remembers, "and they told me I might never walk again; I had a 50 per cent chance. I made a bargain prayer with God saying, 'If you make me well, I'll dance for you.'"

After dancing professionally with India's national company, Singha immigrated to Canada in 1965. "At that time there was no classical Indian dance here," she recalls. "In fact, there wasn't much dance of any kind: there was the National Ballet, and Toronto Dance Theatre was just getting started. Kathak wasn't recognized as a dance form; it was viewed as nostalgia. Even our own community wasn't particularly interested; they were busy trying to build new lives



here and assimilate."

Kathak is a highly narrative form that reaches back to the royal courts of ancient North India. During British colonial rule the dance was condemned as being seductive and unsavoury even though many of the stories were culled from scripture and Indian mythology. And although some of the dances have survived for centuries, Singha was taught to make each one her own, an approach she fervently passes onto her students.

"My whole idea is that artists must be allowed to do what they want to do, to express themselves. All I demand of them is that they own the space they take up and do something that's worthwhile. That's what my own gurus encouraged me to do."

Special guest at this year's Kathak Mahotsav Canada is Guru Rajendra Gangani, master of the Jaipur style at India's national institute of Kathak in Delhi (Singha practises the Lucknow style).

"I saw him as a teenager," recalls Singha. "His father was a very great dancer, a very sweet man, but he died early so the son has taken his place."

"The whole point of the Mahotsav [festival]," she adds, "is for the dancers and the audience to discover the depth and beauty of Kathak, to witness and feel what it can achieve."

One of the pieces Singha will perform this weekend is about an immigrant who bemoans the loss of her homeland "and finds herself surrounded by the strangeness of a new country. Then later, she comes to discover that the strangeness is not only out there; her own family has become estranged because her children are of another culture. So you don't need to do fusion work with modern dance to make Kathak exciting; the stories themselves should be exciting; the originality comes right out of the work."

Mem u Zin

By Ed Thompson

On October 2 we were treated to a very special performance, a dance drama based on a centuries old Kurdish love story by Ehmedê Xanî (1650-1707). The story is about two romances, one with a happy ending, the other with a tragic one, somewhat like Romeo and Juliet. The happier one is of Tacdin and Siti who meet, fall in love and are married, to the delight of everyone in the village. The tragic one is of Mem and Zin, who meet, fall in love and are betrayed by a servant in Zin's family, Bekr, played by Fethi in a very sinister manner (moustache included). Mem is poisoned and Zin jumps to her death from the top of a mountain into the Tigris River. This story does have some basis in fact and couples still visit the gravesite where legend says they were buried.

As mentioned above, this performance is also a dance performance where traditional Kurdish dance is fused with contemporary dance. Fethi has completed an MA in dance at York University and is now working on a PhD in ethnomusicology, also at York. His focus is on Kurdish wedding rituals and he shows us some of these rituals and dances at Tacdin and Siti's marriage (they include some of the dances he has taught at University of Toronto's IFDC).

However, Fethi's choreography goes much beyond traditional into contemporary dance. He is fortunate to have a person who has had training in Latin American dancing as well as ballet: Mateo Galinda Torres, who plays Mem. His leaps and balletic steps were very memorable in the village dance scenes, as was his lyrical dancing in the love scenes. Ida Meftahi, who plays Zin, is also a fine dancer in the love scenes. As well, she is very knowledgeable about dance; she's working on a PhD about the staged dancing body, at the University of Toronto.

The village dancers were well prepared and



Choreographer and Artistic Director Fethi Karakeçili

performed with vigour and smiles. Their costumes, some from Karen Bennett's collection, were stunning. Among the villagers were two children in costume, naturally attracting everyone's attention.

The accompanying music was a combination of recorded and live. It was conducted by Irene Markoff, who teaches several courses in the music department at York. This ensemble includes not only percussion and string instrument players, but also a singer who performs at Tacdin and Siti's wedding.

In addition, projections in the background of ancient buildings and landscapes from the Kurdish area helped bring to life the dance and drama.

A reviewer should mention any problems with the show. Though I am hard pressed to do so, I think more care should have been taken with the lighting and greater consistency of type and presentation in the paper programme we received.

Although I have been dancing for over 40 years, this is the first time I have had the opportunity to see a large ensemble perform Kurdish dance and music on stage. This was a very special evening and one we will remember for a long time.

At the end of the program everyone received a standing ovation. Although standing ovations appear to be commonplace now, Fethi and his company deserved it for bringing this Kurdish love story wonderfully to life.

Fethi and his company have received invitations to perform this program in Montreal, the United States, and Europe. We wish them well.

Mainewoods August 20-27, 2011

By Mirdza Jaunzemis



*Left to Right in Back Row: Devianee, Dale, Ursula
Front Row: Kate, Helga, Lynda, Mirdza*

This past August seven of us from the Hamilton folk dance group went to Mainewoods Folk Dance Camp: Dale Hyde (one of this week's teachers), Ursula Humphries, Lynda Vuurman, Devianee Caussy, Kate Drinan, Helga Hyde and I. For Devi and Kate, it was their first visit: Lynda, Ursula and I had been once before, and Dale and Helga have been a few times. Kathleen Mazurek came from Winnipeg, and in addition three Canadians from Toronto were part of the committee: Walter Zagorski, Sandy Starkman and Cecille Ratney.

Fryeburg, Maine is almost on the state line between Maine and New Hampshire, nestled in the White Mountains, and this "Camp Indian Acres" is used as a boys' camp when the folk dancers are not there. Thus, the cabins are pretty "basic", somewhat rustic, but very adequate; after all, you are not there to enjoy your cabin; you are there to dance and socialize, learn new things, meet new people, try new foods.

During this week there were 63 campers in total, including staff and kitchen personnel. This was a good number because the dance floor was not too crowded, and one could spend time with people. Our teachers were Cristian Florescu and Sonia Dion (two more Canadians!) teaching Romanian dances, Dale Hyde teaching Welsh, and Sani (pronounced "Shani") Rifati teaching Romani dances from the former Yugoslavia (from the mahala, the neighbourhood). These classes took place in the morning; in addition, George Fogg taught English country dances in the afternoon. One could also get involved in sessions of music or singing, or join committees to help with the different "ethnic days". During the week there was also an auction sale to raise money for the camp, as well as a talent show. So, non-

stop fun if one wished to involve oneself totally, or one could take afternoons off to enjoy walks on the surrounding trails, swim in the river, go shopping, or just relax.

Each day had a different theme, and Monday was Hawaiian Day. But just as the week was to begin there was a power failure: it seems a tree fell on a line somewhere, and workers tackled the task of getting the electricity back on. However, this did not slow us down; people immediately set up a table on the paved area outside the main building, out came laptops and off we went! During Hawaiian Day we learned to do the Hukilau (describing the method of fishing and then eating in Oahu), and watched a performance with Puili sticks performed by some members of the group. These sticks are often used in Hawaiian dancing. That evening there was a typical Hawaiian meal, with people dressed in Hawaiian costume.

Tuesday was Romanian Day. Its main focus was the Romanian meal in the evening, with excellent toasts – Noroc! (Good luck!) – and some bread which one dipped in salt. This was followed by a typical Romanian betrothal scene where prenuptial arrangements were thrashed out – in a humorous fashion. All who were able dressed in Romanian (or at least ethnic) costume for the evening’s dancing. Cristian’s favourite saying: “Bon Voyage!” Sonia’s favourite: “Haide!” (Let’s go!)

Wednesday was devoted to the Welsh culture, and Dale provided us with a well-informed “culture corner” session devoted to a brief history of Wales, its culture, costumes and language. The “motto” of Wales: “The Red Dragon Rules!” This dragon is on the Welsh flag, and is in opposition to the white dragon on the Anglo-Saxon flag. The Welsh national holiday is St. David’s Day (March 1) and its national flower is the daffodil. Therefore, Dale’s committee made paper daffodils to decorate the supper tables. The traditional Welsh drink: ginger wine – delicious! That afternoon the weekly fund-raising auction was held with items donated by campers, and \$1242 was raised.

On Thursday, Roma / Romani Day, Sani talked to us about the struggles of the Roma people, their forced expulsion from India around the 11th century, their diaspora throughout many lands and their marginalization, also the unwillingness of nations and even the European Union (with its emphasis on civil rights) to allow the Romani peoples to gain citizenship, unless they lie about their origins. (The term “Gypsy” is repugnant to the Roma, because it has many negative connotations.) Sani’s organization, Voice of Roma, is involved in speaking out about the history of his people, with a goal of informing the world about the plight of the Roma and its culture, hopefully leading to more understanding and acceptance. We sang the Roma anthem together, and supper consisted of typical Romani dishes. Romani expressions: Sukar dive – Good day; Sar San – How are you?

We also were entertained with a (comical – of course!) skit of *The Sound of Music*. Because of the threat of Hurricane Irene invading the eastern

seaboard, some people had to leave earlier than planned, so this event took place on the Thursday night. And some of us binge-danced until 2:15 a.m.!

Friday was International Day from the point of view of activities and food. In the morning we participated in making the review DVD of the week’s new dances, and in the early evening there was the annual talent show with some good laughs. A very nice buffet supper was served, and of course, dancing afterwards. Every night the Mainwoods Music Makers (International Folk Sounds) took part by playing some numbers for our dancing pleasure.

I have tried to outline the different activities during the space of one week, and as everyone can see, a lot of work goes into putting them all together. It is a great camp, with good instructors, music, an excellent dance floor and good accommodation. However, in spite of all its efforts, Mainwoods has been losing money. As a result, it will be running for only one week next year: the week of August 12, 2012. Thus, if you wish this camp to continue, please support it by attending and taking part. Who knows what 2013 will bring, but it is up to the folk dance community to keep this camp alive. I have enjoyed both my stays there, and would encourage anyone and everyone to participate next year. Check out their website for more information on how things are set up and for pictures and articles.



Welsh national flowers (daffodils rendered in paper) decorated the supper tables



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Dances in Tunnels, and Cubiculosis *...Forsaking Europe for the Library of Congress*

By Judith Cohen



Judith: "In My Cubicle"

Hi, all, I thought I'd get the dance relevance part in right away, since there isn't all that much of it. Bev asked me to write something about my summer, which, atypically, I have not spent based in Spain. Well, I was in Portugal and Spain in June but very briefly (for me) – for two conferences and a quick visit to my daughter Tamar, who was finishing off her year at the flamenco academy in Seville; and very briefly indeed in London (England) and Newfoundland, also for conferences.

As some of you know, I have the honour of having been selected as the first Alan Lomax Fellow at the Library of Congress, for the American Folklife Center, funded by the Kluge Center. Having worked for years as the General Editor of the recordings Alan Lomax made in Spain in 1952, I now finally have some time – four months – to work on the accompanying field diaries, notes, correspondence, photographs etc., weaving the material together with my own follow-up fieldwork in Spanish villages half a century later. Just to forestall the inevitable question, this has nothing (well, almost nothing) to do with my usual topics of Sephardic and Crypto-Jewish.

Alan Lomax died in 2002, in his late eighties, but had had a series of strokes in the mid-1990s which left him unable to read or write. His daughter, anthropologist Anna Lomax Wood, took over his multi-faceted work, becoming the director of his New York archive and research centre, which he had named the Association for Cultural Equity (ACE), in the belief that all cultures have equal value and importance and should be given equal respect and attention, and that material recorded from "the people" should be returned to them. Lomax's papers, recordings, correspondence etc. were held partly at ACE and partly at the American Folklife Center (AFC) of the Library of Congress (LC), which subsequently acquired the ACE material so that all Lomax's work would be housed in one place.

"But," you ask, reasonably, "what about the 'dances in tunnels' part?" The various buildings of Capitol Hill – the three large Library of Congress buildings, the Capitol, and some others – are connected by a labyrinth of long, narrow tunnels, which, with few exceptions, are exemplary illustrations of modifiers such as "drab" and "dreary". One spends considerable time trudging through them. People are always wheeling cartloads of books (the Library of Congress has a LOT of books, and a lot of places to read them) up and down them, on the lane labelled "equipment" and other people are always tramping up and down the "pedestrian" lane on the way to find books, or to find less ethereal sustenance (the spectacularly beautiful Jefferson building, where the AFC and Kluge Center are located, has no cafeteria or coffee shop). One can, of course, do this by going outside, but, weather questions aside, once one has passed through security to come in, one tends to avoid the two-way security for the rest of the day if possible.

Well, one day my housemate (landlady, in fact) Jennifer Cutting, an ethnomusicologist at the AFC, was playing accordion with a couple of her

colleagues in the tunnels, on I forget which occasion. The elegant, dignified directress of the Kluge Center, my supervisor, happened to be passing by, and immediately began to dance, excecuting, I am told by those present at the time, a couple of fine jumps with heel clicks.

This is, or rather was, the “dances in tunnels” part. But my spring and summer have not, of course, been devoid of dancing. Through the ever dance-and-drumming-ready Larry Weiner (Ljuti Chushki Ensemble & friends), I was introduced to Balkan singing and dancing groups, and a great all-day music and dance picnic with the local Bulgarian community – not long before Petar Ralchev’s DC concert, with more dancing; and a Norwegian dance workshop in “my” neighbourhood, Takoma Park, with two fine Hardanger fiddle players. A chilly, damp dawn at 6 a.m. on May Day found me at the little Takoma Park gazebo, watching several Morris Dance groups greeting the May. The previous day, I had been playing tambourines and the Portuguese square drum for Jennifer’s Ocean Band at a Faerie Festival. After only a week at her place, it already seemed natural to have her hand me a pile of garments in ocean blues and greens, a “faerie bodice” and glittering purple “faerie gloves”, as well as matching ribbons, with instructions to braid them through my hair. I would have had to wear wings too, but she hadn’t any more at the house and her favourite Faerie Wings vendor at the festival wasn’t there this year (see my Facebook page for photos).

There was dancing, of course, at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, mostly from the 2011 featured country, Colombia, though I didn’t see very much – most of the events took place in the hottest part of the hottest days of the summer, out on the pitilessly shade-less National Mall, with very little water available, as the organizers’ zeal for limiting green-unfriendly plastic bottles was not matched by

Folk Dancer

adequate alternatives. Dance workshops were a part of the Canadian Society for Traditional Music / International Council for Traditional Music held in Newfoundland in July – local arrangements chair Bev Diamond made sure to balance academic events with live music and dance. Various dance moments also punctuated my brief conference-oriented visit to Spain and Portugal: the Lisbon Day parade featured dance groups from every neighbourhood of the city, and there was street dancing to live music in old Faro for St. John’s Eve. In Seville, there is dancing all the time, and Tamar was in her last weeks of classes at the flamenco academy. It was also the time of the annual procession of the Virgin of the Dew, from Seville all the way to the village of Rocio, a three-day walk with the statue, along with fantastically decorated floats, cows and oxen with ribbons adorning their horns, women in full flamenco dress – one even had her chihuahua dressed in flamenco red and white polka dots – and tamborileros – men who simultaneously play the three-holed flute and tabor drum. And, naturally, guitars and other plucked string instruments, and singing, and frequent stops for food and dancing. I spent a day in the village of Bormujo outside Seville, looking for people Alan Lomax had recorded in 1952 among the confraternity of bell-ringers, and after the

procession had passed through on its way from Seville to the next stop, caught the bus back to the city and there, at the stop, filmed women from the Seville suburb of Triana, home to many Gypsies, dancing and singing. On the bus, they switched to singing and clapping bawdy ditties, grinning at me as I filmed them to see whether I caught all the references.

But really, the vast majority of my time from April

18 till Labour Day weekend was spent in My Cubicle at the Kluge Center in the LC (Library of Congress) working with the Lomax papers and clicking through the LC catalogue to request old editions of travel books to Spain, which a few hours later would magically appear on my desk (having been trundled through the



May Day morn at Takoma Park

tunnels on those carts in the Equipment Lane or brought over from Fort Meade several miles away; music reference books had to be read only in the Performing Arts division but eventually I got permission to bring them – through the tunnels – to My Cubicle. There I was, Monday to Friday, sometimes Saturday too. One can also sit and work in the truly gorgeous Main Reading Room: the entire LC has free wifi. Or wander through the spectacular Great Hall, and the ongoing exhibit rooms – Bob Hope and popular American music and politics; the George and Ira Gershwin room; early explorations of the Americas.... the newest one is a retrospective of the LC's *I Love Lucy* collection, with clips from some of the funniest shows. There are lunchtime talks and concerts – I gave two talks (Sephardic music for the Middle Eastern Division and the Hebraic Section, and the talk on my Lomax work, and a concert with Tamar and a Greek oud player I'd met the previous week). Sophia Bilides gave a splendid concert in August, and others in the AFC's Homegrown series included First Nations from Oklahoma, old Blues singers, Iranian, Chinese and others. Venturing outside, forsaking the tunnels for the light of day, one can walk across the street to the Folger Shakespeare Library and theatre and beyond the Capitol (also accessible through the only visually attractive tunnel) stretches the Mall, with most of the main museums on either side, all the way to the Washington Monument, where I watched the Fourth of July fireworks (not terribly impressive, but I'm spoiled by fireworks in Spain) and the White House (where I dropped by to check out the oilsands pipeline protest).

As you will have surmised, it is dangerously easy to get hopelessly distracted in and around the LC. Of course, almost at the end of my 4.5-month stay, I was treated to less appealing distractions: the August 23 earthquake which caused My Cubicle to rock crazily around for a terrifying fifteen seconds and Hurricane Irene, which took down many old trees and, with them, most of the electricity cables, in my neighbourhood, leaving us without power for almost three days (again, photos on my Facebook page).

Alan Lomax spent the second half of 1952 in Spain. (For those of you who want to know more about his work, check out culturalequity.org.) A succession of coincidences (and what else is life? she mused, waxing fleetingly philosophical) led to my being the editor of his Spain recordings back in 2000, working with Lomax's anthropologist daughter, Anna Lomax Wood (without whose encouragement none of this would have been possible). As I prepared the liner notes for each region's recordings, I read more and more of Lomax's field diary, notes and correspondence, and became convinced they should be published. Also, in bits and pieces of spare time in Spain, between research projects, concerts etc., I began to spend days here and there in the villages where Lomax had recorded, and interviewed many of the singers and musicians who were still alive. Much of this work was done with the help of colleagues, and only last month, one of them had occasion to visit a 94-year-old shepherd whom Lomax had recorded singing jotás at the very beginning of his Spanish sojourn. I had asked Alberto to ask the shepherd, José, whether he remembered Lomax. Alberto wrote back that when he began to say "Do you remember an American professor who came many years ago..." the shepherd interrupted him cheerfully: "Oh, you mean that man Lomax! Of course! He recorded us singing on the beach in Mallorca after the festival...." Lomax's diary had not included the beach venue and I shudder to think of how he managed to get the huge, heavy, cumbersome tape recorder there. Several pages of the diary describe manoeuvring it up dark, rocky hills at night, up impossibly narrow old staircases, etc. Other entries refer to trying to repair it – again.

In Spain this summer, since Tamar was in Seville, I went out to one of the neighbouring villages to find the three-holed flute and tabor drum player Lomax had recorded in 1952. In the little town hall, the receptionist told me he had Alzheimer's, and then pointed out his daughter, who, coincidentally, had just walked in. In the afternoon, I walked over to the little house, and tried unsuccessfully to talk with him – until I asked his wife whether she still had the flute and tabor. The drum, she answered, had been sold long ago but she went to a drawer and took out the three-holed flute, placing it in José Manuel's hands. I played Lomax's

recording of him, almost 60 years earlier, and immediately he began to play the melody, then stopped and said clearly that the mouthpiece was too dry. He went into the kitchen for a bit of water, worked on it a bit, and then played several melodies. I asked to try the flute – I’m not a great flute-and-tabor player but did a few simple Renaissance tunes and he professed astonishment that a woman – a foreigner at that – could play it. But nothing compared to the astonishment of his wife and daughter, who said it had been a few years since his last rational conversation. I interviewed a woman whom Lomax had recorded when she was very young, and gave her a carbon copy he had kept of a letter he had sent her the following year and which she had never received – she was delighted but immediately said “Don’t show it to my husband!” In Ibiza, a goatherd in his 80s whom Lomax had recorded playing the little double cane reed pipe which probably goes back to ancient Egypt, told me he used to pasture his sheep in what is now the grounds of the emblematic outsized discotheque, the Pachá, and that he occasionally slips, without paying, into the discotheque from “nostalgia” – “and last night at 2:00 in the morning I danced with three English girls – and they never even noticed!”

Lomax recorded many dance melodies and suites, some accompanied by songs, others instrumental only, and all with explanations from the musicians. But he had only the huge, cumbersome Magnachord recorder, and a Leica camera, no film equipment (he really had enough problems with the recording machine). He described the dances vividly in his diaries – both folklorized “official” performances and village events. Flamenco, of course, and many folklore ensembles at the Palma de Mallorca festival, which was the kick-off of his six months in Spain. He describes them so articulately one can almost see them, and his photos of dancers in Ibiza catch some of the young men up in the air (in Ibiza traditional dance, men leap and jump constantly, and women’s feet, under layers of heavy skirts, never leave the ground, giving them the appearance of mechanical dolls – which several have been rebelling against, to no avail, with the Folklore Authorities). He also described the ritual stick dances of the festivities for

Saint Orosia way up in the Aragonese mountains near the French border – this medieval saint’s head is kept in one village and her body in another; the villages bring them together once a year.

I’ll close with two excerpts of Lomax’s 1952 dance descriptions:

Andalusia, Granada, a flamenco performance in a Gypsy cave in Sacromonte:

“..... the spiked heels stamp out the rhythm vigorously so that the dust rises out of the tiles, the arms and hands weave like snakes high above heads then along the sides then suggestively flutter and clasp above the flanks....” (Alan Lomax 1952)

The Aragonese jota, in Zaragoza:

“The couples leap into the dance as the song rises like an arrow. They execute a rapid heel-and-toe step, never seeming to touch ground, the men kicking out from the hip with flexed knees like powerful race horses, the women using smaller but equally vigorous movements, the dust from their violent revolutions rising in the air about them, as they whirl as swiftly as birds, matching step for step and movement for movement. The pairing of song and dance are perfect, for with the last syllable of the song the dance ends as suddenly as it began, the couples facing each other, trembling, leaning slightly toward each other, like two fencers at the end of a perfect exchange of thrust and parry.” (Alan Lomax, Westminster Album draft notes, 1950s.)

Maybe for a future OFDA workshop.....

Judith Cohen
Washington, DC August 2011



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OFDA's Guinea Café



On October 1, the group “Manding Foli Kan Don” came to our Café and gave the forty-plus people in attendance a taste of the music and dance of Guinea, West Africa.

The drumming was propulsive, but beyond that, we learned that in its place of origin, the drums were the “BlackBerries” of their day – communicating messages from one village to another.

▲ From Left to Right: Maria Pino, Sherwin Charles, M’abinty Sylla, Kimberley Charles, and Mohammed Diaby



M’abinty Sylla danced up a storm, and then encouraged everyone in the room to join her.



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The Back Page...

Erica Tanana - by Karen Bennett



I came to know Erica Tanana between 1980 and 1982, when I was a member of Judy Silver's dance ensemble Womenfolk (later transformed, with the addition of men to the ensemble, into VillageFolk). Erica was a very cheerful and lovable person, as well as a wonderful dancer, and I felt blessed to know her.

I last saw her at OFDA's 40th-anniversary banquet and party on October 17, 2009. She did not mention that she was ill, but that was like her—not wishing to spoil anyone's enjoyment.

In December 2009, Judy Silver sent an e-mail to all former Womenfolk and VillageFolk members that Erica had been diagnosed with ovarian

cancer and pulmonary embolism. When news of Erica's passing in September 2011 spread to us, Ted Zdybal paid tribute to her by saying, "Erica was one of the few people I've met that always had truly a sincere smile and always seemed to be genuinely excited to see you. That was always so special about her, because she had a wonderful gift of making you feel welcomed and warm."

And Michael Wagner summed up Erica's zest for life when he said, "I ran into Erica dancing Tango on the sidewalk in front of the St. Lawrence Market a couple of years back."



The OFDA would like to acknowledge the generosity of Olga Sandolowich for her donations in memory of Erica Tanana, Frank Dennis and Ruth Strauss

Another long-time folk dancer, Ruth Strauss, passed away in October. Our condolences to husband Maurice and their family. Olga S. recalls that Ruth was a folk dancer at the University Settlement House from its beginnings (1948) and danced with many groups in Toronto, in later years with the group called Happy Hoofers.

And now for some happier news. Denis Bowman celebrated his 80th birthday in October by hosting a dance party at his home in the Whole Village, near Caledon, Ontario. Over forty people attended, despite storm-force winds and a gray, rainy day outside, and though there was no farm tour that day, there was dancing from 2-8 p.m., with time out for a delicious potluck supper. The OFDA acknowledged Denis's birthday and continuing generosity to the folk

dance community with an MP3 player, including a library of folk dance mp3's, as well as a newly published book, *Voices and Images from Bulgaria* by Martin (Marty) Koenig.



Denis, after blowing out the candles



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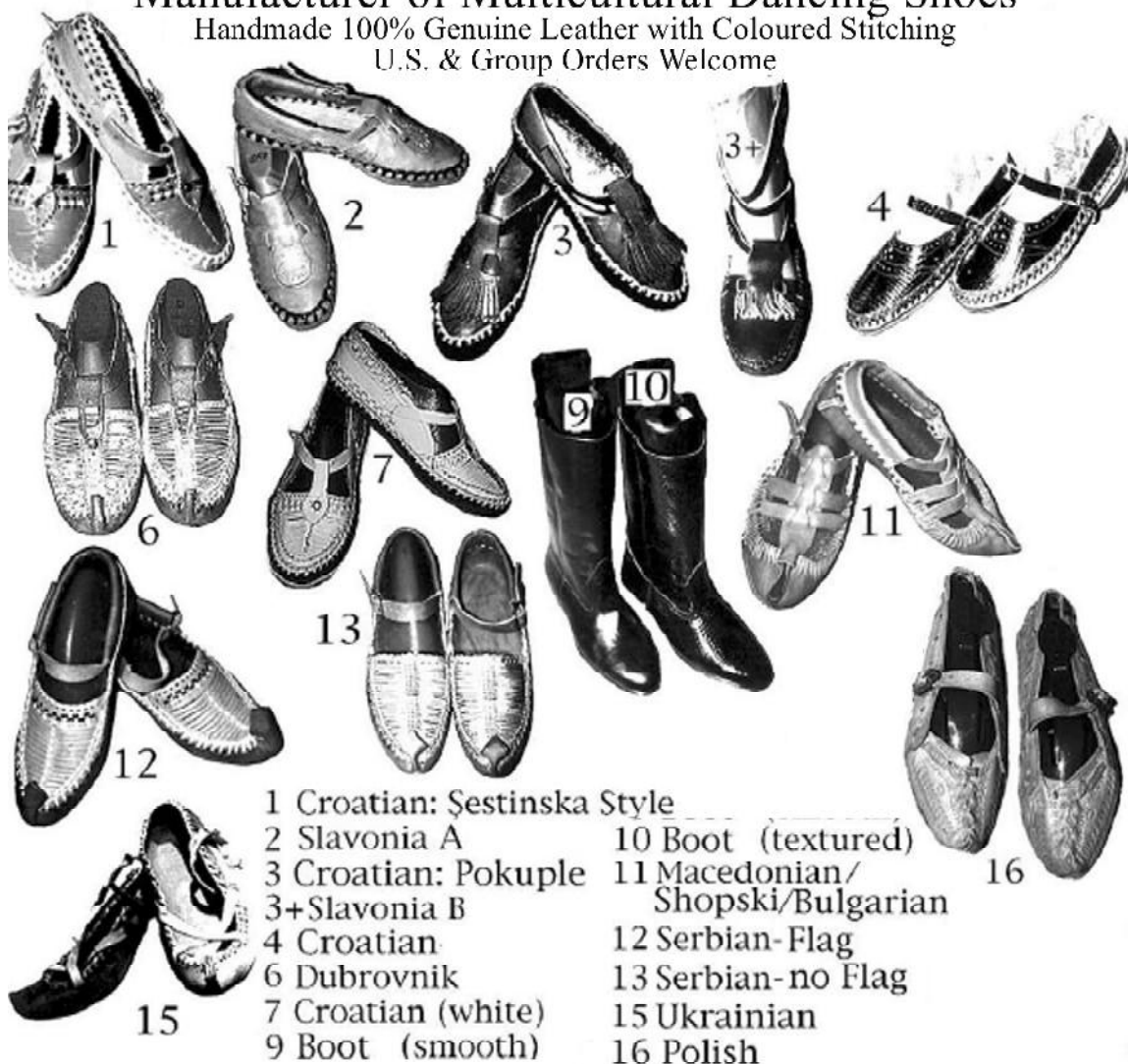
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