

Folk Dancer

The Magazine of World Dance and Culture



*Men in Tyaneh costume dance during Assyrian New Year parade in Chicago, March 1990.
See article on p. 22.*

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Our Educated Feet

by Dorothy Archer

Dancing really is therapeutic. Whether you feel angry, depressed, over-burdened or just plain tired, it perks you up and makes life look better. Well, most of the time! It can even make you feel younger. At a party where the guests were doing a folk dance in honour of a newly-married couple, a man told me it was the first time in 35 years he had danced. I'm sure it was the camaraderie of dancing with a group that attracted him rather than making himself vulnerable by dancing solo or with a partner.

So here we are back to classes and cafés with smiles and friendship. It is nice to have new dancers in the groups, and the ones I've met are all welcome additions. New dancers often ask, "How do you remember all the dances?" So how do you? The dance captain for the Chai Dancers, a former ballet teacher, says, "The body remembers." Recently in a Thursday night class the teacher said it was a test night. She played the tunes and sometimes named the dance but gave no guidance regarding the steps. For most dances someone was able to lead, and usually the majority of people remembered the dance and could follow easily. For other tunes, we helped each other – one or another remembering parts – and occasionally we just stumbled through until the sequence emerged. We only missed one dance, and had a lot of fun. We weren't using our heads; there were no notes. The body did remember, specifically

the feet. However, I don't recommend throwing away your dance notes!

In this issue, Nancy Nies has written about participating in local celebrations in Germany and France, and Karen Walker and Carl Toushan have described a day at a Serbian festival in Maryhill, Ontario. Dorothy Sloan attended Nordlek, a time to celebrate the Nordic culture with song and dance, which was held in Steinkjer, Norway this year, and Mirdza Jaunzemis tells us about Mainewoods. Do folk dancers ever stay home? We will have to find new opportunities to travel, with Mel Mann's announcement that the trip to India in 2013 will be his last. Am I the only one who is taken by surprise? Did I really think he would keep going forever and ever? Many of us will remember fun and interesting trips with Mel and the people who were in the groups. Thank you, Mel, for the good times you made possible.

Karen Bennett has reviewed the first café for the 2012-2013 season, on Assyrian culture. It was very enjoyable, and it is good to be able to look forward to another in December. Stefania Miller continues her history of folk dancing in Ontario with a look at the changes both here and around the world, and makes suggestions for the future of international folk dancing. Enjoy!

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The OFDA has 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!

“Dance on The Water” Announcement

by Mel Mann

The year 2013 will be the 30th year that I have organized and escorted the cruises of “Dance on the Water.” At the end of 2013 there will have been 55 “Dance on the Water” trips to many countries and continents and many glorious memories. But to everything there is a season. This is an announcement that the trips to the Three Rivers and the trip to India (see ad on p. 25) will be my final ones as the owner of “Dance on the Water.”

For the past 29 years, I have been grateful for the opportunity and the ability to bring the joy to friends, new and old ones, of dancing on the upper deck of a ship at night, with the moon shining overhead in some beautiful exotic place in the world. We have, together, learned about other people and cultures and in so doing enriched our lives. It was our hope to bring some understanding among different people and advance the hope for peace in this world.

I am grateful for the loyal support of the people that traveled with me (some for up to 18 trips) and stood by me when unexpected occurrences made it necessary to change itineraries or fight for our rights.

I have made lifelong friends through this work. My training as a social worker and psychologist often came in handy, as did my patience and creativity.

This does not mean that I will no longer travel. It does mean that I will be a passenger instead of the organizer. Thank God, my health is good, my spirit is alive and well, my energy is still very high, that I have such a wonderful mate and that we will have time for other activities in our lives. I hope that many of you will join me on these two last trips, so I can give you a hug, and help me celebrate this passage in life. If you cannot make the trips, please send me a hug by e-mail (meldancing@aol.com).

If you cannot join us on one of these trips, then please plan to come out to sunny California some day soon and be my guest. We dance on a large sprung wooden floor with our cherished Berkeley Folk Dancers, which have dancing all five nights a week, all year round.



God bless you all and stay well. Mel

OFDA APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

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*The following article is a continuation of the third of the series **Folk Dancing: Then and Now***

Looking In and Out: 1992–97, Part 2

by Stefania Szlek Miller

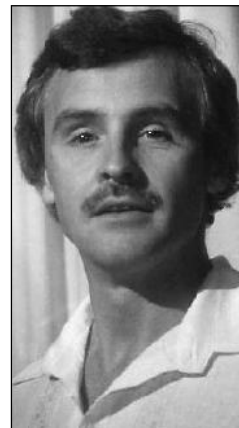
[continued from October issue]

Changing Times: The ethnic conflicts and atrocities committed in the secessionist wars of former Yugoslavia and other regions of the world affected many of us. Edith Klein's articles on the Balkan conflicts showed how folk dance and culture can be utilized by xenophobic nationalist forces (June 1992 and 1993 issues). Jim Nicoloff's report of the experience of the Selyani Macedonian Folklore group at the 1992 Cleveland International Eisteddfod festival in England (a smaller competition than the one in Wales) was also fraught with political controversy. The festival organizers accused Selyani of "making trouble" by using "Macedonian" in its name (October 1992). Ceding to the objections from Greece, which maintained that the name "Macedonia" belongs to the Greeks, the European Union refused to recognize the name of the newly independent Macedonian Republic.

Closer to home, Jane Aronovitch reported on the controversy of Toronto's 1992 "Christmas Around the World" festivities and the conflict between the Greek- and Macedonian-Canadian communities resulting in the police cancelling the festivities (January 1993). There were also numerous media accounts of conflicts between the Serbian- and Croatian-Canadian communities at soccer games and other events. In our own international folk dance circles, some felt uncomfortable doing Serbian or other dances from the region. Most of us refused to be caught up in national stereotypes. The notion that all members of a national group, including Canadians of a particular ethnic ancestry, are guilty of war crimes by association ("collective guilt") is antithetical to Canada's liberal and multicultural society.

The difficult transition from communism in Eastern Europe had other negative effects on social international folk dancing. Jane's extensive interviews with leading international folk dance teachers, the majority of them specializing in Balkan, show that most of them received their initial training

and performance experience in former communist countries. This includes outstanding teachers like Mihai David, George Tomov and Theodor Vasilescu. Others, like Yves Moreau from Quebec, and the dancers trained in the Dutch dance curriculum, like Jaap Leegwater and Bianca de Jong, studied in Bulgaria and surrounding countries in folklore dance academies or with performing groups that were heavily subsidized by communist governments. This state financial support for folklore was no longer guaranteed in the difficult transition from communism to market economies.



Mihai David

On a more positive note, choreographers and dancers were re-evaluating the heavy influence of Igor Moiseyev's Soviet balletic style of folk dance presentation. In Theodor Vasilescu's interview with Jane, he referred to Moiseyev's style as "old-fashioned." In his choreographies, Theodor wanted "to put ritual in the dancing to show its meaning" (April 1993). The need to bring new life to folk dances was also evident in reviews of performing groups. After attending a Toronto performance by the Macedonian "Tanec" ensemble, Terri Taggart wrote: "While Tanec is a venerable group in the world of ethnic performance, they are becoming stylized fossils. The choreographies move the dances further from their sources than ever. Perhaps we need a 'Back to basics' movement for performance groups" (October 1994). The same criticism can be directed to other performance groups from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics. A notable exception of a group that was not averse to sticking to its folk



roots is the “France Marolt” Slovenian Ensemble. The 1992 Slovenian workshop in Beamsville, followed by a concert at Brock University (both events facilitated by Keith Atteck), were wonderful displays of folk culture (October 1992).

The Duquesne University “Tamburitzens,” one of North America’s most successful folklore groups, was also re-evaluating its choreographies, according to Gabor Dobi, who once danced with that student-based group. Gabor was especially enthusiastic about Željko Jergan’s more folkloric choreographies of Croatian dances with the Tamburitzens (April 1992). The emphasis on getting back to folklore basics is also evident in Miroslav Marcetic’s approach to Serbian dances. Those of us lucky enough to attend workshops with Željko, Miroslav or Theodor Vasilescu are the beneficiaries of this trend.

One is left with the impression from reading OFDA’s magazine that we were becoming more relaxed about social folk dancing. Dancing to the same set choreography to the same music for decades can dampen the enthusiasm of even the most hardened folk dancer. Shawn Donaldson (September 1992) and Joe Graziosi (December 1992) emphasized the social and improvisational nature of folk dance and were

especially enthusiastic about dancing to live music. While it would be too expensive to hire bands for our regular folk dance activities, we can draw on the proliferation of world music recordings. This includes Yves Moreau’s compilation of unusual music in the series – “Bulgaria & Sons! (& daughters too)” – a serious, and sometimes hilarious, fusion of Bulgarian music with Jazz, Disco, Blues and other variants. A funky musical version of a traditional Bulgarian dance can add some spice to set choreographies.

In response to the concerns about declining numbers, Kathy Burke in the June 1993 issue concluded that we should “lighten up.” She wrote: “Ethnic communities don’t take their dancing and music as seriously as we do. They just get up and do it; they express themselves, they have fun.” Bill Baird agreed that we needed to lighten up, and wrote that people learn better by doing rather than a formal structured teaching approach (March 1993).

Karen Bennett and Kevin Budd wrote about their December 1994 experience at the Serbian Community Centre in Hamilton. The occasion was the 25th anniversary of Kolo, the community’s performing group, which was reviewed by Karen in the January 1995 issue. At the party following the concert, Kevin noted how differently Serbian-



Canadians dance from international folk dancers. People do not wait to join a dance at the end of the line as many folk dancers have been instructed, and it would be rude to do so since that place may be designated for a community leader. Kevin also observed that people drop in and out of the line as a means of socializing and that there may be many different versions of the same dance going on at the same time. He finally gave up trying to find who was leading, and concluded, "Any steps seemed kosher as long as one maintained the flow."

Kevin timed one dance that lasted for 50 minutes as the band (over-amplified to pump up the dancers) weaved in and out of Serbian and more modern music rhythms (January 1995). In comparison, international social folk dancers normally dance to recorded music lasting about three minutes. We either have very short attention spans or have an insatiable hunger for cramming as much variety as possible in a short span of time. I prefer the latter explanation.

"How I Started": This series was revealing about what attracts people to folk dancing, but in the interest of space I will confine myself to two of the most relevant examples dealing with recruitment of folk dancers. Karen, who initiated the series, informed us that when she moved to Toronto from Midland in the 1970s, she started with the Settlement Dancers on the recommendation of Conrad Stenton. (Conrad is a long-time folk dancer, and his talented wife, Patricia Stenton, teaches dance in Midland.) Karen was instantly drawn to folk dancing, and was encouraged to start teaching by Teme Kernerman (October 1995). Hearing about folk dancing from a friend and being encouraged by experienced teachers are by far the best means of attracting and retaining new recruits.

University international folk dance

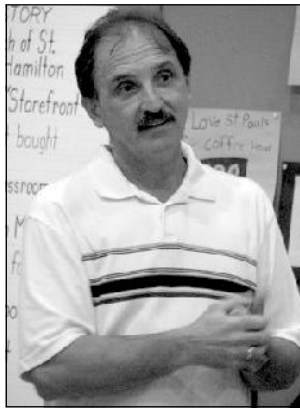


Photo by Kevin Budd

Miroslav Marčetić

clubs, once very popular on campuses, were unfortunately no longer a source of recruitment. As a student at the University of Toronto, Kevin Budd was drawn to IFDC, as was Walter Zagorski, among many others. My first exposure to international folk dancing in the mid-70s was as a faculty member at the McMaster University Folk Dance Club. I recall that by then the student-based club had difficulty attracting undergraduate students, one of the conditions for retaining a student-club status. Walter Zagorski's 1989 review of IFDC, noted in my third article, "Reaching Out" (April and June 2012), indicates that IFDC had a similar problem, and moved from a student- to a community-based club.

There are many reasons why students were not attracted to social folk dancing. It may be a generational difference with students' tastes in music and dance changing over time, as noted by Bill Baird in the March 1993 issue. The composition of the student body has also changed dramatically, with more students with Asian, Middle Eastern, African or Caribbean ancestry on campus. We do not have many dances from those regions in our folk dance repertoire. Students in ethnic-based Serbian or Croatian clubs at McMaster University were not



Željko Jergan

receptive to the Hamilton club's invitation to join us for workshops with such well-known teachers as Željko Jergan or Miroslav Marčetić. There was also a very low turnout of students to Miroslav's dance classes, offered at McMaster in the late 1980s. Students either preferred to dance in their own communities or, more than likely, joined other students in dancing to mainstream popular music, like Hip Hop. The Hamilton club's ongoing experience with students, who do on occasion join our international folk dance circle, is very positive. They are

always welcomed, and they add energy to our dance nights. They do not, however, come regularly enough to become fully integrated in our folk dance club.

Other factors accounting for the decline of interest in folk dancing on campuses include the elimination of physical education academic programs with a folk dance component. University music and dance programs (where they are offered) emphasize classical and contemporary genres (popular music as part of cultural studies). Extracurricular dance programs that continue to be popular on campus include Jazz, Ballroom, Swing, Salsa and other Latin type dances. Many folk dancers also gravitated to dances that pulled them away from our international folk dance circles.

Spreading Out: There were many opportunities to dance in our region, and many took advantage of specializing in dances that appealed to them. Some dancers like Barbara and Chris Bennett (no relation to Karen Bennett), who were once heavily involved in international folk dance, decided to concentrate on ballroom dancing. Others joined Contra, Square, English, Scottish or Irish dance groups. Karen's introduction of the "Hoofers Corner" in the magazine expanded one's horizons of many other opportunities to dance: Middle Eastern, African, Caribbean and Latin American. One could dance in tango clubs or strut to country and western line dancing.

Michael Wagner's two articles on "Swing Dance" (January and March 1997) were instructive about the attractions of this type of dancing. He had started with Israeli dances at age 15 and then joined IFDC while a student at the University of Toronto. He became impatient with the "fixed steps and choreography" of international folk dancing and found Swing allowed him to be more self-expressive. The music also spoke to his roots. He states: "Swing is done to music I've heard practically all my life – Jazz, Big Band, Rock'n'Roll, R&B [Rhythm and Blues]. So I know the music. I have a significant understanding of the culture – it's mine!" He adds: "Best of all, Swing is a social, improvised dance – there are almost no choreographies in the repertoire" (January 1997).

Michael could have added that as a male, he continues to have an advantage of leading his partner in improvisations. He probably also has many partners to choose from, since in our culture females outnumber males in most, if not all, dance activities. Michael is too harsh in his assessment that international folk dances do not allow for self-expression. They do! He is right, however, in stressing the importance of music in inspiring one to dance.

Finding one's roots is also evident in Jane Scholsberg's letter to the editor in the January 1993 issue. Jane, who came from Halifax to attend IFDC's November 1992 Klezmer workshop and party with the "Flying Bulgar Klezmer" band, wrote that it gave her a chance to connect to her parents' Yiddish culture. She writes: "For over 20 years now I have watched the Scots around me celebrate their heritage... Now, however, I have also felt the great strength of the 'tug of the heartstrings.' I have danced MY dances at last" (November 1992).

Others found their niche in Israeli groups. As my previous articles in this series indicate, Israeli dances were a major component of the international repertoire from the very beginning of international folk dancing in Toronto in the late 1940s. Dance



Teme Kernerman, 2007

leaders, such as Teme Kernerman and Sandy Starkman, connected to Jewish community centres were and continue to be at the forefront of organizing international folk dance activities, teacher-training classes as well as folk dance camps. In my third article, “Reaching Out” (April and June 2012), I noted the increasing specialization of dancers attracted to either Balkan or Israeli dances. This specialization and separation became even more pronounced in the 1990s. While the *Ontario FolkDancer/Folk Dancer* listed many Israeli groups in Toronto and elsewhere, there were very few stories about Israeli dancing, especially compared to the coverage of Balkan dances. Of some 20 “Profile” interviews with international dance teachers, none taught Israeli. There seemed to be almost no interaction between international folk and Israeli groups during this period.

One can understand the attraction of specializing in Israeli dances. Recently, Halina Adamczyk, Joan Tressel and I signed up for an Israeli dance weekend in Toronto to learn some new Israeli dances to bring to our Hamilton group. We were impressed by the hundreds of participants, especially of young people. The latter probably included a high proportion of former participants in “Rikudiyah” and other Israeli children’s festivals. The non-stop dancing was very energetic and, for the most part, did not involve dancers holding hands in a circle. Individual dancers whirled by at their own pace, dancing in concentric circles. We were overwhelmed by the huge number of dances and the wide range of music drawn from traditional and modern sources. Choreographers of

Israeli dances do not appear to be intimidated from using a wide range of music. (I recall Nissam Ben-Ami at one of the Montreal camps teaching his very charming waltz set to the tune of the love theme from the *Godfather* film. Another Israeli dance, by Yair Harel, was set to the music of Shostakovich.) At the recent Toronto Israeli festival that we attended, I especially liked a dance set to Russian music (*The Departure*), made popular by the Soviet Red Army Chorus. I described it to Riki Adivi, who identified it as *Kalanu Bamitz’ad*. Riki taught that dance as well as the lyrical *Eilat* to our Hamilton group in 2011.

We can learn from groups, such as the Israeli clubs, about what attracts people to dancing. How are dances taught and retained? Is the focus on simple dances with a minimum of instruction? Does prompting or calling out figures of more complicated dances help to keep the momentum going at dances? How do groups nurture the social bonds of their communities?

Conclusion: What still distinguishes international folk dancers is that we like the variety of dances from many regions of the world. We have a wonderful collection of dances, with new dances being introduced by outstanding teachers. We can diversify our repertoire by introducing dances from regions that have not been traditionally stressed in our folk dance circles. We have not as yet taken up Michael Flatley’s style of dance along with his disciplined row of Celtic “Rockettes.” But who knows where the folk dance journey might lead us?



Photo by Leon Balaban

Nirkoda group performing at Rikudiyah 2009 festival

A Tale of Two Villages

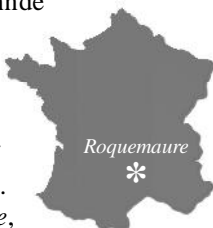
by Nancy Nies

October 2 – Since you'll be reading this in December, I thought I'd send a little summer warmth your way by sharing two experiences Paul and I have had in Europe during the month of July. Both were big outdoor parties involving the whole village, but each had its own distinct flavour.



In July 2012, on a tour of renewable-energy sites in Germany, we visited the "bioenergy" village of Juehnde, near Goettingen. It happened to be the day of the annual village *Thiefest*, with stalls selling food and drink, a large tent sheltering tables and chairs, and a *Blasorchester* (oompah band) performing. On offer were grilled meats and sausages, fries, salads, beer, wine, and even schnapps. We mingled with the villagers, and when a DJ played *Schlagermusik*, or schmalzy German pop music, we danced energetic polkas under colorful spotlights.

Our experience in Juehnde brought to mind a Bastille Day celebration we attended about 15 years ago, in the main square of the French village of Roquemaure, near Avignon. There, for the *fête nationale*, the municipality provided a *repas républicain*, donating wine and bread. For purchase, there were grilled *andouille* sausages and homemade salads. After supper, we joined the townspeople in dancing under the stars to the quintessentially French music of a live *orchestre musette*, or accordion band.

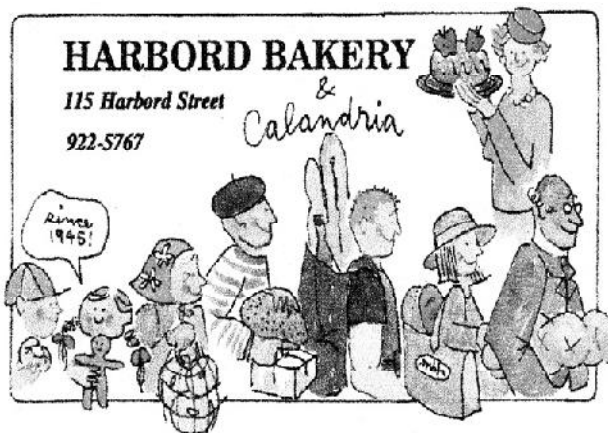


Two countries, two villages – but one spirit of warmth and celebration!



Photo by Kristopher Stevens

Here Paul and I are dancing to *Schlagermusik* at the village festival in Juehnde, Germany.



Brief Workshop and Camp Reviews

Nordleck 2012

by Dorothy Sloan

The Nordic Festival, held every three years, this year was from 10–15 July in Steinkjer, a town of 22,000 population two hours north of Trondheim in Nord Trøndelag province, at the end of the Trondheimfjorden. It is the geographic centre of Norway. Founded in 1857, the town burned down in 1900 and was almost totally destroyed by the Luftwaffe in 1940. It was rebuilt in 1945 with US assistance. On a walking tour we saw variations of architecture, from reproduction original to art deco to modern. We have yet to discover the local industry which supports it but we can only assume, as in much of Norway, it is related to the sea nearby.

A group of 11 from those who danced at the OFDA café earlier this year [March 31; see June 2012 issue – Ed.] from the Swedish, Finnish and Danish groups decided to attend, as we had for many past festivals.

Our first challenge was to find accommodation as there were very few hotels, mostly already taken by the management of the festival. Solveig Lalla's persistence (and she was the only one who spoke Norwegian) paid off when we were offered two houses that, on the map, looked to be quite close together. Steinkjer is a very hilly town, and one house was at the highest point, with a wonderful view. It took 40 to 45 minutes to walk to the campus, and home was all uphill. A car was hired! The other where we stayed was a 25-minute walk and it was not so steep. The catch was the perpetual drizzle most days. The houses



were lovely and very well equipped. In all, 78 families took advantage of the situation to rent their houses and take a trip out of town!

The festival follows a familiar pattern, with mornings for classes and afternoons for dance and music. One could hear great music everywhere, but fewer musicians played in the town than is usual. Previously we have found them on every corner. In the evening, musicians played Danish, Swedish and Norwegian music for an hour each, and instruction was given in the large hall – a new velodrome at the university where the festival was held.

We had spent several months rehearsing the selected combined dances, some of which we had showed at the OFDA café. Previously there had been a public concert on the last Saturday in an arena when all the groups danced all of the dances. We were prepared for that, only to find, because of inclement weather the previous year in Finland and the possibility of the same situation in Norway, we were in an arena at the university which held all of us and


NORDLEK 2012
STEINKJER 10. - 15. JULI

very few of the public. Each group was to dance their own national dance, which left us in a strange situation. Groups were there from Germany, Switzerland, USA, Canada and Russia as well as the Aland Islands, the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland, so we were assigned to join the Swedish dance, which was a fairly simple one. When the Finns came on, we decided that, as we dance Kikari very well and there was space close to us, we would crash that party too. We received loud support from Finns sitting nearby, as we did a lot of flirting in the dance and made it more enjoyable for us and the audience.

A wonderful group we have come to know – Vi Can, those with developmental handicaps – danced at a mall where we also put on a program. We have been beside the Danish group several times, and their leaders have to be admired for the quality of the dancing and the pleasure they have themselves in performing. We included French-Canadian dances in our program, with audience participation, which was extremely well received. We thought the audience was quite thin until the invitation to join in was issued – and we suddenly had a very large circle.

Of course there were wonderful, colourful costumes, and I am working on editing the dozens of photos I took. I will send some in due course for the website. On the last day, we all paraded through the town – which was small, but the route was quite long – and it was the warmest, driest day. The townspeople turned out to see this mysterious group who had invaded their peace, and we felt like Olympians on the long route, with all the cheering and clapping.

I will write in the future about a most interesting visit we made to a beautiful farm outside the town with folklore and costumes.

Mainewoods Camp

by Mirdza Jaunzemis

The Mainewoods staff organized its 18th season this year with two weeks of non-stop fun! We journeyed down again this summer to take part in the second session, August 19–25: a week of dancing,

socializing, and learning about different cultures. Of the 71 campers (36 staff), there were 20 first-timers and 16 Canadians: three staff, nine from the Hamilton group and four from the Toronto dance groups (four were newcomers). Our weather was very good: just a few cool mornings, but beautiful days.



The Sixteen Ontarians

Our instructors were Danny Pollock (Israeli), Yuli Yordanov (Balkan) and Tony Parkes (Contras and Squares). Sandy Starkman gave a beginner's class, and George Fogg rounded out the week with English Country Dance sessions. Something new George added this year: sword dancing! In addition, we had three visitors from Japan, who taught us a dance from Japan and presented a Japanese tea



Sword dancing. George Fogg is at far left.

ceremony one afternoon – very relaxing and peaceful. The band was the Mainewoods Maineacs, supplemented from time to time by other musicians from among the campers.

As usual, each day was devoted to a different culture presented by the instructors with wake-up music, food, skits, culture corners, performances or presentations of one sort or another. After morning workshops one could go swimming in the afternoons, or dance, or socialize, take walks in the surrounding woods, or sleep. The first day was Hawaiian day, and the supper on the Friday was an excellent smorgasbord. Our workshops were fun and challenging at the same time. Afterwards, dance sessions every evening – request dancing plus reviews by the teachers – were great! If possible, people would dress up to highlight the “culture of the day.”

Binge night was Thursday night, and 16 of us danced until 3:02 a.m.! There was an auction at which US\$1,076 was raised for the scholarship fund. And, of course, we enjoyed the Friday afternoon talent show, with the Wizard of Oz being the main event, along with others showcasing their expertise. There is always a special closing dance on the Friday night, after which it’s hug time with opportunities to say “good-bye” or “see you again” to new or old friends. The week went by far too quickly, but many of us plan to return next year for more good times!



Mainewoods is transported to Oz. Can you recognize what role Walter Zagorski (in white shirt) is playing?



Japanese tea ceremony at Mainewoods

Party Crashers?

by Karen Walker with Carl Toushan

It was a very small sign plunked in the median of a four-lane expressway at the north end of Guelph (Ontario). It read, “Serbian Festival; Sept. 2; Maryhill Centre.” Okay... That sounds interesting... Maryhill is a small village. It shouldn’t be too hard to find the festival and see what’s going on.

On the day, finding Maryhill was easy, but finding the right community centre took some more searching. After finding the “downtown” one empty, we went back to the highway and found an exact address. Twenty minutes later and halfway back to Guelph we found the Waterloo Wellington Serbian Cultural and Community Centre (who knew?). On leaving our vehicle in the well-filled parking lot, we caught the scent of barbeque and passed an Eastern Orthodox priest in his long robe. Aha!

It was a beautiful late summer day. The large country property is surrounded by bush and contains a beautiful community centre. There was a lively soccer game in one field, a game similar to bocce in another, and a large children’s play area in a third. At the centre was a large beer tent with the obligatory

six loudspeakers playing traditional Serbian music. We were then treated to a lovely young woman in a skin-tight white strapless dress and killer stylish high heels singing popular Serbian songs. She had a pleasant voice and was a congenial performer.

Outside of, but near to, the beer tent, we managed to find a shaded table. At one end, dinners were being roasted. Vegetarians please skip to the next paragraph. On three rotating spits over glowing coals were three lambs. As we were just sitting and watching the proceedings, the “chef” who was minding the roasting took a piece of the bread and rubbed it around and over one of the roasts. Then he proceeded to eat the bread. It looked like a delicious treat. The menu was posted only in Serbian, but a friendly gentleman told us there was a choice of pork or lamb. The lamb was tender and delicious and tasted like none we’d ever eaten before. There was also a choice of sausages resembling *kafta* in shape, but less intense in flavour. They were served over a large fresh flat bun similar to a cross between naan and an English muffin with a large side of chopped raw onion. Dessert was a delightful custard square.

We managed to learn that there would be dancers at 5 p.m. The dancers were from the town of St. George and were in Serbian costume. The little ones danced a creditable version of Makezice and Savila Se Bela Loza. The middle and senior groups were well practised and adept at their footwork, and the dances were nicely choreographed. We were treated to more than an hour of dancing.

On the way out, there were Serbian shirts, music and videos for sale as well as various toys for the kiddies.

We made our way home to Guelph via the direct route. It was a pleasant afternoon at a heretofore unknown (to us) ethnic gathering place.



Ashkenaz Festival

by Helen Winkler

I attended part of the ninth biennial Ashkenaz Festival at Harbourfront in Toronto over the Labour Day weekend (September 1–3) but didn’t participate in much of the Yiddish dance. The way the stage is now, it’s really awkward. Instead of clearing an area in front of the stage to make room for dancing, they had a centre stage with people sitting on the ground on all sides. Somehow they expected the dance sessions to work around people who are sitting, which was extremely awkward and also dangerous. It also ruined the dances, because a lot of the fun of Yiddish dance involves going into the middle of the circle to show off.

They had a dance leader – Avia Moore from Montreal. While she was leading the dancing, she kept saying, “You guys are sitting where we are supposed to be dancing,” but no one bothered to move. They needed to do it in a more official manner



Photo by Farkhod Karimov

A dancer in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, in 2011.

– using their staff to clear the area before starting the dancing. At many Yiddish festivals, dance is used as a kind of filler – to give people something to do when other things aren’t happening. So they don’t really think it through properly.

However, Rita and I did attend Dance Panorama in the Boulevard Tent. The Askenaz website describes Dance Panorama as “an interactive showcase demonstrating dance forms related to some of the world musical styles featured in this year’s festival. Hosted by dance performer, teacher, and curator Susan Walker, the session will feature dances of Egypt, India and Central Asia, with Israeli bellydancer Ibtissam, Indian Kathak dancer Vaishali Panwar, and Bukharan dance artist Firuza Junatan of the group Shashmaqam.” At the end of the session, people could get up on the stage and dance – something that Rita enjoyed (now she wants to take belly dancing lessons!). I particularly enjoyed the Bukharan dancer, Firuza Junatan, who was an older woman. Her husband accompanied her with a handheld drum. She demonstrated some really intricate movements and very expressive hand movements. These dances are dances of the Jews of Bukhara, and her husband explained that the

influences are both Persian and Turkish. Unfortunately I couldn’t get into Shashmaqam’s group session as people were lined up down the hall – it was overflowing.

Judith Cohen attended the klezmer contra session and said she didn’t think it was anything special, but no one else has said anything to me about it. I think a lot of interesting connections could be demonstrated and experienced by dancers juxtaposing contra dances with similarly structured Jewish dances, and also by incorporating some of the Yiddish dance songs that are known. Some of them are very funny and make a mockery of the pomp and circumstance attached to quadrille dances in particular. It doesn’t sound like they tried to do anything like that. Instead, they played klezmer music and had people dance regular contra dances to it.



Rita Winkler, far right, dances with Israeli belly dancer Ibtissam at the Ashkenaz Festival on September 2.

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OFDA's Assyrian Café

by Karen Bennett

On Saturday, October 13, Nadia Younan, a graduate student in the York University ethnomusicology program, led an Assyrian dance café at the Ralph Thornton Centre in Toronto. She brought along a friend, Noora Hidow, a more experienced dancer, to help teach, and the informality of their approach was akin to villagers demonstrating dances while the tourists followed along as best they could. (The tourists included folk dancers from London, Hamilton, Midland, Bobcay-geon and the Greater Toronto Area.)



Nadia Younan
in her headdress.

Nadia, whose father is Assyrian (her mother is Italian), was dressed in the black-and-silver costume of Tyareh, the name of both an Assyrian tribe and the district within the Hakkâri region of eastern Turkey where the tribe lived until 1915. Before presenting her dances, she gave a short talk on the Assyrian people, a distinct ethnic group who trace their ancestry back to the Sumero-Akkadian civilization that emerged in Mesopotamia around 4000 BCE. The Assyrian nation existed as an independent state, and often a powerful empire, until the end of the seventh century BCE. The Assyrians are indigenous to, and have traditionally lived all over, what is now Iraq, northeast Syria, northwest Iran and southeastern Turkey, but have gradually become a minority in their homelands. They converted to Christianity between the first and third centuries CE. In modern times, they have been forced to emigrate due to massacres, wars and persecution by their more numerous and powerful non-Christian neighbours.

Nadia's talk included some simple phrases in modern Assyrian, which is a Neo-Aramaic language. I was struck with delighted amazement by the formal hello in the plural, *Shlamalokhun*, a combination of "peace" (*shlama*) and "be upon you" (*lokhun*), which was like unto the Hebrew *Shalom*

aleichem: "Well-being be upon you," or "May you be well." (But after all, Aramaic and Hebrew are Semitic languages with a common ancestor.) Other useful expressions: *Dakheet?* ("How are you?") and *Alahaminokhun*, a formal goodbye in the plural. (Visit learnassyrian.com for more.)

Most Assyrians know at least seven or eight dances (Arabanoo, Assyrian Misirlou, Belatee, Demaleh, Goobareh, Karmaneh, Khigga, Sheikhani and Toulama), and Nadia and Noora showed four to us:

1. Khigga, a basic hora-like dance that is the most popular among Assyrians;
2. Sheikhani "light," a simple version of this famous dance (many variations of which are also done by Armenians and Kurds, among others);
3. Sheikhani Yaqoor, or "heavy Sheikhani," a slightly more complicated version (although "Yaqoor" translates as "heavy," what's really meant is "slow"); and



Noora Hidow, left, and Nadia teach a dance.

4. Goobareh, commonly done as the final dance at weddings and parties to a song of the same name, sung in this instance by Juliana Jendo. Unlike the other dances, it went to the left and used little-finger hold. (Complete descriptions are available in *Thirty Assyrian Folk Dances* by Peter Pnuel BetBasoo at www.aina.org/articles/tafd.pdf.)

Then, using no accompaniment but a voice of remarkable quality that seemed to contain a second instrument, Nadia gifted us with some verses of “Goothee goothee,” an improvised work song traditionally done during yogourt-making that she learned from an older woman in the community.

The Assyrian community in Canada, which is estimated to number about 40,000 at present, dates back to 1902, when a group settled as farm labourers in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. Montreal, Toronto, Mississauga, Hamilton, Windsor and Vancouver now hold significant concentrations of Assyrians.

Nadia and Noora stayed till the end of the evening, pleased to engage in conversation with us. They had brought an Assyrian flag and some written materials, including a recipe, and set up an information table, to which I added a pile of my own books on Assyrian costume and culture (ancient and modern), some of which Nadia had not encountered before and was very pleased to see, since the literature on contemporary Assyrians is limited.

Other York students besides Nadia were in attendance as well. One of them, a young Russian woman named Katia (short for Ekaterina), asked me whether our Russian circle dance Katia, done during requests, was a village or stage (choreographed) dance. The dance Katia was already part of the Toronto repertoire when I started dancing in 1975, so I was unable to answer the query from the human Katia standing in front of me in 2012. I later looked up the notes, and found it had been introduced in Toronto in 1968 by Jack Geddes; there was no sign of where Jack learned it. I see via online research



Circa 1900, Assyrian women in Persia make yogourt in a goatskin bag. This is the activity that the song “Goothee goothee,” done a cappella for us by Nadia, used to accompany.

that a similar dance, called “Our Katia” and possessing some additional variations, was taught by Anatol Joukowsky at the 1964 Stockton camp; his notes (www.folkdance.com/LDNotations/OurKatia1964LD.pdf) don’t indicate his source either.

Unwittingly, we’d seen and heard Nadia before, as she’d been a member of the York University Balkan Ensemble that played at the January 2010 Balkan Café. Now we can put a name to her face and look forward to encountering her again, perhaps – at the very least, in print, as she has kindly agreed to contribute an article to a future issue.

*Noora and Nadia lead Sheikhani. ▶
Third in the line is Katia.*



Fattouche (or Fattush) Salad

by Dorothy Archer

I made this salad, also known as bread salad, for the potluck at the Assyrian cafe, and not a bit of it was left over. The following recipe is a combination from the Internet, my Middle Eastern cookbook and tasting it at Fethi Karakeçili's house. The salad's chief characteristic is its lemon taste. Fethi stresses the importance of sumac.

Mix these ingredients together.

- 1 head of lettuce, torn into bite-size pieces
- 2 tomatoes, coarsely diced
- 2 cucumbers, medium size, seeded and coarsely sliced (or 1 English cucumber)
- 4 tbsp. Italian parsley, fresh, chopped
- 1/2 cup mint, chopped
- 1 Valencia or red onion, coarsely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

Dressing

- 1/4 cup virgin olive oil
- 4 tsp. lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. sumac (If you can't find sumac, add extra lemon juice).
- Ground pepper and salt to taste
- Whisk and add to salad 15 minutes before serving.



Just before serving, toast a slice of pita, break it into pieces and add it to the salad.

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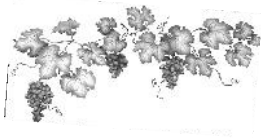
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The Back Page...

Condolences on the death of Henk van der Gaag in late September after a long struggle with Alzheimer's. Henk had danced more than 40 years, and had been a member of performance groups. He, along with Hy Diamond, ran Toronto's Dancing in the Park for many years, and was a long-time contributor to Ontario Folk Dance Camp, organizing interesting craft activities each year.

Best Wishes to Sandy Starkman for a speedy recovery from shoulder surgery, and to Hy Diamond, who (we only recently learned) had a fall in June and has been hospitalized since that incident, in a lengthy attempt to recover from the head injury.

Five Hamilton folk dancers – Kate Drinen, Anita Millman, Ursula Humphries, Judy Bourke and Shelagh Beattie – went to eastern Turkey on a trip arranged by Jim Gold. Everything was just great – lots of sights to see, lots of good dancing – until they got to Trabzon, where Anita fell and broke her hip! She was airlifted to the American Hospital in Istanbul where she had surgery to replace her hip, and she is now back in Canada and on the road to recovery. We all wish her well, and hope she will be back on the dance floor sometime in the new year!

Indefatigable traveller Murray Forbes reported on Oct. 18, "I have now completed walking across Spain. Last year I walked the Camino de Frances from the French Pyrenees – St. Jean Pied de Port – to Santiago de Compostela. This year I walked, starting from our house in the south of Spain, 1,400-odd kilometres to Santiago de Compostela. Then, the Friday before last [i.e., Oct. 5], I walked the last bit from our house to the Mediterranean Sea at Castell de Ferro. It was a lot of walking. Spain really is very pretty, and this year's walk was quite spectacular, much of it through remote rural areas."

Former Toronto folkdancer Barbara Noske was in town from the Netherlands. She has given up academia, for the time being, in favour of horses.



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In July 2012, Terri Taggart enjoyed a two-week trip to Greece that included a 12-day seminar on the region of Serres by Kyriakos Moisidis. He organizes his seminars to focus on a different area of Greece each year. His 14th seminar, in 2013, will be based on the towns of Drama and Kavala in northeast Greece. Visit his site at www.moisidis-dance.gr.

Al and Roz Katz went to Berlin this summer, and Naomi Fromm and Efrim Boritz are spending November in Japan and Korea.

Congratulations to Fethi Karaceçili, who became a Canadian citizen on November 9th.

Our best wishes to Rina Singha and Ray Joshua on their recent marriage!

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by John Pappas

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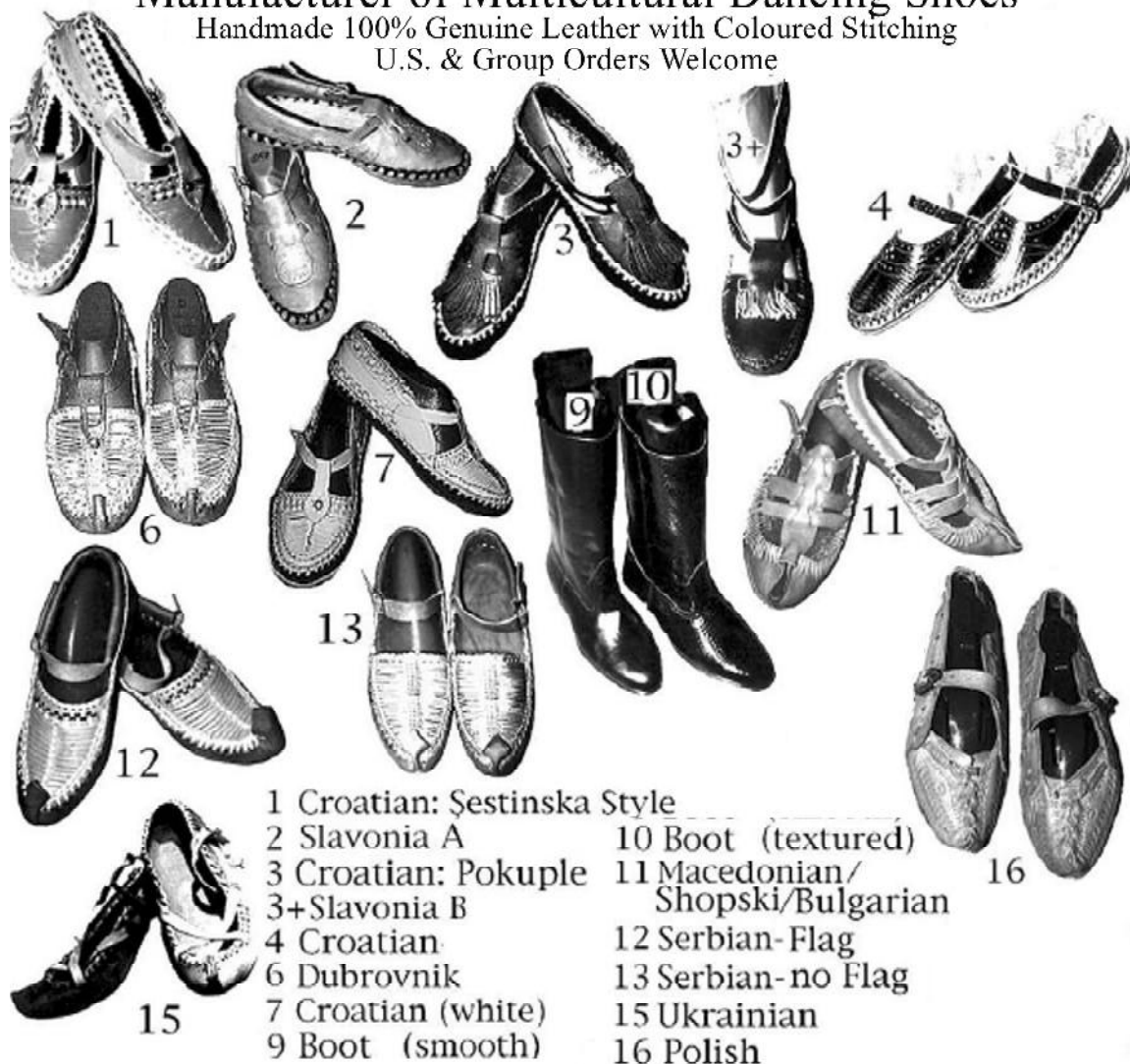
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