

# *Folk Dancer*

**The Magazine of World Dance and Culture**



*Girls in Maltese costume stand in front of a boat of very old design – one that might (minus the Hindu-Arabic numerals on its side) have just issued from a Phoenician shipyard. Story: p. 17.*

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# On History and Industry

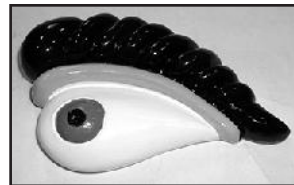
by Karen Bennett

Mirdza Jaunzemis's India trip, Part 1 of which is contained in this issue, was not like Murray Forbes' "The Trip from Hell via India..." (April 2013), to some extent reflecting the greater ease of highly organized group travel. Speaking of Murray, no article of his rests in inventory. I am wondering if we should send out an urgent query. Every bit of the writing in the December and February issues was done by women. If hesitating to put finger to electronic device, ye men, keep in mind that copy-editing, fact-checking, proofreading and (if necessary) photo research services are provided free of charge by the editorial staff—or at least by me, while I'm still here, of which more later.

Mirdza's trip included visiting the memorial to the 1756 "atrocities" from which we gained the expression "The Black Hole of Calcutta" ("the black hole" was 18th-century military slang for any military prison, similar to "the brig" in the navy). The account of the event was written by one man whose veracity was later questioned, although at the time the story was used to justify sending a military force to overthrow the Nawab of Bengal. Mirdza's wording, "It was said that 123 prisoners died out of 146 held; however, the precise number of deaths is not known" is a reminder that there are always bits of "history" that we should imbibe with a peck of salt, like accusations of stablating horses in churches

and the attribution to Marie Antoinette of "Let them eat cake," now thought to have been a complete fabrication by a journalist. "History" is not always what we read or are told...

My Assistant Editor, Dorothy Archer, was exceptionally industrious in generating content for this issue. She wrote two articles and commissioned the writing of another. Let me take this opportunity to remind readers that Dorothy (and Bev) will be keeping the newsletter going when I depart in June and not only need help but deserve it. (Another reminder is the notice on p. 25.) I wasn't expecting Dorothy to write about her trip to Malta, as she had discussed it in her December editorial, but I was just delighted to receive her article, which also contained a lot of history, as it happens. On my own initiative I found the photo that reposes on the cover of this issue, where one of the painted eyes that adorn the bows of the gorgeous local fishing boats can be glimpsed near the shoulder of the girl on the right. (These eyes are also sold as fridge magnets; one is below.) It was such a pity to have to discard the colour from this picture for our purposes; look up "luzzu," the name of the boats in Maltese, on Wikipedia to see what I mean.



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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](mailto:ontariofolkdancers@gmail.com)

**OTEA Scholarship Application 2014. See p. 24**



# *L'Amour et le Mariage*

by Nancy Nies

For the February issue, it is fitting that I again write about Roquemaure – the little French town whose Bastille Day celebration I previously described in this column – because of its connection both to St. Valentine and to a dance-related wedding Paul and I attended.

By the 1600s, Roquemaure had become a busy port on the Rhône, shipping the regional wines all over France and Europe. In 1866, calamity struck when the vineyards succumbed to phylloxera, destroying the local economy. Hoping to save the town, a wealthy landowner went to Rome to acquire the relics of a saint. St. Valentine's relics arrived in Roquemaure on 25 October 1868, and the townspeople celebrated with singing and dancing.

Since 1990 the town has held a 19th-century-themed *Fête des Amoureux* (Lovers' Festival), complete with a re-enactment of the relics' arrival, on the weekend closest to February 14. The festival draws 20,000+ spectators and features 800 costumed participants, horses and buggies, musicians, folk

dancers, organ grinders, decorated shops, and demonstrations of historic trades. (See [youtube.com/watch?v=5ftr\\_0zSJGI](http://youtube.com/watch?v=5ftr_0zSJGI).)

Though we have not attended the festival, we have enjoyed visiting Roquemaure, most recently for the July 2005 wedding of our young French friends Jocelyne Monier and Jean-Jérôme Gaillard. They had met through a country-western dance group in a nearby town. One evening, we joined the group in dancing to *la musique country* – music from our own homeland. Later on, at their wedding reception, the bride and groom taught their guests the Cotton-Eyed Joe!

Thus have St. Valentine and country-western dancing both found their way to the south of France.



Photo: Nancy Nies

◀ *Jocelyne and Jean-Jérôme dance to US country-western music in southern France in 2005. Less than two years later, Jocelyne founded the Association Country Attitude 30. She teaches les danses country in Bagnols-sur-Cèze.*

## OFDA APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

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# *India – Another Planet! Part 1*

by Mirdza Jaunzemis

This past September (2013) I took a trip with three other friends to India, a country I have been interested in for many years. This was a folk dance trip with Mel Mann, the travel agent and folk dancer who has been organizing “Dance on the Water” tours for the last 30 years. There is always a cruise component, as well as excursions on land. We flew from Toronto to Brussels and then to Delhi, where we stayed at an airport hotel for the first night of our journey. Right away we noticed how tight security is in India: In order to enter an airport, you must show that you have a ticket. Once you have left the airport, you cannot go back in without a very good reason. Whenever we arrived at a hotel, our goods were put through an x-ray machine, and we ourselves had to go through a metal detector, as well as being subjected to a wand search.

The next morning we flew on to Kolkata (formerly Calcutta). Our private car brought us to our hotel through some pretty bleak areas of the city: lean-tos, shanties, corrugated tin dwellings – garbage and construction debris everywhere. Much of the road and building work was being done by hand, using a lot of primitive tools and manual labour. India has a population of 1.2 billion people, and this is one way of keeping everyone employed. (I’m sure if heavy machinery were introduced, many people would be out of work.) When we arrived at our hotel, the hotel staff opened the hood as well as the trunk of the car before allowing us into the grounds. Then we again (and every time and at every hotel) went through

security procedures. We found that most people spoke English, although there are 18 official languages and about 1,000 dialects; Hindi is the “national” language but, as almost everywhere, English is the language of commerce.

Upon our arrival in the lobby, a staff member placed a “bindi” (red dot, considered to be the third eye) on our foreheads, and we received leis made of marigold blossoms! We had a very nice meal, and afterwards we met the other members of our group that would be travelling together, and had a dance session that evening.

The next day we were taken on a tour of Kolkata, which was the capital of British India until 1911. My first impression of the city was the traffic. I would describe it as organized chaos: horns honking constantly, scooters, rickshaws, bicycles, trucks, private cars, taxis and buses all were vying for road space. But we saw no accidents, and everyone seemed to allow others to pass or change lanes as needed – it seemed like a gigantic weave going on. There might be two lanes painted on a road but four vehicles filled in the space. I saw no road rage; it seemed that everyone was minding his own business and allowing others to do the same. Of course, the speeds were slower than those in the West.

Our first visit was to Mother Teresa’s establishment. It was a very spare building, with nuns doing work that she had started. Some beggars were hoping for a hand-out near the entrance, but we knew that if we stopped to help one person, a crowd would appear instantly, and chaos would ensue. We visited several Christian churches, the first one being St. John’s Church, the oldest church in India (1787). On its grounds was a monument to the “Black Hole” of Calcutta: After the capture of Fort William on 20 June 1756, British and Anglo-Indian soldiers and civilians were held overnight in conditions so cramped that many died from suffocation, heat exhaustion and crushing. It was said that 123 prisoners died out of 146 held; however, the precise number of deaths is not known.

As we drove through the downtown, our guide



*Some of the modes of transportation in Kolkata.*



explained that the reason for the appalling lack of repair of once-beautiful buildings was that there were often multiple owners and disputes over ownership, and unless they all agreed to pool their resources, the buildings became more and more dilapidated. Often one person would hold out and the others could do nothing except have the whole process drag through the courts, and of course only the lawyers would be making money. Also, once a building was repaired, its taxes would be increased, and no one wanted that. The municipality would take over a building only as a very last resort, because it would cost the government money to repair it as well. Government offices and many public buildings were still from the British Raj (rule) and were well-maintained. We were taken to the Victoria Memorial, now a museum, built after Queen Victoria's death (she never visited India, although she was known as Empress of India), and similar in construction to the Taj Mahal. This museum outlined the history of Kolkata through paintings, statues and writings.

Since the monsoon season was ongoing, on this day we experienced a real rainstorm, accompanied by thunder and lightning. Cars were soon having trouble moving around, as there were about four inches of water on the road; everything ground to a halt. Our group was unable in its entirety to board the bus because it could not stay where it was located; some of

us who were in it finally got back to the hotel, others took a cab, and general confusion ensued. Finally we were all back on the bus (some soaked to the skin – having to use the hotel's towels) and had to hurry to catch our train ride to our next destination. At the train station some short, wiry and very strong men loaded our luggage onto some big trolleys and we all ran like mad through teeming, honking vehicles (no traffic lights) and hordes of other passengers to get to our correct platform. We all made it onto the train in the nick of time; our seats were located in the first class compartment – comfortable, but nothing to write home about... It was a six-hour train ride to Farakka, with several stops; at our destination we all again scrambled to disembark. How our luggage crew managed, we will never know, because there were all of about two minutes to jump off and unload! Two members of our group literally had to hit the ground running! We were all loaded into jeeps for the short ride in the dark (it was now about 10 p.m.) to our boat launch. We boarded a "country boat" – we would call it a tender – which took us to the *Sukapha*, our home for the next eight days. Again our luggage was loaded on, and brought to our rooms. I shared a cozy room with Helga, my cabin mate and travelling companion, and we settled in.

Our cute little boat, the *Sukapha*, was owned by the Assam Bengal Navigation company, a joint Indo-British venture which has been operating since 2003, and won an Indian National Tourism award in 2006. It has 13 generous-sized air-conditioned cabins, and there were 25 of us (five from Canada; 20 from the US), plus the crew (they were all young men, except for one young woman!). There was a dining room, a saloon (not salon!) and a covered sun-deck. Farakka is the town where our tour began, and it is on the Hugli (or Hooghly) River, a narrow, meandering tributary of the Ganges which flows from the Himalayas to enter the sea at Kolkata. (Another tributary flows through Bangladesh.) It took about six hours to arrive in Farakka by train; it would take us eight days to navigate back to Kolkata on the Hugli, with interesting stops along the way. We travelled only by day, so the nights were quiet. (FYI: There are 1,750 miles of rivers in India, so as time goes on, I'm sure there will be more river cruises – an excellent way to see a country!) The larger boat would anchor in the middle of the river and we'd take the country



*Monsoon clouds over Salt Lake, Kolkata.*

boat every time we went to shore, bringing our life jackets with us. The crew made sure we got on and off the two boats safely. Although the motor in the country boat was quite rudimentary (also the steering mechanism), it did the job. After the country boat ride we would reach our destination either by Jeep, bicycle rickshaw or on foot.

After every excursion, upon arrival on the bigger boat we were greeted by some staff: one young man would be holding a tray of wet face cloths for us to wipe our hands and faces, another would be holding a tray of cold non-alcoholic drinks after the heat on land, and a third would be holding a tray with our room keys. We were asked to leave our shoes near the entrance as we boarded, and the crew would clean them; we would later find them arranged neatly in the hallway near our rooms. Talk about pampering! The food was always excellent and very varied – not too spicy! – and served buffet style. Our tour guide was Udit, a very interesting young man and a good storyteller, who gave many details about what we were seeing, with a lot of background information. The manager of the boat was Kunal; our general factotum, helping whenever needed, was Babu.

Our first stop was Jangipur, from where we were taken to Mirzapur, a village where the main cottage industry is silk-making. The villagers were very friendly, and seemed to love having their picture taken. As soon as they saw us coming, they would group themselves correctly (short in the front, tall at the back, big smiles) and we would take their photo – they loved seeing how they looked on our cameras! We were told not to give the children in the villages anything because the concept of begging had not taken hold, and we were asked to respect this situation. We saw several hand looms in very small houses, and could purchase some scarves in one location. On many buildings there were slogans and symbols of political parties in the area. The Communist party had ruled here for 35 years, but now the Congress party is in power. The afternoon was spent in a leisurely fashion, after the last few hectic days. We spent most evenings in the air-conditioned saloon after supper, dancing and getting acquainted.

Then we sailed to Baranagar, a riverside village where we visited three terracotta temples built in 1753 by Rani (Queen) Tarabai to honour Shiva (the Hindu god of death and destruction). These temples were

very well preserved. We then drove to Murshidabad, where the palace of the Nawab (a deputy assigned by the reigning Mughal Emperor), the great Hazarduari Palace, built by an English architect in 1837, dominated the waterfront. It is now a museum housing many artifacts, weapons, paintings, furniture, etc.

Whenever we were to enter a temple or mosque, we had to take our shoes off. This was a sign of respect, but also, we were making contact with the ground. In some places we were not even allowed to take bags, cameras, etc. We would pile them all in a heap and Babu would be in charge of guarding them. Nobody lost anything in this way.

In the afternoon we drove to the Katra mosque (katra = bazaar), which had been built by Nawab Murshid Quli Khan in 1723. It was once meant only for the Nawab's family, but it became a centre of Muslim learning. However, it was damaged by an earthquake in 1897. This was interpreted to mean that Allah was not pleased with this location; thus, the mosque has since remained empty. Nonetheless, it is a well-preserved building and the grounds are still being looked after. We then went on to the Nashipara Palace, built in the classical Georgian style by rich local merchants; it illustrated that a fusion of Indian and British cultures was taking place. In one room there was a dining table which could seat about 20 people, and in another there were about eight chandeliers with different coloured lights. All was very ornate and opulent. That night we were entertained on the sundeck by Bal, a local dance group, illustrating various styles of Indian dance. We were asked to take part – you have to be very co-ordinated! They also tried three of our dances. Interesting!

We took the country boat and then a cycle rickshaw ride into Kushbagh the next morning; here we saw a Mughal-style garden with the tombs of the Nawab and his family. The main wildlife in this area was some monkeys – they were quite used to people, but still kept their distance. Later that morning Udit gave us a talk on Partition – how it came about – and some stories regarding Mahatma Gandhi. (Mahatma means “great soul.”) Udit had already talked to us about Nehru and his troubles with his daughter Indira, a badly-behaved and not very (academically) bright girl who had been expelled both from Oxford University and the school of Rabindranath Tagore (India's only Nobel prize-winning poet and author). She married



*Baul musicians and singers.*

then another for polishing, and finally some designs were etched into the finished product. The whole town was involved in this, but mainly the older people. As it is elsewhere in the world, the youth are not interested in continuing this work; as a result, many of these cottage industries will fall by the wayside, probably these villages will become ghost towns, and mass-produced brass items made in larger factories will be the end result.

Feroze Ghandy against her parents' wishes (they were Brahmins; he was a Parsi, among other "failings" on his part). Mahatma Gandhi advised her to change the spelling of her married name, which of course added to her popularity. She was assassinated by one of her Sikh bodyguards in retaliation for authorizing the destruction of the Golden Sikh Temple at Amritsar. Although the temple was not totally destroyed, it suffered heavy damage.

In the afternoon some of us went out to view a monument in honour of the Battle of Plassey, which changed the course of Indian history. The British East India Company was victorious over the Nawab of Bengal and his French allies; thus, the Dutch and French were pushed out of this area, and Britain gained control. That evening we were entertained by some Baul musicians; they are considered to be descendants of a branch of Sufism, and are common to west Bengal. They use rather unusual instruments and sing and play while they dance.

Our next stop was Matiari, a brass-working village, where we were able to see primitive methods of creating brass vessels. In one area the raw metal would be cut, then another area was for banging the vessels into shape,

After lunch we were transported by cycle rickshaws to visit Nabadweep, a temple town with a huge banyan tree that had become entwined around and covered three temples. Afterwards we went to Mayapur, site of the famous ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness, otherwise known as the Hare Krishna Movement) temple. This offshoot of Hinduism was made famous by the Beatles, especially George Harrison, who became a member. This temple, which is the world headquarters of ISKCON, incorporates a school, a guest house, a museum, a dairy and gardens. There were many garish scenes and gaudy colours throughout the temple, but also people lying prostrate on the marble floors.



*Temples to Shiva in Kalna.*



After breakfast the next day we were taken to Kalna by country boat and cycle rickshaw to view some of Bengal's most attractive terracotta temples. The most unusual one was a temple to Shiva consisting of two concentric rings made of 108 small shrinelets. Inside each shrinelet were marble representations (sometimes black, sometimes white) of a combination of the *lingam* and *yoni*. The *yoni* refers to the goddess Shakti and is considered to be the female reproductive organs, representing the origin of life. The *lingam* is connected to Shiva, and represents energy and the potentiality of life. The lingam is inside the yoni and together they symbolize the totality of creation.

Upon our return to the boat, Udit gave us a lecture on Muslims and Hindus. (The country's main religions in order of number of adherents are: Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, Christian and Jain. There are also other, much smaller, groups.) It seems that in this country, everyday life revolves around these two religions: the type of work one does, when and where one prays, symbols inside and outside a home, one's manner of dress, etc.

Afterwards we went to Chinsura to visit a Dutch cemetery. The Dutch were present in this part of India from 1605 to 1825, when the British took over. In the cemetery were huge well-preserved headstones and obelisks, mostly of prominent families of the time. We then took our cycle rickshaws to Imambara, a huge Muslim temple housing a higher religious centre and an orphanage.

Chandannagar (formerly Chandernagore) was our next town to visit; this was a French possession from 1673 until 1950 and had a lovely riverside promenade. We visited a French Catholic church and a museum showcasing life in this area during the 18th century. Then we went on to Barrackpore, which was an army town (barracks)



*Frangipani: non-native but now naturalized to India.*

with the oldest British cantonment area, which is still off limits to the locals. We went to Flagstaff House, the summer retreat of the viceroy, which had a huge garden with statues of many famous British rulers that had served in India, and one of King George V. At one time the statues had stood in Kolkata but were moved to this location, which is much more serene than the big city. The garden also contained a huge tamarind tree, a camphor tree and some lovely frangipani (*Plumeria*) flowers.

We had to hurry back to our boat in order to cross under the Howrah Bridge, a cantilever structure that was quite low to the water; if the tide was high, we could be trapped on the "wrong" side, thus our hurry. We were back in Kolkata! During our last afternoon on the boat, Kunal, the ship's manager, gave us a cooking demonstration on the preparation of curry chicken and chapattis, after which we sampled his creation – very tasty! Since this was our last night, we had a lovely farewell party, during which we taught Udit, Babu and Kunal some of our dances – great fun! It had been an excellent eight days, and we had seen an area of India that tourists rarely visit. That night was an early one because we had to be up at 4:30 a.m., packed and ready to disembark and catch our flight at Kolkata airport to fly to Delhi.



*Bathing at steps leading into a river.*



I was happy that we had seen rural areas and people living in their “natural” state first: people bathing at the ghats (cement steps leading into the river), selling produce in small markets, processing jute, or preparing cow patties to be used for fuel; goats and dogs wandering in the streets; open ferries crossing the Hugli with cows, cars and every conceivable type of goods as well as people; and water buffalo swimming in the river. Now we were on to the big city and to tourist attractions.

The rest of our tour was to be by tourist coach, and our guide was Ravi Shanker Tiwari. After we checked in at le Meridien hotel, Ravi took us to a school of dance where we were shown classical Indian dancing in honour of Shiva and Ganesh (the elephant-headed god, who removes all obstacles in life) by some graceful young students. We tried to copy their moves, but of course it was not as easy as it looked; we then reciprocated. Ravi said that this was the first time in his life he had ever danced – and he wanted to do more!

I observed that Delhi was cleaner and more organized than Kolkata, although it is home to 16 million people. It has six million cars, none of which can be older than 15 years; also, city buses run on natural gas. There were thousands (maybe millions?) of auto rickshaws (motorized), which are a popular means of transport – they can often get through where cars can’t. Delhi has a very good subway system, and two million people use it every day! Of course, there were also slums and street people.

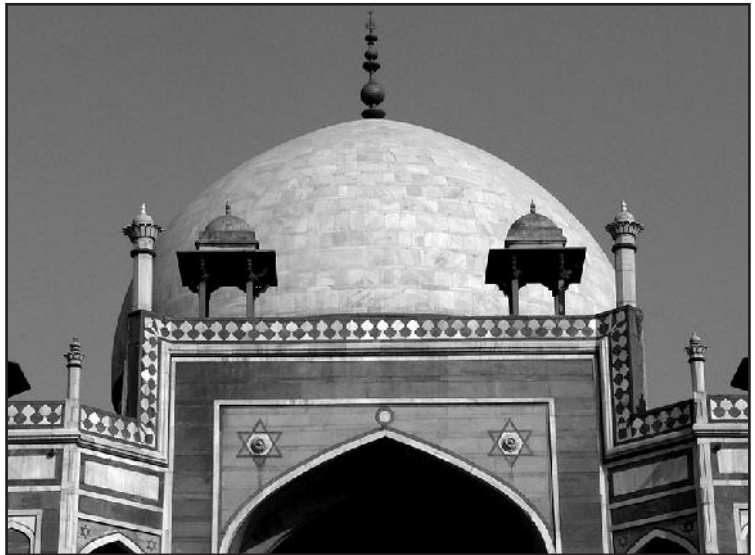
Our first excursion in this city was to the Raj Ghat, the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial, a square black marble plinth placed on the spot where he had been cremated on a sandalwood pyre. On the stone is an eternal flame surrounded by marigolds. Half of his ashes were cast into the Ganges, and the rest were taken to Pretoria, South Africa, where Gandhi had spent 21 years

fighting for the rights of Indians in that country.

We then visited the Mausoleum of the Emperor Humayun, built of red sandstone between 1562 and 1571 on orders from his widow. It is the first substantial and well-preserved example of Mughal architecture and is the precursor to the Taj Mahal in Agra, as the Taj incorporated the same design and floor plan. It is a UNESCO heritage site and was the first garden tomb (as opposed to a mausoleum); there are many tombs of Humayun’s family within the building, which is very symmetrical in every aspect – a dominant feature of Islamic architecture.

A word about Delhi versus New Delhi: In the 17th century, Old Delhi was called Shahjahanabad and was built by the emperor Shah Jahan, and even today it is predominantly a Muslim city, with narrow but vibrant laneways crowded with shops, homes and bustling humanity. In 1911 during the British Raj two British architects designed New Delhi, which is a properly laid-out British-style city with roundabouts everywhere (often doubles) and classical architecture; there is a mood of progress and modernity here and the people seem to be more prosperous. The two cities are side by side.

*[To be continued ...]*



*Emperor Humayun’s very symmetrical mausoleum, Delhi.*

# Why Malta?

by Dorothy Archer

I've been asked several times why I chose to holiday in Malta at the end of September 2013. There are three reasons: I was brought up on an island and miss being able to arrive at salt water whichever direction I go; Malta is very historic, which interests me greatly; and I knew my friend and fellow folk dancer Marylyn Peringer was planning a trip to visit her relatives and do some research for her storytelling. So I spent two glorious weeks in 28-degree temperatures, with no humidity and no rain.

Malta is in the Mediterranean Sea, about 60 miles south of Sicily and approximately 200 miles north of Africa. It is composed of five islands, three of them habitable (although one, Comino, only has two people living on it). The total area is 196 square miles, with a population close to 422,000. The main island, called Malta, is 20 miles by 6 and is mostly rock. To the north of it is the second-largest island, Gozo, which has farmland and supplies Malta with much of its food. It sounds like one could run around the country on a good day, but the hills, the narrow, winding roads and countless harbours and inlets make this impossible.

Malta has a history going back to 5,000 BCE. There are relics and stone structures, but little is known of the people at that time. The first settlers were the Phoenicians in 800 BCE; then the Carthaginian Empire controlled Malta until defeated by the Romans, who took over until the Western Empire fell. The North African Arabs occupied the Island for 200 years, followed by the Normans, who controlled it until 1530, when Malta was given to the Knights of St. John by the Holy Roman Emperor in exchange for two falcons a year. From this mixture has emerged a unique and feisty people with a language influenced by Arabic and a culture influenced by Europe. Everyone speaks two languages: Maltese and English. Today Muslim families and African students are mixing into the population. Malta is 98% Roman Catholic, which is attributed to St. Paul having been shipwrecked at the harbour which bears his name and has a statue of him at its entrance.

Because of its location in the middle of sea routes north and south, east and west, domination of Malta has been seen as a threat by various people. This was

the reason the Turks invaded in 1565 with 40,000 men opposing 9,000 Knights and Maltese, who defended the island successfully. While the Knights built forts and strategized, they relied on the Maltese fishermen for information about the coastline. Also, the Maltese were excellent swimmers and were able to swim underwater across the harbours when boats would have been obvious. Another siege of Malta took place during World War II. It was the most bombed area in the world between 1941 and 1943, with both the Italians and Germans attacking, but once again the Maltese stood their ground, and King George VI awarded the entire population the George Cross, Britain's highest honour for bravery given to civilians. The Maltese also chased the French influence from the islands. Napoleon I routed the Knights from



Photo: Dorothy Archer

*Triq Iz-Zekka (Old Mint St.) in Valletta.*

the islands on his way to Egypt in 1798 and left troops in Malta who proceeded to issue unpopular decrees. The Maltese revolted and massacred the troops. It was at this time that Malta asked Britain for protection, which lasted until 1964, when Malta became independent.

I stayed in Sliema, which is considered the home of the wealthier people, but they have to share it with tourists on all sides. My hotel room overlooked St. Julian's Bay and out to the Mediterranean. Around the bay are shops and restaurants in Sliema and on to St. Julian's. North of St. Julian's is Paceville, known for its partying by the younger set, who overflow around the harbour on Friday nights. I had a wrap-around balcony and floor-to-ceiling glass doors. Whatever I was doing, I could enjoy the marvellous view and watch people swimming, fishing, strolling, and early-morning running.

Marylyn also stayed in Sliema: with her cousin about 30 minutes' walk from my hotel. Between us was a promenade along the Mediterranean. Looking over the railing, I saw people sunbathing on the beach on lovely yellow sand, but when I went down I

found out that this was not sand but yellow limestone. Access to the water is by ladder or ramp; this is no place to practise swimming. There are only a few sand beaches in Malta, and on Comino, one of the smaller islands, there is a "blue lagoon," a favourite day excursion for tourists.

Marylyn's cousin offered her the use of her car but Marylyn wisely refused, much to my relief. Traffic moves on the left side of the road. The cars are small, the roads are narrow, the traffic is heavy and everyone is in a hurry, including the buses, which pull out to pass and whip around the corners of the narrow streets. Drivers do stop for pedestrians or other cars turning, but one had better not dawdle or the horns will start.

The bus system is very efficient. One can ride all day for the equivalent of \$4, and the buses cover the island. At each stop, the bus numbers and destinations are given, and schedules are regular. So Marylyn could phone and tell me she was getting on bus number 222 and 10 minutes later I got on the same bus and saw her waving from the back. However, there is another side. Change is made by the driver, which does delay things. Also, if you ask a driver to call a street or town,

Photo: Dorothy Archer.



*Limestone beach.*





*Entrance to the Blue Grotto on the west coast of Malta.*

his grunt could mean yes or no. It was the same In Australia, where I relied on local people. In Malta, I relied on other tourists.

Valletta is the capital of Malta and is often featured in photos showing how it is all buildings right up to the sea. Much of this stonework is old forts. Valletta is named after the Grand Master of the Knights of St. John when they held the island against the Turks. It is all limestone buildings except for the lovely Barrakka Gardens overlooking the harbour. It was the first town to be built on a grid system, which makes it easy to get around except for the cobblestones and very steep hills. There is only local traffic, so one can saunter and gawk quite safely, which we did.

I took a boat trip around the islands, but the Mediterranean was too rough for our small boat to go around the north of Gozo, which faces the sea. Thus I missed seeing the cave of the Calypso, where, legend has it, Ulysses was wooed. I did see the magnificent cliffs at the west end of the island and got drenched taking photos when a wave came over the bow. I soon dried out, only to get drenched again in a speed boat while visiting the caves on Comino.

Marylyn and I visited her cousins on Gozo, who drove us around to see some of the magnificent views of the fields, small towns, and the sea beyond. Later we went to the Ġgantija Temples, the oldest archeological site in Malta. They are built of stones of different sizes and fitted to make circular rooms. This culture lasted for about 1,000 years and then abruptly

and mysteriously disappeared. Successive inhabitants used the site as a cremation cemetery.

In my editorial in the December 2013 issue of this magazine, I wrote about the fishing boats built in the design of the Phoenicians and about their unique colouring with eyes painted on the bow to ward off danger. I also described the arts and crafts – lace-making, embroidery, ceramics, glass-blowing and filigree jewellery.

There is much I didn't see and places where I would return. I would sit in Mdina, a walled town and the original capital, which has an ethereal atmosphere. I would travel around Gozo more. I would visit the "three cities": Vittoriosa, Senglea and Cospicua, which are across the harbour from Valletta and are steeped in history. And I would resume my seat on the promenade looking out to the Mediterranean and watch the waves and the sea traffic.



*Some filigree jewellery bought in Malta.*



# OFDA Balkan Rhythms II Workshop

by Sheryl Demetro

*[The Balkan Rhythms I workshop, to which this event was a follow-up, was held on September 12, 2009—Ed.]*

Photos: Bev Sidney



*Did you know that Dvašti Trišti has a 37/8 rhythm?*

We spent the enjoyably illuminating afternoon of November 9 with Judith Cohen and Judy Silver as they shared their rhythmic knowledge pertaining to Balkan dance to demystify some of the unusual rhythms we dance to. Any number above four is quite beyond me, so I was an excellent candidate for this session.

As we listened intently to dance music, Judith Cohen expertly tapped out the dance metres on a hand drum; it was helpful that she also marked them on a whiteboard for us. Rather than clapping the rhythms, we tapped them in a quieter hand-to-thigh style percussion so we could hear the music clearly. Judith also pointed out that in certain pieces of music the rhythm seems to the listener's ear to change but that it actually does not.

After a short break, Judy Silver began the dance part of the workshop. This was our chance to put the rhythms we learned about earlier into practice. Some were fairly easy to identify but others were muddier. Did you know that Dvašti Trišti has a 37/8 rhythm?

Our experts clarified the dance metre if we had any difficulty. Judy had a varied selection of dances to present to us and we had an opportunity to get a lot of dancing in over the afternoon period.

OFDA treated us to snacks from Harbord Bakery – we all know how welcome their baked goods are and we also know how much folk dancers like good food – and there was much comparison and chat about the variety of goodies from which to choose.

The participants, now more enlightened, were enthusiastic in their appreciation of Judith and Judy. We are so fortunate to have folk dancers with such expertise so willing to share it with others. Our thanks to you both and to OFDA for sponsoring this event.



*Judith Cohen and Judy Silver.*

# Croatian Workshop Review

by Karen Bennett

On Friday 15 November, I attended Željko Jergan's Croatian folk dance workshop at the Hamilton International Folk Dance Club at St. Paul's Anglican Church in Westdale.

Željko taught the dances Prosijala Sjajna Mjesečina (from the region of Moslavina); Moslavački Drmeš (Moslavina); Pet Je Kumi (Međimurje); Sviračko Kolo (Kordun; my favourite); Djevojčica Ruže Brala (Zagorje; vocal only, which I liked, but the irregular-rhythm steps were hard to remember as Željko was teaching very fast); and, as a bonus, some women's dance steps and scarf motions from Vranje in southern Serbia (co-demonstrated by Bata Marčetić, who'd showed up unexpectedly, to our delight). Željko said he'd learned the Vranje dance while serving in the Yugoslav Army (which he called the Serbian Army). When this dance is done as part of a suite, the whole thing is often called Igre iz Vranje (Dances from Vranje) or Vranjanska Svita (Vranje Suite) and can be so seen on YouTube. Our recreational dance Šano Dušo is sometimes part of this suite.

Željko's son Zach was on hand to sell CDs and DVDs; I said, "This must be boring for you," but being a well-mannered young man, he said, "No, no," and that he had his laptop with him to do school work.

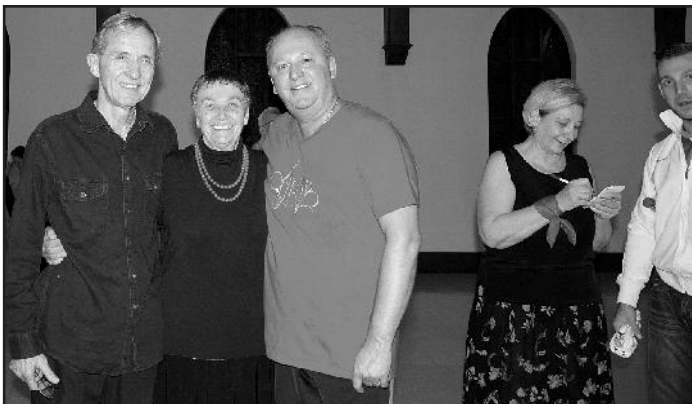
Željko told us he'd be teaching dances from



Photos: Leon Balaban

*Željko teaches Prosijala Sjajna Mjesečina.*

the current CD, Resonance of Croatia, for the next number of years.



It was a very well-attended and high-energy workshop, with many dancers from the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. Hamilton leader Stefania Szlek Miller persuaded Željko to do a number of dances he'd taught in past years, among them Moj Dragane (from Lika) and Nabrale Je (Međimurje), both of which have remained in our repertoire.

◀ *Adam Kossowski and Stefania Szlek Miller with Željko. At far right is Zach Jergan.*

# OFDA's French Dance Café

by Dorothy Archer

The spirit of the evening of November 30 was set early. The performers circulated in period dress: The men wore strikingly simple outfits – black pants and blue smocks, flat-topped black hats with wide brims, and red kerchiefs around their necks, which added a colourful splash. The women's costumes were highlighted by aprons which covered the bodice, and floral-patterned scarves over the shoulders. Their straw hats were tied with ribbons and, as Karen told us, were quite warm in the indoor setting. The band members arrived with two vielles à roue (hurdy-gurdies), a French bagpipe, an accordion, a guitar, a recorder and a C saxophone.

But first to dinner, and it was a real potluck. There were 12 or 14 salads, all different, all delicious; very few dishes with protein; and lots of scrumptious desserts.

Thus fortified, we were treated to three Bourrées from Berry and Auvergne in Central France, danced by Karen Bennett, Cornelia Nita, Fethi Karakeçili and Sean van Wert: Bourrée de la Chapellotte (in threes), Bourrée Ronde (in a circle), and Bourrée Tournante des Grandes Poteries (in couples). Then it was our turn. The first dance we learnt was without partners and in a circle; it was called Bourrée Ronde. This was a three-count Bourrée. Then we learnt a two-count one from the same region in Central France which was done in two facing lines. Circle dances from Brittany followed: Le Laridé à huit temps and Hanter Dro. The latter was a call and response – the calling being done by Karen and the responding by Andrea Haddad and anyone else who was able. The Gavotte des Montagnes was the third of this group. Western



*Karen Bennett (in straw hat) leads and sings the Breton dance Hanter Dro. The ease of the words at that point, close to the dance's end ("La la la..."), may account for all the smiles.*

and Central European dances in the Bal Folk tradition followed: a schottische; La Chapelloise, which was similar to Gay Gordons but with a different handhold and a change of partners; and a waltz. The dances were enjoyed immensely, judging by the smiles and energy from the dancers.

The four musicians for these dances were Andrea Haddad playing hurdy-gurdy and accordion, Sandra Spencer on hurdy-gurdy and recorder, Brandon Besharah playing guitar and doumbek, and Robin Aggus on the bagpipes and saxophone. Their contribution was received by the dancers with great enthusiasm.

Karen supplied detailed notes about the dances and a map of France gratis, and had a CD for sale.

It was a most enjoyable evening. Thank you, Karen, for organizing the evening and teaching such nice dances, and thank you, Andrea, for bringing the musicians.



◀ *Left to right: Robin Aggus, Andrea Haddad, Sandra Spencer and Brandon Besharah.*



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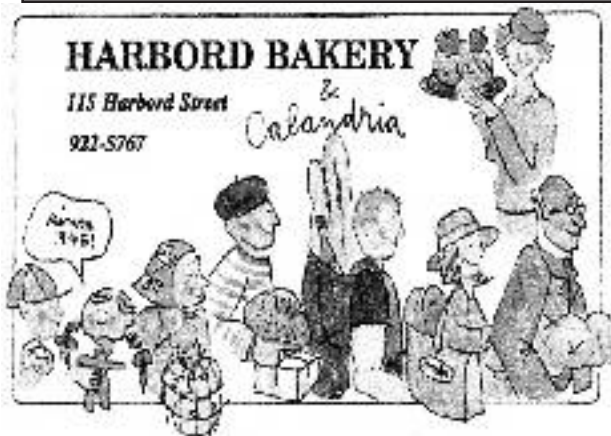
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# *OTEA Scholarship Applications, 2014 Request for Submissions*



Each year the OFDA Executive Committee accepts applications for the OTEA (Olga Sandolowich, Teme Kernerman, Ernie Krehm and Al Gladstone) Scholarship. The purpose of this fund is to assist people involved in any folk-related activity to further their studies, attend workshops/courses, etc., and thereby enrich themselves and benefit the Ontario folk dance community.

The deadline for submissions for 2014 will be May 31.

The applicant must be an OFDA member and should specify:

- (a) what the gain will be for him/herself and the folk dance community;
- (b) a proposed timetable, including time required to complete the project; and
- (c) a proposed budget (maximum about \$200 this year).

Forward OTEA Scholarship Fund applications to the OFDA Executive Committee c/o Bev Sidney, 35 Touraine Avenue, Downsview, ON M3H 1R3, or [ontariofolkdancers@gmail.com](mailto:ontariofolkdancers@gmail.com).



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# Dancing in Hesperus Village

by Riki Adivi

Hesperus Village in Vaughan, Ontario is a seniors' affordable housing residence offering an independent lifestyle and a rich quality of life.

The name "Hesperus" comes from the Greek word for Venus, the evening star. Setting after the sun, it signifies the end of the day, but through its own movement it changes from the evening to the morning star, Aurora. Thus, it embodies the metamorphoses taking place in the life cycle itself.

I knew almost nothing about Hesperus (<[www.hesperus.ca](http://www.hesperus.ca)>) when I received an email in 2012 with a request to run a dance class for their Valentine's Day party. I am so happy that I was available to do it, since it gave me the opportunity to meet the wonderful group of people that attended the party. The people of the Hesperus community didn't know anything about me or about international folk dancing, but they came with a good spirit and energy, and I was able to engage them in a nice circle of dancers.

I started the program with a Polish dance we

learned at Ontario Folk Dance Camp in 2011 from Richard Schmidt, Szia Dzieweczka (the "ha-ha dance"), and it brought a lot of smiles to our circle. After this first dance, everything was easy. I chose simple dances from as many different cultures as possible, and this variety was much appreciated.

They called me again to run a dance party for May 1st, and in 2013 for their Hallowe'en party (where everyone was dressed appropriately). At this last party I decided to find a way to engage the participants who were not able to dance, so we danced a few "sitting dances": dances that have been adapted for a sitting position.

I do hope that people from this community will also join regular folk dance sessions in Richmond Hill and area, but for now they are too busy doing the many activities that are offered locally. I do feel blessed, though, that I have this opportunity to dance every once in a while with the people from Hesperus Village community.



*The 2013 Hallowe'en party in Hesperus Village.*



OPPORTUNITY. The position of Editor of the Folk Dancer magazine is open June 1. Duties include collecting and selecting material of interest and editing it. The Editor works in close collaboration with the Assistant Editor and Production Manager. (If preferred, this could be shared between two people, as Co-editors.)

For more details, contact Bev Sidney: [bvsdny@gmail.com](mailto:bvsdny@gmail.com)



# The Grapevine



Adrienne Beecker was one of only two dancers from the GTHA able to attend the International Folk Dancers of Ottawa's 45th-anniversary workshop, banquet and party on Saturday 26 October 2013 at Parkdale United Church in Ottawa. Among the teachers were Yves Moreau and Lia and Theodor Vasilescu. Live music was provided by the band of Romanian accordionist Sergiu Poppa from Montreal. Germain Hébert was spotted among the attendees.

The Toronto New Year's Eve party, at Kimbourn Park United Church near Coxwell and Danforth, was attended by over 30 people at the beginning and 20 die-hards still dancing at 1:30 a.m. (It was most helpful that the subway ran until 7 a.m. and all TTC service was free of charge from 7 p.m. on, as the weather was very cold.) Toothsome savouries and desserts, courtesy of OFDA, were provided by the Harbord Bakery, and Roz Katz once again contributed one of the Harbord Bakery's delicious chocolate-custard slab cakes, with its artistically emblazoned "Happy New

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Year" message. As the party was dry, hiccups had to be furnished by the sound system, affected perhaps by a hydro network imperfectly recovered from the Great Ice Storm of 2013.



Photo: Allen Katz



Photo: Bev Sidney



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**NORWAY! June 7-17, 2014.** Led by Lee Otterholt.

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**IRELAND! (New!) July 25-August 6, 2014.** Led by Jim Gold.

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