

Folk Dancer

The Magazine of World Dance and Culture



Albanian tour bus driver Kristo, left, in Shkodra with an epic singer and his lahuta. Story: p. 5. Photo: Judy Bourke.

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Hail but not Farewell

by Karen Bennett

I'd like to thank all the writing contributors in my more than two years' tenure at the helm of this newsletter (I was a guest editor before I took over as Editor), in particular Riki Adivi, Dorothy Archer, Rhoda Bodnoff, Judy Bourke, Kevin Budd, Judith Cohen, Sheryl Demetro, Doris Straub Epstein, Murray Forbes, Andrea Haddad, Dale Hyde, May Ip, Mirdza Jaunzemis, Anita Millman, Stefania Szlek Miller, Nancy Nies, Ruth Ostrower, Bev Sidney, Fred Slater, Dorothy Sloan, Patricia Stenton, Terri Taggart, Maya Trost, Karen Walker and Carl Toushan, Heidi Williams, and Nadia Younan. And I thank the photographers too, chief among them Al Katz, Leon Balaban and Bev Sidney, for OFDA pictures. Dorothy Archer, as Assistant Editor, heads the list of newsletter staff I'm grateful to.

Among the riches contained in this issue, I was delighted that Dale Hyde was able to share information on his research for the "War of 1812-14" English dance workshop he taught in Hamilton on March 21 (see p. 23), because how to accomplish original dance research and work with musicians is an under-discussed topic in

these pages. Another contribution I was very pleased to publish (I solicited it, to be frank) came from someone I've known online for years but never met: museum consultant Jan Letowski, who wrote on the subject of collecting costumes, which, as some *may* have noticed, is a passion of mine. (And no, I still can't answer the question, "How many costumes do you *have*?", as the number isn't static. I had *no choice*, y'see, but to add to the total in order to be properly dressed for Dale's workshop.)

And finally, below is an image to bring a smile to one's face: a Breton boy interacting with a colleague in a children's cercle celtique as they wait to perform at a festival. His priceless give-me-a-break body-language is something I'd like to borrow as a means of conveying to you all, "Are you kidding me? Stepping down

as Editor doesn't mean I've lost interest in this newsletter or that I'll stop contributing, in whatever form the newsletter ends up taking, even though I'm not officially on the staff any more." Nancy Nies has more to say on *cercles celtiques* and Breton culture in a Letter to the Editor that appears on p. 26.



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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



In the Heel of the Boot . . .

by Nancy Nies

In September 2013 Paul and I spent four days in Apulia, the region forming the “heel” of boot-shaped Italy. Paul gave a workshop in the town of Castellana Grotte, and our wonderful hosts – Patrizia, Francesco, Sergio, Miriam and Ben – saw to it that we visited the beautiful surrounding countryside with its olive trees, vineyards, and farmhouses, as well as several of the area’s charming old towns, with their ancient limestone streets and buildings.

One picturesque town we visited was Alberobello, dubbed the Città dei Trulli. A *trullo* is a small hut with a conical roof, built of limestone without benefit of mortar. Alberobello boasts a number of renovated *trulli*, and is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Prior to our trip, we had discovered that during our visit to the area, the town would be hosting a festival in honour of its patron saints, Cosma and Damiano. Thanks to our kind hosts, we were in the crowd watching as the statues of the two saints were brought out of the basilica and as a colourful procession, with standard-bearers and a brass band, ensued. This experience definitely helped make up for the fact that we saw no folk dancing.

Alberobello does, however, have its own performing folk dance troupe, known as the Gruppo

Folkloristico “Città dei Trulli,” which hosts an annual international folk dance festival in early August. (See www.alberobellofolklore.it for photos of the group and the 2013 festival, and youtube.com/watch?v=CX4WNj8B8sE for a video of the Alberobello dancers performing a *tarantella* on 1 August 2013.)



Photo: Nancy Nies.

Procession honouring Alberobello’s two patron saints, Cosma e Damiano, begins at the basilica bearing their names. The nearby streets and square are decorated for the occasion.

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Albania 2013

by Judy Bourke

Albania! We'd never been there and it sounded exciting, so last October Anita Millman, Shelagh Beattie and I joined up with Jim Gold, Lee Otterholt with his son Sebastian, and 18 others to explore this country. Corfu was included in the trip, adding to the allure.

Our flight from Toronto was delayed two and a half hours, but we didn't need to worry. An Alitalia representative met us on landing in Rome and rushed us to the boarding gate in time for our flight to Tirana. We were met at the airport by a charming young Albanian who drove us to Durrës in pouring rain. On arrival at the hotel, we were surprised to find that the main group, travelling from New York with Lee, had not arrived. Their flight too had been delayed, but they missed the connection at Istanbul and didn't arrive in Durrës until after we had retired for the night. It seems that the only flights that leave on time these days are the ones you are trying to connect with.

The day in Durrës was pleasantly spent exploring the old part of the city, finding some Roman ruins, then getting lost in a maze of back streets and totally missing the Roman amphitheatre. Dinner was excellent: a foretaste of superb meals to come.

It was raining harder than ever the next day as we started out, but we were in the capable hands of our safe and sure bus driver, Kristo, and our handsome and knowledgeable guide, Kliti, who both looked after us superbly in Albania.

Our first stop was the monastery of Ardenica, home now to only two monks. The church was built in 1743, and here we saw our first example of the intricately carved and gilded woodwork of pulpit and iconostasis that we were to see in other old churches. Kliti explained how to "read" the paintings on the iconostasis, the screen between the body of the church and the altar in Eastern Orthodox churches; for example, the icon second left of the central figure always shows the patron saint of that church.

Continuing south, we stopped at the important site of Apollonia, founded in 588 BCE by Greek colonists and continued under Roman rule. This city flourished



Photo: Judy Bourke.

Statue of one of Albania's heroes, Ali Pasha (1740-1822).

until the 3rd century CE, when an earthquake caused the harbour to silt up. Much of the ancient stonework was used for later constructions, and the nearby Church of St. Mary included some very pagan-looking stones in its fabric.

We had noticed many little bunkers in the fields beside the road, and at Apollonia there was a row of them in the hillside across the valley. Kliti told us that they were left over from the era when Albania split its ties with the Soviets, then feared a Russian-led invasion. From the age of 14, boys were trained weekly in the use of the Kalashnikov AK-47, and in the event of an invasion the bunkers would have been instantly manned and used in guerrilla warfare against the invaders. At the end of the Communist era, it was found that there were twice as many Kalashnikovs as people in Albania.

We stopped for the night at Vlora on the Gulf of the same name and had our first lesson in Albanian dancing from Genç Kastrati, a dancer and choreographer with the National Ensemble of Folk Songs and Dances in Tirana. These dances he taught (particularly Valle Pogonishtë) stood us in good stead everywhere in Albania.

The next morning we awoke to a gloriously clear sky and the first sun we'd seen in Albania. Driving south to Saranda we had beautiful views back to the Gulf as we ascended the Llogara Pass. This road is notoriously bad: two narrow lanes only – except where one of the lanes has collapsed into the valley below, leaving the rest fissured and subsided. We all held our breath while Kristo carefully inched across. There was still sun behind us, but the sky ahead became darker and darker. What should have been a panoramic view at the café at the top of the pass was blanketed with thick fog. Descending, we left the fog behind and, once more on the coast, enjoyed sunshine and the scents of rosemary, sage and thyme at a honey farm.

Just past Himara, we visited the castle of Ali Pasha, built in the late 18th century. Of course we danced the dance, first in the dark archways inside the castle, then on the breezy rooftop looking out over the Adriatic Sea. According to Kliti, the castle was built as a present from the septuagenarian Ali Pasha to his 18-year-old bride!

Our hotel this night was in Saranda, ferry-port for Corfu, our next stop. But first we were entertained in the evening by a group singing in the unique Albanian iso-polyphonic style. They also danced accompanied by traditional musicians, and much of the time we were able to dance along with them.

Next day we had a welcome late start, giving us time to wander along the seafront of the pretty town of Saranda in the sunshine before leaving on the hydrofoil to Corfu (Kerkyra in Greek). We were there for three nights – time to relax after the hectic pace of the last few days. No sea view at the hotel for us; our rooms entertainingly faced out to the runway of the Corfu International Airport.

The leader of the dance group Alios, Andreas Paipetis, was our teacher this day for Greek dances. He and another of his group demonstrated a vigorous Zorba's dance for which young knees were necessary.

After a brief walking tour of the town of Kerkyra next day, we drove across the island to the 12th-century monastery of Theotokos perched on a high cliff at Paleokas-

tritsa, for me chiefly memorable for good views of the sea and the many cats. From there we drove higher to what was supposed to be an even more spectacular view – fog-shrouded again!

That evening we had quite a workout at the Lao-damas school of dance in the town, learning nine! more Corfiot dances, helped by the teenaged students. Dimitri Kantas and his daughter Marialena danced a couple dance for us, and at the close of the session Marialena showed us how to dress in the colourful Corfiot costume.

On the free day, Lee arranged a workshop in the morning and a dance party after dinner. (If ever there was an hour or two free, Lee would manage to fill it with practice of new dances and review of old ones, but he had arranged such a good program of sessions with local dance groups and teachers that we had very little opportunity for this.)

We took the early hydrofoil back to Albania the next morning and had a happy reunion with Kristo and Kliti on the dock at Saranda. Our first stop was at the major archaeological site of Butrint, settled first by Illyrians, but developed as an important port by the Greeks, then the Romans. The Byzantine church was built in the early 6th century. Its circular baptistery contains a beautiful mosaic, sadly covered by a layer of sand to save it from being broken up by rising groundwater, which threatens the whole site.

Here we left the coast, journeying over a mountain pass to Gjirokastra, the City of Stone, picturesquely stacked up the side of a mountain. Houses and roof



Photo: Jeff Isen; reproduced by permission.

Rebelling against the fog in Albania.



Marialena Kantas in costume of Corfu, Greece.

tiles alike are all constructed of the same grey stone.

Before dinner we were entertained by, and danced with, the Gjirokastra Women's Folk Dance ensemble, a group of lively teenagers and their teacher. Our hotel was the leading venue for local events, and a wedding party was taking place in a big hall next to the dining room. We were welcomed into the group to dance but left after a while, thinking of another early start the next day. One of our group had an extremely early start; woken up about 5 a.m. by Albanian music still playing, she rejoined the party to dance until breakfast time.

A visit to the castle was not to be missed – a gorgeous viewpoint over the town and the valley below. Then we were on our way to Berat, first along the valley of the beautiful turquoise-blue Vjosa River in its bed of white gravel, then across a plain seeing 19th-century agricultural techniques in everyday use: men forking crops into horse-carts, small flocks of sheep and goats looked after by men and dogs, single

cows (no herds), the fields divided into narrow strips, stooks of corn stalks – and a man with a cellphone clapped to his ear.

Berat, “town of a thousand windows” – our hotel was a beautifully restored old house in the Berati tradition. What a surprise to have turkey at dinner! How did they know it was our Canadian Thanksgiving? Five Canadians gave a spirited rendition of our national anthem to help our American co-travellers get in the mood. After dinner we had a dance party led by an Albanian couple in costume. She amazingly danced for about 10 minutes with a glass of water on her head that she eventually passed on to Lee, who also danced without spilling a drop.

The next morning we had a short tour of the town before the obligatory visit to the 13th-century castle (all these old towns have a castle, it seems). The unusual feature of this one is that people are still living inside the walls. Looking down at the town, we could see an impressive domed building, described by Kliti as being a private university where one could quickly buy any kind of degree for a few thousand dollars.

On the way to our night stop, Shkodra, we visited the memorial to the great hero of Albania, Skanderbeg, in Lezha. In the 15th century, Skanderbeg defended this Christian northern area of Albania against the Ottomans for 20 years. We dined that night in Shkodra at a restaurant in an old house, entertained by a group of energetic young people who danced for us, then again made room for us to join them. An interesting feature was a singer of the old-style folk songs who accompanied himself on a primitive-looking lute (*lahuta*; see cover photo.)

There is a very sad legend about the Castle of Rozafa in Shkodra. Brothers who were building the castle were having bad luck, and it was suggested that a human sacrifice would turn this about. The wife of the youngest brother was tricked into being the one to be sacrificed by being walled up alive. She agreed on condition that her right eye, right breast and right leg were all left out of the wall so that she could keep a watchful eye on her newborn son, feed him and rock his cradle. A white deposit on a wall is said to be her milk.

At Kruja we were excused from visiting the castle but instead enjoyed the National Ethnographic museum in a traditional house built in 1764, fully furnished in the old style. Memorable was the children's balcony in the women's quarters, like a huge playpen

where the children were safely contained under their mothers' watchful eyes. The bazaar here was the best, and many of the group bought costumes, mats and other handicrafts.

Through a major downpour we drove on to our last stop, the capital city of Tirana. Our hotel looked out onto the broad expanse of Skanderbeg Square. It was fascinating to watch the traffic below negotiating the intersections. There were no lights; one just proceeded with caution but determination never to yield an inch to another. Amazingly, seemingly hopeless gridlocks were sorted out in seconds, with cars, buses, trucks, bicycles and pedestrians all sharing the road.

After our dinner at a traditional restaurant that evening, we were treated to a performance by Genç Kastrati and three other performers from the National Folk Dance Ensemble. The two women performed gracefully, the men powerfully; one dance having them balance *en pointe*, needless to say without pointe shoes. Lee became an honorary Albanian, dancing with the two men.

Our last day arrived, warm and sunny, for us to take a walking tour of the older part of the city, a pastiche of everything from Roman through Italian, Communist, and then post-Communist (early 1990s), when the Albanians' love of colour could re-assert itself. The mayor of Tirana at that time asked for donations of leftover paint to brighten up the city, resulting in buildings striped horizontally or vertically, or balconies picked out in different colours. Now new buildings are made colourful from the start.

People were starting to leave during the day, some hurriedly as Alitalia had decided to have a partial strike. Dinner was rather subdued and danceless this last evening. In the wee hours of the next morning, we three Ontarians sadly left Albania. I had arrived knowing next to nothing about Albania, and learned so much of its history from Kliti and met many friendly people. The mountains are spectacular, the sea beautiful, and the old towns fantastic. The traditional dances are still an important part of the culture here. Jim is so impressed with Albania, he is already arranging another trip there next year! [It will be on October 4–17, 2015, with an extension to Kosovo, October 17–21. And Genç Kastrati will be teaching at Stockton camp in California in July–August 2015 – Ed.]



Gjirokastra, Albania.

Photo: Judy Bourke.

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Thank you to
Frances Cohen for her recent
donation to the OFDA

OFDA's East Indian Dance Café

by Karen Bennett

It was a great pleasure for me to become reacquainted with the energetic and irresistible Paromita Kar at the East Indian dance café on April 5 at the Ralph Thornton Centre in Toronto. (I first met Paromita in October 2011; she was a dancer in Fethi Karakeçili's *Mem u Zin* production, and is still a member of his Dilan Dance Company.) Paromita was born in the east of India and grew up in the north, but now makes her home in Toronto.

After the usual potluck dinner, Paromita let us dip a toe into the amazing richness of dance from all over India, not merely East India, although she began there,

with a dance called Karma, from the state of Odisha. This dance for men and women was succeeded by one for women only: Khalbeliya, from Rajasthan, northwest India. We were getting quite comfortable with the various figures, but such was Paromita's enthusiasm that she couldn't resist shoe-horning in a few movements from a favourite

women's dance of hers: Bhampa, from the Punjab. We weren't able to learn the whole thing, to our disappointment. It was astonishing how the time had flown; we wouldn't have noticed if two hours had gone by, let alone an hour and a bit.

Just a few of Paromita's accomplishments:

In addition to performing Indian, Kurdish (and now Turkish) dance, she's a founding member of the Toronto-based dance troupe Ekakshara Dance Creations and dances with the Saucy Tarts ("genuine purveyors of the Queen Street can-can!"). She recently defended her PhD thesis in dance at York University. Her website can be visited at <http://paromitakar.wix.com/danseuse>, and I can attest that she's a good writer in addition to a wonderful dancer and teacher. Just as with Hilda Panasiuk and the Mexican dancers at the February café, Paromita's material, presence and skill cry out for a return engagement.

Paromita Kar shows arm position for the dance Karma.

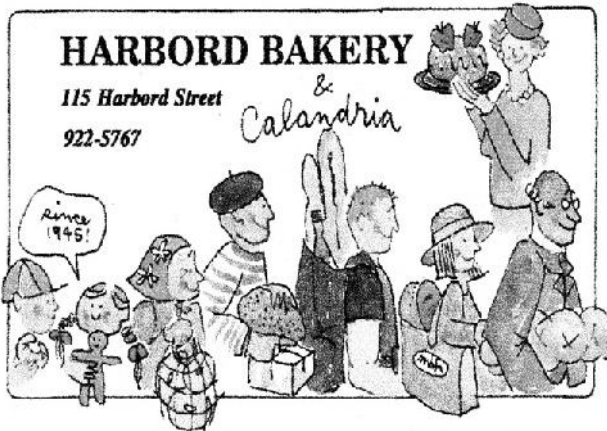


Photo: Allen Katz.



Leading the dance Karma.

Photo: Bev Sidney.



View more photos of Dance Events
at www.ofda.ca/photos.html

Preserving Cultural Heritage: A Responsible Approach to Costume Collecting

by Jan T. Letowski

Jan Letowski is an independent researcher, consultant and curator of European ethnographic dress residing in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He has collaborated with museums in both the US and Europe and holds an M.A. in Museum Studies from George Washington University in Washington, DC. He lectures on the history and function of clothing in the traditional culture of eastern Europe and collects ethnographic material related to his research. His emphasis is on preservation and on increasing the awareness of the value of folk dress to the study of history and art. He hopes that his work will culminate in the creation of a museum specifically dedicated to the study of ethnographic costume. Some of his collection can be viewed at www.flickr.com/photos/ethnicrodress/, and he can be contacted at slavart@easterneuropeanart.com.

Collecting can be an exciting and rewarding activity that brings you personal joy and contributes to the cultural and educational landscape of your community. However, collecting historic artifacts and cultural material brings with it certain responsibilities and obligations aimed at ensuring long-term preservation and expanding our understanding of ethnography, history and art. Folk costumes, along with other traditional arts forms, allow us to experience the creative expression and ingenuity of generations of men and women who created visually striking objects that were functional elements of their societies. As windows to times past, such objects should be cared for and preserved for future generations, while being appreciated as art objects and serving as sources of inspiration and education today. By taking steps to document your collection, maintaining adequate storage conditions, and properly handling the costumes in your care, you can be a more responsible collector and increase the overall value of your collection.¹

To better understand your responsibilities as a collector, it can be helpful to shift your thinking from *ownership* to *stewardship*. Ethnographic collections include objects that have both a history and a prospective future, making their time with any one collector relatively brief. Therefore, in addition to finding personal satisfaction through collecting, your decisions as a steward should be focused on preserving the artifacts in your care along with their stories for future generations.

Documentation and Cataloguing

One of the most important things you can do to give

value to your collection is maintain good records. Regardless of how you came to own a costume – be it in a village, at a festival, from a friend or dealer – it already had a life before you acquired it that can provide clues to its origin, functions, and importance. Such information should be systematically sought out from previous owners, recorded, and kept with a costume whenever possible. As you acquire more costumes, specifics will be harder to remember and relevant details can often get blurred.

One of the fundamental functions of traditional folk costumes was their role in differentiating members of a local community. While this concept is widely understood and commonly addressed in the first paragraphs of any text dealing with ethnic dress, the precise regional customs are rarely well documented. Deciphering specific visual clues without



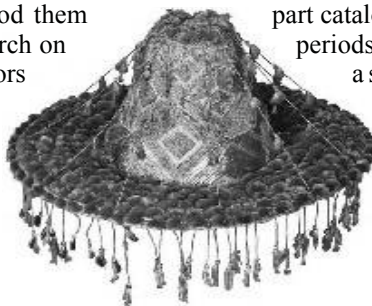
Photo: Jan Letowski.

Rehousing work done at the Smithsonian by Jan included using poly batting to create inner supports for men's shoes from Epirus.

access to the people who understood them poses a significant obstacle in research on a regional and village level. Collectors can help future generations better understand these unwritten rules and visual symbols by recording as much as possible when given access to such information about costumes in their collection. Useful questions to consider include:

- *What was the wearer's ethnic and religious affiliation?* Costumes were often specific to different groups within mixed communities.
- *What was the wearer's marital status and family life situation?* Men's and women's costumes could change depending on if they were single, engaged, newlyweds, with or without children, pregnant, widowed, etc.
- *For what purpose(s) was the costume worn?* Costumes differed depending on the day of the week, church holidays, family celebrations, seasons, times of fasting and mourning, etc.
- *When was the costume made/worn?* As with all fashion, peasant costumes developed over time, so it is important to know when a costume was made and worn in order to study chronological changes.
- *What does the owner consider important/interesting?* By encouraging owners to tell you about their objects, you can pick up on how a costume was unique within its village, understand the maker's technical skills, and record other information specific to the costume.

After information is collected, it is important to link it to the respective costumes so that it can be retrieved when necessary. Consider creating a database (electronic or handwritten) to store all relevant information together and assign an inventory number to each object in your collection. Adopt a record-keeping and labelling approach that will be easy for an outsider to understand so that all of your hard work can serve its desired purpose when you are no longer available for consultation. Museums and other collecting institutions and individuals use a standardized three-



Large, fragile pieces, such as this man's straw hat from Zemmour, Morocco, should be stored individually in adequately sized containers in order to prevent damage.

part catalogue numbering system separated by periods that includes the year of acquisition, a sequential number specifying the order of acquisition² in that year, and a specific object number identifying each element of that acquisition. This is a straightforward and useful approach that records basic information directly in the object's number. With a numbering system in place, you must then physically attach numbers to the object in your collection. One of the most effective methods is to write the number on a piece of cotton twill tape using an archival pen and

stitch it to an inconspicuous area of each garment. Do not write the numbers directly on the garments as this causes irreversible damage. Another option is to write the numbers on archival tags and tie them to each garment; however, this is less recommended, because the tags can poke into the fabric, can pull on whatever they are attached to, have a greater chance of coming loose from the garments, and can be a nuisance if you wear any of the costumes in your collection. By stitching the numbers to the objects, you are creating a more permanent solution that will allow you to be a better steward. Mark all of the pieces which belong together so that they do not get mixed up with other costumes over time. This is especially important for accessories such as jewelry, socks, sashes and ribbons, which can be harder to differentiate later.

Storage and Care

A responsible approach to costume collecting must include an adequate storage and long-term-care plan. Textiles are fragile objects and susceptible to damage from light, insects, acidity, humidity, dust, and numerous other agents. In order for the artifacts in your collection to remain in good condition, you will need to develop an appropriate storage and monitoring system. While the topic of storage and care cannot be comprehensively covered in this article, there are a number of basic elements to introduce, namely appropriate storage techniques, materials, and damage control. Costumes and historic fashion are one of the more complicated, space-consuming, and expensive types of objects to house properly, a reason why

Photo: Jan Letowski.

many museums don't collect, or limit the number of costumes and textiles in their collections. Private collectors can sometimes be more effective by adopting resource-saving alternatives not available to public institutions, but every responsible collector should strive for the highest level of professional standards whenever possible.

The general accepted approach to storing textile objects is to lay them flat with as few folds as possible. However, this can be problematic with tailored or highly structured garments that don't easily lay flat, and in these instances, it can be more appropriate to hang garments. The following useful tips are taken from The Textile Museum of Washington, DC's "Guidelines for the Care of Textiles":

Garments can be hung for storage if they are in good condition. To remove strain from the shoulders of a garment, choose a sturdy hanger with the correct shoulder slant for the garment. Wrap the hanger in several layers of polyester quilt batting to give a fuller shoulder support. Cover the batting with a piece of washed muslin for a smooth finish. Finally, a hanging garment should be protected with a muslin dust cover made in the shape of a cleaner's bag. Avoid using plastic cleaner's bags and vinyl garment bags that deteriorate and could potentially harm your textile. Avoid hanging heavily beaded costumes or dresses cut on the bias.³

Additionally, when opting for a hanging solution, hang only one costume piece per hanger. Since textiles are sensitive to changes in the surrounding environment, acid-free, archival materials⁴ are the best long-term solution for housing your costume treasures. For garments that can be stored flat, archival acid-free garment boxes can be purchased from specialty online retailers that also carry all of the other necessary archival materials. These boxes will protect your costumes and create a porous buffer against humidity fluctuations, absorbing some of the moisture from the air before it affects the textiles inside. An alternative to archival cardboard boxes are clear⁵ storage bins made of polypropylene and polyethylene plastics.⁶ Such boxes are also acid-free and, since they are not perfectly airtight, they are suitable for storing textiles and other materials. Do not store your costumes in sealed bags or fully air-tight contain-

ers as natural fibres need air circulation to breathe.

When selecting archival storage containers, give preference to relatively shallow boxes. Deep boxes will tempt you to stack too many items inside and layering folded garments will result in permanent creasing and splitting to fibres of objects at the bottom. Instead, reduce the number of objects and spread them out between several boxes, wrapping each in washed muslin fabric and/or acid-free/lignin-free tissue paper. This will create an additional buffer against environmental changes, protect pieces from catching on each other, and make it easier to detect insect activity. If layering a few items in one box, be mindful to place heavier objects towards the bottom and stagger the placement of objects within the box to reduce the direct weight on lower textiles. Use acid-free/lignin-free tissue paper to fill out voids in the box that would otherwise cause a garment to sag over the side of one below it. Use crumpled archival tissue along any folds in garments and to gently fill out sleeves or other tailored elements. Lignin-free/acid-free tissue is the best option for textile storage as lignin is a component of wood that causes even acid-free paper to lose its archival qualities and damage your costumes over time. Never use regular gift-wrap tissue paper from department stores as it is not suitable for archival storage.

Additional care should be paid when storing accessories such as elaborate headdresses, bonnets, belts, footwear, jewelry, and other three-dimensional objects that do not lay flat. For such objects it is beneficial to create custom supports using polyester quilt batting wrapped in washed muslin fabric or cotton stockinette to create a small pillow, which can be inserted into objects, preventing sagging and giving additional support to weak areas. Jewelry should be stored in separate archival boxes since certain metals and plastics can discolour and stain textiles.

One of the most significant threats to any textile collection are pests such as moths and carpet beetles, which attack objects made from protein fibres: wool, fur, sheepskin, silk, and feathers. Maintaining a clean environment and systematically monitoring your costumes is the best way to avoid an infestation. Whenever introducing a new costume to your collection, take time to inspect it for signs of insect activity and freeze or store it separately from the rest of your collection for a period of time. Freezing at low temperatures is the most effective and safe method for

pest control and is the only method recommended by many museums and conservators for eradicating an insect infestation.⁷ However, low-temperature freezing is often not available to most collectors and so it can be necessary to consider alternatives. Various natural and chemical pesticides have been used to control insect activity throughout history, with varying degrees of success. A common solution of past decades has been the use of mothballs, traditionally made from naphthalene and para-dichlorobenzene but recently made from other compounds as well, e.g., pyrethrin and permethrin. While pesticides can be effective at killing insects, their vapours are also toxic to humans and can react with textiles, causing stains and other damage. On the other hand, while natural repellents such as cedar and lavender may smell pleasant, they are not effective at combating insects and protecting your collection. Do not pack costumes into tight closets, damp basements, or hot attics, but instead store them in dry, dark, clean areas in your home that experience the fewest fluctuations in relative humidity, such as under a bed. For larger collections, it is best to have a special area of your home specifically dedicated to storage. Always wash your hands before handling textiles to remove oils and dirt, and never eat or drink while working with your collection.

To Wear or Not to Wear

The folk dance community cares for a significant percentage of the authentic costumes in private hands, and numerous North American institutions have already benefited from the foresight and generosity of visionary dancer-collectors. Nevertheless, many dancers acquire costumes primarily for wear and

are unaware of the issues related to proper storage, care and long-term preservation. While I hope that this article has depicted folk costumes as more than mere accessories to dance, for those who continue to wear them it is also beneficial to examine some wear-related issues.

Firstly, as a professional in the museum field, I do not support the wear of historic garments, because the risk of long-term damage is too great. Originally, folk costumes were worn and danced in during village feasts and celebrations, serving both utilitarian and ritual functions within the context of the village environment. Now they are also historic artifacts worth preserving, much like once-functional Roman pots or Scythian vessels, and such important cultural treasures should no longer be subjected to the rigours of the spins, jumps, stomps, lifts, flips, and kicks of dancing. While I firmly profess that certain costumes should never be worn, I acknowledge that others could be appropriate for wear based on their age, condition, history, and other factors. As anyone familiar with peasant culture will recognize, traditional costumes play a significant role in folk dancing and the expression of ethnic identity, and can understand the need for costumes suitable for wear. Preferably, these should be contemporary reproductions with little or no historic value and which bestow no ethical responsibility on the wearer to protect them from damage.

When selecting costumes from your collection to wear, use educated judgment to identify those which can sustain the impact of dancing, as quick movements, rapid bends, lifts, and kicks, can put high strain on weaker parts of garments. High-risk areas include the base of armholes, shoulder straps, joining seams, and any fastening points (buttons, hooks,



Slovak blouse with red embroidery, before (left) and after being hand-washed about 10 times. Jan tested for colourfastness by washing in cold water and working his way up to hot, frequently checking for colour transfer. He only takes risks when pieces are too dirty to be useful, and never washes anything too important.

Photos: Jan Letowski.

clasps, laces). Monitor these areas regularly and stop wearing a costume if you notice splitting, deformations, wear to the edges, or other damages.

There are also a number of things you can do to minimize any potential damage:

- Wear undergarments and buffer layers. T-shirts, slips, petticoats, and other undergarments are easy to wash and will reduce the amount of perspiration absorbed by a costume. Consider wearing a cotton bandana under decorative kerchiefs, bonnets and hats to absorb hair and head oils.
- Substitute certain authentic elements that see the most wear, such as blouses and shirts, with plain garments or contemporary reproductions that are easier to clean.
- Don't wear a costume that is too small. Costume elements that are too tight will suffer greater strain at the seams and could tear.
- Seek assistance when dressing/undressing. Having an extra set of hands to lift, tie, and adjust costume parts will reduce the strain caused by tugging and pulling garments.
- Avoid eating and drinking while wearing a costume to prevent stains.
- Remove watches, rings and other personal jewelry that could get caught and tear decorative trim, lace, ribbons, etc.
- Limit the number of times you wear any given costume.

After wearing a costume, allow it to air out before returning it to proper storage. Address any damages as soon as possible, as a minor tear or small stain can become a serious problem if left untreated. Food and perspiration stains should be cleaned promptly to prevent setting and attracting insects. Hand-wash any plain elements such as blouses and undergarments after every use to prevent yellowing. Use extreme caution when washing embroidered and decorated items and seek professional advice where you have concerns, as damage caused by

bleeding dyes is irreversible. Avoid ironing whenever possible and use the lowest-heat settings when absolutely necessary. Dry cleaning can be a good choice for certain heavier, wool and decorated garments that cannot be washed at home; however, it is important to seek out a reputable dry cleaner who will address your specific needs and use cleaning agents safe for your garments. Ask for recommendations on a reliable dry cleaner at museums, theatres, or high-end fashion shops in your area.⁸

Planning for the Future

In addition to caring for your collection during your lifetime, it is necessary to think about the future of your costumes while you are still collecting. Many collectors fail to realize the importance of planning ahead and often leave family with the task of disposing of their collections. Unfortunately, surviving family members rarely have the personal dedication and knowledge about your collection that is necessary to

ensure it gets properly passed on. There is no easy solution to what to do with your collection after you are no longer able to care for it, but as a responsible collector you should devote time and energy to investigating options early. While you are collecting, consult with other collectors, contact museums and cultural organizations, discuss options with dealers, and create a network that can assist you when the time comes to part with your costumes.

An unfortunate problem faced by many collectors today is that museums are seldom willing to accept entire collections without a substantial endowment to fund their future care. Furthermore, few museums in North America are interested in acquiring European ethnographic costumes, so it is no longer reasonable to assume that donation will be a convenient last resort.

Regardless of how and when you dispose of your collection, be sure to include your documentation



When worn with care, costumes can serve as excellent tools to teach about world cultures. (Costume from Ilmajoki, Finland, bought from Jan Letowski and worn by Karen Bennett at OFDA's Finnish and Scandinavian café on March 31, 2012.)

and research so that the future can benefit from your dedication and expertise. By being a responsible collector during your lifetime, researching the objects in your care, maintaining detailed records, and creating a suitable environment for their storage and care, you will increase not only the value of your collection but also your chances of finding a suitable lasting home for your treasures.

Endnotes

1. For the purpose of this article, the term “value” is used primarily to refer to the historical and education value of cultural objects, and less to their financial value. The motivations behind collecting for financial gain can be quite different than those assumed here, so they will not be a primary consideration, though in many cases there may be overlap.
2. Example: A 10-part folk costume acquired in 2014 might have catalog numbers 2014.001.01 through 2014.001.10.
3. The Textile Museum, Washington, DC.
4. See Additional Resources for retailer information.
5. Coloured plastics are more likely to contain other chemicals and less likely to be acid-free.
6. This is the standard for modern storage containers from companies such as Sterilite® and Rubbermaid®, but always research materials before buying and contact a company with questions about the chemical make-up of their products.
7. Additional information on this and other pest control guidelines can be found in “Pest Busters,” prepared by the conservation department of The Textile Museum in Washington, DC (see Additional Resources).
8. It is not possible to comprehensively cover washing guidelines and techniques here; please consult Additional Resources.

Additional Resources

This article is a starting point in your journey to becoming a responsible costume collector. There are numerous in-depth publications and institutions that can help you along the way.

1. Publications

- Boersma, F., Brokerhof, A. W., Berg, S., & Tegelaers, J. (2007). *Unravelling Textiles: A Handbook for the Preservation of Textile*

Collections. London: Archetype for the Netherlands Textile Committee.

- Mailand, H. F., & Alig, D. S. (1999). *Preserving Textiles: A Guide for the Nonspecialist*. Indianapolis, IN: Indianapolis Museum of Art.

2. Institutions

- *The Textile Museum (Washington, DC)*, <http://textilemuseum.org/care/care.htm>. Includes useful information for textile owners, including the “Pest Busters” brochure.
- *Textile Museum of Canada (Toronto, ON)*, www.textilemuseum.ca/collection/owners. Includes useful information for textile owners, including Canadian resources and conservators.
- *Canadian Conservation Institute*, www.cci-icc.gc.ca/publications/notes/index-eng.aspx. An excellent resource with scholarly publications and practical guides for object care (CCI Notes).

3. Archival Material Suppliers

- Archival Methods: www.archivalmethods.com.
- Talas: <http://talasonline.com>.
- University Products: www.universityproducts.com.



Photo: Karen Bennett.

Linen apron and dress of a Croatian costume from Prigorje (around Zagreb) with many burn marks from an iron. Original, hand-embroidered Prigorje costumes are too rare not to be valued even if discovered, as Terri Taggart did this one for Karen Bennett at a Toronto antiques show, with irreparable damage.

The “War of 1812–14” Workshop

by Karen Bennett,
with the kind assistance of Dale Hyde

On Friday, March 21, I hied me to Hamilton for an English dance workshop taught by Dale Hyde that was another in a series of 30th-anniversary events for the Hamilton club. I’d lugged along a custom-made Regency ball dress, but so time-consuming was it to struggle into (I really needed a maid!) that I was absent for Dale’s introduction and his first dance. (Also, I couldn’t write down the later dance names as I didn’t want to get inkstains on my long white gloves, which took forever to get on and off!) However, in response to a subsequent electronic plea, Dale supplied a wealth of insight into how he researched/reconstructed the dances in his program and worked with his two musicians. I found these details fascinating and decided they needed sharing; I’ve done so, with Dale’s permission.

“I didn’t do a big ‘ramble’ at the beginning [wrote Dale]. I introduced Stephen Fuller (fiddler) and Michael (sorry, he didn’t tell me his last name, and that is the first time he’s played when I’ve called dances; he was a bass player). I also mentioned that, keeping with the theme of the War of 1812–14, I chose dances that were from the years 1780–1810. Several of these dances were referenced in manuscripts and music copy books of the time. The main references were “Country Dances danced by the British Officers in their Wintering-Over Quarters” (1785) and also the Frobisher music copy book from Montreal (1793).

“The Frobisher music copy book is a real gem.

I found that one in the Canadian Archives. I haven’t been able to find out a lot about Caroline Frobisher. I presume after she had copied out her music at her lesson, she then hand-wrote the directions of the dance underneath that went with the music. Stephen and I have managed to reconstruct all 16 dances and also the music to accompany them.

“I also mentioned that the music of very few of these dances had ever been recorded, so only when we had musicians could we do these dances. In the old books and manuscripts, the tune is also printed along with the dance directions. I struggled through several of these notations, and it is amazing how many of the figures were not fully described; I guess it was expected that everyone knew the figures so why keep explaining them. Example: many of the notations say that 1st couple leads down the middle and back. Then, suddenly, they are dancing a figure with a 3rd couple. Question: how did they get there? That’s where the reconstruction comes in, to presume

that 1st couple must have had to cast off one position. Since I don’t read music, it meant having meetings with Stephen after he had a chance to work through the music. As an interesting example of solving problems when we collaborate, I didn’t get to the dance Prince of Brunswick last night, but when we got together and Stephen played the music as printed, there was no possible way that dancers would be able to move through all the figures at the speed of the music. Then Stephen thought



Dale Hyde (centre) with musicians.

perhaps if we interpreted the 6/8 time signature as 3/4, that might make the difference. Eureka!! that was the solution. Stephen does quite a bit of music history and knew that the two time signatures could be interchangeable in that time period.

“The dances were, in order: Mrs. Musters’ Fancy (1788); Constance (1788); Nancy’s Choice (1780); Clasmont (1812); The Rose (1795); British Sorrow (1807); The Rainbow (1780); 63rd Letter (1803); and Elegance and Simplicity (1803).”

And now, back to me, lest readers think I let Dale do all the work of talking about his workshop! His final dance, Elegance and Simplicity, was a three-couple set that I missed because it was time to struggle *out* of my ball dress, so I’m unable to pronounce on whether it lived up to its name, but I had no problems settling on likes and dislikes among the rest of the dances. British Sorrow was the only one I’d done before; I believe I first learned it from Tony Parkes in 1991, and was perfectly content to re-learn it. Notable, for all the wrong reasons, was The Rose, with an unusual, too-rushed movement by #1 woman and #1 man that reminded me of a naval cutting-out expedition whereby enemy ships/boats are captured at anchor (er, I’ve read a lot of naval fiction set during the 18th and 19th centuries). The dance was named for the British frigate HMS *Rose*, 13th of that name, whose success in suppressing smuggling in the colony of Rhode Island in the 1770s provoked the formation of what became the Continental Navy, precursor of the modern

US Navy. But the dances I loved the most were The Rainbow and the 63rd Letter. Wonderful stuff.

Almost everyone showed up in some kind of costume (in and out of period); kudos to the attendees for putting such effort into dress (which they’d mostly made themselves), as it added so much to the ambience of the evening. My own garb was something that for more than 30 years I’d been yearning for, and Dale’s workshop gave me an excuse to treat myself and have a professional seamstress make me a Regency-era dress (of dark blue taffeta). And it was a pleasure to meet Sheila Scott, who was to go on to teach English and Scottish dance at Ontario Folk Dance Camp in May. But of course, in the end, the main tribute belongs to Dale. It was a perfect evening, with the bonus of dancing with the Hamilton group, who always have such warmth and energy that I love to visit, no matter the occasion.



Dressing for the occasion are, left to right, Helga Hyde, Shelagh Beattie, Richard Palmer, Léa Chauvigné and Kate Drinan.

Both photos by Bonnie Kinder.

Marty Koenig Events

by Terri Taggart

What an evening! Thanks to Martin for providing such an interesting evening of dance and conversation. Thanks also goes to the 45 folk dancers who attended the Bulgarian dance workshop given by Martin on Wednesday April 23rd. There were a great many hugs and hand-shaking throughout the evening at Prosserman JCC (Bathurst north of Sheppard) as many old friends came to greet Martin, who has not been to Toronto for many years.

The dances he taught included Nestinarsko Horo, Anthoula, Batyovata Bulduzka, Gaida Avasi and Dobrolushko Horo.

As if that was not enough, Martin taught the next evening at Olga's Thursday evening group. This too was an excellent evening much appreciated by everyone. Thank you, Olga!

The next night (April 25), at the opening of Marty's photographic exhibition at Todmorden Mills (see April issue, p. 9), the Bulgarian ambassador to Canada, Dr. Nikolay Milkov, spoke very personally and positively about Marty and his efforts to preserve Bulgarian culture.

Village Dances of the Balkans

Dances taught by Martin Koenig



Photo: Walter Zagorski.

The CD that Marty taught from in 2014.

[A bio of Marty, updated to 2012, can be found at www.phantomranch.net/folkdanc/teachers/koenig_m.htm – Ed.]

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The Grapevine

In February, Walter Zagorski played a role in a modern adaptation of Gilbert & Sullivan's *Patience, or Bunthorne's Bride* (1881), in Toronto. Walter was a member of a football team called the Dragoons (in place of the original's Dragoon guard); the women were "goths" instead of milkmaids; and the character of Patience was a barista at the Dairy Queen. In March, Terri Taggart went to Rome, while Mirdza Jaunzemis visited Panama. On Sunday 5 May, Mirdza Jaunzemis was in Rochester, NY for a Jane Austen Ball, and reports that it was "great fun" and attended by about 80 people in Regency or period costume. She stayed overnight with Ruth Hyde. In May, Karen Walker and Carl Toushan went to England, and in June, Dale Hyde will take a cruise to England and Scotland (including the Orkney Islands). Later in the summer, many southern Ontarians will be descending on Mainewoods camp. And in September, Shelagh Beattie and Mirdza Jaunzemis will be going to Portugal.

Bev Sidney and Rachel Gottesman attended the March 20 performance of Rina Singha's Circle of Bricks: Rhythms of Kathak Dance concert at the Fleck Dance Theatre at Harbourfront Centre in Toronto, and pronounced it "an excellent dance event." The show, which ran from March 20–22, was a tribute to Rina's guru, Shambhu Maharaj, who taught her to dance inside a circle of bricks – a painful way to learn not to misstep. The production also included a contemporary retelling of the story of Babel. Rina did not dance but co-choreographed and co-directed, with Danny Grossman. Featured were Canadian kathak artists Hemant and Vaishali Panwar, Reshmi Chetram, Shanta Chikarmane, Nisheeth Nirjhum Proshanti, Chad Walasek and guest artist Eddie Kastrau, along with apprentices Divya Gossai, Sharda Samaroo, Neetika Sharma and Farzana Aluddin.

Terri Taggart recommends the 2013 film *Brasslands*, in which half a million people descend upon a tiny Serbian village for the 50th anniversary of the world's largest trumpet festival. She saw the film, she says, "at Balkan Camp last summer. It's a very thought-provoking documentary about Zlatne Uste, led by Michael Ginsberg, a Balkan Brass band from New York that travelled to Guča, Serbia, where a competition among brass bands is held annually. Included

in the film are two other bands, a Serbian brass band and a Roma brass band. As each of the bands describe their experiences as professional musicians, we get a glimpse of what life is like for these fellows. The date of the showing is June 14th at the Royal Cinema," 608 College St., Toronto.

Nancy Nies writes in a Letter to the Editor, "By coincidence, my article on Breton culture for the Folk Dancer ('Brittany: Land of *Coiffes* and *Crêpes*, Bombarde and Biniou,' April 2014, p. 17) appeared in print the same month as a *National Geographic* feature story on Breton women and their traditional headdresses, called *coiffes* ('Legacy in Lace,' April 2014). In my article, I mentioned that over the last 20 years, in Plougastel, the number of ladies still wearing the local *coiffe* in daily life had decreased from 50 to one, and surmised that the routine wearing of the distinctive, foot-tall *coiffe* of the Bigouden area had also likely died out since I witnessed and photographed it in 1981. The *National Geographic* article confirms this, featuring the last two Bigouden ladies (ages 87 and 90) known to carry on the tradition. The NG story is also accompanied by a dozen portraits of young Breton women modelling the traditional costumes and *coiffes* of their various towns. The Breton culture, states the article, is being passed on to young Bretons through their membership in the *cercles celtiques* – also mentioned in my article – which prepare them for competition in costume at folk dance festivals. The wearing of the *coiffe* in Brittany is thus dying out, in one sense. Yet, in another, it is still going strong, as a generation of proud young Bretons embraces its heritage."

Kitty Cohen, 101, became the oldest Canadian to throw out the first pitch for the Blue Jays' Mother's Day game on Sunday 11 May at the Rogers Centre in Toronto. The Jays were playing the Los Angeles Angels. Before delivering the pitch, Kitty (naturally) practised by tossing the ball in the dugout.

After a very successful stint on the faculty of Ontario Folk Dance Camp in Waterloo on May 16–19, Brazilian Lucia Cordeiro went on to guest-teach two classes at Prosserman JCC in Toronto on Wednesday May 21 before travelling to Ottawa for a workshop there. Her stay in Ontario included a sight-seeing trip to Niagara Falls. It was her first visit to Canada.

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Dubrovnik (optional) Oct 21-24!



2015 Tours

CUBA! February 13-20, 2015: Led by Jim Gold

Havana, Matanzas, Varadero

CHINA! (New) March 20-31, 2015. Led by Lee Otterholt

Beijing, Xian, Guilin, Yunnan, Shanghai, Hong Kong, etc.

ITALY Ecotour! (New) May 10-23, 2015. Led by Dan Buckin.

Venice, Padua, Belluno, Magenta, Lake Como, Dolomitic Alps!

POLAND! June 14-29, 2015. Led by Richard Schmidt.

Kraków, Zakopane, Wrocław, Berlin, Gdansk, Olsztyn, Warsaw!

BULGARIA! (Koprivshtitsa Folk Festival), August 1-15, 2015. Led by Jim Gold.

Sofia, Plovdiv, Bansko, Veliko Turnovo!

FRENCH CANADA! September 9-19, 2015. Led by Richard Schmidt.

Montreal, Quebec, Mont Tremblant!

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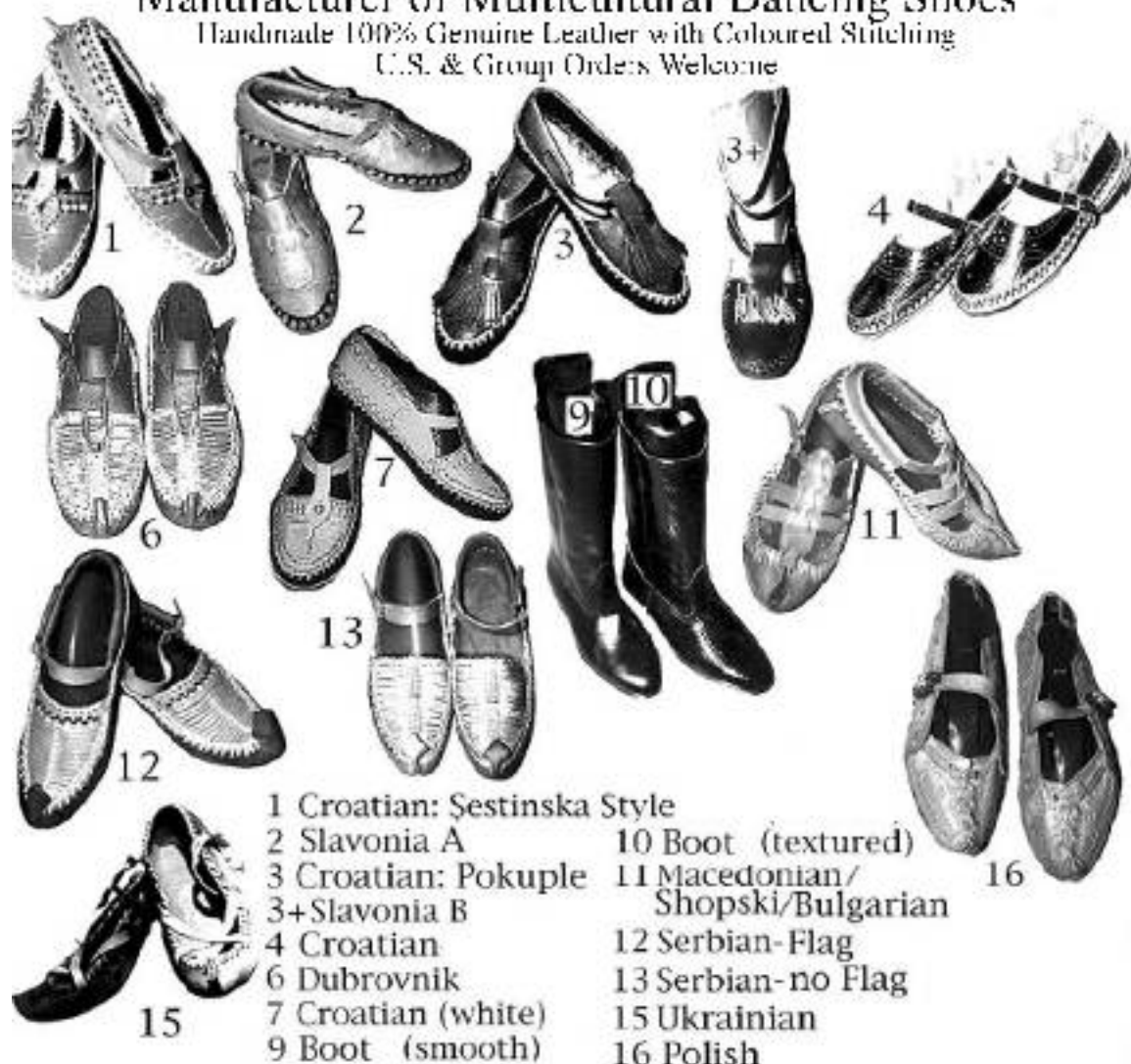
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