

ISSN 2368-7134

Folk Dancer Online

The Magazine of World Dance and Culture



PUBLISHED BY THE ONTARIO FOLK DANCE ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 46 NUMBER 1

February 2015

Folk Dancer Online

Editor Dorothy Archer
Production Bev Sidney
Advertising Paula Tsatsanis
Dance Calendar..Cornelia Nita

To contact the Editor, or to send calendar items, articles and other magazine content:
folkdanceronline@gmail.com

Proofreaders

.....Rachel Gottesman
.....Carole Greenberg
.....Adam Kossowski
.....Shirley Kossowski
Distribution.....Judy Deri

Folk Dancer Online (formerly Folk Dancer/the Ontario FolkDancer) is the magazine of the Ontario Folk Dance Association. We publish five issues per year (Feb. 1, Apr. 1, June 1, Oct. 1 and Dec. 1).

All rights reserved. Material may be reproduced with written permission of the editor, provided that magazine and author are acknowledged. Opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the individual author and do not reflect the views of the Folk Dancer Online and its staff or the Ontario Folk Dance Association and its Board of Directors.

DEADLINE: All materials must be received, by e-mail or postal mail, six weeks prior to publication.
Deadline for the April 1, 2015 issue is February 15, 2015.

Visit OFDA's Website
for local information and links to other
dance-related sites.

www.ofda.ca

Web Design: Noemi Adorjan
416-530-1528 or friendlyweb@gmail.com
Web Maintenance: Helen Winkler



Ontario Folk Dance Association (OFDA) is a non-profit organization. Established in 1969, incorporated in 1986, the OFDA's aim is to promote folk arts and particularly folk dancing of many cultures.

Steering Committee: Riki Adivi, Bev Sidney, Helen Winkler

Treasurer Janis Smith
Membership Mirdza Jaunzemis
Secretary Marylyn Peringer

Executive Members at Large

Gilda Akler-Sefton ~ Judith Cohen ~ Roz Katz
Adam Kossowski ~ Shirley Kossowski ~ Gary McIntosh
Cornelia Nita ~ Mary Triantafillou ~ Maya Trost ~ Paula Tsatsanis

For **MEMBERSHIP RATES** and **SUBSCRIPTIONS** see <http://www.ofda.ca/membership.html>

ADVERTISING RATES

	W	H	Single*	Multiple*	Yearly**
1/4 pg (3" x 3.5")			\$20	\$18	\$ 80
1/2 pg (6" x 3.5")			\$30	\$27	\$120
Full pg (6" x 7.25")			\$45	\$40	\$180

* per issue

** no copy changes unless camera-ready

Business Card Format: \$12 once, or \$48** per year
Your Ad on our Website: rates available on request.

For more information,
contact:
folkdanceronline@gmail.com

Prices shown are for sized and formatted ads. Because of the time required to alter, re-set or adapt other formats we ask that any advertising be submitted with finished layout and (at least close to) the size desired. There will be an additional charge for ads that require substantial alteration.

Cover: *The Mexican Folk Ballet at Charm of Music and Dance concert. See p.13. Photo: B.Sidney*

In This Issue

(Click On Bolded Titles To Go Directly To The Page or Article)

FOR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION (See www.ofda.ca/membership.html)
FOR THE DANCE CALENDAR (See www.ofda.ca/fdo_clndr.pdf)
FOR DANCE CLASSES/GROUPS INFO (See www.ofda.ca/groups.html)

.....

1. Editorial	... 4
2. Message from the Executive	... 5
3. Our California Correspondent <i>My Little Tiny French Wedding</i>	... 6
4. A Virtual Russian Dancer <i>Who Didn't Have to Defect</i>	... 8
5. BALfolkFESTnoz #2	... 11
6. OFDA Israeli Café	... 13
7. Charm of Song and Dance <i>Concert of the Academy of Serbian Folk Dancing</i>	... 14
8. Dancing Through Serbia 2014	... 15
9. Grapevine	... 28

[RETURN TO OFDA WEBSITE.](http://www.ofda.ca)

This is it!

by Dorothy Archer

Here it is, the first issue of Folk Dancer Online. Like most things that look first-class and seem easy, it belies the amount of work that went into the development. Bev Sidney spear-headed the effort; researching, seeking opinions, meeting with others, experimenting. Many people helped, especially Helen Winkler who gave good advice and sometimes experimented along with Bev. Membership secretary, Mirdza Jaunzemis, has had the help of Willie Kisin in overhauling the computerized membership files in order to streamline the process of sending renewal notices, either by mail or by internet. A great big thank you to all these people.



Bev Sidney



Willie Kisin



Mirdza Jaunzemis



Helen Winkler

You've no doubt heard of "My Big Fat Greek Wedding." In this issue, Nancy Nies turns the tables and writes about her own wedding which was just the opposite. Thanks to Ruth Budd for referring us to the article about Richard Holden and his love of Russian dancing. Devi Caussy and Paula Tsatsanis and Roz Katz describe events which you will be sorry you missed. We know the cafés are always good fun and now we know to mark the next BALfolkFEST on our calendar. Bev Sidney also recommends noting the concerts of the Academy of Serbian Folk Dancing in her review of its latest concert. And Murray and Lavinia have been travelling again, this time to Serbia – in the rain. There are still pertinent advertisements and travel opportunities listed and the Grapevine has some nice stories.

Gung Hay Fat Choy to our Chinese readers who celebrate New Year beginning February 19th. Many countries celebrate *Nowruz*, Persian New Year, on March 21st. Kurds call it *Newroz*. Happy New Year to all celebrants.

Enjoy!



Dorothy Archer

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE

Welcome to 2015, and the new look of OFDA's magazine, which you may well be reading on your computer, smart phone, laptop or tablet. Let us know your impression, and if there are (positive!) suggestions you might have for the magazine production team, send us an e-mail at folkdanceronline@gmail.com.

This same e-mail address will be the way to submit material for the magazine, and we encourage you to send in your articles, reviews and photos, as well as letters to the Editor or any articles that you come across which you think would be of interest to dancers.

All of the online issues will reside on, and be available to anyone visiting our website. Although the magazine is no longer for members only, OFDA will continue to provide members with an assortment of benefits. Here are the current advantages of membership (aside from the altruism of helping to promote recreational folk dancing):

- The OTEA Scholarship Fund is available only to members.
- Starting in 2015, there will be a significant preferred fee structure to OFDA events. Café fees will now be \$5 members/\$10 non-members, and similar preferential fees for other OFDA events will add up in savings to more than the cost of a membership.
- OFDA members will receive notices by e-mail when new issues of the magazine are posted.
- OFDA members can sign up for the Upcoming Events e-mails which are posted on a weekly basis. These wide-ranging notices of (mostly local to Ontario) dance classes and workshops, performances and concerts are sent only to members.

As you can see, there is good value represented by your OFDA membership, and new benefits may be introduced in the future.

WEBSITES WORTH VISITING

Around the World in 20 Dances

[Click here for a quick and informative world tour of dances.](#)

Our advertisers have websites which you can visit by clicking on the links on their ads.



[Link to Anna Todorovich' website.](#)

SOCIETY OF FOLK DANCE HISTORIANS transforming information into movement since 1987

Archiving and disseminating the history and practice of international folk dancing

Publishing each year (free to members):

Folk Dance Phone Book & Group Directory

Folk Dance Problem Report to Member:

Contact us:

SFDH
2100 Rio Grande St
Austin TX 78705
sofdh@yahoo.com

SFDH.org



[Link to SFDH website.](#)

My Little Tiny French Wedding

by Nancy Nies

The shop windows of Avignon were decorated not only for Valentine's Day, but also for the bicentennial of the French Revolution, when Paul and I arrived there in February 1989 to attend French classes and, as it turned out, to get married.

Paul likes to joke that I rushed to the *hôtel de ville* (city hall) soon after our arrival, to see what it would take to get married in Avignon, a beautiful walled town famed for its bridge and its Palace of the Popes. We were to become frustratingly familiar with French bureaucracy. Getting married would require an extension of our stay to 47 days, reams of paperwork, doctor and lab visits, a trip to the American consulate in Marseille, and certified copies of our birth certificates, which would have to be sent by our parents back home and then officially translated into French. We eventually managed to accomplish all of this, were assigned a date and time, and saw our intentions posted in a glass case outside the *hôtel de ville*.

We arrived at the appointed hour on the cool, sunny morning of 24 March 1989, and, with our two witnesses, were ushered into the historic city hall's elegant *salle des mariages*. There we signed yet more documents, the registry department ladies finally smiled, and the deputy mayor, wearing his *tricolore* sash, performed the ceremony and gave a nice little speech. After saying "*oui*" we were given a maroon-and-gold *livret de mariage*, which made it all official.

During our stay in Avignon we did see a local folk dance group perform, but that's another story, for another column!

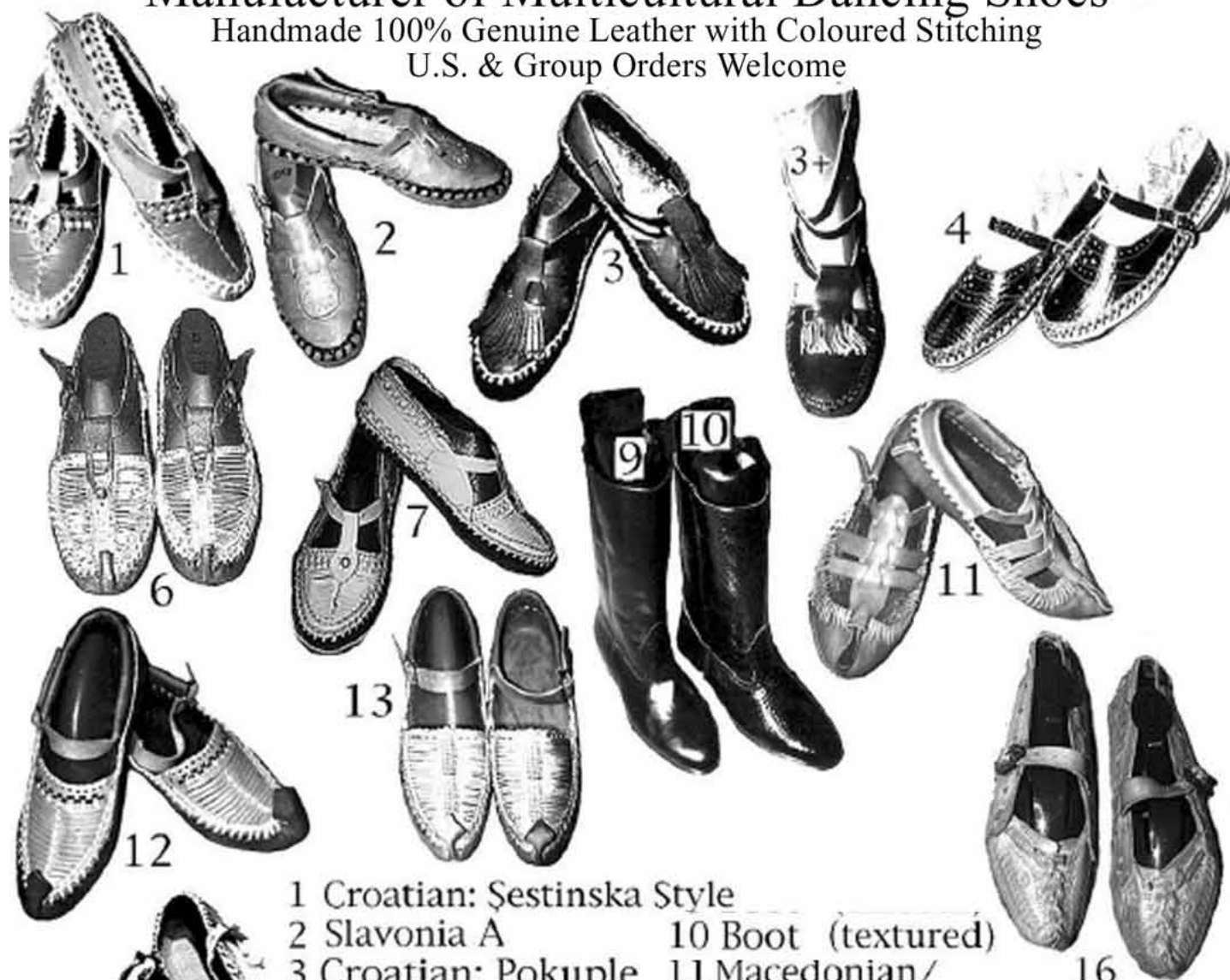


SHAN SHOES

Manufacturer of Multicultural Dancing Shoes

Handmade 100% Genuine Leather with Coloured Stitching

U.S. & Group Orders Welcome



1 Croatian: Šestinska Style

2 Slavonia A

3 Croatian: Pokuplje

3+ Slavonia B

4 Croatian

6 Dubrovnik

7 Croatian (white)

9 Boot (smooth)

10 Boot (textured)

11 Macedonian/
Shopski/Bulgarian

12 Serbian-Flag

13 Serbian-no Flag

15 Ukrainian

16 Polish

Inquiries/Orders c/o:

Dushan Neceski,
1980 Liverpool Road,
Pickering, ON CANADA L1V 1W5
Bus: 416-693-4039 Fax: 905-509-4246
e-mail: sneceski@hotmail.com
website: www.shanshoes.com

Prices:

European sizes: 24-30, \$40C
31-36, \$50C
37-40, \$60C

Plus handling/postage charge.
Refer to website for other sizes

A Virtual Russian Dancer Who Didn't Have to Defect

by Richard Holden

Arizona Balalaika Orchestra

*Reprinted with permission from BDAA Newsletter
(Balalaika and Domra Association of America) March 2013.*



In the last Newsletter, Judy Sherman urged us to “send in our stories”. I’m taking her up on it. Now at the age of 85 I naturally have a long story to tell. I wouldn’t think of tiring anyone with all of that so I’ll reduce it some, well a lot, really.

My interest in Russian folk music began at the young age of 12. As you can figure, that was during WW2 when the Soviet Union was very popular. During my eighth grade of Grammar school I even had the ridiculous notion to join the Red Army, as if that was even possible. I settled for The Lone Ranger and Captain Midnight on the radio every afternoon after school.

These boyhood dreams prompted me to find out more about Russia and by age 14 I was seeing Soviet movies that had not only folk music but dancing as well. I dreamed of being a dancer like ones doing the squat kicks and leaps I saw so much of in these movies such as Иван Грозный, Садко, Поезд идет на восток, Конек-Горбунук (Ivan The Terrible, Sadko, The Train Goes East, The Humpbacked Horse) and the Moiseyev Folk Dance Company. Inspired by these I started to learn the Russian language by myself. I even read Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* in 4 volumes with the aid of a Russian/English dictionary. That was a struggle.

About dancing like those in the films, the teacher I found taught just that. Senia Russakoff had me doing hundreds of these steps and I took to them so naturally he put me right away in his dance group where I would do squat kicks (**prisyadki**) on top of a table, then leap off, rift my legs apart and touch my toes in mid-air. Russakoff added on another table, then a third. I was a boy sensation. This boyhood career as a virtual Russian dancer never disappeared but was put on hold when I eventually became a professional ballet dancer and choreographer. Of course, in the various ballet companies in America and Europe where I danced I was always the one chosen to lead a czardas or a mazurka. When I finally reached the age of retirement and moved to Tucson, Arizona I found in this desert city of all places, a Russian balalaika orchestra. I joined it and was given an old,

beaten up instrument to play. Shortly after, to complement this orchestra I rounded up an assortment of young men and women and started what I called the Kalinka Russian dancers. Most of this happy group had never danced before and certainly not on the stage, so I had to train them as best I could.

Someone once told me – a Russian lady actually – that in Russia men only dance when they are drunk. I never believed this, and especially after seeing Moiseyev's company where the male dancers have all the strength and stamina of trained ballet dancers. In fact, part of their daily routine is a ballet class. At any rate, I ended up with a crew of young men. Fortunately I still looked a bit young for my age so, at the age of 63 I danced along with them in what turned out to be a reasonably good amateur group. Most all of the tricks of Russian folk dance I was able to teach them to do in approximation plus I had the advantage of knowing how to make non-dancers look like they were actually dancing. The young ladies were not nearly as challenging and the authentic costumes helped a lot to make the various dances look spectacular.

Though I loved folk dancing I never believed in putting actual folk dance on the stage. I thought: Who would want to sit and watch endless skipping in circles that belong more in a meadow. So I theatricalized them as much as possible to add interest. Polish, Jewish and Russian dances. More than 40 I created for over 18 years. The women's round dance, the Khorovodskaya Pliaska, grew to be the most popular. Floor length gowns were created so the ladies looked as if they were on roller skates as they skimmed in patterns around the stage while handling colorful Russian shawls I ordered direct from Moscow.



Former Kalinka dancers performed the round dance at the tribute to Richard on his 85th birthday.

A male chorus of 40 voices who could sing in Russian was added, making it even more authentic. Just imagine; all this in the desert city of Tucson, Arizona. How unlikely. An interesting story is how I got this music. In the early days when I could watch the numerous Slavic dance groups perform I would bring along a cassette tape recorder and secretly record. I had the best teachers in this form of dance, called 'Character dance'. Russians in United States, in England and even in Russia took an interest in this ersatz compatriot. Actually a book was written about me in Russia and became a best seller there.

I invited the entire Moiseyev company to teach a master class for local dancers during their visit to Tucson. Moiseyev himself had just died at age 101, but his successor, Elena Scherbakova taught the class with help from two of the company dancers who volunteered to show the steps to our locals. This ended with gifts in appreciation of my contribution to the Russian culture of dance, literature, music and opera that has enriched my life continuously from boyhood days on.

When I turned 85 and the orchestra decided to give me a rousing tribute, my long time assistant Mia Hansen managed to round up twelve former Kalinka dancers. Some were joined by their grown daughters, to perform, as a tribute, the round dance that I had choreographed many years earlier.

Like the round dance itself, my life had somehow turned full circle.



Whittamore's
Your Farm in the City!

FUN FARM YARD

- Wagon Rides
- Farm Animals
- Farm Bouncer
- Tree Fort
- Giant Slide
- Horse Swings
- Playhouses
- Climbers & more!

PICK-YOUR-OWN

- Strawberries
- Raspberries
- Green Peas
- Snow Peas
- Sugar Snap Peas
- Green & Yellow Beans
- New Potatoes
- Tomatoes & more!

FARM-SHOP

- Fresh Produce
- Baked Goods
- Preserves

Book your **Barnyard Birthday Bash** online today!

8100 Steeles Ave. E., Markham, ON | WhittamoresFarm.com | 905.294.3275

[Link to Whittamore's Farm website.](http://WhittamoresFarm.com)

BALfolkFESTnoz #2

by Paula Tsatsanis and Roz Katz

Balfolk is a dance event for folk dance and folk music in a number of European countries, mainly in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. This particular event focused on French music and dancing.



Image detail from BALfolkFESTnoz#2 flyer.
Toronto Artist: Kathryn Durst

On Friday, November 7, we attended, with our husbands, BALfolkFESTnoz #2 which was presented by Balfolk Toronto at 918 Bathurst St. What a fun-filled, lively, very enjoyable evening we all had! Emilyn Stam and Tangi Ropars, started Balfolk Toronto. Both are musicians (and members of Toronto's Lemon Bucket Orchestra) and were joined on this occasion by others in entertaining the party goers: button accordion duo, Alain Pennec and Sebastien Betrand, both from Brittany, France; trio Montage from Buffalo, NY and Shinglehouse, PA.; Réveillons!, from Quebec City; and local musicians who are community members of Balfolk Toronto. We particularly enjoyed the bagpiper, Robin Aggus of Guelph.

When we arrived the room was filled with high-spirited music and dancing. There were people of all ages - children to seniors. The scheduled evening started at 6:30 p.m. with a workshop for families with children. The adult workshop began at 7:30 p.m. and dealt with introductory Balfolk dances. From 8:00 p.m. until midnight there was live music with the various bands and entertainers, excellent dance callers with robust voices, and enthusiastic participation by band members and audience

Throughout the evening simple steps and dances were taught as people came and went. Families with children left early and adults of all ages, singles, couples, small groups, kept trickling in as the evening progressed, making the hall always full of lively parties. There was a good mix of men and women. The dances included those done in lines and couples. Some people chose to do their own thing. Dancers moved around changing partners, dancing with young and old, people they knew and

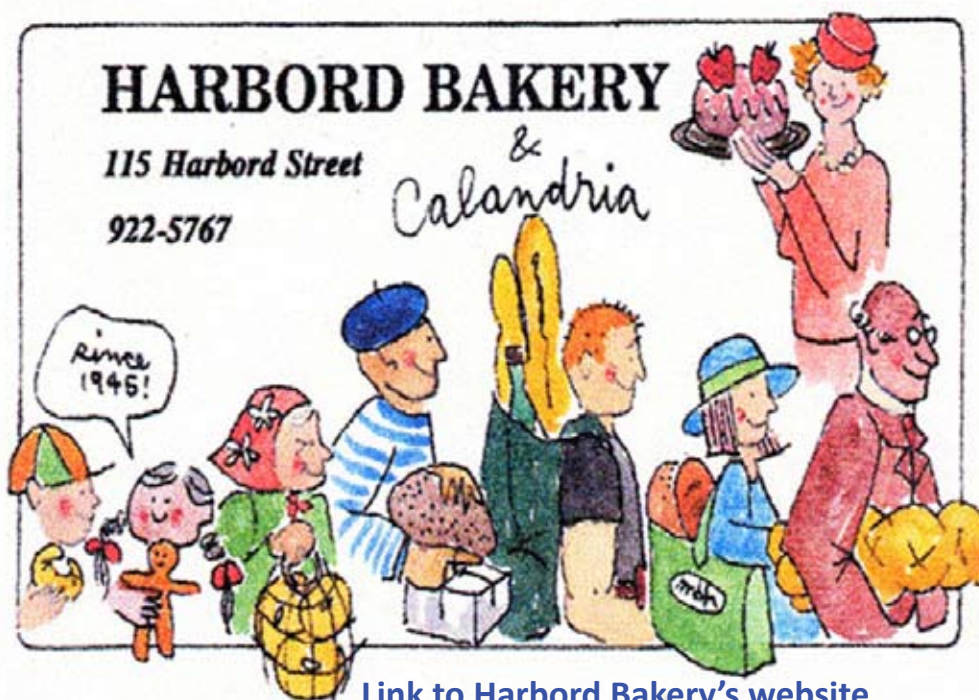


Dancing at BALfolkFESTnoz #1.

some they did not know. Everyone felt welcome and included. Dances in lines were led by the more experienced dancers, which included band members, and one could choose which line to join. Often the same dance steps and types of dances were done to different music. Although it lacked the variety experienced folk dancers enjoy, it did allow for those new to folk dancing, which many were, to learn the dances. Technique and doing steps correctly was

not the object of the evening, it was having fun dancing and socializing.

The event was very well organized: registration (tickets could be bought online or at the door), water and cups set out, chairs which were set up along the two long sides of the room allowing for a large dancing place in the centre. Food and a cash bar were available for purchase, catered by La Palette. Alcohol was available and drinking was moderate. The room was simply decorated, but nice. The callers, dance leaders, sound system, quick changing of the bands added further to the enjoyment so that great fun was had by all.



[Link to Harbord Bakery's website.](#)

OFDA Israeli Dance Café

by Devianee Caussy

Dance enthusiasts were treated to a wonderful evening on Saturday, November 29. Riki Adivi taught some delightful Israeli dances and Judy Cohen did a great job as the emcee for the evening. We started with international dancing around 6:00 p.m. with the few members who had managed to arrive. Due to traffic constraints on the Don Valley Parkway, a lot of participants did not get in till later but as the evening progressed the numbers kept increasing until there were at least 50 of us.

The potluck dinner, which consisted of a great array of delicious main dishes and desserts, was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Starting at 8:00 p.m. Riki taught the dances Veshuv Itchem, Kan Badarom, and Al Kanfei Hakesef. Like any good teacher, she made the dances seem easier as she led us through the parts of each dance before we did the whole sequence with the music. She also provided us with some background and anecdotes related to the dances which made us appreciate them more.

The last hour of the evening was devoted to more international dancing with requests and here we were treated to some of our favourites. Everybody seemed to have had a great time as the dance floor was always full. All in all, it was a fabulous evening with good food, good music and good dancing! What more can we ask?

Photo: Allen Katz.



Riki (in black) leading from centre-circle.

Charm of Song and Dance

by Bev Sidney

On Saturday, December 13 Toronto's Academy of Serbian Folk Dancing Association, under the Artistic Direction of Miroslav Marčetić, presented one of its annual concerts. The Academy consists of over 350 participants, with seven age-delineated ensembles, plus their folk band. On this occasion, five of the ensembles appeared onstage, as well as guest performers from the Toronto dance groups, Mexican Folk Ballet and Sassoun Dance Ensemble (Armenian) – a full and varied presentation.

We have come to expect a high level of achievement from Miroslav's students, and there was no disappointment on that account. Not only were the dancers' movements precise and cohesive, their singing (while dancing) added another level of difficulty which, for those of us who are pleased to just manage to get our feet engaged, was admirable indeed. Not to be ignored was the skill of the musicians. The band, including folk dancer/videographer Leon Balaban on guitar, was excellent and the music was so compelling that it was difficult to sit still! One remarkable feature which made the evening so enjoyable was the gracious nature of the audience in their encouraging and enthusiastic response. Clearly, doting Serbian parents and grandparents were present to admire and support their own, but it did not stop at that, as their appreciation was extended, with the same gusto, to the guests from outside communities.

Aside from the actual dances, there were many other details which enriched the concert – the colours and displays of stage lighting and costumes, little unexpected onstage events, costumed children infiltrating the audience after their dances were done – which all contributed to engaging interest throughout the evening. When you next see an ad for one of the concerts of Miroslav's Academy, take note, as they are well worth attending.



Photo: Bev Sidney

An impressive number of young dancers compose the First Ensemble!

Dancing Through Serbia - 2014

by Murray "Indiana Jones" Forbes



With some reluctance I have been forced to acknowledge the unpleasant laws of averages. Our trips this year have been remarkable in their total absence of any catastrophes. In fact they have been so hazard free that they have not been worth writing about. In retrospect, leading up to this trip there had been a series of ill omens. The comets, stellar conjunctions, eagles with snakes in their mouths not to mention an extremely painful right shoulder. Both shoulders are crucial for Serbian dancing. This last omen was, however, miraculously counteracted by a fiendish Australian masseuse in our village and like Lazarus I was able to take up my bed and walk. The cure was definitely more painful than the

ailment. Then Lavinia strained her back. This is also not ideal for long car rides and crunched plane seats and tramping the endless sidewalks of foreign cities sustained exclusively on carbon monoxide and second hand cigarette smoke.

It started off suspiciously uneventful. I had managed to build in a day and night in Rome in each direction – a city we have always wanted to visit but have never actually managed to do. Rome itself, in spite of August being possibly the worst month to visit it because of the overwhelming number of fellow tourists, is nevertheless a most exciting and interesting city providing, of course, one brings with one buckets of euros. There is a frequent train that goes directly from the airport to the main train station and we had managed to find a hotel within ten minutes walk north of this - ten minutes along stifling traffic infested streets over broken down sidewalks, dragging the suitcase that Al Italia would not book through directly to Belgrade for us, provided of course one heads in the right direction. Naturally we did not. Information in big tourist cities comes at a price but the map I bought at the train station failed to have a compass on it. Eventually we did get going in the right direction but I still managed to find a scenic wide circumnavigation of our hotel.

Rome was not seen in a day. We, however, wanted to see as much of it as we could so turned immediately around and headed back south through that humid unbearable city heat past the train station and south

to various Roman ruins ending eventually at the Coliseum. Of course it was far too much walking and, totally exhausted, we found our way, late into the night, to a mediocre restaurant near our hotel.

Bright and early next morning, raring to have another marathon sightseeing before our plane left, we found it to be raining again, of course. Umbrellas in hand we made our way via a rather good bakery to Porto Pia and headed down towards Fontana di Trevi. We never got there. At Fontana di Tritone the skies opened in torrents and we hastily took shelter in a nasty noisy tunnel to emerge in even worse torrents around the area we had been the day before. My umbrella chose this strategic moment to finally collapse but luckily the street vendors were out in force. I can, however, attest that street vendor umbrellas do not prevent one's shoes and trousers getting drenched in this type of rain.

I had allowed an hour to make the half hour train ride to the airport. This was a total misjudgment. After all we were in Italy. None of the ticket vending machines worked. There was no information at the vast and confusing train station about our train and no one to ask. Finally someone in the last minute ticket booth shared with us that the train was delayed and usually left from platform 24. At least we weren't the only victims. Packed to capacity we arrived late at the airport only to find that one information screen wanted us to check in at desk 118 which had a battalion lined up in front of it and another at 180 which we discovered did not exist. It probably didn't matter too much which line we got into and eventually, now very delayed, we were released to try to find the gates. One just had to know. There were no signs at all. Luckily the airline staff in Italy is friendly.

Clearly Serbia is not a most favoured nation because along with those flying to Beirut we walked at least two kilometres of corridor to a totally isolated wing, very worried and very late. We needn't have worried at all about being very late. No seating. We stood for about an hour and it was here that I first realized that Serbia is a nation of giants. Both men and women towered over me, all obviously members of basketball teams. I should mention that I am six feet tall and trip over most Spaniards. Eventually we got bussed out to the plane, one bus at a time with an inexplicable endless delay between the two trips. Naturally we were on the second one. Once we got going I thought that they might be driving us to Belgrade but in the fullness of time we were all piled into the plane and subjected to the famous plane seat torture while we waited. An hour later our friendly captain pointed out that the airspace over Croatia had been closed because of violent storms and they were looking at flying across Ukraine to provide target practice for the Russian military or Albania or somewhere.

We did get to Belgrade eventually having left three hours late and taken a long bumpy diversion over Albania. I had rented the tiniest car I could

find and by some miracle my new GPS accepted Serbia as being part of Europe. I had booked a hotel in Novi Sad, a charming low key city north of Belgrade on the Danube. In one of many miscalculations I opted for one a bit out of the centre lured by the offer of free parking which in hindsight was unnecessary and the location was a bit of a nuisance. In reality the pedestrianized centre was not a long walk away but the weather was very hot and very humid. Late though it was, we headed for this area and collapsed at the first lively outdoor café for supper. No sooner had we sat down and ordered than there was a loud crash overhead and down came the deluge. A short half marathon later we found ourselves inside the trendy restaurant mother ship looking very unhip amid the young twenty-something-year-olds absorbing their preferred music while being entertained by some football match on an enormous screen. After a very good and enjoyable meal, well-tranquilized by the local brew, we managed to commandeer a taxi to take us back to our hotel.

We had two days set aside for Novi Sad before the workshop was to begin at the other end of the country and I had thought of using this as a base to do some exploring but in the end we liked this totally untouristy place so much that we stayed put.

Our hotel was run pretty much like an extension to the manager's house and he and his family could not have been more charming or helpful. Called Isle de France because the owner had worked in France and saved enough money to buy it, this thoroughly Yugoslav establishment provided us with a cavernous room, an en suite semi-functional bathroom and the full benefit of insomnia-producing street sounds below and no curtains so that the day could begin at 5:30.

Alternating between steam bath and drizzle we wandered far and wide around Novi Sad managing to get across the Danube to Petrovaradin Castle in time for a major inundation. The only establishment within reach and open in the associated village just happened to be one of the best bakeries I've been into for a long time (France excluded) and, although they were unable to get their coffee maker to work, they were able to produce yummy sour cherry and poppy seed cake.

Then on day three we set the GPS loose on Sirogojno. Our guidebook had very nice things to say about Sremski Karlovci which is close to Novi Sad also on the Danube and so we headed first to this. In effect it has a wide plaza with grand buildings of a bygone era and a church and, of course, a bunch of cafés. Luckily there was nothing more to hold us riveted to this spot for more than a prolonged yawn because I had unwisely jogged the GPS to avoid the one and only recognizable highway in Serbia. Through constant rain from "English summer" to monsoon we staggered along a wide variety of roads - one lane to disintegrated pathway to twisted mountain climbs, from hairpin bend to hairpin bend. It took all day and would have been impossible without the GPS even if I was able to read

Cyrillic. We had in mind visiting Valjevo en route but when we got there the rain was so extreme that all we managed to do was to rush into a roadside café where the waitress outdid the best Parisian barista in obnoxiousness. She certainly wasn't into communicating in strange ways with weird foreigners.

Sirogojno is a tiny village up in the mountains, isolated by inhospitable roads, on the outskirts of which is a living museum. Serbs flock to this entirely recreated traditional village from the 19th century and the houses and buildings in it have been scrupulously transported from the Zlatibor region and placed here, church included. It is in fact totally charming and the barrage of wool and craft sellers on the way in is not threatening and in fact they have some rather nice products. The workshop organizers had managed to commandeer a bunch of these minute wooden houses for our group. Lavinia and I shared a 150-year-old two storey doll house with a German couple from Hamburg - down ladder. They were both engineers and amongst their normal travel gear were washing lines, a folding washing bucket, a plug that can be modified to any size, a neatly packed tool kit and, of course, a variety of tap filters so that they could upgrade the existing ones.

Photos: Murray/Lavinia Forbes, unless otherwise noted.



Murray (Left) with other workshop diners.

When eventually everyone arrived we were 39 participants not to mention the two folk dance teachers (Serb and Macedonian) and their respective musicians – three in total - plus the striking young woman from the village organizing the museum stay who at 6 feet 2 inches did not get lost in the crowd. Meals were taken communally in a restaurant by the huts and included a reasonable range of local dishes so that one could normally find

something that one could eat. Each meal started with toasts in slivovitz (a sort of lethal plum brandy that the Serbs drink in vast quantities). Their diet is not what one might call light.

We found that most of the participants knew each other either from their folk dance groups at home (Germany and France mainly) or from previous workshops. Ironically I was the only person there whose mother tongue was English although this was the common language and the classes were taught in a reduced version of it. The most idiosyncratic



Cabin residence in Sirogojno Village., an open-air museum, “ethno-village”, and the location of the dance workshop.

version, however, goes to the sole gentleman from Japan who has created a bit of a cult around his approximation of it.

Luckily we had done quite a lot of Serbian dancing with the Serbian community in Toronto because this was not a beginner workshop. We wondered how our bodies would manage with a week of it as it is very energetic stuff and we do not get younger. However the music was so good and the teaching so excellent that we can truly say we suffered for art and it was a most enjoyable workshop. The fact that neither of us will ever walk the same again is a small price to pay.

The weather was consistent and predictable. It was in general awful, alternating between thunderstorms and downpours and humid build-ups to the next

storm. That is not to say that we did not manage some exquisite days and with the weather co-operating this is a most beautiful and remote spot in lovely green rolling mountains. However having left southern Spain, which has hardly seen any rain this year, in temperatures around the mid 30s it was a shock to realize how cool it was and we definitely did not bring enough warm clothes.

We did not attend all of the concerts in the evenings but I am sure they were excellent. It was just that we were totally worn out by nighttime. We did go to part of a gypsy band which was extremely good and some young electrified guitarist who wasn’t - or possibly was - an acquired taste.

As usual in these workshops there are a number of organized outings. Many of the participants had attended the workshop numerous times before and not everyone went to everything. We were given a guided tour in indecipherable English of the village museum that included a close inspection of their brandy making capacity. The slightly sad reality is that in this remote part of Serbia, an economically poor country, one speculates, from what one can see, that the peasants are still using much the same methods and their living conditions have not improved significantly.

The village also has a wool museum and a shop selling knitted items of a very high quality. It is one of those remarkable success stories. The village ladies for generations have been renowned in the region for their knitting skills but there is very little employment and a great deal of poverty. Then some remarkable lady organized them on a non-profit basis to make up creative designs and styles and market their products internationally. They now have a thriving enterprise with the ladies working at home using Icelandic wool that is softer and warmer than the local wool and their products are successfully marketed internationally as well as at their shop in the village.



Hills around Sirogino on a rare rain-free day.

One would have to say that some of the excursions were more memorable than others. The first major outing was to a village fair on a mountain nearby. All the cars, including ours, were commandeered and the idea was that we would inch our way along the one track, barely paved country road to below the mountain and then walk up to enjoy the initial stages of the festivities before everyone was impossibly drunk. All started according to plan. There were no head-on collisions with crazed Serbs and we managed to stack the cars by the river and stagger in unbelievable heat and humidity up the rather steep road to a mud patch where an enormous tent and stage had been constructed. No other foreigners were here and the villagers, most in costumes, invited us to eat and drink as their guests while the men in their military style costumes sang some amazing chant that went on indefinitely but which of course we could not understand - probably about disemboweling Turks. Then the performances, which included some of the dances we knew, began and as this took place on and off the stage many of us joined in. A group of eight young men then took the stage playing brass instruments with an extremely sexy young female singer whose black leather outfit didn't hide any of her obvious assets. This was to the obvious delight of a very drunk man who was eventually coaxed away from the stage. At about this point a few drops of rain started coming down and we all moved sedately to under the enormous tent. Five minutes later there was a deafening crash of overhead thunder, a gale force wind and a deluge like I have only seen in the tropics. Part of the tent collapsed under the build up of water and we all hung onto the metal supports of the rest of the tent to keep

it from blowing away and pushed the water off the roof to prevent this collapsing. It soon became evident that this was not a passing storm but a second coming of Noah and we started worrying about the cars, none of which were amphibious. Rivers can expand very rapidly in the mountains and the quantity of rain was staggering. Vladista, our Serbian teacher, and I decided to wade through the torrent that had been a road to save the cars from death by drowning and try and pick up our group to take them back. Totally soaked in two seconds we joined the utter chaos as cars in every direction were trying to do the same thing. After working my way up and down the hill a few times diving into the muddy foliage to avoid being gored by villagers, who may or may not have consumed the vast quantity of alcohol that was apparent at the fair, I managed to fill to overcapacity our minute car including an enormous French lady in the front who made gear changing a contact sport. With zero visibility out of any of the windows I nevertheless was able to make out the frantic gestures from a costumed villager to turn around just before a car behind me whisked by and almost turned into me. I moved rapidly enough to avoid actual impact. Eventually it materialized that the road in both directions had collapsed and was impassable in the direction of our village. The police arrived with their van which they parked on the steepest part of the road making it almost impossible, even slipping and sliding in the mud off the side of the road, to get by them. In the fullness of time I followed a motorcade out in the wrong direction squishing past the mudslide and performing death defying feats to avoid the traffic still heading into the fair. I did not have the GPS with me but luckily it materialized that two of the cars ahead of me were driven by participants of our workshop who had been many times to this area and knew the roads. A very long, wet and treacherous drive later we arrived at our village. The French drive awfully fast no matter how deteriorated the road is and I did not dare to slow the pace despite zero visibility or else I might have been stranded so it was a traumatic drive. Of course being so hot when we set out I did not have any additional clothes or rain gear so arrived back soaked to the skin in my sodden T-shirt and possibly because of this, as well as the circulation of cold-infested northern Europeans, I managed to succumb to a full-scale cold.

Not all our outings were as colourful as this. On one occasion we descended in a large motor coach on Guča near Čačak for its annual brass band festival. At least half a million people descend on this otherwise peaceful little town in the mountains to be entertained by deafening fully-amplified noises mainly from brass bands, some of which, shall we say, are better than others. The actual competition is held in a massive stadium but there is also a stage in town where various events take place and every stall competes with its neighbour to drown out the other's choice of CD. It was terribly hot with no shade but we did survive a very good performance of folk dances – highly choreographed versions of what we were doing. The whole downtown was cordoned off and police

were heavily in attendance. There were stalls selling everything from tractor parts to tourist knickknacks. Many of them sold folk clothing, traditional dance shoes and CDs. There were food stalls galore with vast slabs of meat grilling everywhere and alcoholic beverages to quench anyone's thirst. We stalked some pickpockets for a while but when the deafening noise could no longer be sufficiently muted by our makeshift earplugs, we wandered over to a café on the outskirts where the police seemed to congregate and we got to hear a lower volume version of some modern pop music in the background while hiding out until dinner time, two kilometers away at the entrance of the town. Later we did venture to the competition where the police searched us thoroughly at the entrance and were reluctant to allow Lavinia in with her suspicious looking hairbrush. I have to say we were glad when it was over and understood why some of the group had decided not to attend.

Another much more enjoyable outing took us right up to the Bosnian border. We first visited another of these village museums at Mokra Gora. In midsummer these are busy places because Serbians love them. We were shown some incomprehensible film about a monk taking some stones up a mountain which no doubt is full of carefully camouflaged symbolism and may have meant to demonstrate how hard village life was. The village itself was quite stunning with mountains all around as background. Of course there were a good supply of restaurants



Train ride to the Bosnian border.

and vendors and tourist shops. Our group eventually escaped all this for a train ride that used to link Bosnia with Serbia but now provides a tourist outing winding incredibly up the mountains with a series of spectacular views. These were compulsory as the train stopped for the photo ops. In reality it was very pleasant and the weather managed to hold out more or less until we got to our next stop in Zlatibor village. Here there was a gigantic market selling another enormous array of goods

but mainly food. I managed to buy some Serbian dance shoes but they are not ideal as they have soles on them. Of course the moment that the coach was about to load up was the moment that the skies finally opened again and our pitiful umbrellas were mere gestures of protest as opposed to protection. It was, however, a pretty fun outing.

Unfortunately, Vladista managed to pull a ligament in his leg – it is surprising to me that we never do stretches or warm up exercises

before launching into these physically exacting dances. Luckily Sashko had arrived to teach Macedonian dances and he quickly launched into a complex highly choreographed Shopska dance that most of the regular group either knew or knew something similar. As we didn't we thought we would spend our free afternoon by clearing off after breakfast and driving to Novi Pazar near the Kosovo border. The elements were definitely opposed and in pouring rain we ended up subjecting ourselves to the Shopska torture for most of the morning. A glimmer of hope occurred at the mid morning pause when the rain vaguely abated and, as the forecast was for better weather on Saturday, we decided to take our chances. It was a magnificent drive over the mountains around an enormous turquoise green reservoir and so on to Novi Pazar, just missing rain wherever we went. One could see it on the ground below but we had brilliant sunshine and beautiful weather. The road varied from almost undrivable to highway quality and, in addition to stray people, all passage came to a stop every time a herd of cows was driven down the road, vaguely guided by some very elderly man or woman.



St. Peter's Church at the outskirts of Novi Pazar.

I had identified a hotel in Novi Pazar where I thought we could stay. Chaos in its most extreme manifestation reigned assisted by a series of oneway streets and a police blockade preventing us from following the GPS but eventually we found the hotel. What we did not know was that there was a music festival in full swing – sort of loud modern stuff. We were extremely lucky to get the last room and managed to squeeze our minute car into the last space in the hotel's parking lot. No need for alarm clocks. A series of muezzins, or more accurately amplified multiple recordings of one of them, kept us informed as to when we needed to be awake. I would have thought the muezzin union should have prevented real eunuchs from being replaced by loudspeakers but I didn't feel it was wise to try and organize them for fear of raising a jihad.

It is a fascinating town primarily Muslim of converted Serbs so one does not have the tensions that exist further south in Kosovo. I am not sure what the Muslim population made of the music festival with its hundreds of young folk dangerously exposing shoulders and kneecaps, and often much more, to the naked eye. We walked far and wide in the town visiting what is left of the castle and the downtown maze of streets and then headed out-of-town to the Orthodox church of St. Peter's. This,

built in the 8th or 9th century, is reckoned to be the oldest in Serbia and although the walk to it was not pleasant at all along noisy major roads the effort was well worth it. The church is perched on a quiet hill with a magnificent view and we even got to see a Serbian police speed trap on the way. The police do not fool around in Serbia. I guess this is how they collect their salaries. You'll be pleased to hear however that our walking did not break the speed limit.

On the drive back to Sirogojno we visited the Sopoćani monastery way up in a mountainside near nowhere. It was quite a sight with incredible frescoes that somehow survived two centuries of it being roofless and abandoned. Surrounded by towering exposed rock faces and vivid green everywhere it was certainly a worthy detour. I thought from the map that I could keep going to the Bosnian border and then cut back to Sjenica but the GPS persisted in trying to turn us back, so in the end we retraced our previous route. This time, however, it was crammed with cars taking advantage of the rather rare splendid weather and the weekend as well as farm vehicles and underpowered trucks so it was not an enjoyable drive. I thought exploration unwise because the roads in Serbia are extremely variable and we needed to get back for a group excursion which left at midday.



Waterfalls near Montenegro.

The final day was an excursion day. The group was split into two smallish buses and we trundled back to Sjenica past the magnificent reservoir where this time we stopped for a break. The buses then took off towards Montenegro and in the wonderful high mountains just before the border veered off the road onto a one track ascent straight up one of them. The buses took the whole width and I still do not

know how they managed the incline but we luckily did not meet opposing traffic on the way up. At a spectacular shelter near the top we had a picnic including the compulsory slivovitze and then walked to some splendid waterfalls. There were a number of other people at the falls with their cars and it is unclear to me how our buses inched their way back past them.

The walk up to the falls was spectacular and most enjoyable.

Next thing we were back in Prijepolje collecting a school teacher who came with us to the Mileševa monastery to give detailed explanations in Serbo-Croat. Lovely though it was the weather chose this moment to radically change. One could see the storm approaching over the mountains.



Lavinia and Murray in front of a mill at the site of the waterfalls.



XIII Century Mileševa Monastery in Sjenica.

We had yet another wet dash to the buses.

At the reservoir this time the buses crossed the dam and luckily the storm had veered off somewhere else. We zigzagged our way straight up the mountain on the other side with spectacular views below, along a road that rapidly deteriorated to almost impassable, to the village of Lubjiš. The only villagers left in Lubjiš are members of one family who converted

the old mill into a fish farm and rather nice restaurant that manages to employ them all. Our last night was a wonderful success in this very nice restaurant. The hired folk trio, after they got their two foreign pieces out of the way, were first class. Their efforts were supplemented by our musicians and teachers who seemed to know all the songs and, of course, sang along with gusto, partly I expect fueled by a steady flow of slivovitz. It was great fun and lots of dancing.

We had built in an extra day on the way back and as we had our own transport did not have to get on the bus at 6:00 a.m. with most of the others. Researching a hotel in Valjevo I unfortunately misjudged again. The ratings were not good for either of the two actually in the town but our travel guide claimed the one we chose was the lesser evil of



Workshop participants, before departing Sirogonjo Villiage.

two and had a sort of unrenovated grandeur. The description was totally accurate to the extent of it being unrenovated, in fact to the point of derelict, but thereafter, except for the price, there were no traces of grandeur. As far as I could tell we were the only people in it. One could not fault the location within

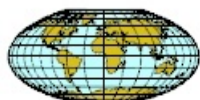
full earshot of the noisy pedestrian area below but its private parking was private to the entire town. The town itself was also really not very interesting and we were well ready to leave the next morning. On our way there, possibly as a premonition of what was ahead, we got pulled over by a tough looking policeman of a certain age, I think because the lights were not on which is apparently required even in daytime. We were totally unable to understand what he wanted us to do and eventually we think we got waved on. Whether this means that there is an arrest warrant out for us or some massive fine in the mail we are not certain. I think we were meant to go back to somewhere in the previous town and pay a fine at some establishment there. I offered to follow the policeman but I guess he either did not understand my brand of mime or was out for better catches where he was.

The drive to the airport was traumatic and difficult. In this direction there seemed to be one urban patch after another with confusing speed signage and a lot of traffic. We saw police pulling people over so this made us even more insecure about what speed we could go. In any event we got to the airport in time, even accounting for having to backtrack on the highway to top up the fuel as there were no gas stations on our side.

In Rome we now knew the routine and the weather had infinitely improved. We were soon out pounding the sidewalks and pedestrian streets again. We did finally make it to the Fontana di Trevi, which did not at all look like it did in *La Dolce Vita*, and continued on down past one magnificent monument after another amid a tidal wave of fellow tourists, getting more and more worn out. Eventually we cut across the river and made our way towards, but not to, the Vatican. Finally with some difficulty we meandered our way to the Coliseum and the metro there to get back to our hotel. This time however we lucked on a very good restaurant where the owner was a fine advertisement for his excellent food. Altogether it was again too much walking but nevertheless a very successful afternoon.

Jim Gold International Folk Tours: 2015

[Link to Jim Gold's website.](#)



Travel
broadens
one!

Travel with Folk Dance Specialists:

Jim Gold, Lee Otterholt, Adam Molnar, and Richard Schmidt

Exciting adventures in fascinating cultures.
Meet the people. Folk dance with local groups. And more.

Visit www.jimgold.com for tour itineraries!



2015 Tours

CUBA! (New) February 13-20, 2015

Led by Jim Gold
Havana, Mantanzas, Varadero



CHINA! (New) March 20-31, 2015. Led by Lee Otterholt
Beijing, Xian, Guilin, Yunnan, Shanghai, Hong Kong ext.

ITALY Ecotour! (New) May 10-23, 2015. Led by Dan Botkin.
Venice, Padua, Belluna, Magenta, Lake Como, Dolomitic Alps!



NORWAY, SWEDEN, DENMARK!

(New) June 13-23, 2015.

Led by Lee Otterholt. Oslo, Swedish West Coast, Hamlet's
Castle, Copenhagen, Jutland peninsula, cruise of Oslo Fjord!



POLAND! June 14-29, 2015. Led by Richard Schmidt.
Kraków, Zakopane, Wrocław, Berlin, Gdansk, Olsztyn, Warsaw!

BULGARIA! Koprivshtitsa Folk Festival Tour! August 1-15, 2015.

Led by Jim Gold.
Sofia, Plovdiv, Bansko, Veliko Turnovo, great Koprivshtitsa Folk Festival! !

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

Montreal, Quebec, Mont Tremblant!

ALBANIA! October 4-17, 2015. Led by Jim Gold and Lee Otterholt.

Dance with Albanian master teacher Genc Kastrati! Tirana, Durrës,
Vlora, Kruja, Saranda, Berat, and Shkoder!

TOUR REGISTRATION: Can't wait to go? Reserve your place. Mail your \$200 per person deposit. Or register with credit card at: www.jimgold.com

Tour(s) desired _____
Name _____ Address _____
No. of people _____ Phone(_____) _____ Email _____

Jim Gold International, Inc. 497 Cumberland Avenue, Teaneck, NJ 07666 U.S.A.
(201) 836-0362 www.jimgold.com Email: jimgold@jimgold.com



The Grapevine

Folk dancing doesn't guarantee a long life but it sure must help. Kitty Cohen was 102 on December 28. She still loves to dance but transportation makes it difficult for her to attend class regularly. Cecille Ratney turned 98 on December 28. She dances once a week, using her walker as a partner. Jean McAdam turned 100 on January 14th. She still attends a dance class once a week with her daughter and enjoys the music and even a dance or two.



Kitty Cohen



Jean McAdam



Cecille Ratney

We missed singing Happy Birthday to Hy Diamond at the New Year's dance. He is in the Baycrest facility in Toronto. On November 29th, Reva Goodman and Hy Diamond became great-grandparents. Their granddaughter, Sarah, gave birth to a healthy baby boy, Ezra Nachman Levy.

November 10, 2014 was a very special day for Gemma Rosario, who does kitchen duty at OFDA's cafés and other events. After six years of living in Canada and working as a live-in caregiver and then on the sales staff at the Harbord Bakery, her husband and two teenagers arrived in Canada under her sponsorship. The young people have settled into school and her husband, who was a policeman in the Philippines, is job hunting. And Gemma is cooking up a storm. "I'm a mother again" she said.

Walter Zagorski will once again be onstage in the 2015 North Toronto Players' community theatre production of the Gilbert & Sullivan operetta *El Mikado*; Walter will play a cowboy in the Wild West chorus (See www.northtorontoplayers.com for details). And, further news; there was a draw conducted after the 2014 production and Cornelia Nita won the draw and 2 free tickets to the next season's production. Nice!

We folkdancers appreciate the benefits of our chosen form of activity, and the world has been starting to recognize the benefits of dance, too. In December, CBC Radio's call-in show *Ontario Today* featured a program based on the notion of what dance does for people. It is a wide-ranging hour of people's reflections on how dancing has influenced their lives, and those of others, and can be heard by searching for and clicking on the title "What dance does for you" in the Past Episodes listings on the following web page: www.cbc.ca/ontariotoday/episodes.