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Folk Dancer

The Magazine of World Dance and Culture



Arms up for "Hora Lautareasca Din Dolj", in Huntsville (see p. 22). Photo: Bev Sidney.

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Terpsichore Meets Thespia

By Kevin Budd

The OFDA will be changing its publishing schedule in the spring of 2010. We have been publishing seven issues a year and will be switching to five issues. This is due to time commitments of the publishing staff, especially of myself, the Editor-in-Chief, now that I have entered a full-time program of re-education...er, further education.

As always, should there be an eager potential Editor replacement out there, champing at the folk dance bit to take over and fill the magazine with new ideas, then let him or her come forth and be recognized.

While we will produce fewer issues per year, we hope to maintain the amount of content at present levels (keep sending those articles, folks!). Also, because we'll save the postage costs for two issues, we're intending to use that savings to produce more colour issues in future. So, we anticipate that the change will be a positive one, for the production staff as well as the readers.

The current issue enjoys the presence of some fine tales of action and adventure by members of our well-travelled folk dance community. Amongst these you will find another in the series by Rhoda

Bodnoff who, as our unofficial Ottawa-based prime Hellenophile has been plying the waters of Greece for some years now, dancing, and studying the language, and once again, she sends us back her photos and recounts the more adventures she has there.

Karen Bennett, former editor of this printed matter also has written a fascinating piece with many levels of interest: cultural, historical and folk. Her research is resulting in some very intriguing tidbits of rarely revealed information, but now, for your eyes only, we dare to publish it.

Joe Malkiewicz, of Buffalo, New York, has sent in a charming personal account of a dance encounter as well, in which he and wife, Martha journey to the wilds of Kentucky.

A play now playing in Niagara-on-the-Lake's Shaw Festival is a trio of one act pieces by Noël Coward. Entitled, "Brief Encounters", it consists of three separate plays, "Still Life", "We were Dancing" and "Hands across the Sea". The second portion of the trio deals with British travellers enjoying life in tropical clime. To quote the Shaw web page, "we move to a country club in the fictional country Samolo (a place that Noël Coward often used in his plays, it's a

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The OFDA has established an e-mail list in order to communicate timely information of interest to folk dancers. If you would like to add your name to the list, send an e-mail request to: ontariofolkdancers@gmail.com



Please do let us know about special events!

generalized South Sea island). Music can be heard as a couple dance across the floor. Coward describes them as “both in their thirties, soignée and well-dressed, and they dance together as though they had never been apart.” As the title and this description suggest, dancing figures prominently here. The playlet ends with the people all dancing about wearing, what, to my eye, are bits and pieces from Indonesian folk costumes. It’s meant as humour, and I suppose it’s funny, though I found myself drowsy rather than stimulated. And “soignee”? Very well dressed and groomed.

A few days ago I went to a another play, this time in Toronto, as part of a course of studies. The play was at the Theatre Passe Muraille, in Toronto, and was entitled, “The Refugee Hotel”. It deals with the plight of Chilean refugees who found themselves in a hotel in Vancouver, shortly after the Pinochet coup of 1973, as guests of the Canadian government. The characters attempt to deal with their situation, their past, and each other. Flashbacks to torture scenes occur in the play, and interestingly, these are marked by the appearance of a traditional folk dancer doing the national dance, the “cueca”. Dressed in his cowboy boots, spurs jangling, and full traditional garb, the lone male dancer stamps his way onto the stage for a few seconds and off again. It’s a dramatically

interesting use of a dancer, suggesting that the folk traditions of Chile are pulling the refugees back there, at least in their minds, and that the deep symbols of their homeland are far more long-lasting and meaningful than any politician. The cueca is the national dance of Chile, and during the reign of military dictator, Augusto Pinochet, it became almost a dance of resistance. The performer portraying the dancer, Felix Basaez, is in fact a member of the Toronto folklore dance group, “Grupo Chile”.

Did you realize that the name “Felix” means “happy”? Latin, you know. And now you see the connections, in Spanish, “felíz”, (as in felíz navidad) and Italian, “felice”. And while we are on the subject, “fido” means faithful. And finally, a piece of advice and observation from the Roman writer, Cicero, “Nemo saltat sobrius.” which translates as, “Nobody dances sober.” Perhaps we can infer, not just that having imbibed, we dance more easily, and perhaps better, but also that that dancing itself has an intoxicating effect, no? And we can also infer, therefore, that Captain Nemo, of the submarine “Nautilus”, in Jules Verne’s classic, “Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea”, was therefore, Captain Nobody.

Happy 40th OFDA!

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Explorations in Folklore 1: Persia Indoors

By Karen Bennett

Charles James Wills was an English doctor who travelled widely in Persia from 1866 to 1881 while working for the Indo-European Telegraph Department. He was an observant man who liked his posting and the people he lived among. His two books about his experiences were *In the Land of the Lion and Sun* (1883) and *Persia as It Is, Being Sketches of Modern Persian Life and Character* (1886). On p. 60 of the latter book my attention was caught by the following passage in the midst of an account of a wedding among the well-to-do in Tehran, after the women guests have arrived at the bride's home: "As the dresses worn among Persian ladies for indoor use only reach to the knee and are very much *bouffé*, their wearers look like opera dancers. The ladies' feet and legs are bare, as a rule."

Say what? sez I to myself. "Opera dancers?" Why? Wherefore?

In the April 1921 issue of the *National Geographic Magazine* I came across a photo captioned thusly: "Persian Women in Indoor Costume. This modified ballet attire was introduced from Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The story is told that Naser-ed-din Shah, upon attending the opera in Paris during a European visit, was much attracted by the ballet and ordered that the entire front row be purchased at once for his harem, which already contained several scores of carefully selected beauties. Disappointed in this desire, he had to be content with the adoption of the ballet skirt by the ladies of his harem, whence the new fashion rapidly spread" (p. 355).

Naser-ed-din (also known as Nusser-u-deen and Naser al-Din) was King and Shah of Persia from 1848–96. He made three trips to Europe: in 1873, 1878 and 1889. His costume "reform" was evidently in common use outside the royal harem before Dr. Wills left Persia in 1881. (The Shah's 1873 travel diary could



Women of Tehran in "ballet skirt" indoor costume, as mandated by a 19th-century Shah. They were still wearing it in 1921, when a National Geographic Magazine photographer took this photo.

tell us whether he attended the life-changing Paris Opera performance on that trip, but since the diary has been published solely in Persian, German and Dutch, I have yet to follow that hare.) Among the other Western innovations the Shah introduced to Persia were a modern postal system, train transport, a banking system and newspaper publishing. However, the number of his wives and children was not innovative, for the time: He had at least 27 wives, 11 sons and eight daughters. How women managed to sit (on cushions on the floor) with propriety in the short skirts he decreed is a mystery to me, since the Shah wouldn't

have allowed women to wear the narrow trousers we see in the 1921 *National Geographic* photo. “The ladies’ feet and legs are bare, as a rule,” Dr. Wills wrote.

I’ll get back to women’s costume in a bit, after I pass on another anecdote about this particular Shah (who did not die peacefully in his bed, I have to say; he was assassinated). Dr. Wills wrote on pp. 10-11 of *Persia As It Is*: “It is the Royal habit when tired to be shampooed by his attendants, and it is thought no indignity for a high official to be told to assist in the kneading process. Of the delights of shampooing, Europeans, as a rule, have no idea. It is a real art, and it is carried out to scientific perfection by some of his Majesty’s more confidential servants.... One of the Royal pleasures is music; the King has several bands, trained by his bandmaster, a Frenchman, M. Lemaire. These bands are fairly good, if rather noisy. M. Lemaire, however, also is an excellent flautist; the flute is the favourite instrument of all Persians in their moments of ease, and the King is no exception. The playing of the flute and the recitation of poetry in the East are supposed to be conducive to sleep. The Shah is usually read to sleep, and as a rule shampooing goes on concurrently with the reading, both ceasing gradually as his Majesty drops off.”

The Shah being asleep, let us tiptoe out.

Later in the book, Dr. Wills is summoned on a professional visit to the women of a non-royal upper-class household in Tehran. From pp. 80–85: “In Persia.... [d]octors are privileged persons, Possibly on his first visit, or if his patient be the wife of a holy man, she may be veiled; but afterwards the veil is cast aside. One great characteristic of the Persian is his curiosity; among Persian women it is developed to an intense degree. And that is why it is that the doctor is so often sent for....

“I have been summoned to the house of a Persian grandee. In deference to Oriental prejudice I have discarded my linen cut-away coat, which from its shortness is considered indelicate, and substituted for it the professional black-cloth frock. I have slipped

a pair of galoshes over my ordinary walking boots; and, with my solar topee (or sun-helmet) on, have ridden through a mile of deserted streets and thronged bazaars, in a grilling sunshine, to the door of the patient’s house....

“We reach the door of the principal apartment, the windows of which look down upon the whole length of the *hauz* (water-tank in the courtyard). I cast off my galoshes at the door, but retain my head-gear, for to remove it would be the height of rudeness....”

Dr. Wills seats himself on the only chair in the magnificent room. (I can’t account for the doctor’s use of the word “us” in the next passage, as the doctor hasn’t heretofore mentioned travelling with anyone in tow. He spoke Persian fluently, so he wouldn’t have needed a translator.)

“The *frou-frou* of silk is heard. Three ladies enter the room. The feet and legs are bare to the knee, for they have cast off their shoes at the door; but all the rest of them is shrouded in a large sheet of dark-blue silk, the outer veil of the Persian lady. Gracefully they sink down into heaps in a semicircle opposite us.... [When the women take off their outer dress,] a plump middle-aged lady, very comely, and her two innocent-looking daughters, handsome young women, fair as any English girl, with round chubby faces and magnificent eyes, are disclosed to view in all the splendour of the Persian lady’s indoor dress. The costume of all is the same, varying only in colours, and these are the gayest: short and voluminous skirts of silk, much *bouffé*, reaching to the knee; shirts (the Persian word, like the French *chemise*, is applied to the garment of both sexes) of transparent silk gauze; tiny zouave jackets of gaily-embroidered velvet, just covering the shoulders and the top of the back (of these the sleeves are unbuttoned from the elbow, hanging down and showing the gay linings of pale-coloured but brilliant silk); the top of the head and the ears are hidden by gorgeous silk kerchiefs, embroidered in gold; and there is no more clothing to describe, unless the numerous bracelets of the bangle

form, of gold and of glass, which jangle as the ladies move their arms, may be called clothes. The ladies chat.... Tea in delicate old china cups is served; we all smoke hubble-bubbles.... Conversation turns upon the curious customs of Europeans. I am asked if I am married. I have to admit that I am not, and am duly pitied.... More tea; more pipes. Sweet cakes, confectionery and conserves are handed; iced sherbet, in Bohemian glass tumblers, gilt and gaudy colours, is served. I insinuate something to the effect that this is a professional visit; my hostess smiles. I repeat the remark; and then the lady, rising to bid farewell, replies, "We were dull; we were bored; you have *désennuyé* us. Wallah!"—with a little laugh—I have forgotten why we sent for you. Your footsteps, however, have been fortunate, for our hearts are no longer sad." So here was an end of my visit. She shook hands heartily, and the lady gave me a huge bouquet of narcissus as I left."

The exclamation "Wallah!" is apparently akin to a Christian tossing off "Good Lord!"

In articles to come in my "Explorations in Folklore" series, I plan to brandish more passages torn from mouldering old books and to spout off on what the women's movements mean in the dance Bjelolitsa Kruglolitsa (a.k.a. the "pretzel dance"), which I first learned many decades ago but whose history I only recently started to research when I happened upon a photograph of Russian women dancing in a birch forest and weaving in and out of the trees. (The fact that I happen to be partial to birch trees is, of course, *completely irrelevant* to my interest in this topic.) Another subject that my fearless investigative skills will cast light on is the meaning of the triangle shape (equilateral, not isosceles) as it has appeared over thousands of years in the decorations of hundreds of cultures—and as it is still with us. I already have the title of that article: "Triangular Momentum." Pieces from my costume collection will also make an appearance, in particular a magnificent Albanian robe fit for a princess—an Austrian princess, that is, as that was how the coat was advertised when I found it: as an Austrian princess dress. (Thereby hangs a tale of yet another Oriental potentate who travels to Europe.)



In 1851, Mrs. Amelia Bloomer, an American citizen, went to England in order to lecture on women's rights—including the right to wear comfortable clothes. While she was in London, she appeared in the costume pictured above, designed by herself. It included a short skirt and long pantaloons, or "bloomers," as they soon came to be called, based on Turkish harem pants. Alas, Mrs. Bloomer's attempt at fashion reform attracted ridicule instead of reiteration. (But I still wear abbreviated bloomers under folk costumes with short skirts, so thanks, Amelia.)

Notes from Greece, 2009

By Rhoda Bodnoff

Hi Folks....decided to forward my letter that I wrote to my travel agent,so please enjoy my travels so far!!!! Sorry Irene I typed too quickly and had errors....so this version should be better.....it's the HEAT! ha ha ha ha

Geia sou Irene:)



please keep the shade down for the people to be able to sleep...I opened it a few inches after she left my area....heck I wanted to see Italy!!! It was gorgeous!!!

We only took eight hours to get there instead of ten...really heavy tail winds I guess! We landed beautifully....everyone clapped...great pilot!!!

Sorry didn't write sooner...been so busy! The trip to Montreal was fine...my friend Andre met me and we had a nice lunch,gabbed, got my valitsa checked in, and he left at 5pm...I was on the plane at 8pm.

Christos Pantieras's uncle George was in the row in front of me...I was in row 6A...It is in front of the TOILETS....ha ha ha ha....you cannot lean the seat back! Hilarious.

So, a man was in the aisle seat...his son was the PILOT of the plane! They were French Canadian!! Before takeoff....the pilot told the flight attendant to move his dad to First Class... After awhile a lady from the row of four seats in the middle asked me if she could come and sit in the aisle seat...I said "Sure". Well...she put on eyeshades, covered herself in a blanket, put on extra socks...and took pills to sleep!!! I was wide awake...380 people on the plane!

I saw the Big Dipper beside me nearly all the way! The stars were HUGE! It was so neat! I slept a little....now and then...but it was so uncomfortable...had a pillow behind my back, and behind my neck...and it was COLD in the cabin...Chris's Uncle gave me a blanket !!!

In the a.m. I looked out and saw mountains...it was Italy....the flight attendant said to

So next was Athens airport...I went to check my luggage, they said I was too early...and to come back at 3 p.m. ...okay...so had to wander a bit...nice airport...huge...like a long football field. So at 3 pm, I went back and was able to get rid of the valitsa...yay...in the line was a family in front of me...They sounded Australian...but were from South Africa! We had a nice chat...they were Greek!

I had to wait some more...so sat in a waiting/shopping area...people across from me...so I said "apo pou eisia" They were Italian...but we managed to have a chat! I met many people and used my Greek a lot!

Now came the nightmare....I was told to go to Gate1 B...so after walking 1/2 a mile and getting checked in, they said the gate # was changing...so I had to go to the opposite end of the airport...the flight was going to be later!!!! I freaked and sent my friend Michael a text message...he texted back and said, "Don't worry...I wait you!!"

Well this changing gate and time happened four times....not funny!!!! plus I had changed from running shoes to heels....BAD IDEA!!! It was because of the Greek holiday...so the agents were screaming, as well as the people!



Anyhow...finally I was accepted and on the Olympic Plane!!! WHEW!! When I arrived in Thessaloniki...my dear friend Michael jumped over the barrier to meet me and picked me up in the air!!! It was so nice. He drove me to his apt...it is gorgeous...he redid all the work himself. Very artistic!!! He then took me all over Thessaloniki and we stopped here and there and walked all over and took a zillion photos...later we talked at his place till midnight! We were exhausted...he loved all the stuff I brought him and he had a cute toy dog for me...saying, "Love is everything" It was so sweet.

In the a.m. we went out for some breakfast and another tour...then he took me to my Hotel and he came in to make sure all was okay...he then went to his mom's in Chalkidiki. He was there for the weekend...but he's back at work today and we are supposed to go out for dinner.:

I had supper at a taverna and the waitress was from Georgia/Russia...she was a dancer as well...she gave me a glass of wine, and extra karpouzi...watermelon, after my sliced eggplant and tzadziki, as well as souvlaki! I was so full.

I met four Spanish ladies last night as they are here also for the dance seminar which begins tomorrow! We all went for supper together...and this a.m. I was with two of them at the breakfast at the hotel. Later we walked a bit...they went off to a museum...I walked many blocks yesterday and today...the road goes all the way to the sea! It is really lovely...today with the shops open I bought many souvenirs. I also swam in the small pool in the hotel spa both days, very pleasant...finally slept like a log yesterday afternoon...

The Spanish ladies and I walked for almost two hours after dinner, so we were all tired when we returned. I watched 2 1/2 hrs of folklore dance on TV...It was gorgeous.

Thanks again for everything! Na eisai kala....RHODA:)))

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Picnic at the Whole Village, 2009



June 20th was a wet, gray day, so the dancing and picnicing was relegated to the indoors. We were guests at Denis Bowman's new home - The Whole Village, in Caledon - and between thirty and forty dancers made the trip to the eco-village for the first time.



The weather discouraged much in the way of outdoor exploration on the 198 acre property, but during a lull in the precipitation Denis conducted a brief tour of some of the facilities, for those who were interested.



In the spirit of the Whole Village, ours was a collaborative event, with a Potluck Picnic meal and a roster of volunteer programmers to provide dancing from 2 - 7:30 p.m.

Folk Dance Camp Memories Abound: KDI 2009 Provided a Van-Full

By Joe Malkiewicz

Kentucky Dance Institute (KDI) is unique. 2009 marks the 14th time, since 1987, that my wife, Martha, and I have made the journey from Buffalo, New York, to (initially) Morehead, and (currently) Murray, Kentucky, for this week-long event.

Over the years, we've taken as many as eight people: our two children, Mark and Anna, and three to five of our eight grandchildren. We've seen our youngsters grow up at KDI acquiring not only dance knowledge and skills, but building lasting friendships with their contemporaries and the other adult participants who attend.

KDI's 2009 dance program featured Ahmet Luleci teaching Turkish dances, Ya'akov Eden offering Israeli and Country & Western line dances, Sandy Starkman presenting a variety of ethnic circle and partner dances, George Fogg with English Country dances. Stew Shackette, the director of KDI for the last 44 years, instructed the dancers in American squares, contras and quadrilles, and the camp's signature dance, the Kentucky Running Set, a traditional dance that is part of the infrastructure of Kentucky dance. It's always a highlight of the week, a dance of breath-taking beauty to both do and watch. One can't help but notice the attention to preserving and promoting the diverse layers of dance that appeal both to beginners and to advanced, serious dancers.

Stew and his wife, Kathie, not only serve as co-directors, but keep a loving watch over all the participants. They serve as an inspiration to all, gently coaxing first-timers to join in the classes. They value the experienced dancers and create times for them to serve as guest teachers. Stew's son, Troy, along with his wife, Dawn, generate all sorts of wonderful community building activities for the younger participants in the famous "after-parties" that have

become part of the heart and soul of the week for our family. Steve and Jody Trautwein assist Stew and Kathie with administrative tasks that promote a smooth-running program.

Tradition is important at KDI. There is a welcoming ceremony to integrate newcomers; costume, Kentucky and dress-up nights bring a sense of whimsy, comic surprise, and even formality to the evening dance parties. The most serious tradition actually the mission of KDI is cultivating future folk dancers. Stew has often spoken to me about his commitment to the young in our midst. My wife and I see it not only in our son, daughter and grandkids, but in all the youngsters who've grown up with the KDI experience.

The teachers bring expertise and enthusiasm, patience and variety to the dance program. Their guidance clearly pays off, for by review day, it's evident that all have acquired a sense of competence and confidence with the dances. New friendships have taken root and reunions have deepened. Tears flow during the good-bye hugs amidst promises to, at the very least, stay electronically in touch. For our family, it's a week that enriches our love of folk dance and connection to a community that nurtures the best in others. We've already marked our calendar for the week of July 25th in 2010. The 800 mile pilgrimage to Murray from Buffalo brings us into a unique space that is unparalleled.

If your own interest has been stimulated by my brief recollection, make an inquiry to Stew Shacklette at 614 Long Needle Road, Brandenburg, KY 40108, 217-422-2421 for 2010 the 58th year for KDI.

Girlz Unplugged, 2009 - Folk Dancing in Muskoka



Girlz Unplugged, 2009 - Folk Dancing in Muskoka

By Maya Trost, Terri Taggart and Bev Sidney

Once again this summer, three of our own ventured out to spread the joy of International Folk Dancing into the wilderness of Muskoka.

The YWCA operates The Girlz Unplugged Summer Program, a one week summer day camp for girls, aged 9 to 14, in each of the three towns of Bracebridge, Huntsville and Gravenhurst. This program has evolved over the past four years from the year-round school-based program, which operates in all of the 18 elementary schools throughout Muskoka.

The program welcomes youth, especially those who would benefit from support during tough times including separation, divorce, or those witnessing or experiencing violence, trauma, or substance abuse.

The Girlz Unplugged Summer Program offers a unique opportunity for girls to make new friends, discover hidden talents, learn about great women, and explore new interests. Summer activities include active games, creative writing, music, yoga, nature inspired art and visits from special guests.

Three of these 'special guests' this summer were Bev Sidney, Terri Taggart and Maya Trost, who volunteered to teach a one hour folk dancing class in each of the three camps. A total of 53 girls participated, with full capacity in both Bracebridge and Huntsville. The girls enjoyed a variety of dances from several continents.

Our experience with teaching the girls was different in each of the three centres. The range of involvement went from passive to incredible excitement and from little body sense to lots of dance experience. Regardless, each group ended up having

a good time, and they wanted to repeat their all-time favourite dance, Dos-á-Dos, over and over again.

Our teaching stint provided us with the pleasure of sharing an activity that we love, and it was gratifying that at the end of each class there were those who made a special point of thanking us because they'd really had fun. But, while we were ostensibly providing a service, it was something of a privilege to have had the opportunity to contribute folk dance to the activities offered by this summer camp – the more so, when considering the difficult circumstances that encircle some of the young participants.

Hannah Lin (Youth Programs Co-ordinator for YMCA Muskoka), who provided the program information for this article, observed that of those who participated in the summer youth program this year, one in three requested a subsidy to cover the costs. This represented an increase from last year, when about 20% requested financial help – an indication of changing times.

In the face of social/emotional problems and economic hardship this program fills a need. An example of the kind of impact that the Girlz Unplugged program can have is seen in the following note that Hanna recently received from a very, very happy parent:

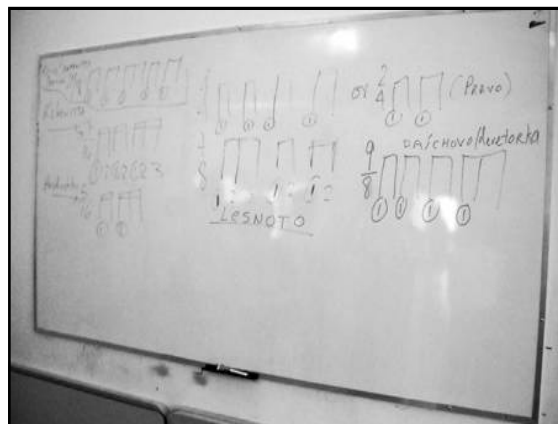
I've been meaning to drop you a note to thank you!!!!...Amanda had a wonderful week at the Girlz Unplugged camp this year. She raved about it every day and asked that she could go back next year. That's never happened before!!!!...she's usually pretty lukewarm about camp...so thank you so much for offering such an amazing opportunity. I've seen her coming more out of her shell just after that one week!!

Balkan Rhythms and Dance Workshop

On Saturday, September 12th, as part of the year-long celebration of OFDA's 40th Anniversary, a workshop on Balkan Rhythms and Dance was offered (free to members). The popularity of the topic and of teacher Judy Silver were evident by the great response - over fifty members and non-members attended.

Dancing was a large component of the afternoon, as Judy demonstrated musical theory by the use of well-known dances. She was aided by Judith Cohen, whose drumming emphasized the various rhythms under scrutiny...Pravo, Lesnoto,

(continued on page 25)



Photos by B.Sidney



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(continuing from page 24)

Pajdusko, Gankino, Neda Voda, and more.

A challenging subject for anyone who isn't educated in musical theory, it was a fun way to be introduced to the concepts, and given that only a very



Special treats were provided for snacking at half-time

small amount of information could be conveyed in the three hour period, perhaps there might be interest in a future, follow-up workshop.



Sandy Starkman and Walter Zagorski, enjoying the workshop from the sidelines

The Back Page - Tuesdays in the Park



▲ On Tuesday August 4th, with a freshly issued batch of OFDA 40th Anniversary Banquet Tickets in hand, Paula Tsatsanis happily takes Brian Walker's money

The summer started out very tentatively, as far as Dancing in the Park was concerned. All park permits had been cancelled because of the municipal workers' strike, and it was uncertain whether we'd be able to dance or not - not only because we had no permit to be there, but also because the lack of grass cutting might have made it difficult. Everything worked out alright, though, and despite July having been record-breaking rainy, remarkably only one Tuesday evening was "rained-out".

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