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Folk Dancer

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Spontaneous dancing at a festival in Potsdam, Germany. Yes, there was beer and music. Photo: Kevin Budd.

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Viewpoint

Dance Creationism or Dance Evolutionism?

By Kevin Budd

Are you a Folk Dance Creationist or a Folk Dance Evolutionist? Known as "the great debate" the arguments about the origins of folk dances rage continuously as people struggle to put forth their understandings regarding how folk dances came to be.

Those are the two main camps in folk dance theory, though later we shall also address those who fall into the third camp of the folk dance "Intelligent Design" crowd.

Basically, the arguments are as follows. Folk dance creationists believe that folk dances sprung perfect and complete from some undefinable source. Perhaps the source was divine, perhaps it was a birth that the fecund land itself produced, a birth of tradition, of intended destiny. Up until fairly recently, that is, until Charles Darwin put forth his own theories, the prevailing religious, or at least faith-based, orientation was indeed that this must have been true. Darwin's great influential tome, "On the Origin of Folk dance Species", rocked the world view of the folk dance creationists, and the matter is still in hot debate today. Both sides agree that folk dances have not existed eternally. There is unsettled agreement that, somewhere after a big bang, or a moment of original creation of the earth, divine or geological, folk dances somehow came into being.

The creationists suggest a Creator gave existence to all dances, and they have existed largely unaltered since that moment of birth. According to certain highly traditional dance-ologists, all real folk dances sprung into selfhood in a small perfect village somewhere in the Balkan regions of a simpler, more perfect world. There, the village is exquisite, quaint and charming, all the people are happy, and, as Garrison Keillor might say, all the dancers are above average, and all the dances are beautiful. And yes, legends report that intrepid travellers still occasionally happen upon this ideal hidden Shangri-la of terpsichorean tradition, though typically, it is at that moment that the batteries of their digital cameras run out of juice.

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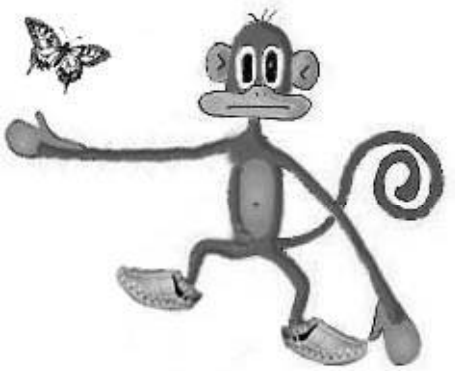
The OFDA has established an e-mail list in order to communicate timely information of interest to folk dancers. If you would like to add your name to the list, send an e-mail request to: ontariofolkdancers@gmail.com

Please do let us know about special events!



This mindset has a certain appeal, since the power of the legend continues to entrance many, and a narrative is always more appealing than simply facts and figures. However, the folk dance evolutionists insist that, backed by Darwin's observations and deductions, dances developed gradually over time, forged and moulded by the forces of a capricious (goat-like) and always changing set of traditions. Local festivals, weddings, costumes, geographies, seasons, needs, foods, and beliefs all contributed to the gradual formation of every folk dance we now hold so dear. Over eons of steps, hops, slides, leaps, lifts, bends, touches and sweeps, what we now maintain as the large body of folk dances evolved. Certain dances may have appeared and after a few tries, were abandoned onto the heap of historical cast-offs. False starts and dead-end dances ended up on the dust pile of folk dance trash. Through the process of "natural selection" only the most valued ones survived and evolved.

Or at least they evolved up to a point. They evolved up to the point where, to use the blunt scientific phrase, they stopped. At that point a folk dance collector, like a gatherer of pretty butterflies, learned the steps, recorded the music, and brought them back proudly to be taught in dance clubs throughout the civilized world. The dance itself was then frozen in time, pinned to the butterfly display case, sliced out of the flow of time at one instant, as a photograph grabs one moment, and these dances, then, have been on display ever since. The original moment of preservation has, in most cases been lost and forgotten, and like a dried but still lovely blue morpho butterfly, are re-danced, re-vivified, and reconstituted for the pleasure of thousands of aficionados the world over. And of course, without such clubs, these dances might have disappeared. Without their cultural contexts, without their social meanings and rich societies from whence they came,

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the steps and music of thousands of dances might have gone extinct.

And the intelligent design hypothesis? It suggests that certain features of folk dances could not have developed through random happenstance evolution but are rather the result of, or best explained by, the idea that they were choreographed in some way by some intelligence. I know, I know, the word choreographed is to folk dancers what sun is to vampires and snowmen. Folk dancers tend to think that a choreographed dance is one that is self-consciously designed for presentation on a large stage to large audiences, and as such, that it lacks any "real" folkiness. And so it may be.

I leave it up to you, gentle reader, to decide for yourself whether there is intelligence in folk dances, intelligence in their design, whether they were designed at all, or did they, from the mists of an eternal past, arise naturally like the sun and the stars, following natural laws of such complexity and beauty at which we cannot even guess.

Not The Back Page...

News from Sandy Starkman's Class: Molly Frankel had an operation at the end of 2009 and is on the mend. Congratulations to Naomi Fromstein on the birth of a new granddaughter.

The OFDA is pleased to acknowledge the gift of membership given by Adrienne Beecker to David Taylor

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My Hamilton Birthday Party

It was truly a happy, joyous and exciting celebration for my 80th. Lots of love & energy went into the organization and preparation of this party. From beginning to end it was incredible. It began on such a high and it remained high the whole evening. It was electrically charged. The planning and programming was tops. So many of the dances which I brought to Hamilton dating back to the mid 80s have been kept alive – some of which I have forgotten and which I loved. I will go back and have the Hamilton dancers teach me a few – Slavonsko Kolo being one.

Joan & Allice's beautiful quilts hanging on the walls added so much warmth to the room.

The evening was full of many surprises beginning with the arrival of many Toronto and London folk dancers – many, many hugs. Thank you for the very kind, caring words in the historical tribute of my contribution to the Hamilton International Folk Dancers over the years. The flowers, the beautiful floral headpiece (thanks Joan), the glass booties filled with cherry brandy – the booties will keep me dancing forever. The birthday cake, birthday waltz, mad spending money for my next trip, delicious food, Mary Mischenko's print of a Bulgarian village dance scene framed by John & Mary. Surprise visit of Chris Klashoff and his accordion. Chris is the band leader of the well known and much loved Hamilton Macedonian band "Boys from Bouf". What a treat! A week later the arrival of a DVD filmed by Jack (Evans) capturing the highlights and high spirit of the evening. The DVD has kept me smiling, singing, laughing, clapping, dancing and will do so for many years to come.

Many thanks to all who shared in this never to be forgotten celebration. Happy Dancing.

Olga Veloff Sandolowich

Traditional Birthday Waltz

Olga Veloff Sandolowich

By Stefania Szlek-Miller

Even after teaching and dancing for more than six decades, Olga has not lost her joy and enthusiasm for international folk dance. Like that other great Macedonian teacher and octogenarian, Atanas Kolarovski, Olga just gets better with age. Dancing keeps one young, and it is the best therapy for facing even the most difficult challenges in life. Olga loves to travel saying that it opens new doors of opportunity usually linked to dancing and meeting friends. We have especially enjoyed our train trips to Montreal folk dance camps with Olga and our mutual good friend and dancer, Ginger Northcott. This is how we in the Hamilton folk dance group see Olga, our dancing friend and honorary club member.

When our club was first formed in 1984, we had a very limited repertoire, and I was very green, to say the least, about the art of teaching folk dance and leading a group. Olga was one of my mentors. In her many Hamilton workshops, beginning in the mid-1980s, Olga demonstrated the subtlety of Macedonian and other Balkan rhythms, and explained patiently (sometimes not so patiently) about stressing the beat of uneven rhythms by lifting one's foot "in one's shoe" (a good way to explain a cukce). As a result of her admonishments about loose or "spaghetti" arms, we worked on developing strong upper body posture and arms, so essential for styling and enjoyment of line or circle dances. She taught us many of the classics of Macedonian dance from elegant **Lesnotos** to the more intricate and dramatic **Ovcepolsko**. We still have not mastered all the variations and calls of **Daichovo/Zizaj Nane,** something to add to our list for future workshops.

Olga also introduced to our group some of our favourite dances in the international folk dance repertoire, including: **Debka Oud, Godecki Cacak, Horehronsky Czardas, Mason's Apron, Slavonsko Kolo, Syrtos Pyleas, Sulam Ya'akov,** and that frenetic Romanian dance, **Valpiuta**. E**lu Tsiporim**, an Israeli dance that she taught to our group in 1988, has become one of Hamilton's signature dances at our many parties.

The novelty dances that she introduced, such as **Louisiana Saturday Night,** were fun, though some of them by their very nature were very short-lived. For example, **All My X's Come from Texas** died. We appreciate her clear teaching and the fact that she always attributes the source of dance choreographies and music in the dance notations.

Over the years, Olga and some of the members of her dance groups (currently, she leads three groups in Toronto) have participated at many of our special events and parties in Hamilton. Among the highlights: Pece Atanosovski's workshop in 1992 which included many members from the Macedonian community in Hamilton; our tenth anniversary party in 1994 with Chris Klashoff's band playing Macedonian favourites like **Pusceno Oro;** workshops with great teachers like Mihai David, Joe Graziosi and Zeljko Jergan; and our 25th anniversary party with Miroslav Marcetic last January. Many a Halloween party, we have been entertained by Olga and Ginger's outrageous costumes (the chicken outfits were among the more memorable ones).

In 2003, many of us joined other dancers in Toronto to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Don Heights dancers, a group that continues to thrive under Olga's leadership. It was a wonderful occasion with tributes to Olga from international folk dancers and the Macedonian community in Toronto, including a performance by the alumni of the Selyani Macedonian Folklore Group. On the occasion of her 80th birthday in 2009, it is a pleasure to acknowledge Olga's great contributions to the Hamilton International Folk Dance Club. We wish Olga Veloff Sandolowich many more birthdays and many more years of dancing.

Stefania Szlek Miller
HIFDC, 27 November 2009

Photos by B.Sidney

Olga and Stefania

Afterglow by Mail....

"As a long time student of Olga`s and a new-comer at Hamilton I found the party to be a great delight. It was a culmination of. everything Olga and Stefania represent now and for the future: friendship and mentoring, joyfulness and playfulness." Janet Rutt - Stoney Creek

"We were on a high for several days...that party was a highlight for all of us! We all know that Olga, at 80 (I still can`t believe it), deserves all the accolades that have been given to her these past few weeks...it has been a lot of fun." Ginger Northcott - Markham

"Olga, I can't tell you how much we London folk dancers enjoyed sharing your birthday celebration with you. We could not stop talking about the evening on the way home, and beyond. What a special and unique event, and you the elegant and beautiful star of the show! Telling you I enjoyed your birthday event would be an understatement. It was a totally perfect evening in every single way." Leslie Hallock - London

"Hamilton Folk Dance Club are always an exuberant group but on Nov,27 the atmosphere was even more charged because they were honouring Olga on her 80th birthday with gratitude and respect for her unwavering support of their group, especially in earlier days. I was pleased to be part of this enthusiastic celebration . The group certainly have not forgotten Olga's contribution and under Stefania's leadership continue to thrive as a warm, welcoming family." Sheryl Demetro - North York

Don Heights Party for Olga

By Helen Kirkby

Do you believe it? Olga is 80 years young!

That called for a big celebration. And Don Heights celebrated! They feasted on Chinese food and danced until closing time and in-between, tributes were made to Olga.

In Gib Whittamore's toast to Olga he wished her a Happy Birthday and many more years of folk dancing. (Olga, don't even think of retiring!)

A tribute from Wynne Vandezande made us smile when she said "there's almost nothing that will keep Olga away from giving us a super evening of fun and dance". We remembered that Olga did not cancel any classes because of blizzards or if there was no electricity. Once we sang with gusto while dancing in the light of a flashlight and an emergency exit light.

Ginger Northcott's brief outline of Olga's dance history was fascinating. It included Olga being chosen by the Ontario Ministry of Culture and the Ontario Arts Council along with Veronica Tennant, Margaret Atwood, Robertson Davies and other notable figures to be part of an exhibit. The exhibit titled "We Among Others" toured Paris, France; London, England and to parts of Germany, Canada, Mexico and the U.S.A.

Sheryl Demetro who has danced with Olga for more than 30 years, presented Olga with flowers and expressed the appreciation felt by the whole group.

Olga's son Robert joined the noisy party. He was reluctant to dance, but Mary Trantafillou, who wore a Macedonian costume, quickly pulled him in and had him dancing Gaida.

It was a fun and lively evening, every one in high spirits, similar to Olga's classes. Olga is a catalyst who brings people into a circle to dance, to laugh and be energized. Olga claims that people and dancing energize her and keep her ageless. We believe her.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY OLGA.

Olga leading in Hamilton

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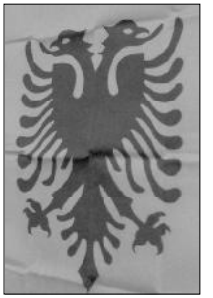
OFDA's New Year's Eve Party

About 55 people celebrated the end of 2009 and greeted a fresh New Year at the party room of Rachel Gottesman's apartment complex in Toronto. The weather co-operated and out-of-towners were able to get into the city to join what has to be one of the best ways to spend New Year's Eve - being among friends, eating, drinking and dancing! As we had no expense for use of the room, we were able to donate $230 of the door fee to the Second Harvest Food Bank. So, while we enjoyed our party, we hope that we've helped others have a Happy New Year, too.

Photos byAl Katz and Bev Sidney

Albanian Dance Café



Detail from Albanian Flag

On November 28, 2009 the OFDA organized a café with an Albanian theme. Prime mover for the event was our own Karen Bennett. As MC Judith Cohen very correctly observed, Karen is every bit as scholarly in her knowledge and attention to detail as credentialed academics, and we are lucky to have her in our midst!

Karen brought and modelled her costume, as well as one for Marylyn Peringer, both of which brightened the room. Aside from teaching several dances, she shared a bit of cultural lore and a collection of reference books for people to browse.

She generously donated a cd of Albanian music for a prize in our Members' Draw, and this was happily received by Chantal Daigle, whose ticket was drawn. (see photo on left, Rita Winkler drawing)

This particular café marked the occasion of the first evening ofda hired someone to help in the kitchen, and it proved to be a successful venture. Not only did this free up people to enjoy the evening's activities, it provided a bit of income for someone living in the Ralph Thornton community. At the end of the evening, leftovers were gladly taken by our helper to share with people in the neighbourhood who would welcome a gift of food. We hope to continue this practice in future!

Photos by B.Sidney

Notes from Karen's Website Blog....

November 28: I taught Albanian wedding dances (that is, dances done at wedding receptions) on Albanian Independence Day (Albania declared independence from the Ottoman Empire on November 28, 1912). As it happened, no one in attendance (great turnout!) was Albanian, but I had no trouble persuading people to "release their inner Albanians" (dance solo in the middle of the room) during the Ciftetelli part of the music. It was a great, high-energy evening, and I'm very glad I did it.

◀ At the left is me holding up the back of my Albanian pirpiri, a black wool sleeveless coat with gold embroidery. I was wearing a costume from the Elbasan region, central Albania. Anyone curious about Albanian dances can find them on YouTube. I used music from numerous sources, including Fanfara Tirana's Albanian Wedding album (CD-PIR2116), the Elveda Rumeli soundtrack (Kalan CD 455), Anthology of World Music: Music from Albania (Rounder CD 5151), and Songs and Dances from Albania (Tirana Folk Ensemble; EUCD 1601).

◀ *Modelling costume from Elbasan region of Albania*

▼ *Chantal Daigle receiving cd from Karen*

Dance-on-the-Water Black Sea Cruise, July2009

By Eileen Kopec

I'll bet that many of you have been to Sebastopol…CA. But how many of you have been to Sevastopol on the Black Sea? I had the chance to tour there with Mel and Esther Mann's latest Dance-on-the-Water cruise. Our group of sixty-seven adventurous travelers explored exotic places along the Dnieper River and around the Black Sea, including Kiev, Yalta, Odessa, Nessebar and Istanbul. My head is still swimming with images of the many sights and sounds of the Ukraine, Crimea, Bulgaria and Turkey.

Nessebar Performers

The trip started in Kiev aboard the ship MS Shevchenko. While not luxurious, the cabins were cozy and thankfully air-conditioned. Those of us on last year's Russian trip were prepared for the unusual bathroom - also called the "wet room" because the sink area turned into the shower area. Handy for multi-tasking. When presented with so many opportunities for touring, eating, socializing and dancing, there wasn't much time left to spend in the cabin anyway, except to grab some much needed sleep before being gently awakened by the pan flutes of Gheorghe Zamfir's Lonely Shepherd every morning.

Being Jewish, my trip was a little different than some of the others aboard. Since that area of the world has deep historical significance for Jews, Mel thoughtfully provided unique opportunities in several cities to visit Jewish sites. In Kiev, after visiting the Podol Synagogue (also known as the Great Choral Synagogue), I was not prepared in my jet-lagged state on my first day in Kiev to visit Babi Yar. I was surprised how close it was to the heart of Kiev. One imagines unspeakable violence as happening far from witnesses. It's now a peaceful treed glen, but I swear I could still hear the trees screaming. There were many tears and comforting hugs that afternoon. After that touching emotional experience, the trip so far had exceeded all my expectations. And it was only the first day!

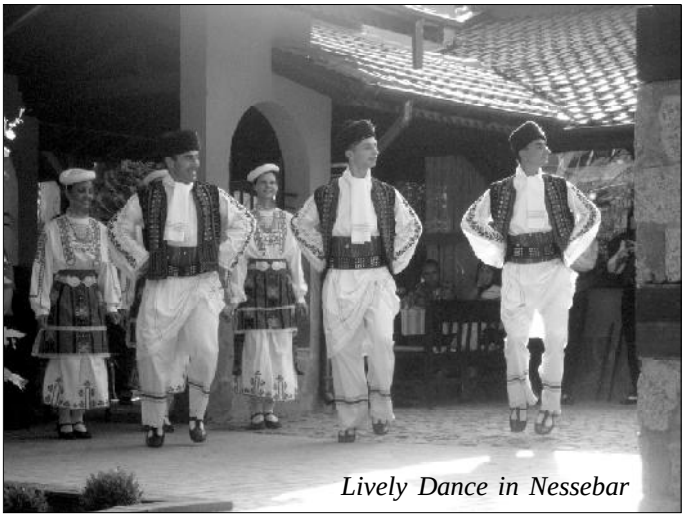
The next day we did not stop at a port – a nice way to get oriented to the ship and meet our dance leader Lee Otterholt. However, Lee was not quite up to dancing yet. In fact, we were lucky to have him with us at all. He was recovering from a very nasty bout with pneumonia and almost didn't make the trip. He was brave to come and we were fortunate that he recovered enough to start teaching after a few days. If you read my article about last year's trip (or check out leeotterholt.com) you will get biographical info about Lee, including his upcoming tours to Norway, Turkey, Greece, a unique trip down the Ganges on a Pandaw boat in 2011, and you can find his teaching schedules around the country.

Lee appropriately taught some Russian/ Ukrainian dances including Posadila Rosu, Ya Da Kalinushku Lomala, Russian Krakovyak and the lively Hai Zelananky, as well as reviewing the dances from last year's trip. He told us that you can choose to be a pedestrian or a dancer, meaning instead of mundanely walking though a dance, pay attention to posture, styling and have spring in your step. He gives positive feedback to help reinforce that message, saying things like "see how much better that looks" rather than badgering. He tells his dancers that he is saving their lives by urging them to dance with bounce instead of flat footed. It not only looks much better, but develops your calf muscles that can help you recover from a stumble and keep it from turning into a fall, thus risking a serious break.

Lee related a great story about the first time he remembers dancing. He was doing homework and his mother was ironing. A song came on the radio and his mother put down the iron and pulled him away from his work and taught him the box step. Powerful memories can change your life! So find a kid and teach them a dance! Who knows what that will turn into? One of Lee's dreams is to get more kids into dancing. We can all help with that by being inspirations to our kids and grandkids. In Lee's case dancing then turned into a strong hobby. He discovered that his mind was a sponge which soaked in dances, which eventually turned him away from a dissertation in political science, and led him to teaching dance classes and then into choreography. It's great when someone finds out early in life what they are meant to do. It's nice that we could be the beneficiaries of Lee's talent on this trip.

Meanwhile, back to the ship. We received dance lessons in the Skybar by day and danced on the deck at night. Sometimes it was challenging to keep our feet under us as the boat rocked and swayed underfoot. One night we were docked in Odessa and thought we could look forward to a calm night of dancing on deck. People on shore gathered at hearing our music and began snapping photos. We were briefly stars. But dancing was not *in* the stars. We started on our Russian repertoire but kept glancing up at the sky, which was rapidly darkening. In the middle of Ya Da Kalinushku Lomala some drops started to fall, getting larger and larger until we hysterically ran for cover. Lee said it would be memorable – and it was!

During evening rainouts or rough seas when the deck was off limits, the ship's musicians were always playing ballroom dance music in the Skybar. The combo consisted of two male musicians and a female singer. They also put on a few performances for us. One was a traditional performance of Ukrainian music, complete with costumes. They distributed a series of percussion instruments to members of the audience, adding to the fun. We learned some of the Ukrainian wedding customs – like hiring professional weepers if the wife couldn't cry the night before the wedding. And we learned about some of the national instruments such as the bandura and kobza. Another evening they presented music from all over the world, which included songs from Italy, Spain, France, Armenia and even America. Some of the selections were Hava Negila, Besame Mucho, Moscow Nights, Guantanamera, and to our surprise, Turkish Kiss, inducing some



Lively Dance in Nessebar

of us in the audience who knew the dance to make a lot of hand gestures.

One day, Lee discovered that one of our guides, Olga, had been in a dance troupe for ten years! He cajoled her to teach us a dance called Utushka (Meadow Duckling), and was great fun. Another day a Ukrainian folk group named Rainbow (Veselka in Ukrainian) came aboard. They were a group of gorgeous Ukrainian young women (which is redundant because all the girls there were stunning), accompanied by several musicians led by the artistic director, Mykhaylo Nildry on flute. His wife, who had a fantastic voice, did a few solo numbers. The group sang and played and taught us a few easy dances. We also met up with a group called Anadolu Folk Toplulugu led by Goksenin Ileri in Istanbul – we danced with them one night, and the following day they came to our hotel. They were warm and enthusiastic and even dressed us in some of their costumes. The interactions with so many friendly local people made the trip extra special. Even though their grasp of English was limited, we communicated with our feet and smiles. Wonderful.

By far the most amazing dance experience we had was in Nessebar, Bulgaria. The "Sunny Beach" (Slanchev Bryag) School of Arts and Folklore Ensemble met us near the dock with huge loaves of bread, carried by costumed young women and lively musicians. The musicians and the director, Danislav Kahayov, led us to a square a few blocks away and the dancers performed for us. Then they took us to their school/studio where they welcomed us with a gorgeous spread of fruit, snacks, chocolate, bread and soft drinks. They talked about the four different regions of Bulgaria and modeled costumes from each one. Then we got to dance with them! They demonstrated a dance and then motioned us to join in. They started with easy pravos, saw we could do them, and progressed to harder and faster dances. I can't describe what it felt like to dance between two handsome young men less than half my age – and to keep up with them! When one of them took my hand in both of his and nodded to me with a big grin as if to say good job, I was in heaven. Recognizing real talent, they pulled Lee up into a few dances with drums and other masculine props and he did us proud! It was a great afternoon, despite the wilting heat.

Bulgarian Dancers, Nessebar

As if all that wasn't enough, we experienced more performances along the way. An experienced singing group of older Ukrainians entertained us on a ferry out to Belogrudny Island in the Dnieper Delta, near Kherson. Along the way we waved to many families along the water, who waved back as if to say "leave the boat and join us". They were swimming and fishing off docks outside their dachas. It was tempting to dive off and join them! We were hosted by a woman on the island who served us local delicacies, including the ubiquitous sallow – a strong bacon fat. It went down better with vodka, also provided. A few days later, some of us, who survived the bus trip with the broken A/C, saw another folk performance in Bulgaria, with charming dancers in great costumes. And I can't leave out the amazing Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol, who wowed us with their energetic singing and dancing. They were incredible.

Turkish Folk Group

I haven't even mentioned the amazing sights and tours we experienced. We had a full tour of Livadia Palace, site of the Yalta Conference. We saw the actual table where Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt sat dividing up the world. We cheered as handsomely muscled men in the Cossack show in Zaporozhye performed athletic feats on horses and demonstrated their skill with whips. We also learned the Cossack cold remedy – drink vodka mixed with gunpowder at night and wake up healthy in the morning. Don't try that at home! We viewed the Panorama in Sevastopol showing scenes from the Crimean war. We saw many cathedrals and churches filled with icons. On a Jewish tour in Istanbul a few of us went to the Neve Shalom Synagogue that had been bombed twice, resulting in really stringent security. We stood before a memorial plaque listing the names of the people killed in those bombings – one last name was Angel (Esther's maiden name). Another poignant moment. We were awed at the power of Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque, and were dazzled by the jewels in Topkapi Palace. The experiences continued with the assault to the senses in the bazaars and markets of Istanbul, swimming with the locals at various Black Sea beaches and the relaxing cruise on the Bosphorus while sipping freshly squeezed orange juice. Or how could I forget the mesmerizing Whirling Dervish show in Turkey!

But even more than all that, it was the quiet moments aboard the ship, meeting fellow dancers and spouses, sitting on deck reading or listening to music while watching the world glide by, socializing at meals and learning about peoples lives that make Dance-on-the-Water cruises so special. Making new friends and renewing friendships with old friends from past cruises. Dancing on deck while watching the moon slowly rise over us. The sharing of moments. Life is after all made up of moments and I don't think I'll forget a single one of them from this trip.

There were many available options for tours on this trip. Each traveler's experience of the journey was a little different. But we shared many moments. Cheers to my fellow cruisers who will never be able to hear the refrains of "It's a Small World After All" without salivating and wanting the next meal, nor forget Valeryi calling "vodishka, vodishka" throughout the dining room. Na zdrovia!

Turkish Dancers,Istanbul

Judith Cohen's 60th Birthday Party

By Bev Sidney

View from the stage

It was a full house

Tamar and Judith, backstage

On December 5th, Tamar Adams Cohen put together a very special party to celebrate her mother Judith's sixtieth birthday.

After the full hall of family and friends had gathered at Toronto's Portuguese Community Centre, Casa do Alentejo, the evening's activities were "piped in" by Patrick MacDonald; in this case it was Scottish bagpipes rather than a Balkan varietyof instrument, and the effect was definitely dramatic. There followed a number of performances. Judith, acting as her own very laid back MC, was joined on stage by Tamar as well as numerous musical

"Let the Show Begin"

Some of the evening's performers

Photos by B.Sidney

Tamar's Flamenco Group

Medieval Trio from Montreal, reunited

colleagues - some from her early days in Montreal, some from more recent Toronto times.

Songs were played and sung: Sephardic, Spanish, Portuguese, Medieval, Balkan...and more. After an intermission that included a delicious spread of potluck offerings, Tamar's Flamenco group added to the eclectic concert by putting in an energetic appearance, with Tamar and La Morocha clapping (palmas), singing and dancing and Jorge Miguel on guitar.

The tapestry of guests was rich - the exotic and artsy intermingled with the many (place your favourite adjective here) folk dancers who were present. The part of Judith's life that is folk dance was acknowledged with a generous interlude of folk dancing at the end of the evening. Many non-dancers joined the folk dancers in a set of live Klezmer, lead on the dance front by Helen Winkler, and continued dancing to recorded music programmed by Judy Silver.

The evening, a reflection of Judith's interests and accomplishments, resonated with talent, multinational culture, honouring of family and long time friendships, music and dance. What a great tribute to sixty years and counting.

Portuguese Dance, "Malhao"

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