

# *Folk Dancer*

**The Magazine of World Dance and Culture**



ELIZABETH LUMLEY AND FETHI KARAKEÇİLİ GAMBOL DURING OFDA'S 40TH-ANNIVERSARY PARTY ON OCTOBER 17, 2009. ELIZABETH IS WEARING A RUSSIAN COSTUME LENT BY KAREN BENNETT; FETHI IS DRESSED IN HIS OWN BLACK SEA ENSEMBLE FROM TURKEY.

*Photo by Allen Katz. Story on p. 5.*

**PUBLISHED BY THE ONTARIO FOLK DANCE ASSOCIATION**

**VOLUME 44 NUMBER 1**

**February 2013**

# “Reason Enough to Celebrate”

by Karen Bennett

With this issue, Stefania Szlek Miller’s remarkable series Folk Dancing: Then and Now comes to an end with “Still Dancing: 1998–2011,” a period during which, Stef reminds us, Kevin Budd and Beverley Sidney were “especially responsible for the success of the *Folk Dancer* and OFDA.” In 2012, Kevin was able to relinquish his role as Editor of the newsletter after overseeing more than 90 issues, and I would like to proffer my thanks to Kevin for his many years of work. I’d also like to express my gratitude that Bev continues to serve OFDA in so many ways.

In our inventory and scheduled for upcoming issues we have the tale of a trip to Asia, starring Murray and Lavinia Forbes, that was as full of trials, tribulations and humour as we’ve come to expect, and Murray has since sent us a report on a recent trip to Chile. Nadia Younan, who presented at the October 13, 2012 Assyrian café, has written a delightful tale on her Italian/Assyrian heritage. Heidi Williams has submitted a history of the London, Ontario folk dance group.

Stefania’s final article gives me a chance to run one of my favourite photographs: from OFDA’s 40th-anniversary party in 2009. Leading a line, while the band “Karamfil” plays on stage, is Olga Sandolowich, followed by Helen Kirkby and Stefania herself, in a gorgeous Polish costume. I find it a perfect illustration of why we are all Still Dancing.



Photo by David Trost

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



***Please do let us know about special events!***

# Le Carnaval de Nice

by Nancy Nies

**January 1** – Living in North America, we hear about the New Orleans Mardi Gras and the Rio de Janeiro Carnival but not much about the Carnaval de Nice, the highlight of winter on the Côte d’Azur, the French Riviera. This year’s festivities in Nice will take place from 15 February through 6 March and involve parades both day and night, with floats, flowers, huge animated figures and more than 1,000 musicians and dancers from around the world. The theme for 2013 will be “Le Roi des Cinq Continents” and will feature the French-speaking cultures on the continents of Africa, the Americas (North and South), Asia, Europe and Oceania.

range the colourful closing parade of amusing *grosses têtes* (big heads) and animated floats. That evening, at the beach, we watched from a distance the traditional, dramatic close of Nice’s *Carnaval* – the burning of the king, who that year represented the 20th century, followed by fireworks.



On the last day of February, 1999, Paul and I had flown to Nice, where Paul was to attend a conference. It was only en route that we realized, in reading the in-flight magazine, that we would be arriving on the final day of that year’s Carnaval celebration. As soon as we had checked in at our hotel, we sought out a good spot to witness at close



*The grosses têtes, made of cardboard or foam, are an integral part of the Carnaval de Nice. They are carried on the bearers’ shoulders and can weigh up to 30 pounds [13.61 kg]. A hole at chest level allows for some vision – and air!*

## OFDA APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

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The following article is the fifth and final in the series *Folk Dancing: Then and Now*

## Still Dancing: 1998–2011

by Stefania Szlek Miller

Kevin Budd's intention in the fall of 1997 was to edit three issues of the magazine until a new editor could be found. Little did he know that he would grace us with his wit for more than 13 years. Kevin brought to the task his musician's ear for good music, ethical concerns about acknowledging musicians, and a deconstructionist eye for debunking some folklore myths. He raised political questions about multiculturalism and Canadian identity, "political correctness" in the language we use to describe "ethnic" or "national" groups, as well as differences between "sacred" and "profane" dance. These issues illuminate the nature of social folk dancing and will be discussed in this last article in my series.

Following Shirley Kossowski's two-year term as production manager of the magazine, Beverly (Bev) Sidney took over that responsibility in 2000, and continues in that role to the present day. Seven issues of the magazine were published until the spring of 2010, when the number was reduced to five issues per year. By then, Bev had already developed an electronic mail network of informing members of upcoming events and other news. With some relief from Karen Bennett and Bev, who took over as guest



Photo by Conrad Stenton

Bev Sidney, October 13, 2012.

editors while Kevin was performing at panflute festivals in Switzerland and other places, Kevin edited over 90 issues of the *Folk Dancer*. Reviewing these issues is a good reminder of why we are still dancing.

Bev Sidney, who does not like to be in the spotlight despite her considerable skills and accomplishments – as a dancer, production manager, organizer, writer and photographer – was, more than anyone, responsible for the survival and rejuvenation of OFDA. In 2001, she served as Acting President of OFDA after Myrna Levine's resignation as President. From 2002 to the present, OFDA continues to be run by a three-person steering committee elected at OFDA's annual meetings. Bev has served on all of them and is its constant and leading member. Many other people contributed to the magazine and OFDA (see endnote), but Kevin and Bev are especially responsible for the success of the *Folk Dancer* and OFDA during this period.

### Highlights

Folk dancers love to travel, judging from the number of articles in the *Folk Dancer*. Judith Cohen, an ethnomusicologist by profession, reported on her



primary research on Sephardic music and dance experiences in Spain and other places. After taking early retirement from her teaching position in Hamilton, Mirdza Jaunzemis taught for two years in China, and wrote about her experiences and travels. Rhoda Bodnoff and Judy Bourke delighted us with their trips to Greece, while Adam and Shirley Kossowski reported on their dance tour of Poland. Murray Forbes' sardonic commentary of his and Lavinia's numerous travels to remote places added humour to the magazine. Many others informed us of the joys of cruising to exotic places with instructors like Sandy Starkman leading dances on board. Zoomers were certainly on the move.

There were also many opportunities to dance closer to home, with special celebrations and workshops at individual clubs, ethnic nights sponsored by OFDA, and the annual Ontario Folk Dance Camp in Waterloo. Some of these events included



*Photo by Allen Katz*

*Adam and Shirley Kossowski,  
Waterloo camp, 2011*

performances by Kevin and other Toronto-based performers. After spending many years in Turkey, Brenna MacCrimmon returned to Ontario, and became very well-known as a singer with various bands. Folk dancers also enjoyed the fabulous performances by students from the Serbian Dance Academy, founded and directed by Miroslav ("Bata") Marèetia



*Brenna MacCrimmon*

In "Allo? Allo? Ici Ottawa," Edwidge Munn informed us, in French, about the dynamic Ottawa group (December 1999). In "Apples for Our Teachers," Robert McDonald paid a wonderful tribute, in English and French, to 10 Ottawa teachers (February 2000). The Ottawa group celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2008 with a workshop with Lee Otterholt (December 2008).

Montreal was another great centre of folk dancing. Jocelyne Vaillancourt and her capable crew organized wonderful week-long August camps, "Perseids," in Montreal from 1999 to 2003. Aside from learning dances, participants had an opportunity to dance or listen to the many vibrant folk bands in Montreal. In 2005, Jocelyne hosted, with Ahmet Lüleci and Joe Graziosi, the World Dance Camp in Montreal. Sharon Smith wrote about the adventures of Hamilton and Toronto dancers at the 2006 camp in the February 2007 issue.

News from the west included Jeremy Hull's advice on how to rejuvenate groups based on his experience with the Winnipeg folk dance group (October 2006). Astrid Hudson, a Sacred Circle dancer from Cobourg, had nothing but compliments about the Winnipeg international folk dance group, in contrast to her scathing review of the Sacred Circle group in Winnipeg (May 2001). Maya Trost's report of the 50th-anniversary party of the Vancouver

International Folk Dancers in 2009 – with more than 150 people in attendance – indicated that dancing was alive and well on the west coast.

Despite the cheerful news, the concern about the decline in folk dance participants noted in my previous article continued during this period. Our ranks also shrank as more and more dancers travelled to far-off places or spent winter months in warmer climes such as Mexico. Articles in the magazine offered advice on attracting new recruits and even rebranding our international folk dance activity.

### “Sacred” and “Profane”

One of Kevin’s innovations as editor was to introduce international dancers to Sacred Circle dance groups. In an editorial appropriately entitled “Pontifications” (December 1999), Kevin reported on Laura Shannon’s October 1999 Toronto workshop, “Dancing the Inner Fire.” Shannon came to Toronto

from Findhorn, Scotland, the birthplace of the Sacred Circle movement in 1976. What impressed Kevin about this movement, which is not affiliated with any religion or specific nationality, is its emphasis on dance as a form of meditation. The dances have a “calming” and “trance-inducing effect” which bond participants in a community. In the same issue, Astrid Hudson emphasized that Sacred Circle communities are very inclusive and welcoming of beginners, since the dances are not based on complex choreographies. There are apparently “no wrong moves, only variations.” In a subsequent article, Astrid wrote that “Sacred Circle dance brings body, mind, emotions and spirit together” (September 2000).

Sacred Circle obviously appealed to many people, with some 17 Ontario clubs listed in the October 2000 issue of the *Folk Dancer*. It is significant that most of the clubs continue to thrive in smaller cities such as Orillia, Brantford and



*A Sacred Circle dance workshop in Romania, 2011.*

Simcoe. Cosmopolitan large cities, such as Toronto, may be just too big, with too many competing activities and attractions. Joining forces with Sacred Circle raised new opportunities for expanding our own circles of dance. OFDA and Barbara Herring's Sacred Circle group organized a joint workshop in Toronto on 13 November 2000. Rina Singha, the well-known classical Indian dancer and a long-time folk dancer, introduced some non-performance-style Indian village dances, while Barbara Herring taught several dances from her Sacred Circle repertoire.

Kevin Budd's review of that joint venture in the February 2001 issue was bound to raise some eyebrows among folk dancers. He suggested that folk dancers were less warm and cuddly than Sacred Circle dancers. The latter hug each other much more than we do. Rather than clapping at the end of a dance (clapping apparently breaks the mood and energy of the activity), Sacred Circle dancers show their appreciation in a more serene way. Kevin noted the simplicity of Sacred Circle dances and that everyone can take part in all the dances. Kevin concluded, "For folk dancers used to being force-fed complex choreographed performance multi-figures which they can carry as trophies of accomplishment, this might seem too simple" (February 2001).

A letter-writer with the initials C.V. chided Kevin in the March 2001 issue for his critical remarks about folk dancers. He responded by stressing that his intent was "to promote an attitude that keeps folk dancing dynamic and alive" – one that "can grow and develop, be more inclusive, embrace new areas, adopt improvements and open itself to different levels of experience" (March 2001). He was also impressed that dancers from the Sacred Circle community were prepared to pay \$150 for a day-long workshop, such as the one with Laura Shannon noted above, compared to the \$50 that folk dancers in our international folk dance circles usually pay (December 1999). Obviously it is not our fees that deter people from joining us.

Bill Baird took up the gauntlet in his article "The Profane World of Dance" (September 2001). He argued that folk dance originated in the "profane"

world of "work and play, love and hate, tragedy and comedy." He also offered an "irreverent counterpoint" to some of the "unflattering things that have been said about international folk dance and dancers. Apparently we are obsessed with our feet, dance technique, complex steps but miss the real heart or inner experience of communal dancing." Bill noted that folk dancers do experience a high (even a "cathartic" release from everyday cares and woes), and a feeling of togetherness in shared movement. He also emphasized the pleasure one derives from learning and mastering movement skills. "Learning to folk dance is like learning a language. The first steps are usually awkward and 'inarticulate.'" After one masters the basics, one can experiment with variations and learn styling as well as develop esthetic preferences for certain dances. Bill traced his own preferences over time from enjoying simple to very complex choreographies, and concluded, "Now I appreciate dances that have an organic flow to them.... Dances that originated in actual traditions, born of a collective mind, seem to give me that feeling more than dances choreographed by someone." He stressed that instructors and leaders of international folk dance groups need to be sensitive to participants' esthetic preferences as well as to the other dimensions of folk dance.

The exchange between folk dancers and Sacred Circle shows some striking similarities between the two groups. The impression that Sacred Circle is a free-for-all (anything goes) is not accurate, as was evident in Astrid Hudson's very critical commentary of a Sacred Circle group she danced with in Winnipeg. She was particularly critical of that group's "muddled" approach to teaching and explaining dances (May 2001). Sacred Circle as well as folk dance groups have certain rituals and rules which reflect their respective approaches to dance. We do share the objective of being inclusive and developing a community spirit. Some of the rules that have been in circulation for many years among folk dancers may impede those objectives. For example, participants in some folk dance circles are advised not to join a line or circle if they do not know a dance – advice that is especially uninviting for newcomers. Even for more experienced ones, it means sitting out or being

relegated to dancing behind the line. In his article “You Put Your Right Foot In” (April 1998), Al Gladstone offers a more friendly list of guidelines. His advice to participants includes: “Join in as many dances as you find enjoyable. It’s good for you!” He concludes by reminding dancers to thank “leaders and your fellow folk dancers. They also appreciate you being there!” Folk dancing is a joyful activity, and we need to find ways to include all dancers in the circle, especially at party events. It is easier to follow or learn a dance by being in the circle than out.

It is regrettable that the dialogue between Sacred Circle and international folk dance groups went no further than what is noted above. While the *Folk Dancer* continues to list some Sacred Circle clubs, there is little, if any, interaction. Perhaps an update on that community is in order in a future issue of the *Folk Dancer* magazine. There is some merit in rebranding folk dancing to make it more attractive for recruitment. While “profane circle” may not quite fit this bill, there was a serious move to change the name to “multicultural dancer.”

### **Multicultural versus International**

Al Gladstone, who was Associate Editor and then historian of the magazine for many years, initiated a proposal to change OFDA’s purpose from promoting “international” to “multicultural dance” to avoid the

political connotation of “international.” This initiative was approved by OFDA at its 1998 Annual General Meeting (AGM), with the result that the mission statement reads: “OFDA’s aim is to promote folk arts and particularly folk dancing of many cultures” (October 1998). With the exception of Al Gladstone and David Yee’s “Multicultural” Monday night group at Armour Heights in the late 1990s, most of the clubs listed in the magazine continued to use “international” to designate their dance activities.

While sensitivity to political meaning of terms is laudable, it is very difficult to divorce politics from what we do. Most of the dances that are in our repertoire have national labels (Bulgarian, Canadian, Israeli, Turkish, etc.). I am not sure how one avoids this labelling by referring to cultures, especially since “national” has a broader meaning than one restricted to political state boundaries. For example in Canada, we have the “First Nations,” referring to Aboriginal peoples whose rights are enshrined in our Constitution. English and French are accorded special status reflecting the “two founding peoples” or “nations” of Canada. (Some of you may recall John Diefenbaker’s opposition to this concept of Canadian confederation.) Those of us whose ancestry (by self-description) is other than Aboriginal, British or French are usually the ones who are referred to as belonging to “ethnic” groups under the multicultural label. Rebranding ourselves as “multicultural dancers” might thus be misleading. I am certain that the First Nations and French-Canadians would not take kindly to being lumped with Polish-Canadians as just another cultural or ethnic group in Canada.

Richard Duree’s distinction in the October 2007 issue between “ethnic,” “tribal,” “social” and other dance types does not clarify this issue. He settles on the term “folk” (German “volk”) as dances of “people” who share a common heritage, language and tradition. This terminology is just as fraught with political meaning as is “international.” The 19th-century European interest in folklore – the culture and dances of predominant rural or village “folk,” as opposed to the wealthier and better-educated landed gentry and urban elites – was closely tied to nationalism and national self-determination movements against foreign rule. While we can try to dissociate “folk”

Photo by Bev Sidney



*Cecille Ratney, left, talks with Al Gladstone and his wife Marilyn Wilcoxin at Cecille’s 90th-birthday party, April 21, 2007.*



from that political meaning, it still does not define who is included in, or excluded from, the boundaries defining a “people.”

As folk dancers, we can rebrand ourselves with a totally different name that does not carry as much historical baggage. Until that happens, international folk dancers just have to be sensitive about labels. For example, a “Turkish” dance may be “Kurdish,” as Fethi Karakeçili outlined in the magazine in February 2008. Other dances could be symbiotically related but be hotly contested as to whether a certain dance is Macedonian, Greek or Romani (Romany, Romanes – various spellings; Romani is also sometimes used to refer to Roma as a people).

### Political Correctness

The issue of labels attached to certain ethnic or other groups was also addressed in Kevin’s editorial in the December 2000 issue. It was a response to a letter from Stephen Puschuk, who wrote that one should avoid using the word “Gypsy” for Roma. Kevin accepted the criticism as valid, and indicated that the magazine will continue to use widely used terms, such as “gypsy,” in quotation marks. This is certainly a step forward, since the word in many languages has a pejorative meaning – similar to using the N-word to refer to African-Americans. The International Romani Union and the Roma National Congress are working to further the human rights of their members.

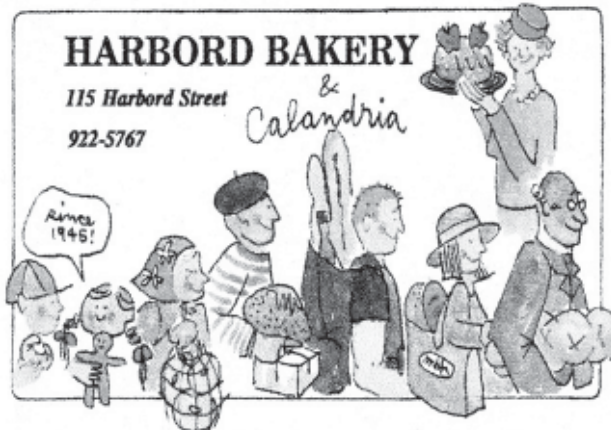
We have come a long way in Canada in avoiding degrading language and stereotypes about ethnic and other groups. It is thus distressing to see some performing groups continue to depict Roma in ways that would be insulting to their own cultures, i.e., “gypsy” men are portrayed as more violent and misogynist and their women as less chaste than members of other groups. One can add to this stereotypical Hollywood and other movie images of ethnic groups. Kevin singles out Sacha Baron Cohen’s 2006 film *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* as a particularly grotesque caricature of East European and Asian villagers. The British comedian also used music from the recordings of Ezma Redzepova, the renowned Romani singer,

without her permission or paying for the right to use it. The film grossed over \$20 million, and there was no question that Ezma should have been paid royalty fees (Kevin’s editorial in February 2007 issue). This example also highlights the difference between profit-making ventures which can well afford to pay royalty fees, and small, non-profit folk dance groups. One, nevertheless, has to agree with Kevin that folk dance leaders and instructors need to acknowledge musicians and to urge their members to buy their music (February 2000).

### Canadian Identity

The perennial and perplexing question about Canadian identity was raised in a number of issues. In an editorial, Kevin argued that there is “no one set of dances that we can say define our identity at this point.” He then concluded that what is usually labelled as Canadian music and dances have been “adapted from French, English, Irish, Scottish origins, but as they say, the ‘folk process’ means adopting and adapting. Anything that is transplanted must also be adapted to its new locale” (February 2008). In her review of the Canadian dances taught by Dale Hyde at the 2005 Ontario Folk Dance Camp in Waterloo, Mirdza Jaunzemis reached a similar conclusion. She notes that 18th- and 19th-century settlers in Canada from the British Isles and France adapted old-country dances into distinctive Canadian ones in their new homes (September 2005). We have

[continued on p. 17]



[“Still Dancing,” continued from p. 10]

also enjoyed France Bourque-Moreau’s very instructive workshops on French-Canadian dances at the 2003 Ontario Folk Dance Camp (also see my review of the 1999 Perseids Montreal camp in October 1999). Dudley Laufman’s long article on “Dancing in Quebec” (February 1999) is outstanding in describing the dance scene in community basements in Quebec, and the similarities and differences between their dances and New England dances across the border in the United States.

Have other settlers to Canada, besides those from Britain and France, adapted dances from the “old” country to the new? Many of these settlers arrived in Canada many generations ago, and settled in concentrated geographic areas, such as Ukrainians in the Prairie Provinces. Did they develop a Ukrainian-Canadian style of folk dancing as distinct from “traditional” Ukrainian dances displayed by their performance groups? Did they join other ethnic groups in developing hybrids when they got together to celebrate weddings and other special occasions? For example, I recall that when we arrived in Canada in the early 1950s from Displaced Peoples’ (DP) camps in post-war Europe, the party dances in Polish-Canadian communities in Brantford were distinctly different from the dances in the camps. Could the Chicago-style polka be a “new” world adaptation that is distinctly North American? This very aerobic style of polka was obviously a social or recreational “folk” dance as opposed to “old” country Polish dances which were performed on stage on special occasions. These performance dances were already the more gentrified versions of village dances. To be of peasant background (as were most DPs, such as my parents) was something to be ashamed of rather than displayed as folklore. Kevin provides some humorous aphorisms to describe the phenomenon of imagined ideal village folk dances so long as one does not look like a villager doing them (May 2008). It is a reminder



Photo by Leon Balaban

Dale Hyde, 2007.

that folk dance has a social-economic class as much as an ethnogeographic dimension.

The question of how one represents Canada’s rich demographic makeup at international folk dance festivals or on major occasions, such as Canada’s upcoming 150th anniversary in 2017, will become increasingly complex. How does one balance depictions of European settlers with immigrants who increasingly come from Asia and other continents? Perhaps dances choreographed to “world music,” with its fusion of regional Middle Eastern, Asian, Latin American, Balkan and other genres

of music, like North American jazz, might be the solution. For international folk dancers in our area, however, these important issues were secondary to the problem of keeping our activity alive.

### **OFDA Survival and Renewal**

Myrna Levine, who was elected OFDA president in 1998, had to resign in 1999 for personal reasons, with Adam Kossowski taking over as Acting President in 1999. Myrna was re-elected in 2000 but resigned before completing her two-year term. At the May 2001 OFDA annual meeting, Bev Sidney and Kevin Budd were elected as President and Vice-President (June, 2001), adding these duties to their already heavy workload of producing the *Folk Dancer* magazine. They all worked very hard to energize the folk dance movement. This included a tri-cultural event, organized by Myrna, with international folk dancers and the Serbian- and Romanian-Canadian communities in Toronto, with Miroslav Marëetiaë as guest instructor (October 2000). As already noted, OFDA also reached out to the Sacred Circle community in co-hosting a joint workshop in February 2001. An exchange between IFDC and the Ottawa club was initiated in September of 2000 (June 2000), but the distance between

Toronto and Ottawa was too great to make this a regular occurrence. The norm for co-operative ventures between OFDA and clubs continued to be restricted to the Toronto and Hamilton area and was a means of sharing costs of workshops with international dance instructors. This included OFDA's co-sponsorship with IFDC of a Romanian workshop with Theodor Vasilescu in 1999 (May 1999). Beginning in 2000, OFDA also continues to sponsor summer dancing in Hamilton with Adam Kossowski.

Despite these efforts, OFDA was at a crisis point. Membership continued to decline, with 269 members in 2001 (June 2001), compared to 460 in 1992 and 331 in 1997 (see previous article). In 2002, Bev Sidney appealed for volunteers, stating that "OFDA is teetering at the brink of dissolution for want of a critical mass of committed people willing to help run the show" (February 2002).

In response, volunteers came forward to serve on OFDA's Steering Committee and Executive. When Hy Diamond, who had led the summer dance in the park for many years, could no longer continue, Walter Zagorski and others were willing to take over. The problem of storing books and magazines in OFDA's collection was resolved by donating them to York University, where they could be properly catalogued and used by students and others interested in folklore research (February 2003). For the same reason, Mary Ann and Michael Herman's collection of records and other folk dance material found a home at the Kentucky Dance Foundation (September 1998).

Thanks to Al Gladstone's contacts, the Ralph Thornton Community Centre on Queen Street West in Toronto became the regular venue for OFDA activities in 2003. It continues to serve as the meeting place for OFDA's regular events including performances and workshops by visiting groups showcasing dances from New Guinea to Latvia. Other OFDA events included workshops such as Balkan rhythms with Judy Silver and Yiddish folk dances with Helen Winkler. Helen also wrote very informative articles on adaptive dancing for teens and adults "with developmental delays" (September

2005). OFDA paid tribute to Denis Bowman in 2008 for his many years of hosting folk dance parties at his home at King Summit. Fethi Karakeçili, a doctoral student at York University, gave an OFDA workshop on Kurdish dances. (He was also one of the teachers at the 2010 dance camp at Waterloo.) OFDA and the Hamilton group co-sponsored a number of very successful workshops with out-of-town guest teachers, such as Cristian Florescu and Sonia Dion in 2009 and Yves Moreau in 2010. The February 2011 issue reported on "world music" workshops with York University students led by Professors Judith Cohen and Irene Markoff as well as Fethi.

We also heard from some younger dancers. Shaina Silver-Baird (then age 14) received an OTEA scholarship to attend (with her parents, Judy Silver and Bill Baird) the 2003 "Perseids" Montreal Camp. Shaina's review of that camp sparkled with the enthusiasm of a young dancer (October 2003). In the same issue, Adrianna Wenk (another young OTEA scholarship recipient) reported on her participation



Photo by Bev Sidney

*Denis Bowman talks with Rina Singha at Denis's 80th-birthday party, October 15, 2011.*

at the Ogontz Family Camp in New Hampshire. Bella Lamb (age 20) wrote about the 2004 Ontario Folk Dance Camp in Waterloo (September 2004).

To attract new leaders, OFDA offered leadership workshops (February 2006), and Teme Kernerman organized another in a long series of Teacher Training courses in 2007 and 2008 (June 2007 and February 2008). Maya Trost provided a report on the success of these initiatives in the December 2007 issue: "New Teachers Strut Their Stuff." This was followed by a more detailed report about new dance initiatives and classes offered by the following: Riki Adivi, Dorothy Archer, Sheryl Demetro, Adam Kossowski, Marylyn Peringer, Eva Rosenbaum, Bev Sidney, Maya Trost and Lyndon Than (October 2008).

In 2009, OFDA celebrated its 40th anniversary with a wonderful banquet followed by a dance at Estonian House in Toronto. Over 140 participants from groups in Ontario and beyond attended this superbly organized event with music provided by "Karamfil" (Balkan) and the "West of Odessa" (Klezmer) bands. The special-edition wine served for the occasion was produced by Maya Trost and Bev Sidney. Sandy Starkman was a most capable MC, and Judy Silver and Helen Winkler led many of the Balkan and Klezmer dances. Many people came in colourful folk outfits, thanks to Karen Bennett's beautiful collection of costumes. Teme Kernerman and Nora Brett spoke about the beginnings of OFDA. Others helped with organization and billeting out-of-town guests. It was one of the most successful community events in decades, with some lovely pictures in the magazine as well as images on OFDA's

***Folk Dancer***



*Steve Starchev (d. 2006).*

website. In expressing my appreciation to Bev for the celebration, I raised the following complaint: Why was the event not featured on the cover of OFDA's magazine and as the lead story rather than being relegated to the back pages of the December 2009 issue? We need to celebrate major achievements.

Bev and the many capable members who served on the executive during this period deserve a lot of credit for the survival and rejuvenation of OFDA. The organization's numbers even improved, with 272 members in 2011. The membership fee of \$24 (\$30 for couples) remains very reasonable.

### **In Memoriam**

The international dance community paid tribute to people who strongly influenced the folk dance movement. Rita Shelelia wrote about Georgi Terzieff (died in 2003) and his influence on the Balkan dance scene in Buffalo and broader international community (October 2003). Ivy (Krehm) Wittmeyer (d. 2005) was instrumental in starting folk dancing in Toronto and Ontario, as was noted in my first article (December 2011). Dick Crum (d. 2005) was an outstanding teacher who taught at many folk dance camps (February 2006). Igor Moiseyev, the choreographer who so heavily influenced the balletic style of folk dance performance, died in 2007 at the age of 101 (December 2007). Despite criticisms of his balletic style (noted in my previous article), Moiseyev more than any other choreographer gave artistic expression to folk dance.



*Ken Cowan, 2010.*

*Photo by Allen Katz*

Closer to home, we mourned the passing of friends.

Bill Baird died on January 1, 2004 at the very young age of 54. Aside from his leading role in IFDC, Bill served on the editorial board and was a frequent contributor to the magazine. Shaina Silver-Baird's moving eulogy for her father was published, along with many other tributes, in the February 2004 issue. Nancy Leslie paid tribute to "The Two Gordons" in the March 2005 issue. Gordon Fitzpatrick (d. 2004) taught English Country and other dances at the University Settlement House as well as other international and English Country and Contra clubs. Nancy stressed, "Over time, Gordon was very vocal that international folk dancing should remain international and not be extremely overshadowed by the Balkan and Israeli dances." Gordon Melamed (d. 2004) was an ardent supporter of OFDA and of other folk dance events. He was one of the original participants at the first Ontario Folk Dance Camp in 1959 and was a regular contributor to the camp for many years. Kevin Budd wrote in memory of Steve Starchev, who died in 2006 (age 51). A noted Toronto radio host for CBC and talented musician, Steve was especially fondly remembered for his performances on the hurdy-gurdy. We also mourned the death of Sharon Smith, who died in 2007 (age 54). Helen Griffin recalled Sharon's love of dance and contributions to the Hamilton International Folk Dance Club as well as her love of theatrical performances, especially in skits at the annual Waterloo camp (December 2007). Another great loss was Margaret Whelan (d. 2008). Margaret served as OFDA president and was in charge of advertising of the magazine from 1978 to 2002. Her magnanimous personality and many contributions were fondly remembered by Kevin Budd, Karen Bennett and Bev Sidney in the June 2008 issue. Adrienne Beecker's tribute to Kenneth Cowan (d. 2011) recalled Ken's devotion to his family and community and his love of African drums. Ken danced with Olga Sandolowich's group in Toronto, served on the OFDA executive and helped out in running events at various camps (June 2011). Myrna Levine, past president of OFDA, also died in 2011. Right to the end, she kept on dancing despite aching joints. Myrna's poem

"Confessions of an Arthritic Senior Folk Dancer" was published in the October 2011 issue.

We remember them by dancing. It is our way of celebrating their lives and their contributions to our dance community.

### **Celebrations**

There were happier reasons to dance. In 2000, Rina Singha received the William Kilbourne Award for her contribution to Toronto's artistic and cultural life. Her many achievements include her contribution to the film *Can Racial Attitudes Be Changed?* (September 2000). Rina continues to offer Indian dance classes in Toronto.

Teme Kernerman was honoured by the "IsReal" Dance Festival for her outstanding achievement in promoting Israeli and international folk dance for six decades. This includes organizing the annual Rikudiyah children's festival, directing various performance groups as well as offering teacher and leadership training courses. At the June 2007 IsReal festival, there was a dance presentation of "Oseh Shalom," an original dance choreographed by Teme.

The Don Heights Dancers celebrated their 30th anniversary in 2003 with a huge party that included a performance by the Selyani performing group and tributes to Olga Veloff Sandolowich, group leader and teacher (December 2003). The December 2010 issue congratulated Olga for receiving the United Macedonian Diaspora Outstanding Achievement Award in recognition of "Olga's 57 years of Excellence and Out-standing Achievement in the Arts."

Ontario Folk Dance Camp celebrated 50 years of dancing in May 2009. Judy Bourke wrote about the highlights of that major anniversary in the June 2009 issue. The 2009 camp syllabus included an impressive list of all the teachers who have taught at the camp from 1959 to 2009. Nancy Leslie interviewed Teme Kernerman concerning the start of the camp in the September 2008 issue. The many reviews in the magazine are a reminder of the profound influence of that camp in enriching our diverse repertoire.

Photo by Bev Sidney



*Sandy Starkman, Waterloo camp, 2012*

For many decades, it has been Sandy Starkman and her capable team of colleagues who have continued to be responsible for organizing the annual Ontario camps. Sandy also organizes the annual summer Maine camps, instructs on numerous dance cruises, teaches folk dance classes in Toronto and is a guest teacher in groups in Canada and the United States. In 2008, Sandy was honoured with a “lifetime achievement” National Dance Award at the San Antonio Folk Dance festival (May 2008).

## **Clubs**

OFDA can only be as strong as individual clubs, since they are the major source of the organization’s membership and of volunteers who serve on the executive. It is an encouraging sign that the 2011 list of weekly classes in Toronto was longer than noted in my previous article. Olga’s group at Don Heights, which began in 1973, is still a going concern, and Olga offers classes in other centres of the city. IFDC, which began in 1974, remains an important centre with talented teachers such as Judy Silver (the group leader), Karen Bennett, Terri Taggart, Helen Winkler and Walter Zagorski, among others.



Photo by Bev Sidney

*Judy Silver, 2009*

David Yee, who began teaching with Al Gladstone, continues to lead classes at the Ralph Thornton Centre. While Al Gladstone no longer leads a group, he is the contact person for dance, folk arts and program consultation. International dance classes which began in Jewish community centres many decades ago are still ongoing, with many instructors joining the teaching core of Teme and Sandy. There are, however, very few articles in the magazine about the history of folk dancing at the Jewish community centres, especially the relationship between international and Israeli groups. The newer groups in the Toronto area include Miroslav Marèetiæ’s energetic Wednesday Serbian classes for adults at the Burnhamthorpe Community Centre in Mississauga. Dorothy Archer has started an international folk dance group at the North York Seniors Centre. Riki Adivi has started a group in Richmond Hill which includes some relatively young participants. This list does not include all the clubs that offer Scottish Country, Swing and other classes.

As already noted earlier, the dynamic Ottawa club, which celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2008, has a long association with dancers from the Ottawa region as well as Quebec. Their leaders also have submitted regular reports about the club’s activities to the *Folk Dancer*.

There is, unfortunately, little information about the London folk dancers in the magazine. Based on my communications with some of the vibrant dancers from London, who often join us at the Hamilton club for special occasions, London has a long history of folk dancing with teachers like Sharon Wise, Ross Lemon and Tova Zarnowiecki. Since moving to London in the late 1980s, Leslie Hallock has added her many years of teaching experience to the London scene. As an American student, Leslie had danced in the performing group “Lado” while she was studying in Zagreb. The current London group also includes Yaga McInnes, who started to folk dance in the mid-

1970s; Terry Snider, whose parents taught folk dancing for many years in Vancouver; and Rexhep (Rexi) Ferati, who danced with the performing group “Shota” in Kosovo prior to emigrating to North America. Heidi Williams, another lovely London dancer, has volunteered to write a history of folk dancing in London for the *Folk Dancer*.

When I wrote a long article in the June 2004 issue on the 20th anniversary of the Hamilton

Photo by Conrad Stenton



*Rexi Ferati leads a line at the OFDA Assyrian café, October 13, 2012. Next to him is Frances Cohen.*

International Folk Dance Club (HIFDC), I also paid for a full-page ad thanking all of our members for their many years of contributing to the club. At that time, I did not expect that we would still be dancing as a club well into our 29th year. Volunteer clubs, as a general rule, have a short lifespan before they burn out, and I frequently remind myself not to take our community for granted: “Dance as if each session is our last.” But we – like members of other clubs with even a longer history – are still dancing and celebrating birthdays, anniversaries and any other excuse for a party. Adam Kossowski, who has been a member of HIFDC since 1985, continues to organize the summer dance programs in the park. Starting in 2011, Adam began teaching classes for adults in Kitchener. There may be other opportunities to start folk dance clubs in smaller

cities. Helen Griffin, who danced with the Hamilton group before moving to Peterborough in 2011, has been encouraged to start a club in that city.

Since moving to Hamilton in 2002, Dale Hyde has been a regular contributor to HIFDC and is our resident expert on Canadian, British as well as many other dances. Dale also teaches two day-time classes (International and Canadian Step Dance) at the YWCA in Hamilton, and is a frequent guest instructor at English Country dances. Dale Hyde is well-known to the international folk dance community as a teacher and choreographer. As noted in previous articles, he was the founder and director of the Canadian Dance Tapestry, a group that performed at numerous Canadian and international festivals. An internationally recognized researcher and choreographer of Canadian folk dances, Dale has offered many workshops in Canada, the United States and Europe. His most recent research is on the traditional dances of Wales.

## Conclusion

This series, “Folk Dancing: Then and Now,” demonstrates the enduring nature of folk dancing. It is a reminder of the many wonderful people who have developed and sustained the movement in Ontario and beyond. We are also beholden to all the editors and staff of the magazine who have left an impressive record of folk dance history. We have a solid foundation to continue promoting folk dance, and have many talented teachers, organizers and enthusiastic participants. While the decline in numbers is a concern, I remain optimistic about the activity that continues to give us so much joy. There is enough “ageism” in our culture without us adding to it by bemoaning the age of our members. At least we are all aging at the same rate. Cecille Ratney and Kitty Cohen celebrated their respective 95th and 99th birthdays in December 2011. They are still dancing. So are we. That is reason enough to celebrate.

**Endnote:** Members of the editorial board as well as OFDA executive members are listed in each issue of the *Folk Dancer*. As noted in my previous article, Marg Murphy prepared a chronological account of OFDA’s policies and a list of all executive members from 1969 to 1994. An updated list is being prepared.

# OFDA's Italian Café

by Bev Sidney

Photo by Allen Katz



Marisa  
Buffone

Our guest teacher for the Italian Café at the Ralph Thornton Centre on December 1, Marisa Buffone, was born in Toronto but grew up and was educated in the south of Italy, graduating from Salerno University with honours in Modern Languages. Along the way, she gained a passion for theatre and for singing the traditional music of southern Italy.

After further research and study at the Conservatory of Music of Salerno, she was invited to join the La Mama theatre troupe, and performed in many of its New York and Italian productions.

Now back in Toronto, Marisa teaches high school, where she enjoys engaging students in dramatic performances, dance, and music-related activities. In 2001 she launched her company ArtWorld Theatre, and in 2007 she wrote and produced a musical, *Tarantella*, which was staged in Toronto and New York.

For our café event, Marisa taught several variations of the southern Italian dance called Pizzica Tarantata (a “spider dance” that belongs to the Tarantella dance family), but not before she impressed us all with her strong, clear voice as she



Photo by Allen Katz

Marisa, aided by a scarf, demonstrates the Pizzica Tarantata with Mario Morello.



Photo: Bev Sidney. Dancing: Allen Katz (far left).

Women's upraised palms hold phantom scarves.

sang, a *cappella*, a traditional village song. The following excerpt from her promotional material gives an overview of the Tarantella and Pizzica:

“Contemporary expressions of the Tarantella and Pizzica in free-style (group), duet and ... solos have created an international platform in which tradition meets pop and classical. The pizzica tarantata, still practised today in the deep south of ... Italy, is fast becoming an international sensation. In this ancient healing dance, the speed and rhythm of the beat facilitates the expulsion of the tarantula's venom, the venom of social, psychological and sexual repressions. The tarantella is experiencing a revival throughout Europe, especially among young people, who seek within this Mediterranean folk dance an authentic expression of their musical roots and heritage.”

Marisa's experience in teaching was evident as she demonstrated various steps, then encouraged wide participation. While the dance moves were not difficult, the music was lively, and the mood it engendered was light-hearted. This resulted in some spirited and energetic dancing.

More information about Marisa and her Toronto Tarantella Project (“song, music, dance and anthropology in the art of the Tarantella”) is available at <http://artworldstudioproductions.com>.



# Dancing Out West

by Andrea Haddad

It's nice to know that when you are out of town for work or conferences there is always folk dancing to fill your evenings. I went out west [from Toronto] this October, so before leaving I checked the *Folk Dancer* and the Internet to connect with groups and find out exactly what kinds of dancing each group did.

There are three places to dance in Vancouver on Monday nights: one general folk dance, one French-Canadian and the other Balkan. There are more groups in Burnaby and Surrey, too, on other nights. In Vancouver I chose the Balkan group, which turned out to be quite small that evening: only about 10 people – although they had a wonderful rendition of the Chartres Cathedral



Photo by Andrea Haddad

*On the gym floor in Vancouver: the labyrinth pattern from Chartres Cathedral, France.*

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labyrinth drawn on the floor! The next evening, one of the dancers I met kindly drove me out to the group in Burnaby. This was a large group of about 25 or 30 dancers. And in Edmonton, the Friday night international group, led by Ann Smreciu (who taught Romanian at Ontario Folk Dance Camp in 1992), was also very active, with around 30 people.

In each place, the format of the evening was just like in Toronto: teaching at the beginning, then requests, announcements, a short pause and more dancing. As usual, I cannot remember the names of the new dances I learned, but they were well taught by the leaders and, I must say, quite challenging. There were also many dances that I recognized from home. In Burnaby and Edmonton, they even welcomed my teaching the simple French Cercle Circassien and seemed to enjoy it very much (finally being able to look up while dancing instead of down at their feet for all the Balkan stuff). I noticed that no-one ever sat out a dance.

Everybody was very friendly and welcoming, and I hope they will come to visit when out this way.

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# The Back Page...

Reva Diamond wrote, “Dear folkdancers: The family would like to thank you and let you know how much the cards you sent to the hospital for Hy Diamond are appreciated. A smile is brought to his face when he looks at them – something that doesn’t happen very often.” Murray Forbes wrote in November, on hearing the news of Hy’s health problems, “I remember Hy Diamond well from when I started folk dancing, and in fact he was my first folk dance teacher. He probably would not remember me, but if someone thinks of it please give him our good thoughts and hopes that things get better for him healthwise.”

Betty Leeson appreciated all the cards and calls she received while in her temporary rehab residence.

On November 29, Judy Deri had the first of two hip replacements, and is on the mend. Judy wrote, “All your good wishes are helping my recovery and getting me back to dancing with you again. With all my heart, thanks.”

Our condolences to Paula Tsatsanis on the passing of her mother, and to Gloria Mostyn on the passing of her father, both in December.

Turnout and spirit was good for the OFDA New Year’s Party at Kimbourne Park United Church in Toronto. An unexpected treat was the presence of Boris “Kete” Ilievski, notable local Macedonian dancer and teacher.

Teachers have been announced for the May Ontario Folk Dance Camp in Waterloo: Olga Sandolowich for Macedonian, and Steve Kotansky for international.

Judy Silver is very proud of her sister, Linda Silver Dranoff, whose name is on the list of those who will be awarded the Order of Canada this year.

At the end of 2012 Cecille Ratney celebrated her 96th birthday, and Kitty Cohen celebrated her 100th! Both ladies are still dancing, and we wish them hearty congratulations.



Photo by Paul Friedman

*Kitty Cohen, enjoying her 100th birthday party. According to Sandy Starkman, Kitty would still be dancing if the band hadn’t been asked to stop playing!*



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**POLAND!** . . . June 9-24, 2013. Led by Richard Schmidt.  
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**NORWAY!** . . . June 15-25, 2013. Led by Lee Otterholt.  
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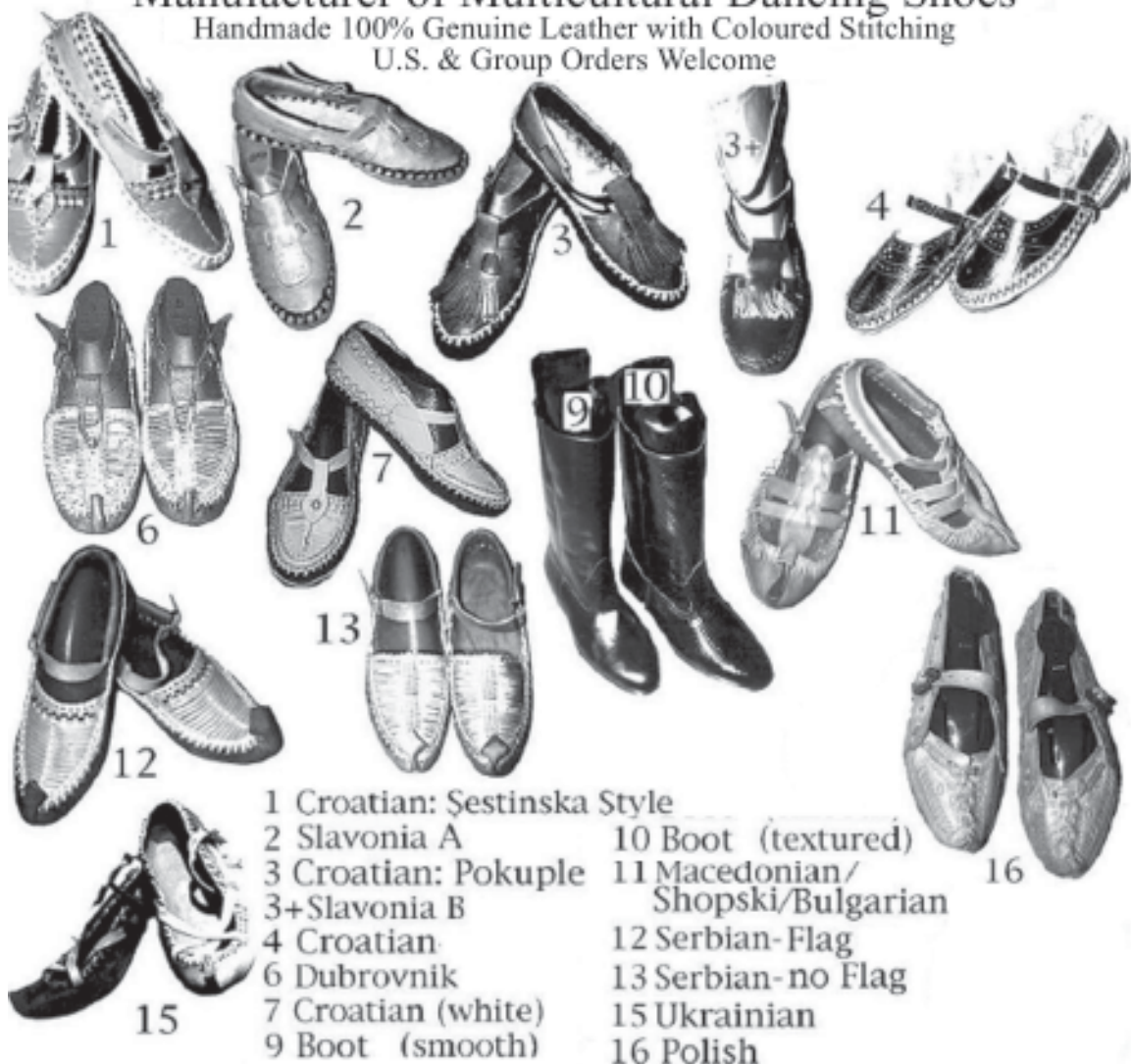
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