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Editor Dorothy Archer
Production Bev Sidney
Advertising Paula Tsatsanis
Dance Calendar...Terri Taggart

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

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

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for local information and links to other
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Web Design: Noemi Adorjan
friendlyweb@gmail.com
Web Maintenance: Helen Winkler



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Cover Image: One of Jean McAdam's posters, painted for the Ontario Folk Dance Camp. See p.12.

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[RETURN TO OFDA WEBSITE.](#)

It's An Upbeat World For Folk Dancers

by Dorothy Archer

Most of the classes have shrunk a little this winter with people off to warmer climes or coping with illness. That is, all but IFDC which is experiencing a resurgence. Bev Sidney has written about the efforts to attract new members. Congratulations to members of IFDC who took the ideas and ran with them. We are looking forward to your Balkan Party in April.

Twenty folk dancers were out on a Monday morning to bid farewell to Jean McAdam. Jean was special and the articles and tributes to her attest to this. The minister at the funeral service spoke of Jean's enthusiasm for folk dancing and wondered if it kept her young – he hadn't met Cecille and Kitty yet! I first met Jean in the 1980s at Solo Squares. We met in the evening but Jean had already folk danced in the morning with Al Gladstone's group and attended a painting class in the afternoon. She continued this pace into her 90s.

Helen Winkler is a good sleuth and found a very interesting article about the benefits of dancing by Bronwyn Tarr doing post-doctoral research at Oxford. The article was written in 2015. It is interesting that Judy Silver wrote her doctoral thesis on a similar topic, *Therapeutic Aspects of Folk Dance: Self Concept, Body Concept, Ethnic Distancing and Social Distancing*

It was mentioned in the *Grapevine* of an earlier edition that Helga Hyde had been in Tanzania. In this issue, she tells us more about her trip – about the people, the living conditions, and her safari with some photos of animals. Nancy Nies keeps up her beat on the doings in Bakersfield but also takes us around the Mediterranean. We read about these enticing trips and it is really nice to have those who take them report back. After reading this article and enjoying the photos, I'm sure you will be planning a trip by land or sea – I already have my land trip of Italy booked.

Our guests for the Georgian Café, members of the Georgian group, Trio Zari, joined us for supper. This meant we had the benefit of their song of blessing before we ate and the wonderful pie they brought which literally melted in your mouth – hope you got a taste. That was only a part of the wonderful evening they gave us. From the first song wishing us health and happiness to the final song and dance, it was a special occasion.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

VIDEOS WORTH WATCHING

Did you know that the OFDA website has a “Links” page containing interesting, informative, or amusing links related to dance? If you haven’t checked them out, here’s one to whet your interest:

Square Dancing Tractors

The origins of tractor square dancing can be traced back to the fifties. An ad campaign in 1953 by tractor manufacturer International Harvester is believed to have started it all. The ad aimed to show off the fast hitching abilities of their Farmall Super-C tractor. It came with the latest technology (back then) that allowed farmers to switch implements as easily as changing dance partners.

www.odditycentral.com/videos/you-think-tractors-cant-dance-check-out-tractor-square-dancing.html

OTEA SCHOLARSHIP

Each Year, OFDA offers the OTEA Scholarship to support a member who wishes to attend a course or workshop or other enrichment activity related to folk dancing.

Applications can be submitted at this time. Details on the OFDA website: www.ofda.ca/wp/about/ or here: [2016 OTEA Scholarship Ad](#) and [OTEA Scholarship Rules](#).

*A donation in memory of
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Red Simpson (1934-2016) and the Bakersfield Sound

by Nancy Nies

In early January 2016, Bakersfield lost a local country-music icon. Red Simpson, whose parents brought their big family west from Oklahoma in 1929, had made a name for himself in the 1960s with his truck-driving songs. They exemplify the Bakersfield Sound, which developed in the 1950s at honky-tonk bars in and around Bakersfield, as a reaction to the slick Nashville Sound with its string orchestras. The new sound grew out of the music of the Dust Bowl migrants who had come to our area in the 1930s from Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and other parts of the U.S. South, and was to become popular with mainstream audiences and influence many later performers. (For more, see <http://www.bakersfield.com/the-bakersfield-sound> .)

A front-page *Bakersfield Californian* article, published the day after Simpson's death, quotes local music writer and historian Scott Bomar: "In my opinion, Buck Owens and Merle Haggard are the twin pillars of the Bakersfield Sound, but directly under that is Red Simpson." Simpson wrote many songs recorded by Owens and Haggard, though did not become as well known. Bob Dylan called him "the forgotten man of Bakersfield." In recent years, Bomar had worked with Simpson to produce "Hello, I'm Red Simpson," which the *Californian* calls "a 2012 career-spanning retrospective that featured five CDs and a 108-page hardcover book, the definitive account of the artist's life and music." (For a sample, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-gKXH2Yb-Q>).

One Sunday afternoon in May 2015, Paul and I had been in the audience—at a modest VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) hall on a nondescript stretch of highway—for one of several country-music events held annually to raise funds for a future Bakersfield Country Music Museum. There is a different band each time, and local talent take turns singing country-western favourites. Western hats and boots are much in evidence. This is a dancing crowd, and we like to join the couples waltzing and two-stepping their way around the dance floor. The guest of honour on that particular Sunday was Red Simpson, still performing at 81. Red was there to sing, and also to receive a lifetime achievement award. He will be missed.



Photo: Paul Gipe.

Red Simpson performing in Bakersfield, May 2015.

Jean McAdam 1915-2016

Jean died January 18th, four days after her 101st birthday. She loved folk dancing and all who folk dance loved her. Ginger Northcott wrote about the party for Jean's 90th birthday in the March 2005 issue of *Folk Dancer*. January 22nd, the night of the party, delivered a significant snowstorm and minus 31 degree wind chill, yet over eighty guests came out to the Banbury Community Centre to celebrate with Jean. That says something about how people felt about her.



A funeral service was held February 8th at Grace Church-on-the-Hill in Toronto. Jean had been cremated earlier and beside the urn at the front of the church was a delightful photo of her dancing what looked like Knees up Mother Brown. Susan, one of her four children, gave the eulogy and spoke of her mother's energy, especially when they went hiking in England.. Several of Jean's paintings were displayed at the reception along with photos of her folk dancing. Jean was very fond of the dance Joc Batrinesc which she usually led. The folk dancers present performed this and then the guests were invited by Olga Sandolowich to join the circle and all swayed to the music of Mechol Hasheket.



Memories of Jean:



Jean enthusiastically dancing, third from left, with Ginger Northcott to her left.

“I recall many wonderful memories of folk dancing with Jean over the years,” writes Ginger Northcott. “I loved Jean very much as did many other folk dancers. Jean was a gifted artist. I treasure her artwork and her paintings - her labour of love. Jean was an amazing woman and a role model to many. She was a warm, caring, energetic, loyal, committed, modest and unassuming person with a delightful

inner strength and 'onward and upward' attitude. We have been privileged to have had Jean in our lives. She will not be forgotten.”

Helen Kirkby agrees with Ginger. She writes, “For many years I had the pleasure of dancing and working with Jean. Of all the many folk dances we do, one became known as ‘Jean’s Dance’ and she always led it. Jean was generous with her artistic skills. She painted many large posters for the walls at Ontario Folk Dance Camp. These posters reflected the costumes, customs

and landscapes of various cultures - diligently researched by Jean. She also

designed the striking logo for the t-shirts for the Ontario Folk Dance Association and the colourful floral wreath displayed on the coffee mugs, cook book and t-shirts to celebrate the 20th, 30th, and 40th anniversaries of Olga Sandolowich’s Don Heights Folk Dance Group. Jean - so gentle and gracious.”



One of Jean’s well-liked designs.

My Tanzanian Experience

by Helga Hyde

In October 2015 I visited The Olive Branch for Children, an orphanage currently consisting of 50 children ranging from the age of two to early twenties, who have either lost their parents due to AIDS with no surviving relatives remaining to look after them, were abandoned by their parents, or, in the case of girls, were saved from being sold off for marriage at a very young age (sometimes as young as 11 years). It was nice to meet the girl I am sponsoring as well as the young lad who my sister is sponsoring. All of the children are taught English and as a result, since I only know a few words in Swahili, communication was not a problem. During my stay I taught some of the children how to make a picture frame using plastic canvas.



Inside, some of the children learning to do crafts.

This Organization, under the leadership of Deborah McCracken, formerly of Woodbridge, Ontario, where her parents still reside, is not just an orphanage providing shelter, food, clothing, education and lots of love for the children. Deborah, with the help of volunteers has set up 28 Montessori schools in remote communities (two to three-week workshops were held to train local people and there is a monthly follow up to address any issues). Micro-financing has been established as well as a savings and loan bank. Deborah's aim is to reach and give help to the most vulnerable people by helping communities develop sustainable programming, and solving their most pressing issues, including access to medical care and education. A home-based care program for people living with HIV/AIDS has been established in partnership with three remote communities in Tanzania. The Olive Branch for Children has helped construct three medical clinics. Unlike Canadian poor people who get health care as well as monetary help from the government, these communities get no government support whatsoever and are left to completely fend for themselves. They also have no electricity or running water and often have to travel many miles to get any water.

The Olive Branch for Children is also in the middle of constructing their own living quarters so that they will no longer have to rent the very meagre premises that they currently occupy. Once the new living quarters have been completed, they also hope to build a primary and secondary school. Where the orphanage is presently located, which is about 40 miles from the nearest town, the water supply has been turned off for several months so they are forced to buy water daily and

Photos: Helga Hyde.

the hydro gets turned off for many hours each day.

None of the above accomplishments could have been achieved without monetary donations, finding sponsors for the children, and without the help of volunteers. When one has seen first-hand the conditions under which many of the Tanzanians live, one can truly appreciate what we have and be thankful for living in Canada.



New premises are under construction.

Besides spending time with the children, visiting many of the



Helga with Mlambwa, one of the ophanage's graduates.

communities supported by The Olive Branch for Children, and attending a graduation ceremony from grade 7 for two of their girls, I also went on a wonderful safari in Ruaha National Park where I saw many herds of elephants, giraffes, impalas, zebras, kudus, wild boars, wart hogs, huge herds of cape buffalos, baboons, hippos, a leopard hiding under a bridge, two male lions flaked out under a tree and six baby lion cubs waiting for their mothers who were out hunting in the neighbourhood. At the Tandala Camp where we stayed, the owners had provided a watering trough not far from our cabins so throughout the day one could see different animals such as elephants, impalas, giraffes, kudus and baboons coming for a drink.



One reason why I have been supporting the Olive Branch for Children is that, unlike many charitable organizations, I know that 98 percent of the funds received go to the source. If you wish to learn more about The Olive Branch for Children, please go to <http://theolivebranchforchildren.org>.



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OFDA Georgian Café

by Dorothy Archer

See many more photos of this event at www.ofda.ca/photos.

The first café of 2016 was held January 30th with the culture of Georgia the theme for the evening. Andrea Kuzmich and Shalva Makharashvili “Bachi” of Trio Zari were joined by Gabo Makharashvili, Mario Morello, Michelangelo Iaffoldano, David Anderson, Alisher Hakimov and Mika Hakimov for some of the songs.



Photos: Bev Sidney.

When we were about to start eating, the group rose and sang a traditional Mravajamier song, which is sung at festive gatherings to wish the guests many years of health and happiness. After the usual delicious dinner, the program opened with the group singing Didebata, from the province of Svaneti. Andrea Kuzmich then invited us to form a circle and the dancing began with Shalva Makharashvili “Bachi” in the centre playing the *doll* (drum) and later the *chonguri* (a plucked four-string instrument.)

Andrea taught the steps to two community dances. The singers joined the circle and sang Haria from Samegrelo as we danced. The second dance we learnt was Mrza i Bekzil from Svaneti. The circle dances were followed with steps to be danced solo and ended with Khorumi, a War Dance, from the province of Achara. These solo dances were taught by Nino Shaoshvili a very graceful dancer who ended the program with a solo performance while the group sang Gandagana, also from Achara.



This was a well-received and well-attended event. The remainder of the evening was devoted to requests with some quite vigorous displays of dancing. A reflection, no doubt, of the enjoyment of the evening’s program.

Dancing and Social Bonding

by Dr. Bronwyn Tarr, Social and Evolutionary Neuroscience Research Group, University of Oxford

Reprinted with permission of the author.

You might not think of yourself as a dancer. In fact, maybe even the idea of dancing makes your palms sweat. But growing scientific evidence suggests that getting up and grooving with others has a lot of benefits. In our [recent study](#), we found that synchronizing with others while dancing raised pain tolerance. It also encouraged people to feel closer to others.

This might have positive implications for dance movement therapies, which are already showing promising results in [the treatment of dementia](#) and [Parkinson's](#). [Music-based therapy](#) is also already used for children with autism, and perhaps synchronized and exertive dance therapy could also help them connect with others.

The power of music

Humans are naturally [susceptible to music](#): when we hear a good beat, it makes us want to move. You might find yourself tapping your finger or foot in time to a song on the radio, or bobbing your head (if not whole body) at a concert. This is something that [even babies](#) do.



Biggest Flash Mob in Chicago, USA 2009. Watch video at https://youtu.be/vF_ghvvIfjU.

Humans have danced together in groups throughout history. And with a rise in dance activities ranging from Zumba to flashmobs, collective dancing—an activity which involves synchronizing with both the musical beat and fellow dancers—shows no signs of letting up.

So, why do people do it? There has been much debate about whether there is any evolutionary explanation for our tendency to dance. Most likely it features in our [selection of romantic partners](#), and also in how we [signal our group membership](#) to other rival groups (think of the highly synchronized [Hakka](#)). One of the main theories about why we dance is that it offers opportunities to form positive connections with others.

So far, our testing of the “social bonding” hypothesis of dance has focused on one particular aspect: synchronization with other people. It turns out that when you synchronize even a small movement, like the [tapping of your finger](#) in time with someone else, you feel closer and more trusting of that person than if you had tapped out of time.

This is because when we watch someone else do the same thing at the same time as us, our brain ends up with a [merged sense](#) of us and them. It feels like we “become one”. Anyone who has ever rowed might be familiar with that moment when you hit a state of perfect synchronization with your rowing team. Suddenly you feel like you are part of something bigger than just yourself, and that you belong.

The science of dance and friendship

In other social animals like monkeys and apes, activities which encourage social connections, or “friendships”, are underpinned by various hormones. It is likely that we use similar chemical pathways to forge our social relationships.

Called the brain’s “happy chemicals” because of their feel good effects, endorphins are released when we exercise. They may also be an important chemical in human and other primate’s bonding processes. In fact, the social closeness humans feel when doing synchronized activities may be because they [trigger the release](#) of a cocktail of bonding hormones, including endorphins.

Dance can be both exertive and synchronized, so we wanted to see what the relative effects of both these aspects might be on bonding and on endorphins. As it’s hard to measure endorphin levels directly, we used pain thresholds as an [indirect measure](#). More endorphins mean we tolerate pain better, so measuring relative increases in people’s pain thresholds can indicate whether endorphins are being released (although other chemicals like [endocannabinoids](#) are probably also in the mix).

We had 264 young people take part in the study in Brazil. The students did the experiment in groups of three, and they did either high or low-exertion dancing that was either synchronized or unsynchronized. The high exertion moves were all standing, full-bodied movements, and those in the low-exertion groups did small hand movements sitting down. Before and after the activity, we measured the teenagers' feelings of closeness to each other via a questionnaire. We also measured their pain threshold by attaching and inflating a blood pressure cuff on their arm, and determining how much pressure they could stand.

Not surprisingly, those who did full-bodied exertive dancing had higher pain thresholds compared to those who were seated in the low-exertion groups. But curiously we also found that synchronization led to higher pain thresholds, even if the synchronized movements were not exertive. So long as people saw that others were doing the same movement at the same time, their pain thresholds went up.

Likewise, synchronized activity encouraged bonding more than unsynchronized dancing, and more energetic activity had a similar effect – it also made the groups feel closer. So all in all, moving energetically or moving in synchronization can both make you feel closer to others when you are dancing, and lead to higher pain thresholds. But dance which combined high energy and synchrony had the greatest effects.

Although there are lots of examples of highly synchronized and exertive dances around the world (flashmobs are a good example), dance also involves other features like creative expression, improvisation, ritual and cultural significance. These elements no doubt also contribute to why we have such a widespread appreciation and aptitude for dance.

But whatever the reason, if dance helps us build social cohesion and trust, then as a collectively advantageous behavior it is probably one we should all do more. So the next time you find yourself at an awkward Christmas party or wedding dance floor, wondering whether or not to get up and groove, just do it.



Bronwyn Tarr

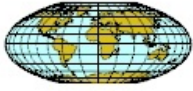
For more information about Bronwyn and her work, see the Oxford University website page : www.psy.ox.ac.uk/team/bronwyn-tarr

On that site there are a number of links to other of her research findings, including

- a recent podcast on: 'Dance - it's only human', and
- a non-scientific discussion about her research: Oxford Research on 'How to live a happy life'

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

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We Cruised and Danced with Yves, France and Roberto: A Log

by Nancy Nies

From September 14 to 24, 2015, Paul and I went on our first folk dance cruise—our first cruise ever, in fact—and had the good fortune to have Yves Moreau and France Bourque-Moreau as our leaders, with Roberto Bagnoli as guest instructor. The western Mediterranean cruise, with ports of call in Italy and France, began at Civitavecchia (the port of Rome), and docked at Naples, Messina (Sicily), Cagliari (Sardinia), Marseille, Nice/Villefranche, Ajaccio (Corsica), and Livorno (Italy). We had the opportunity not only to dance on board the ship, but also to meet several local folk groups on land, see them perform, and dance with them. It was an unforgettable ten days.

We arrived in Rome a few days early in order to recover from jet lag and have some time to explore the city. In addition to visiting the more well-known sights like the Colosseum and the Forum, we enjoyed seeing Michelangelo's basilica at the Baths of Diocletian, the display of Roman sculpture at the National Museum, the Jewish ghetto with its synagogue, and the colourful streets of the Trastevere district.

Sant'Angelo Romano

The evening before our cruise began, we met our fellow participants for the first time. There were 49 of us in all, a congenial group made up of people from ten U. S. states, Canada, Mexico, Australia, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Italy. Most of us were present that first evening to attend a special welcome program in the ancient hilltop village of Sant'Angelo Romano, an hour's bus ride to the northeast of Rome. There, despite rain and temperatures much cooler than those in Rome, we received a warm



The folk dance cruise participants--49 strong--pose for a group photo on the ship.

welcome from the mayor and climbed narrow cobblestone walkways up to the castle—the Castello Orsini-Cesi, dating in part from the 12th century—which now houses a museum and a venue for social and cultural events. Afterward, we went to the village’s community center, where local ladies prepared and served us a traditional meal. Yves wisely advised us to pace ourselves with the food, since there would be lots of it, including two kinds of pasta and two meat courses.

Between courses, the Gruppo Folk Monte Patulo entertained us with their joyful music, song and dance. (For a sample, see: www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQfe_aAtH_g .) Afterward, they invited us to dance with them. The folk group seemed to be made up of friends and family members who enjoyed the evening as much as we did. Of particular note among the musicians was a young man of 16 who impressed us with his masterful playing of the diatonic accordion—even more impressive was the fact that at age 11, he had played for Yves and France’s 2010 Mediterranean cruise group. (Incidentally, Italy is recognized as the international capital of accordion production.) That first evening was a delightful lead-in to the wonderful cultural experiences that awaited us.



Monte Patulo men regale us with a folk song.

Photo: Paul Gipe.

On Board the Celebrity Silhouette

The next morning found us assembling again for another hour-long bus ride, this time to the port of Civitavecchia, where we would board our ship, the *Celebrity Silhouette*. After lunch at the ship’s Oceanview Café, we settled into our cabins before dinner at the elegant Grand Cuvee dining room. A particular section was reserved for our group.

After dinner—every evening, except for the cruise’s two formal nights—we would take the elevator up to Deck 14, to the conference room that had been designated our dance space for the cruise. (On our two “at sea” days, we also danced during the day.) In the course of the cruise, we had instruction in 19 dances from 14 countries: Bulgaria, Romania, France, Italy, Greece, Portugal, Canada, Serbia, Macedonia, Albania, Spain, England, the Netherlands, and Hawaii, with the dances from the latter two being taught by fellow cruise participants. Dancing on a rolling ship was challenging, but also amusing. The most touching moment of our onboard dance experience came when we were joined by a young man from Romania, a member of the ship’s staff, who wiped away tears when our group sang and danced Hai Bună Seara for him.

Naples

The morning of September 15th, we docked in Naples for the day. (We learned that Napoli, the city's Italian name, originally came from Neapolis, meaning "new town"—the name dating back to pre-Roman times when the original town was farther north.) There being no folk dance related activities scheduled there for us, we were free to explore on our own. Some of our group visited Pompeii. Paul had arranged for the two of us to meet his Italian colleague, Francesco, who had spent ten years living in Naples and whose family home is nearby.

Francesco gave us a personal tour of some highlights of the city. We walked along the waterfront promenade and enjoyed the view from the Castel dell'Ovo; explored the city's historic center, including the Gesù Nuovo church and the Santa Chiara cloister, with its frescoes and majolica-covered columns; strolled up the colourful "Christmas Alley"; and had lunch at Pizzeria da Michele, which Francesco called the best pizzeria in Naples, the city renowned for having invented pizza. We learned a bit of Neapolitan culture when Francesco bought me a little string of what looked like red plastic chili peppers, but were actually little horns (*corni*) meant to bring good luck.

Messina

Our port of call the next day was Messina, in Sicily's northeastern corner. At a downtown park, we had a memorable welcome on that sunny morning—a lively performance by the smiling dancers and musicians of the Gruppo Folk Gli Agatini, from Reggio, Calabria, which shares Sicily's culture—who had taken the ferry across the strait that morning to meet us. After that welcome, we all boarded three mini-busses, which first took us to the cathedral, then on a drive north along the coast to the Punta del Faro, where we visited what remained of the ancient Roman lighthouse—now a museum of contemporary art. Roberto obligingly interpreted our guide's explanation of the history of the site. There, Gli Agatini performed again, in front of the nearby Horcynus Orca Cultural Center.

Our busses then headed back south and up a winding dirt road to a 16th century fort, the Forte Petrazza, which has been renovated and is now used for social and cultural events. It was in that historic setting



Gli Agatini welcome us to Sicily with a lively performance.

Photo: Nancy Nies.

that we were served a sumptuous buffet lunch, with a great variety of delicious dishes. (Many sources credit Sicily's varied, "fusion" cuisine to the influences of many different invading peoples over the centuries, including the French, Spanish, Greeks, Arabs and North Africans.) Here, we once again enjoyed the music, singing and dancing of Gli Agatini. We also had the chance to dance with them, to purchase local products and crafts from the fort's shop, and to take in the spectacular view from the fort's grounds—the city, the harbor, and Calabria across the strait. Before we left to return to the ship on that hot afternoon, the musicians sat in the shade and played more music—and this time, it seemed they were not performing, but just playing for their own enjoyment. (To see Gli Agatini in action, go to: www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQfe_aAtH_g)



Yves Moreau dances with one of Gli Agatini at Forte Petrazza.

Photo: Paul Gipe.

Cagliari

The next morning, we watched from the deck as our ship entered the harbor of Cagliari, on the southeastern coast of Sardinia. When we disembarked, we were met by two costumed gentlemen from our host folk group Su Idanu, of Quartu Sant'Elena, a city four miles east of Cagliari. (Quartum meant "four miles" in Latin, we learned.) From our bus, we had views of the beach, as well as salt pans dating from Roman times, as we drove to Quartu Sant'Elena. There we had a brief tour, admiring the neat,



Su Idanu women, wearing elaborate costumes and jewelry, line up to greet us.

tidy streets and the Basilica di Sant'Elena Imperatrice. Our bus then took us from the city to the country, where we would have lunch and see Su Idanu perform. The venue was Agriturismo Simbirizzi, a farm/restaurant where all food served is grown or raised, as well as prepared, onsite.

Photo: Paul Gipe.

Walking along the tree-lined road from our bus to the restaurant, we heard music. As we approached, the Su Idanu dancers stood side-by-side and greeted us with what we later learned was a song of welcome. Their elaborate, colourful costumes were striking. According to the *Folk Costume and Embroidery* blog, Sardinia is “the jewel of folk costume in Italy, having easily as many variants of folk costume as the entire mainland.”

We were then invited into the restaurant, where we were served a multi-course meal and entertained by the impressive singing and dancing of Su Idanu. (Watch them dance here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQfe_aAtH_g.) Thanks to Roberto’s interpreting, we learned that the women’s heavy costumes and necklaces—and we were told that they were wearing only half the usual amount of jewelry that day—made it necessary for this group’s dances to be quite sedate. Though Su Idanu did do somewhat livelier dances from elsewhere in Sardinia, the dance from their hometown of Quartu Sant’Elena was a particularly calm one. After their performance, many of our group joined them on the restaurant’s small dance floor. On our way back to the ship, we had a little time to explore the city of Cagliari.

Marseille

After a day at sea—a time to take advantage of the myriad activities offered on board a cruise ship, which in our case included folk dancing—we docked at the port of Marseille. There we were met by two ladies from the Groupe folklorique Roudelet Félibren of Château-Gombert, a part of Marseille. They acted as our guides for a tour of the city’s highlights. Especially



The view from Notre-Dame de la Garde is breathtaking.

memorable were the old port and the Basilique de Notre-Dame de la Garde, considered the guardian of Marseille. The latter, also known as *la Bonne Mère* (the Good Mother), sits atop a promontory offering spectacular views of the city, bay, and coastal islands. (On the smallest island sits the Château d’If, setting of Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo*.) After spending a little time on our own in Marseille’s downtown area, we boarded our bus and headed for Château-Gombert.

It was a beautiful, sunny day—the kind of day that makes you realize why Provence has always been a magnet for artists. As our bus

Photo: Nancy Nies.



Roudelet Félibren dancers and musicians welcome us to the Centre de Culture Provençale.

arrived in Château-Gombert, we saw costumed dancers and musicians waving and cheering in welcome. As we walked across the gravel courtyard to the Centre de Culture Provençale—Roudelet Félibren’s headquarters and performance venue—we were greeted by a line-up of smiling dancers the ladies holding out their voluminous skirts in a curtsy, and musicians, each simultaneously playing the fife and drum. (This instrumental duo is characteristic of Provençal folk music.) The

director gave a welcome speech, with Yves serving as interpreter. Then, the folk group performed a few dances onstage. After enjoying a traditional Provençal meal—cooked vegetables to dip in *aioli*, a braised beef dish, and, for dessert, boat-shaped cookies called *navettes de Marseille*—we witnessed the rest of their impressive *spectacle*. We were struck by the number of energetic dance steps reminiscent of ballet, and were told that ballet steps had their origins in Provençal dances. (For a sample of Roudelet Félibren’s singing and dancing, see the short video on their website: www.roudelet-felibren.com/.) When they finished their performance, the dancers invited members of our group to dance. Afterward, we had the opportunity to visit their costume room, watch one dancer put on a *coiffe* (bonnet), and see another lift her skirts to show us the layers of petticoats underneath. Worthy of note is that for the past fifty years, the active Roudelet Félibren has organized its own annual international folk dance festival. All too soon, it was time to head back to our ship.

Nice/Villefranche

The next morning found us anchored in the bay of Villefranche, France, just east of Nice. When we took a tender to shore, the sun shone brightly on the picturesque, pastel-hued buildings lining the harbour. There being no onshore folk dance-related activities planned, we had the day to do as we wished. Some of our group went sightseeing in Nice or Monaco.



Roudelet Félibren delivers an impressive performance.

Paul and I spent the day with Bernard, a French colleague of Paul's, who lives in the area. We first drove east along the coast, enjoying gorgeous views, to St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat. There, we took a scenic hike around the cape and walked the streets of the exclusive residential enclave of Cap-Ferrat. Then, we drove farther east to Eze-village, set on a hilltop overlooking the Mediterranean. Joining throngs of other tourists, we climbed cobblestoned streets too narrow for cars, past picturesque stone houses-turned-boutiques, to the castle ruins at the top, where we enjoyed the botanic gardens and spectacular views of the coastline. We then headed back west to Nice, where on that hot day we sat in the shade and savoured a refreshing *salade niçoise* at a harbour restaurant. After lunch we squeezed in a visit to the Musée de Paléontologie de Terra Amata, built over an archaeological site, before saying *au revoir* to Bernard and returning to the *Silhouette*.



Photo: Nancy Nies.

On the French Riviera we enjoy spectacular views, like this one of Villefranche.

Ajaccio

Our next port of call was Ajaccio, Corsica's capital and largest city, located on its west coast. The lovely weather and beautiful harbour made for an impressive arrival. Here, once again, we were free to pursue our own activities. Some members of our group took a train ride or kayaked along the coast. Paul and I went on a bus tour which took us into the mountainous, *maquis*-covered interior of the island to see a geological formation called the Gorges du Prunelli and the red tile-roofed village of Tolla. We had an excellent tour guide, who provided lots of detail on the history, culture, geography and vegetation of Corsica, which she described as "a mountain in the sea." When we returned to Ajaccio, we strolled through the open-air market, lunched at an outdoor restaurant overlooking the palm-lined beach, and explored the historic part of town. Coming upon a group of French tourists, we realized that their guide was pointing out the house where Napoleon was born in 1769. Napoleon is everywhere in Ajaccio—statues depict him, places of business are named for him, and souvenirs bear his likeness.

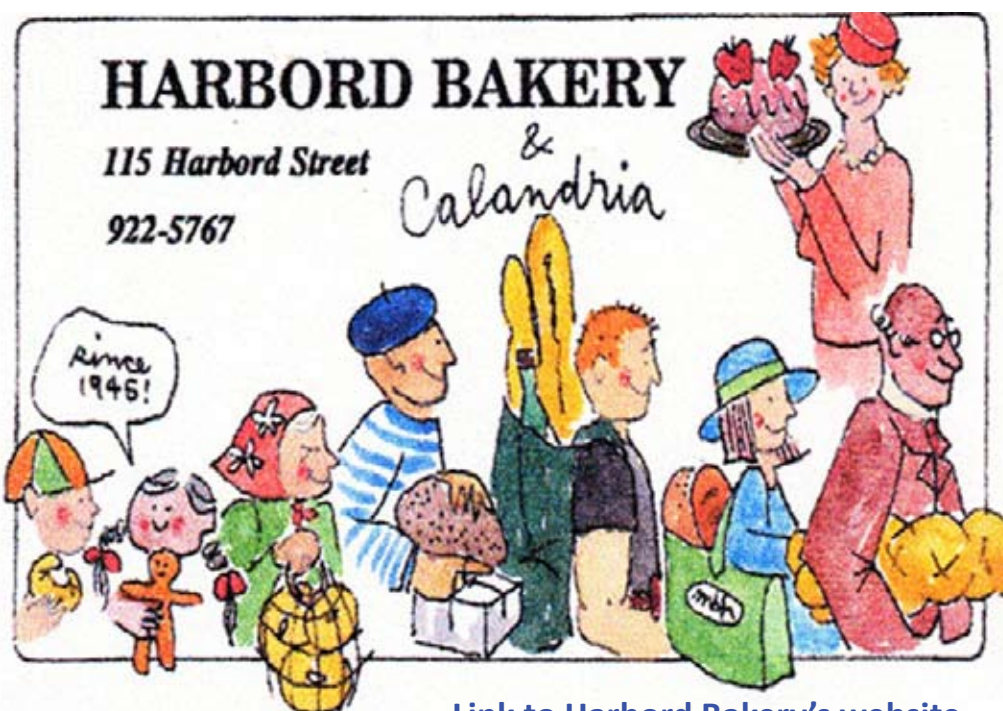
Livorno

After a second "at sea" day, we docked in the industrial harbour of Livorno, Italy, on the west coast of Tuscany. This would be the last full day of our cruise. The next morning, we would return to Civitavecchia,

the port of Rome, where our cruise would end. In Livorno, many in our group took advantage of cruise-organized excursions to Pisa, Florence, or even as far afield as Cinque Terre. Paul and I decided just to stay in Livorno and experience life there for a day. A highlight was the beautiful indoor market building, with its colourful stalls selling everything from pastries to hardware. Especially memorable there was a congenial conversation in very basic Italian with a young woman from whom we purchased a couple of made-in-Italy tea towels. We also enjoyed visiting a shop where kitchen and household items were sold, and window-shopping at the businesses sheltered by the many downtown arcades. For lunch, we shared *bruschetta*, a *panino*, and a *cannolo*. Later, after more exploring, we sat in the town square and watched the world go by, enjoying a *gelato*.

All Good Things . . .

Before we knew it, we were saying goodbye to new friends and winging our way back to California. Although it is true that all good things must come to an end, we are fortunate to be able re-live our cruise experience whenever we wish. Roberto provided participants with a CD of the music for all the dances taught, and Yves and France's daughter, Catherine, a videographer who came along to film the highlights of the cruise, produced two professional DVDs for us (one, of the dances taught on board the ship, and the other, of the sights and sounds of our colourful experiences on land). We also have an official group photo, with all 49 of us wearing our official cruise t-shirts (which, by the way, bear the title of this article, along with our ports of call). Even without the CD, the DVDs, the photo and the shirts, though, it is certain that we would never forget our folk dance cruise on the Mediterranean—and we are very grateful to Yves, France, and Roberto for making it happen.



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

IFDC Challenges Declining Numbers

by Bev Sidney



In Toronto, the University of Toronto International Folk Dance Club (IFDC) had been experiencing sparse attendance over the fall and winter terms of 2014, to the extent that its viability came into question. So in April 2015, Judy Silver hosted a potluck brunch; ten people gathered around the table to brainstorm possible ways of increasing the number of dancers, and a list of strategies was considered, with hopes that at least some would prove to be a catalyst for growth.

One of the first ideas to be implemented was a Facebook page, created and maintained with frequent updates by Judith Cohen. Flyers were posted to publicize the activity in the nearby neighbourhood, and a weather-proof poster was created to make our presence “visible” from the street when we’re inside dancing. The poster at the front steps has rewarded us with the occasional ad lib drop-in – someone who was walking by, read the sign, and decided to see what was going on; and of those spontaneous visitors, there have been at least a couple who came back on subsequent occasions.

One of the well-known problems was the access to the locked building; we had gotten used to entering by a back door through a large parking lot behind the building – a route which can be daunting, if not scary for new people. Once at that back door, a remote switch must be pressed to activate a light that can be seen by the people in the dance room, and that quirky process presents another level of complication, along with some waiting for response. In order to make entry a simpler affair, it was agreed that someone would stay by the front door for the first hour, when most of the newcomers would be expected; after that, a sign would direct anyone wanting to join us to phone a cell number and wait for someone to come to let them in. This strategy seems to be effective, and every once in a while, during a dance evening, the dedicated cell phone will ring, surprising us all with the knowledge that someone’s at the front door.

Following Adam Kossowski's encouragement and timed for the beginning of the 2015 fall term, Helen Winkler created an IFDC Meetup Group – an online social networking site that advertises many different groups of diverse interests, and encourages people to join a group's activities. The Meetup group was initiated with a kickoff Open House and a four-class pass at a reduced price for beginners. The Open House was well attended and several people purchased a four-class pass. Since that time about 165 people have become members of the IFDC Meetup Group. Not all of them have shown up on a Friday night, but there is a constant trickle, and occasionally someone starts to come on an ongoing basis. There seem to be two streams of attendees: 1) people from various ethnic communities who are familiar with folk dancing, and 2) people who have never heard of international folk dancing as a recreational activity.

The result of our endeavours is tentative at this early stage, but since September 2015 the attendance has trended from what was averaging six to eight people per night in the previous winter and spring to 15-20 as of the end of February this year, many of them new dancers of varying ages. It's been a very welcomed change, and fingers are crossed that the trend will continue.

The advice of Loui Tucker, a U.S. teacher who's had success in rehabilitating folk dance groups and who shares her experience freely, is to use a multi-pronged approach and keep the efforts ongoing. We intend to follow her advice.

IFDC's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ifdcut

IFDC's Meetup group: www.meetup.com/Recreational-Folk-Dance

Loui Tucker's writings: <http://loutucker.com/dance/DanceWritings.htm>



The efforts to attract new dancers have had some positive results.



Congratulations to Dianne Saxe who has been appointed Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. Dianne is a member of OFDA and dances at Winston Churchill Park in Toronto in the summer.

Diane Brown has returned to live in New York City but promises to come back for Ontario Camp at Waterloo in May.

Janis and Jack Smith, Paula and Peter Tsatsanis, Gilda Akler-Sefton, Carole and Nate Greenberg spent time in Florida this winter. Maxine Louie was in Hawaii in January.

February was a favourite month to travel: Sandy Starkman visited Cuba, Adrienne Beecker was in the Turks and Caicos, and Fred Slater attended The Flurry in Saratoga Springs, New York. Thelma Feldman and Vita Baron cruised the waters of southeast Asia and visited Hong Kong, Singapore, Bangkok, Thailand, Vietnam and Macau. Look for an article about the trip in a future issue.

Mary, John and Aphrodite Triantafillou and Valerie Sylvester performed with Zvravez Assembly February 27th at a fundraiser for Doctors without Borders.



Photo: Roz Katz.

Walter Zagorski and Chris Linge,
as servants in the castle.

While holidaying in Palm Desert, Blima Dreezer attended a Greek Festival and joined in the dancing with other visitors.

There were many folk dancers in the audience to cheer on Walter Zagorski and Chris Linge in the North Toronto Players' presentation of *Chelsea Moor Castle*. It is an original play inspired by the lyrics of W.S. Gilbert and the music of Arthur Sullivan. It was great fun!

Vita Baron won't be dancing for a while. She is recuperating from a car accident which she had when she returned from her cruise.