



LITTLE WINDOW



DEMO-  
GROUPS

S.I.F.D.

NEWS

SHEET

JULY 1957



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NEWS SHEET

July 1957

Chairman: H.J. Price Esq.

Hon. Secretary: Miss M.J. LeFort

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### BACK TO THE STONE AGE?!

Up to two or three years ago, Friday classes were run on the not very admirable, or sociable, principle of "invitation only". This, as older members will remember, resulted in a lot of cliquishness and it is undoubtedly still with us in the form of a dearth of dancers for the Demonstration Team. In those days there were never much more than 10 people at a Friday class, and they were always the same people, some of whom are still among the stalwarts of the Society.

With the formation of The Panel, and after agitation from some progressive quarters, the Friday classes were thrown open to all as an advanced class for learning new and more difficult dances. This resolution was adhered to for quite a while, even though progress was slowed down, and instructors infuriated by the "memaces" to a successful class: (1) the people who are well intentioned but have "two left feet" and (2) the people who act terribly blase, and will not work properly, when a step is being studied which they think they know.

These latter type are as often as not the very people who would benefit most from a proper study of these steps, which they consider too elementary for them, and whatever may be the facts of the matter, not supporting the work of the instructor, especially if such an offender is an old member, points to plain bad manners!

There is, of course, an intermediate type of class-attender, who come between 1 and 2 above; those who can dance, but have never learnt the basic steps of that certain country's dances. They should of course learn these on Wednesdays first, and then come to advanced classes.

Now many people are worried about attendance at classes - so a word of explanation of the prevailing statistics may be in order: during the last three months of 1956 attendance at the classes showed a steady drop, partly due to the stress and strain

of the Albert Hall show, but during the first three months of this year an encouraging and gradual increase in the average attendance figures is shown by the statistics. Provided that our members give their support to our many and varied functions by coming themselves and bringing their friends, and provided that the programme for the autumn term is arranged with extra special care and attention, all three weekly classes at Carlyle School, general and elementary dancing on Wednesdays, advanced on Fridays, Balkan and miscellaneous on Tuesdays, should show ever increasing attendance figures, without the separate Groups influencing these statistics.

This, however, is not the aim of certain "old dichards", who would love to see the old system back with only the Wednesday classes open to all, with its unfriendliness towards newcomers - of which we are still accused for both Wednesdays and Sundays - and the other classes for the select few, who will think more than twice before they admit a new member, however good a dancer, to their exclusive "club".

Another point that these "old dichards" tend to forget is that some people may be excellent at catching the spirit and feel of a certain country's dances, and be absolutely hopeless with another. In the infancy of the SIFD it was quite sufficient to show an approximation to the correct style of each dance at outside demonstrations, but with the apparent expansion of the Society and its growing reputation as an authority, we are in danger of making ourselves ridiculous!

The question now remains: What shall it be? Open Classes, and further expansion of the Society, or shall it be "Back to the Stone Age"?

J.U.

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#### NOTES AND NEWS

ODIN, the London Scandinavian Monthly.

Under the name of the ancient god, one of our members, Mr. D. Kenrick, publishes a new Journal dealing with items of interest to Swedes, Danes and Norwegians living in London, including dance news.

The SIFD is prominently mentioned in Odin's Calendar for the Month, which we hope will bring more Scandinavian friends to our functions.

Odin is non-political, like the SIFD, and its functions include the publicising of events of mutual Anglo-Scandinavian interest, to assist Scandinavian visitors to Britain, to foster British interest in Scandinavia, to further trade and travel between Britain and Scandinavia and to encourage Scandinavian writers living in Britain.

This monthly is published at 6d. per copy from 26 Onslow Gardens, London, N.10.

The EFDS tell us that on Friday, July 5th, a Swedish-English Social Dance will be held at Cecil Sharp House, in honour of a team of students from Upsala, who will be on their way to the International Eistedfodd at Llangollen. On Thursday, July 11th, the Austrian and Spanish teams from Llangollen will give a display, also at Cecil Sharp House.

The SIFD Committee are extremely busy, attending not only to the routine business of their monthly meeting, but holding special sessions for things like finance, the new constitution and next term's programme.

The Croydon Branch plans are progressing well, and we are all looking forward to the commencement of their activities in September.

#### PERSONALIA:

In the name of all our members, we wish to extend our heartfelt sympathy to our Demonstration Secretary, Margery Latham, in her recent bereavement.

Ray and Audrey Staines sailed for Canada on June 26th, taking with them our very best wishes for happiness and success! Just so they can easily remember the town they will live in, they have gone to London, Ontario.

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NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY by Madelynne Greene

...from "Let's dance", the Magazine of the Folk Dance Federation of California.

With the steady growth of folk dancing as a hobby and recreation in the past decade has come the increasing need for good teachers. People who are trained, repeat TRAINED, in their field are needed as teachers to direct and lead large groups of eager aspirants, young and old, in the intricacies of the dance.

The need for teachers is great.

The demand for someone to attempt teaching is even greater. The new "teacher", meeting (?) that demand, arrives in somewhat the following chronological order. You should know, as in nine chances out of ten it has happened, or almost, to you.

About the time you are finding yourself dancing madly two or three times a week, a neighbour - seeing a new spring in your walk, a fresh glow on your cheek, new words in your vocabulary and, in general, a great change for the better - approaches you with the fatal words:

"What is all this I hear about Folk Dancing? I'd like to get in on it. If it does all this for you, it must have something. How about teaching some of us to dance?"

Overlooking the backward compliment, your ego jockeying for position as "one of the initiated", but still maintaining civilised reticence, (translatable as: coax me!) you reply: "I'm just a beginner. I don't know anything about teaching."

"Don't tell me that! You are out every night and twice on Sunday!" (You glance at the overgrown lawn as he speaks. He is so right!) "I hear you practising with those records of yours all the time! You could bring your records over to our rumpus room, and start a group right here in the neighbourhood."

You gulp and think to yourself, "Gosh - would I have the nerve...to teach a lot of people...?"

But your neighbour is reading your mind.

"It would be simple... We don't know a thing about it; you have been dancing three whole months. You would be way ahead of us, and I'll bet you are an expert anyhow..."

"Mmm", you say, "I'll think it over..."

But you know very well that you are going to do it. You think of all the people you have seen teach in the past three months. You had come to know pretty much how each one operated. You'd been kind of critical as you stood in that circle with all the other pupils.

How would it be on the other side of the fence, with the circle around you and with all eyes focussed on you; some speculatively, some quizzically, some bored, some interested, some

impatiently glowering. Others, deep in conversation not remotely concerning folk dancing, might not even be looking your way. How do you get these to be quiet? Follow your first impulse and tell them to "Shut up!?" Wait until they have finished their conversation? Go ahead and talk above their voices? Be tough? Professorial? Laugh with them? Or be meek and charming?

You fall into a deep reverie and visualise yourself as the potential instructor. Would you be the teacher who:

1. With closed eyes, vaguely directs a group of people, apparently floating midway between floor and ceiling?
2. With your hand on your mouth, describes a dance for 20 minutes, while your pupils sag wearily on their feet?
3. Dashes wildly through the routine once, throws a record on the turntable and "away we go..." whither?
4. Emphasises "fun" to the point of introducing handsprings into otherwise sane dances?
5. Teaches impossibly long dances to beginners?
6. Indulges in "performance" teaching, in which you clown around while your pupils wait for the performance to end?
7. Preaches a dance with a fervent gleam in your eye, and talks down to the class as though 5 to 7 were the age limits?
8. Cannot resist the temptation to turn five spins in the dance you just taught with one?
9. Becomes a creative genius and explains to visitors, "We know the authentic version, but in our club we like to do it backwards, and on our hands...because it is more fun that way"?
10. Comes to blows with your partner while demonstrating a dance?
11. Holds the book of dance directions in one hand, mumbles into the pages, while frantically trying to demonstrate the steps before the group?

YOU GROAN!!! "What kind of a teacher will I be! Maybe I am not ready to teach?" But you will probably take the challenge anyway. Teaching, like everything else, has to begin somewhere...and you can improve with the years.

A conscientious effort to teach dances correctly, to learn the finer points of instruction at Teachers' Institutes, to develop an eye, ear, hand, and foot for National flavour and style, can turn you into one of the outstanding leaders of tomorrow.

Or, from the starting point, relying alone on the persuasive charms of raw personality, you can be one of the other kind...

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NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

IBERIAN GROUP

June 15. Our group performed at a Garden Party given by the University of London Extension Society at Holme Lodge, Regent's Park. It was a glorious day and the setting was perfect for our dances. We danced on the terrace in front of a beautiful white house, with lawns sweeping down to the lake. We were warmly welcomed by the Chairman on our arrival and ushered into a large changing room, the walls of which were simply covered with lovely mirrors.

The programme we presented was as follows:

Trojak  
Kujawiak (Weselni) } Poland

Suite of Portuguese Dances

Ole  
Malaguenas  
Farruca  
Fandanguillo de Huelva  
Panaderos } Spain  
(Andalucia)

Jota de Realito  
Jota Aragonesa } Spain  
(Aragon)

Edith and Alex made the mistake of dancing Jota Aragonesa in bare feet on the hot concrete terrace, and now wonder why their feet are blistered. (This was due to an extra quick change).

The programme went very well, without any pauses or hesitations, in spite of the number of persons in the team (13).

Tea was provided to all members plus many additional ice-creams, lollies and such like.

Many thanks to Edith, who stepped into Pamela Mason's shoes and danced Panaderos, owing to Pam's last minute illness. Also to George Swann, our wonderful pianist, who is worth his weight in gold!

Forthcoming Iberian Group Demonstrations:

June 22, Anglo-French Club (Cabaret)

July 6, Ivinghoe Garden Party.

Margaret Harris

THE HUNGARIAN GROUP will provide the programme for the class at Carlyle School on the 12th July, and we shall certainly not be sticking to just the few dances the SIFD knows already. Will everybody who has a costume, please come armed with it! J.U.

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NOTES FROM MEXICO: Las Canacuas by Mildred Hall Walter

from "Let's Dance", the Journal of the Folk Dance Federation of California.

One of the most charming of Mexico's many fiestas is Las Canacuas, a group of dances and songs native to the towns adjacent to Uruapan in the beautiful state of Michoacan. Its origins reach back into antiquity, for it is known to have been a marriage ceremonial in pre-Cortesian times. The Tarascans, Indian inhabitants of Michoacan and its nearby regions, were one of the most cultured of the pre-conquest tribes, and their ancient music and dances are of the greatest interest to folklorists, to students of music and the dance, and even to casual students. Their excellence in crafts is well known, tourists take home samples of their famous lacquer work and of their embroidery.

Las Canacuas is done by young girls of the region, and although still used for wedding celebrations as in the distant, as well as the more recent past, it is best known to outsiders as a fiesta to honour famous guests. Frances Toor, well known folklorist of Mexico and author of several books, in "A Treasury of Mexican Folkways" describes a festival shown in her honour. The basis for this sketch, however, is the celebration viewed by another famous folklorist of Mexico, Higinio Vazquez Santa Ana, and the description of this traditional ceremony in the "Album Musical de Michoacan" edited by Francisco Dominguez.



Vazquez says that the group of dancers consisted of sixteen pairs of young girls, dressed in the heavy dark skirts of the region, with white blouses and aprons and blue rebozos worn in the usual fashion, that is, with ends tucked under in front. Each girl wore three ribbons of different colours on each braid. Every girl carried a tray, the beautiful lacquered jicaras of Uruapan, which showed an embroidered napkin, on which were piled fruits and flowers. The only man in the group, other than the two musicians, was the carguero, an elderly, honoured man who was in charge, and who gave a talk, evidently a speech of welcome.

The girls filed in in two rows facing their audience for the greeting song: Buenas Tardes, which is to be found in Toor's volume mentioned above. After this song they separated into groups of four, and scattered perfume from their trays. While singing their second song, Tata Ninito, or Dear Friend, the first row was seated, the second row knelt, and the third stood.

After that they seated themselves in a hollow square, and a young man joined the group to do several jarabes with the most accomplished girl among the dancers. When the jarabes were over, the girls walked towards the guest and laid their gifts of flowers and fruits next to him on a table. Then they stepped back, and the leading danseuse did a solo for the guest. They sang two more songs, then a farewell number, and left.

(to be continued next month)

#### LATE NEWS

We are very pleased to announce the arrival of a son to our Austrian teachers, Heinz and Ilse Striegel.

MONTHLY PROGRAMME

July 1957

Motto: Nothing worth while is easily acquired, especially knowledge.

Classes at Carlyle School, Hortensia Road, Chelsea, S.W.10.

Time: 7.30 p.m. - 9.30 p.m.

Music by Mme. Barbara Duleba

Members: 1/6d.

Non-members: 2/-

Tuesdays: July 2 Advanced Balkan class by Ken Ward - open  
9 Balkan class by Ken Ward - open  
16 Advanced Balkan class by Phillip Thornton  
This class by invitation only  
23 Balkan class by Phillip Thornton - open

Wednesdays: July 3 "From our book" by Dorothy Weir  
M.C. Peter Heath  
10 SOCIAL DANCE - M.C. Simon Guest  
17 Lithuanian class by Bert Price  
M.C. Erik Owden  
24 Lithuanian class by Bert Price  
M.C. Bob Symes

Fridays: July 5 Estonian class by Aili Eistraat  
12 Hungarian class by the Hungarian Dance  
Group. Leader John Ungar  
19 Polish class by the Polish Group  
Led by Kostek and Ziutek  
26 END OF TERM PARTY

Dances at Inns of court Mission, Broad Court, Drury Lane, W.C.2.

Time: 6.30 p.m. - 9.30 p.m.

Music by Mourie Pfeffer

Members: 1/6d.

A.N.D.Others

Guests: 2/-.

Sundays: July 7 M.C. Roly Minton July 14 M.C. Mourie Pfeffer  
July 21 M.C. Ken Ward

Dance at Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park Road, N.W.1.

Time: 6.30 p.m. - 9.30 p.m.

Music by the Wallace Collection

Members: 2/-

Guests: 3/-

Sunday July 28 M.C. Margery Latham

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