

Journal of the Society for International Folk Dancing.

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EDITORIAL

'And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

'And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their sheep by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill to all men.'

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Christmas greetings to all members of the S. I. F. D.

Romsaid Joulu Puhil - Estonia.  
Zycze wam wesolych Swiat Bozego Narodzia - Poland.  
Prejeme Vam Vesele Vanoce - Czechoslovakia.  
Feliz Navidad - Spain.  
Felicita e salute per Natale - Italy.  
Sincere vouex de joyeux Noel - France.  
Froeliche Weinachten - Germany.  
Zalig Kerstfeest - Holland.  
Glad Jul - Sweden.  
Glaedlig Jul - Norway and Denmark.  
Boldog Karacsony - Hungary.

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DECEMBER FOLK CUSTOMS

Almost all major folk customs in December focus on Christmas, with the exception of a few saints' days. Of these, the two outstanding are St. Barbara on December 4th, followed by St. Nicholas on December 6th. Legend has it that a thaw on St. Barbara's day, followed by a hard frost on the day of St. Nicholas is a promise of a good winter.

St. Nicholas (Sinterklaas), has been revered by the Dutch for many centuries, first as the patron saint of sailors, and gradually as the friend of children. Tradition has it that on the eve of December 6th, St. Nicholas, accompanied by Black Peter, interviews

the children, giving out sweets and toys to the good children and a cut of the switch from Black Peter if they have been bad. (St. Nicholas usually gives sweets to the children after their whipping anyway). Black Peter was originally a devil who was condemned to be the slave of St. Nicholas once a year. With the years, Black Peter has become to be regarded tolerantly, rather as a Puck who loves mischief in a jolly way, but he still has to carry the sack of sweets and toys - and the switch.

The early Dutch settlers took their Sinterklaas to America with them, and there he became caught up with the jolly, rotund, bearded figure, clad in red with long boots, who was the Englishman's 'Father Christmas'. Gradually the two merged and became one, a Father Christmas with an Anglo-Dutch name, Santa Claus.

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THE GOURMET

For the month of December we have a Christmas cake and a Christmas drink, both of which can be thoroughly recommended.

Croatian Royal Cake.

$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. butter	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated almonds	8 oz. flour
4 egg yolks	2 tablespoons rum	Rind of 1 lemon
3 egg whites	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of raisins	Juice of 1 orange
6 oz. sugar	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of currants	Pinch of salt

Cream butter and sugar, and add salt. Add egg yolks and beat. Add all ingredients, excepting flour and egg whites, and mix evenly. Fold in the flour. Mix in the egg whites which should have been stiffly beaten. Place in a greased baking dish, and bake in a slow oven until cooked. Leave for one day. Cover top with white sugar, and decorate with ginger-bread cut-outs.

Argentine Fruit Cup

5 oranges	6 bananas	1 tin apricots
6 pears	1 pineapple	1 lb. grapes
3 apples	1 tin peaches	Any other fruit obtainable
	$\frac{1}{2}$ bottle of brandy	
	$\frac{1}{2}$ bottle of sweet white wine	
	$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar	

Cut all the fruit into very small pieces, remove any seeds from grapes. Mix all together, adding the orange and lemon juice. Shake the sugar over the whole and leave to stand for several hours. Add the brandy and wine, and chill before serving.

N.B. For a clear fruit cup, the ingredients may be strained before adding the wine and brandy.

### A POLISH CHRISTMAS.

In Poland, Christmas is an extended celebration stretching from Christmas Eve to the Feast of the three Kings - January 6th.

From the beginning of Advent, the girls and men begin the preparations. The men and boys prepare the outside of the houses with paint and decorations, the tree is chosen, ornaments are hung on the trees and bushes. The girls spend hours making cut-outs from coloured paper. The paper is folded and cut into very striking shapes and stuck onto a background. These cut-outs are to line the walls of the house. Intricate shapes are made from wire and tinsel, and 'mobiles' are made from stiff paper or egg shell.

The village organist bakes Communion-like wafers and distributes these to each household. These are greatly treasured and members of a family away from home are always sent some. The wafers are sometimes hung on the tree, or a large one may be suspended from the ceiling, where it may hang for the whole year.

The tree itself may be a whole evergreen or just a branch, but it is always very carefully selected. When it is decorated with paper chains, fruit, mobiles, gingerbread figures and multi-coloured ribbons, it is hung, Polish fashion, point down from the ceiling in a corner of the main room.

The Polish peasant eats no meat during the six weeks before Christmas, and since he is poor he cannot afford to spend money on good meat substitutes. These six weeks are as a consequence weeks of real hardship, which gives the preparation of the Christmas meal an added spice.

Christmas Eve is the real festival and day of days. On Christmas Eve the streams and rivers are believed to run with wine and honey, and in addition they acquire healing powers, but only the very pure in heart may touch them. Animals are supposed to talk with human voices, but again only the truly innocent may hear and understand. The spirits of the dead are allowed to roam abroad for the whole of the twelve days of Christmas, and some households lay a place at table especially for a spiritual visitor should one wish to visit their home.

Preparations for the Christmas Eve feast take many hours. The number of dishes which tradition demands vary from district to district from nine to eleven. Always the dishes must represent the produce of the land, for the fields and waters might become angry if they were to be ignored upon such an occasion. Obviously the courses vary from house to house, but in almost all there should be beetroot or mushroom soup, poppyseed cake, cabbage, peas, and fish (usually herring). The final sweet is either compote of fruit, or 'Kutja', a mixture of grain, poppyseed, honey, and milk, cooked together to a porridge-like consistency.

The table must be laid in a special way. Straw is placed under the tablecloth in memory of Christ's birth in a stable. The very best linen is used and everything must be spotless. 'A guest in my house is God in my house' is a Polish saying, and a place is laid for a guest who may chance to arrive. Nobody would be turned away on this night.

When all is ready the family wait for the first star to appear in the sky, for this is the sign that Christmas has begun. All then proceed to the table. There are numerous rites to be observed before the meal is begun. Greetings must be exchanged between members of the family, there may be a processional walk three times around the table, a welcome may be given to the expected spiritual guest, but finally the whole family sits down to eat.

Throughout the meal little rhymes may be spoken to each vegetable and flesh as it appears. This is to ensure good crops for the coming year. At each course a spoonful will be set aside for the household animals. After the meal, little games may be played at the table; all pull straws from under the tablecloth, the longest straw showing the longest life, or the girls may drop some melted wax in a saucer of water in order to divine their future husband.

When the meal is over the people rise in a body from the table at a given signal, for it is believed that the first to rise will die before the next Christmas Eve - so nobody must be first.

After the feast the crumbs from the meal are gathered together and scattered on the ground to ensure good crops. The Christmas wafers and scraps from the table are fed to the animals. Straw from under the table must be wrapped around the fruit trees as a fertility rite.

When all has been done the evening is given over to friends and relatives, visiting is the order of the day. Then songs and games and carol singing go on until midnight, when all but the very youngest go to the church for the Midnight Mass.

Christmas Day is relatively quiet, although visiting is fairly general. Outdoor showings of puppets are also very popular. Carol singing really starts on the following day, St. Stephen's Day, known in Poland as 'drugie swieto' (2nd day), when groups of singers, who have been practising for weeks go from house to house singing both holy and secular carols. Occasionally boys dressed as animals will accompany them. All through Poland the people throw grain at each other on St. Stephen's Day, even in church at the priest. This is said to be in memory of the stoning of the first martyr Christian martyr, St. Stephen, although it may well spring from an earlier pagan rite.

The twelve days of Christmas are called 'Swiete Wieczary' (the Holy Evenings) and carols are sung each evening. Certain types of

work are forbidden although mostly for superstitious, not holy reasons.

New Year's Eve is known as St. Sylvester's, and it is rarely celebrated, although some divinations into the future may be practised by the young girls.

Zycze wam wesolych Swiat Bozego

Narodzenia i szczesliwego Nowego.

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THE INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSIC CENTRE

by Ron Coultrop

No doubt the name of the International Folk Music Centre is becoming familiar among the members of the Society, but many are probably wondering what it is really all about, and I feel that to those, an explanation is due.

A way of giving some idea of the I.F.M.C. is by describing a little of its short history, and what led to its formation.

It had been apparent that during the past few years interest in folk music in this country had been growing rapidly. Many national folk dance and song ensembles, as well as regional groups and individual folk artists, had been coming here from all parts of the world, and had been able to command large and appreciative audiences. In addition to these mainly professional groups, a constant flow of amateur artists had visited the British Isles in order to attend the many festivals and displays organised throughout the year.

It was noted, however, that there had been a sad lack of co-ordination and co-operation between the many folk singing and dance clubs, groups, and societies active in this country. As a consequence, a group of active folk dancers, singers, and musicians who were disturbed by such a situation, grouped together towards the end of 1957 and founded the International Folk Music Centre.

The aims of the I.F.M.C. may be summarised as follows:-

1. To provide a centre for the interchange of folk music and dancing knowledge between resident and visiting folk artists.
2. To provide facilities for the study of folk-lore and allied subjects.
3. To provide an up-to-date information service on all folk-loric activities.

4. To promote concerts, demonstrations, lectures, and exhibitions.

It is clear that in no way can the purpose of the I.F.M.C. be confused with any known existing organisations which are already working successfully. It is not the intention of the I.F.M.C. to duplicate anything, but to be complementary to the effort now being made, and to act as a liaison body to fill in the gaps which still exist.

The International Folk Music Centre has already received the support of many well known personages and organisations, and fund-raising functions have been successful. The membership is growing, and it is optimistic of the physical acquisition of a Centre in the very near future.

An ambitious programme is planned in which we intend to utilise all potential support that has not yet been used in furthering the popularity of the many aspects of folk music. Functions are being planned in co-operation with the E.F.D.S., and it is hoped that the S.I.F.D. and Harrow Green, and the many other singing and dancing groups will assist in these, and in others.

We feel that the I.F.M.C. can inject a new impetus in the growth of popularity and interest in folk singing and dancing in this country, and bring us together, under one roof, where it belongs - the folk music family.

The I.F.M.C. can and will be a success with the help of everyone with a genuine interest in all or one of the many aspects of folk music.

The I.F.M.C. exists to be of service.

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A TRAVELLER IN THE BALKANS 1958.

My Uncle Jonce.

The first morning of my arrival back in Skopje, I eagerly left my hotel and made my way through the smart Marsala Tita and crossed the old bridge into Turkish Ushkub: the old town apart from a few new buildings along the river front was unchanged. How lively the place was early in the morning, and I was lucky that this day was one of the more colourful market days. The same confusion was still apparent as in previous years, although I felt that there were fewer rags to be seen in the bustling crowds. I retraced my footsteps across the bridge and climbed the several flights of steps up to the Folklore Institute and to the small door marked "Direcktor". Jivko Fivfov was the same genial, charming person, and he greeted me

very warmly indeed. He rang the radio station and soon my other friend Vaye, who speaks excellent English, arrived to help out with the conversation. He wants to bring his amateur group to England again, but the difficulty is to find financial backing in England to arrange a little tour. With Vaye I went into the small but very well organized museum. Here are beautiful models of Macedonian domestic architecture and implements, and in addition a superb collection of beautiful costumes, the quality of which one would seldom see today, although I was assured that many of the more elaborate costumes were still worn in the remoter parts of Macedonia on special occasions.

I returned in the afternoon to meet Jonce, who was to be my teacher. We very soon became very good friends, as he was a most likeable chap, and dancing with him was an enjoyable experience. He was older than myself by about 8-10 years, and as a joke I called him Uncle, and Uncle Jonce he became for the remainder of my stay, and still is when we correspond. He learnt English while in America with the 'Tanxec' dance group, of which he is leader and teacher; as the group is quite famous I was honoured to have so excellent and likeable a teacher. Time was the only drawback, as he was rehearsing his own group between 7 a.m. and 12 noon each day, in preparation for a tour, and midday lessons with the temperature well in the hundreds was an endurance test. During my lessons he would say to me - "If you dance badly your Uncle will beat you", but he was very patient. The dances were not broken down very much, and I had to learn mostly by carefully following him (the system used by Phillip Thornton, incidentally), and this to no music whatsoever, so that the rhythms were contained within my mind while dancing. The dances I learnt were quite different from any I had attempted before, but he was quite satisfied, and promised to teach me some exciting ones next year.

Fivov gave me some of his own recordings on a tape which I had taken, the quality was not good, but they are interesting and I learnt the dances to some of them. In addition Vaye also arranged for the radio station to give me some of better quality from their library.

During one afternoon I sat in a cafe and only then did I realize that although Skopje was a new town, most people seemed to know each other, and by the time we left I was tired of hand and slightly inebriated by Slevovitza. The same evening we visited the Cafe Balkan which is the best place to eat, drink and listen to music of all kinds. The band and singers presented songs and dances not only from Yugoslavia, but also Rumania and Hungary. All are fine musicians, especially the clarinetist, who is a remarkable musician and one of the finest in Macedonia. He is a quiet man and devoted to folk music, and his playing of the Serbian 'frula' (pipe) is also renowned. He is a friend of Jonce and at his request



played for me many dances in syncopated rhythms, including one fantastic one in 19/16. Everyone became merrier and merrier, but unlike the Serbs the Macedonians do not seem to dance in cafes very often, only out in the open and often strictly to custom.

Several times Jonce took me to see dancing, mostly by young amateur groups. There are several hundred in an around Skopje, a remarkable fact, and the dancing that I saw was very impressive. Live music of a high standard is always used and many of the drummers were very dark skinned, gypsies I think.

Jonce invited me to travel with the ensemble to Leskovac and Ljubliana, which I accepted, and in doing so let myself in for some more trouble. My tape was not ready, so I had to return to Skopje en route. Of course my train had left! And the next never arrived!! So I spent the night on Leskovac Station, first in the buffet full of men in a drunken stupour and later curled up in the waiting room floor with bodies and baggage!; but luckily no livestock.

The performance at Leskovac was very enjoyable - considering the awful conditions it was a feat of endurance. The dancing was perfect and not distorted with too much stagecraft. I wish the musical arrangements had not been so sweet and sentimental (the songs very much so), because when traditional instruments were used in some items the quality of these arrangements was evident. One of the best items is still the silent kolo from Bosnia, the name of which for the moment escapes me; this is given a noble and thrilling performance - exciting too is the Shopska Petorka, in which the men excel in steps at almost breakneck speed, still keeping perfectly together in time and movement. I could go on and on, so much still remains in my mind, but the description of dancing and costumes would make laborious reading perhaps.

I now look forward to my return in 1959, to meeting my friends again, and suffering greatly whilst transporting myself inside the country. I think that to travel alone has its disadvantages. Loneliness is sometimes the worst - especially at mealtimes and on long journeys, and waits for train connections. But against that is weighed the advantages of mobility, and most important of all I think, the amount of discomfort and sometimes risk that is involved when travelling off the beaten track. Yugoslavia certainly offers you something of everything if you are prepared always for the worst.

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DEMONSTRATION NOTES

On Saturday, October 25th we had a teaching session for the C.C.P.R. at Dorking Grammar School. This was the usual National

Dance Party, with groups of children coming from different parts of Surrey. Richard Beckford came as my partner and Ken Ward played for us. It was from 2.30 until 6 p.m. and we had a scramble at the end to get changed and catch our train back. Quite a strenuous afternoon.

We had 2 teams out on Thursday, October 30th for the Islington Festival at the Islington Town Hall. Margaret Colato and her team provided the Spanish, and Charles Stevenson looked after our team. It was a very successful evening and the Entertainments Manager asked me to convey his thanks to both teams for their gay and colourful dancing.

I was asked to do a teachers training course for the Sussex County Council on four successive Tuesdays. Joan Richardson took over the first one for me as I had to work late. We both agreed that the standard of dancing was not very high considering that they were all teachers and going to pass on the dances to their classes. The men were the worst, very slow to pick up the steps and much too bouncy. They improved but could have done with a much longer course and all wished the classes could have continued throughout the winter.

On November 1st after much difficulty in assembling a team of 6 couples, we joined forces with Harrow Green to put on a Norwegian and a Swedish item for the Holiday Fellowship Association at the Festival Hall. Both teams danced well and were enthusiastically received. We did 20 minutes of dancing for each country; quite a long stretch in the overheated atmosphere of the Festival Hall. I had a very appreciative letter from the organizers, asking me to convey their thanks for a 'delightful show' to the members of the team.

I should like to thank everyone concerned for their co-operation and support, especially Dorothy Sloan and Dick Beckford who came back from the Surrey Crest weekend, and the musicians who played for us at short notice, Barbara Duleba, Barbara Smith and 2 members from our new orchestra.

MARGERY LATHAM

Future Demonstrations:

Saturday, November 15th	Teaching session, Kent County Council, Folkestone.
Monday, December 8th	Dulwich Music Club.
Saturday, December 13th	Banstead Etampes Association, French evening.

LETTERS.

2516 West 7th Ave.,  
Vancouver, 8, B.C.

Dear Editor,

A copy of the August News Sheet has just reached me from Toronto - a lovely surprise to have it again after a gap of nearly twelve months. I should certainly like to continue receiving this.

On reading the editorial and your plea for material, I wonder why not start an 'Overseas Column'? Dancers will always dance, no matter where they are living, and S.I.F.D. members may be interested to hear of dance activities elsewhere.

Although I am no longer in Toronto, I am corresponding with the International Group there. Their season was opened by Vyts Beliajus (Editor of the Viltis Magazine), who makes a grand teaching tour once a year visiting as many groups as possible. This tour is also carried out by other 'top leaders', each having his own speciality.

This is the first city I have been in which has no central international group. There are national groups, but this limits one's scope to perhaps one or two groups only; there is usually also the language difficulty, and the fact that they may only meet and rehearse for special displays - no weekly classes.

Please think over the idea of news from ex.S.I.F.D. members, and let me know what is decided.

Kindest wishes to all,

Patricia Paice.

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NOTICES.

S.I.F.D. Albert Hall

The show, 'See How They Dance', is to take place at the Royal Albert Hall on Friday, December 6th. Tickets are still available, and we do urge everyone to make a great effort and to make this show a ticket 'sell-out'. Remember, December 6th.

Inns of Court Mission.

There will be two dances at Inns of Court during December,

December 7th	M.C. John Hughes
14th	M.C. Mourrie Pfeffer

There will be no more dances there after December 14th, until January 4th, 1959, so Sunday dance enthusiasts are reminded that the 14th will be their Christmas dance. Arrive on time and in the party spirit so that the evening may go with a swing.

Cecil Sharp House.

We regret that there will be no dance at Cecil Sharp House during December, owing to the Christmas festivities.

E.F.D.S.

Christmas courses have been arranged by the English Folk Dance and Song Society, from Monday, December 29th - Friday, January 2nd, in various English dances. Details may be obtained from application to - The House Secretary, The E.F.D.S., Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park Road, London, N.W.1.

Thamesfield, Henley-on-Thames.

Thamesfield has been booked for the weekend of January 24th. Members wishing to join in with this weekend party, please send deposits (minimum 7/6) to Jack Richardson, 73 The Chine, N.21. Saturday tea until Sunday tea inclusive, 17/-, but guests wishing to extend the weekend from Friday or Saturday lunch until Sunday may be able to be accommodated. All queries and deposits to Jack Richardson.

Surrey Crest.

According to reports received, a very enjoyable time was had at the weekend at Surrey Crest Guest House, near Godstone Green. The weather was golden on the Saturday, and although there was no bonfire to celebrate Guy Fawkes, yet there were fireworks - and of course, dancing. Sunday's weather was not so kind, but I have heard nobody complaining of a dull time. After all, despite the weather, there is always dancing.