

NEWS SHEET

April 1959

Journal of the Society for International Folk Dancing.

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
EDITORIAL	1
KOLOS WITHOUT TEARS	2
COSTUMES	3
DEMONSTRATION NOTES	5
OVERSEAS COLUMN	8
LETTERS	9
NOTICES	10

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EDITORIAL

One of the least courageous methods of putting over a point of view is that of the petition. It must of necessity always be a slightly underhanded process; a scrap of paper passed around unknown to the person or persons directly concerned, and often signed unthinkingly or from a variety of personal reasons. In a relatively small society such as the S.I.F.D., it should be a simple matter to approach the person or persons directly concerned; then all points of view could be discussed and much bad spirit and hurt feelings would be saved.

I recently heard that a petition was passed around among members at the last Cecil Sharp House dance in connection with the orchestra. How much more satisfactory it would have been if those disgruntled people had approached the leader, Mr. Orloff, and spoken their complaints and explained their reasons for feeling disgruntled over the music which was being played.

So it is with all complaints. To approach the offender means that another side of the question is opened up, another view disclosed. On serious matters, which may concern the entire Society, it is a simple matter to call a General Meeting, and provision for this has been catered for in the constitution.

In the matter of the orchestra, Mr. Orloff would probably have mentioned the following points:-

- a. That the programme for the dance in question was handed to Mr. Orloff a few minutes before the dance was scheduled to start.
- b. That the music provided for the band was mainly one line music for one instrument only.
- c. That three of the orchestra's most regular and practised players were absent that evening through illness.
- d. That any orchestra, however, experienced, needs to be allowed time to at least study the music and to get the feel of it.
- e. That the orchestra has been crying out for music which Mr. Orloff has himself undertaken to orchestrate.
- f. That the orchestra meet every Thursday evening at Hugh Myddleton School for the purpose of practising our folk music, hoping that some dancers will attend to set the rhythm and tempo. To date, Bert Price is the only member to attend.
- g. That unlike the majority of musicians, they are not out to get large fees for devoting their time each Thursday evening and one Sunday evening each month, but that they play

for the love of it, receiving an amount of money which barely covers their travelling expenses.

- h. That the orchestra believe in the S.I.F.D., and are desperately eager to help in any way.

All these points add up to a lot of sense. Doubtless the sponsors of the petition have also a concrete point of view and would like to voice it. The pages of the News Sheet are always at their disposal.

One thing all members should remember: it takes a long time to become proficient. I am sure that founder members can recall the struggles which many of you had to master even a simple polka or step hop. The advanced people at that time did not bawl you out or bar you from their sets. Instead they often encouraged you to join in, even although their pleasure in executing a dance might well have been spoiled. Folk who learned their dances at Drury Lane instead of at the classes will know how many dances and steps they picked up wrongly at first, and they, especially, should recognise how essential it is that the orchestra should be provided with proper music, and be allowed to make their mistakes whilst they are in the beginner stage. Tolerance to beginners has always been a strong point among folk dancers, and I cannot believe that the Society has changed in character so much that this facet has disappeared.

KOLOS WITHOUT TEARS

by Keneric Quad

Balkan dancing (i.e. Horas, Oros, Kolos, etc.) is one of the most pleasing of all types of social dancing, a point which is borne out by the increasing enthusiasm shown at our larger dances.

The main advantage, I think, is that usually no partners are needed, and linked in a chain one has the feeling of belonging and not just joining in. The irregular rhythm is a problem, and one that must be solved sooner or later now that interest is being shown in the more involved type of dance.

It is the rhythm which causes the main difficulty; in the social dances many of the steps are simple and only the subtle way in which the footwork is made to fit the music makes them appear difficult at first sight.

What is rhythm? Have some people no sense of rhythm? All our life is surrounded by rhythm, and even the normal going about our daily tasks involves the use of rhythm. The wind on the trees; running water; a ball bouncing down a flight of stairs; these all

create a rhythmic sound. Running for a bus, eating, writing, and speaking involve rhythmic movements. How then can a person have no sense of rhythm? It is there and must be discovered.

Because we are English it does not mean that we cannot dance a difficult kolo - Jonce my Yugoslav friend often said that it was sometimes very difficult for his own people to learn a dance, and perhaps because it is more difficult for us to grasp a strange rhythm, it may be a little more difficult for us.

When wishing to join in, first of all try to grasp the rhythm, then the pattern of the footwork, and then when both have registered in your mind, join in regardless of what your neighbours may say. Eventually you will find yourself dancing with them.

Let us choose a popular dance - the Greek Kalemantianas. This dance has seven beats to the bar ($\frac{7}{8}$). This is unusual for the occidental, although contemporary composers are now experimenting with irregular rhythms within one bar.

We can discover this rhythm in the following way:-

(a) Join hands in a circle, and walk anti-clockwise starting right foot (R.F.), walk R.F., L.F., R.F., L.F., normally and count four on each foot as you walk (i.e. R 234, L 234, R 234 etc.). You are now walking $\frac{8}{8}$.

(b) Now walk as before but count only 3 on the R, and then 4 on the L, keeping the movements smooth (i.e. R 23, L 234, R 23, L 234). You are now walking $\frac{7}{8}$.

(c) For the purpose of the dance you must divide the second count of 4 in half so that you now count R 23, L 2, R 2, L 23, R 2, L 2 (i.e. long, short, short, long, short, short, etc.) (i.e. R.F., L.F., R.F., L.F., R.F., L.F., etc.)

After a little practice you will be able to walk this quite easily, especially if you relax the body, and do not move with long jerky movements.

Next month I will describe the dance, and suggest some records that can be used. Meanwhile try beating seven on the table with your hands in $\frac{7}{8}$ time. L, R, R, L, R, L, R, and repeat without pause after seventh.

COSTUMES

In each edition, details of a folk costume are given in order that folk who want a costume but have no idea how to set about it, may be encouraged to start making one with the minimum amount of difficulty.

This is no easy task, for whichever costume is chosen, some 'costume expert' will come forward with adverse criticism. My advice to those who wish to make a costume which is 'criticism free' from those experts in the Society or near-Society, should go to the fountain head of the nationality chosen, i.e. the Embassy. Failing this, a consultation with the subject teacher will be a safeguard. For instance, in this edition, Jugoslavian costumes will be described, and I advocate a session with Philip Thornton or Ken Ward on points of detail, types of material, and exact colouring. In any case, whatever costume you decide to make, and upon whoever's authority, you will not please everyone. So many fail to realise that a costume is a living thing, dependent upon personal taste for the finer points. Basic essentials should be strictly adhered to, but artistic imagination must be allowed to breathe. It is a fallacy to imagine that every girl from one village or region will have the exact facsimile of embroidery on her costume. True, the type of stitch and colouring will be there, but it is ridiculous to imagine that the designs will also be the same.

In the February edition a Catalan costume received some criticism from a well known expert, yet this costume was actually seen by me, whilst I was holidaying in Spain, and the details were written down on the spot. In addition several picture postcards bought on a subsequent visit, all portray this same costume. In similar manner, my first Polish costume received criticism because the skirt had a blue background. 'Never blue', said my Polish friends in shocked accents. Yet I had spent hours touring the shops trying to match the pattern of material I had been given, and had been elated when my quest was successful - this pattern had, incidentally, been given me by yet another Polish friend.

So, because your task of pleasing everybody is well-nigh impossible, I offer the following advice - (1) Choose your costume bearing in mind the village or region as well as the country.(2) Visit the country of your choice if possible, and do a bit of research on your own.(3) Consult the relevant Embassy, where you will always be treated with much kindness and helpfulness.(4) Consult the national groups.(5) Consult the subject teacher.(6) If all else fails, follow one of my descriptions.

Jugoslavian Costumes (seen at the Albert Hall by a visiting nation group in 1952).

Woman's Costume

White kerchief worn over a red skull cap. Two corners of the kerchief are knotted at the back under the hair. The edges are decorated with three bands of silver and red braid.

White blouse with plain round neck and full, loose sleeves edged at the wrist with white fringe.

Black bodice falling from shoulder-neck line, hip length. The back has a loose panel hanging from each shoulder to waist about three inches wide. It joins about nine inches down with a V-shaped piece of the same width, and from the waist a straight piece goes straight across the back about five inches wide. This loose back piece is decorated in black, gold, and red thread.

Full white skirt, gathered at the waist and reaching nearly to the ankle.

Black apron edged with black fringe. There is a large centre panel embroidered in red, silver, and gold.

Red stockings cross gartered with gold braid.

Mocassin type shoes, with up-turned toes.

The whole of the front of the blouse is covered with silver and gold coins which jingle all through any dance. Wide embroidered belt at waist goes over bodice.

All embroidery is of geometrical pattern in red, silver, and gold.

Man's Costume

White shirt with full sleeves gathered into a cuff. Shirt worn outside the trousers and held at waist by wide black belt or sash. The collar is round, Peter Pan style, and the hem of the shirt is embroidered in black, about two inches wide.

Red bolero, edged with black piping; tied at neck with red bow. Red buttons on shirt front.

White trousers, very full with black embroidery at bottoms.

Black sandals.

All embroidery is of a geometrical pattern.

DEMONSTRATION NOTES

I must apologize for the absence of demonstration notes in the last three news-sheets. Now that I have to work in the afternoons and evenings I find it difficult to fit in ordinary S.I.F.D. work and the organizing of demonstrations without having to write about them afterwards. I have also had more difficulty in getting teams lately owing to the fact that there is more and more competition on the services of the few dances we have left. We have also had our share of 'flu casualties. All mid-week demonstrations now have to

be "farmed out" as I am working, so most of these reports come from my "delegates".

"Steve" took the team to The John Lewis & Co. New Ski Club in Oxford Street, on January 9th, and he reports -

"On January 9th the team gave a short display of Austrian dancing at a Social Evening held by the John Lewis Ski Club. We were originally asked to provide only a demonstration, but it seemed clear that the audience would enjoy participating, and possibly the greater part of the evening was spent in teaching them some simple dances.

The evening went smoothly and we received a good measure of applause at the end."

The next demonstration in January was on the 16th, when the team went to Conway Hall to demonstrate at the Annual Reunion of the Baptist Holiday Fellowship. We found on arrival that we were expected to dance on a small stage before quite a packed house, and to our consternation one of our men did not arrive. There was a hasty reorganisation of the programme so that we did only couple and two couple dances for two fifteen minute periods. This was just as well, in view of the small size of the stage.

A good rapprochement was obtained with the audience, as was evidenced by odd items of cross talk between the stage and the audience.

Helen and Steve danced the Aragonesa to the rhythm of the castanets because there was no music available. Suitable humming noises were made in the background by the rest of the team.

All the dances were well received and the audience clapped loudly every time we appeared.

We had trouble, too, over the demonstration at The Old People's Party at Camberwell Toc H Cripple Club. Owing to a misunderstanding Mourrie didn't turn up to play, so Penny had to be dispatched to collect her set of records so that the old people could at least have some entertainment. We couldn't charge expenses for this, indeed we never do for this type of demonstration, but we are not usually out by the cost of a double taxi fare!

I took one couple and a musician to St. Mary Cray, Kent, on 24th January. This was the second of the teachers' training course to help launch our book in Kent schools. Again I wasn't very impressed by the general standard of dancing. Some were good but quite a number were bad and would have needed lots more time than we had to produce satisfactory results. Still the book sales were good.

Edward Erine took charge of the team for me at the Kings Own Girls' Club, Neasdon on 27th January. There were two age groups in this club and they were taken separately. Both were very keen on the dances and enjoyed the simple dances which were taught.

The third and last of the Kent Teachers Training Course was at Gillingham on February 7th. We enjoyed this class and the teachers were very keen. We sold our books and hope that the records sales will also receive a boost. As we were in Kent we agreed to go on in the evening to The Medway Folk Dance Group which is run by member Ian Hayden and his wife. They have our book but weren't sure of one or two of the dances. We had a very pleasant evening dancing with this group, who normally do mostly square dancing. They have a nice little hall and, great asset, several teenage boy dancers!!

I was unable to get a team for the London Tuition Centre Students Club, Oxford Street, on February 19th, but Margaret Colato came to my rescue at the last minute and took a Spanish team to augment my one and a half couples! George Sweetland who was in the Spanish team also danced for the International and was "fair wore out" at the end of it with costume changes and racing from one team to the other. It was a great success despite the fact that the audience was smaller than had been expected owing to 'flu.

I stood down from the team on Saturday, 14th February, as we had five girls and Bob Symes took over for me. It was for The Ramblers Reunion at The Royal Festival Hall. Unfortunately one of the girls didn't turn up and despite the fact that we had managed to secure an extra man to replace a 'flu victim we still had to dance with three couples - most frustrating, especially as I could have gone if I'd known. However it was well received. I would like to thank all the dancers who have danced in these demonstrations, and Steve, Edward and Bob for their efforts on my behalf. It isn't easy when one is let down (even when it isn't anyone's fault) to keep things going and to improvise different programmes from the one arranged. We do need more people in the team. Anyone who can come regularly to the classes to learn the demonstration repertoire and who is willing to work will be very welcome.

Future Demonstrations:

April 25th. Brit.Ass. of Physical Training, Y.M.C.A.
June 6th. London Group Holiday Fellowship, Golders Green, North S.
June 27th. Midsummer Fair, Windsor.

OVERSEAS COLUMN

Vancouver, Canada.

Life has been taking on quite an international aspect of recent months; at the University here they have quite a new building called International House on campus. It consists of two auditoriums, a theatre and various smaller rooms on the sides for discussions and meetings. It is quite lavish and has some beautiful wood panelling, one side wall of glass; ceiling high drapes and various greenery inside. One large wall mural shows a map of the world in relief. Last month the students put on various national evenings - Russian, Indonesian, Hungarian, and Indian. There was plenty of music and dancing with an opportunity to stay and meet them over coffee afterwards.

I drove down to Seattle (4 hours) with Len, Beryl, and Hal, a Danish dancer, a couple of weeks ago to attend a Scandinavian Ball held on the campus of the University of Washington. We left Friday afternoon and took the coast road and crossed the border through farm lands mostly and small towns. We danced at the ball, where there were about 450 people dressed in gaily coloured costumes, and stayed over to see the town on Saturday. Seattle is built, like Rome, on seven hills, all sloping down to the harbour and the waterfront. The sun was glorious, but the wind was mighty chilly. We saw a great deal that day including parks and Museums, and the zoo, and stores. We would love to return for a spending spree one day. The whole trip was extremely pleasant - in particular a couple of hours spent with the dance leader at his record shop (called Folklore Center) chatting about dance in general. He knows Cecil Sharp House and also several North American groups and teachers.

I met Beryl for lunch and she tells me she has written re the Seattle trip and about Vancouver's new international group which is meeting in the Sawyer home monthly.

The University Summer School here is planning to include a course of folk dancing - it seems they have had several requests. I understand that this year will be a pilot scheme, and it will be in three parts - Ukranian, Balkan, and Israeli. I'll probably be here yet another few months as I am saving for a trip home and it is a rather slow job. However, Mexico is rather tempting being so close, and I shall be battling with my conscience.

Yours,
Patricia Paice

The idea of an Overseas Column originated from Pat, and it is opportune that the first letter in the column - a private one written to Margery - should come from her. We hope to hear from you again when you can spare us the time, Pat. Ed.

London, Ontario, Canada.

We had a very pleasant time at Christmas, our tree was so beautiful that I felt very sad about throwing it out. It is very cold outside, about 6° F, but about 70° inside. Everything is very icy, and there are layers of it on the roads and also a thick layer on the river. There is talk of floods if it thaws too quickly, and unfortunately we live in a flood area - about 150 yds. from the river; but they have built a handsome new Dam which is supposed to control all that.

Len and Beryl seem to be doing very well. They do an awful lot of dancing. We do none at all and I really miss it. Still I play my kolo records now and again.

I am sort of hoping to come over next year, but I don't know whether it will materialize or not. If I do I shall certainly be coming round to see you. How are all the various families? Rita and Bob, Larry and Frances, Margaret and her husband, and Kostek?

We heard from John Ungar by telephone on Christmas morning. He may be visiting us with his mother in the spring.

Nothing much happens here, but I have just been reading in a Toronto newspaper that they are having a weekend of Balkan dancing next week. Pity I do not live there.

Best wishes,
Audrey

I think Audrey sounds just a little bit homesick, and I am sure that she would love to hear from some of her old friends. All addresses may be obtained from Margery. Ed.

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

At the last Annual General Meeting of the Society, it was resolved 'that the Committee be asked to organise mid-week dancing, as opposed to instruction, on approximately the same scale as last season, commencing in January 1959'. This is the wish of the Members, expressed in the constitutionally correct manner. It is, therefore, unnecessary to ask members to express their views, as suggested in the March News Sheet. Furthermore, by not acting on the resolution, the Committee is acting in an undemocratic manner.

Yours sincerely,
Jack Richardson

Acting upon the instructions of the General Meeting, the Committee has made arrangements for social dances to be held at Cecil Sharp House on Fridays.

The item in the March News Sheet should have read, 'The Committee is loath to commit the Society too far ahead in its bookings until it is reasonably sure of members' favourable reactions to this venture'.

Any misunderstanding of this point is sincerely regretted. Ed.

NOTICES

Wedding Bells

It is with great pleasure that this column announces the engagement of Frances Watt and Ken Ward. I know that all members will join with me in wishing them every happiness.

Drury Lane

During the summer season, the Sunday dances at Drury Lane will be starting at 7.30 p.m. According to report, these dances are becoming very successful, and all members are cordially invited to attend.

Wednesday classes.

The classes held at Hugh Myddleton School on Wednesday evenings are to be thrown open to all comers at a charge of two shillings per evening. Members who have not enrolled for this class will be very welcome if they care to drop in on Wednesdays for this very useful General class.

General Meeting

Advanced notice is hereby given of the General Meeting to be held at Hugh Myddleton School on Thursday, May 21st. This is expected to be an important meeting, and members are urged to make every effort to be present. At the meeting, the findings of the Sub-Committee appointed to consider and make proposals for the future of the Society will be placed before members for their consideration, discussion, dismissal or adoption. The future of the Society is of vital importance to the youngest, the eldest, the hardest working, and the most idle and apathetic member, and everybody should be present on this occasion. Thursday, May 21st.

My Query of the Month.

The old definition of syncopation is 'an irregular progression from bar to bar'. After reading 'Kolos without tears', I am wondering whether a few bars selling Slivovika would help to get the kolo rhythm?

S.I.F.D. members may be interested to know that a Swedish Folk Dance Group has been formed under the auspices of the L.C.C. The Group meets on Mondays at 8.0 at the Waterloo Institute, West Square School, Westminster Bridge Road. The instruction is by Dr. V. Cyriax and Willy Wallace is our violinist.

We should be very pleased to welcome any new members, and for further details please apply to Pauline Harrison, 178 Mantilla Road, Tooting, S.W.17. Telephone: BAL 1574.