

NEWS SHEET

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Journal of the Society for International Folk Dancing.

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EDITORIAL

Some time ago whilst watching a demonstration, I pointed to one of the dancers and remarked, 'She dances well'. My companion, a national teacher replied, 'Yes, technically she is almost perfect, but she dances without a heart'. Feeling somewhat shaken at this criticism, which on reflection I realised to be true, I pointed to yet another dancer who was obviously enjoying his dancing and asked, 'What about him?' Back came my answer, 'He is a selfish dancer. He enjoys himself so much when he is dancing that he forgets everybody else. See how he allows his partner to find her own balance after nearly swinging her off her feet in that pivot. Now watch in the chain, how he grabs each girl's hand instead of taking it and passing her on to her next partner. No, he is a selfish dancer.' We watched in silence for a while, and then the teacher nodded in the direction of one girl and said, 'There is the good dancer. Perhaps her steps and body movements are not quite up to the standard of the other, but watch the flow of the whole movement. No particular part stands out, she moves as a stream of water. Her face does not express exuberance, but her smile is contagious because it is entirely selfless, lost in the joy of the dance. Yet she keeps her eyes on the rest of the team watching to see that the spacing is even, the lines straight. That girl may go wrong in the demonstration, but no-one watching will mind, she will have the sympathy of the entire audience with her. She is a good dancer, because she has heart and because she can forget herself.'

These words were spoken to me two or three years ago, and since then I am continually finding myself looking for 'good dancers'. It is an interesting pastime, and not so depressing as one might think, for I have found several. Most strange is the fact that not all have been found among the advanced dancers; I have seen several among the semi-beginners, the self-effacing, and the shy. So a word of cheer to those folk who despair of making the grade of difficult dances - if you can dance the simplest dance with inward joy and satisfaction, and in so doing give pleasure to those watching you, you are streets ahead of those foot-perfect heartless, selfish dancers, whose performances drive you into the slough of despond. You are a 'good dancer', and the knowledge should send you into an advanced dance secure in the thought that however long it may take you to master it, master it you will, and better than those others.

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OVERSEAS COLUMN

Australia

I have just been reading in the newspaper that Britain is frozen stiff and that London is hidden by fog; our really hot weather has started, no centuries yet, but I guess they are coming. Most days are simply superb, I do wish you could sample some of our sunshine.

I was in hospital having my tonsils removed, and all went well, it was not really so bad as I had been led to believe. Whilst recuperating I fell ill, and so had to spend another three weeks in another hospital, this time a public one (for which one still pays). Anyway, it was a beastly patch of fluid at the base of my right lung which caused the trouble. How it came to be there is a mystery. I was sent home to continue resting for another month, which is up on Tuesday, so I can hardly wait to hear what the result of the X-ray and examination will be. I feel and look so much better that I am sure the fluid is almost absorbed. Since being home I have put on weight in all directions, and as I was down to seven stone in hospital, the improvement is great.

On the last three Sunday evenings we have been listening to the latest series of broadcasts by Wilfred Thomas who travels and commentates for the B.B.C. These three were on Yugoslavia - you can imagine how avidly we listened. The subject matter was very interesting - but oh! the music! It just about drove us frantic with joy to hear it again. Picture us sitting there with wildly tapping feet and hands, and a sort of beautiful grin on our faces (in other words, quite soppy looking). We shall have to write to the A. J. C. to repeat the series once a month.

This letter should really be written on mourning paper, for it is just two years today since we arrived home, and truly it was one of the saddest days in my life. I shall never forget it. We both still dream of going back to see you all - all we need is a miracle in the form of a fortune, large or small, we are not fussy. Wouldn't it be wonderful, we could call in and see Beryl and Len on the way!

I must close now and potter off to bed, you have no idea how tired one gets simply sitting resting.

Love from us both,

Florence and Jon Brian

"SKANDIA BALL" - SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

February, 1959

The trip to Seattle had been planned over several months before it took place, and was therefore greatly anticipated. When the party finally departed on a Friday afternoon (after wangling a few hours' absence from the office) it consisted of three ex-members of the S. I. F. D. (Len and Beryl Sawyer and Patricia Paice) and Danish Harold. The drive to Seattle from Vancouver, B.C., is a long one, at the end of which it was necessary to find a convenient hotel in which to stay. However, this was accomplished by 8.30 p.m. and four

excited dancers set out for the University where the Skandia Ball was already warming up.

The programme consisted of an hour of international dances, one hour of Scandinavian, a demonstration and folk music from the North-lands by an orchestra of 16. Unfortunately, we missed all but three dances in the first hour which began with the familiar 'Jagermarsch' and included German 'Windmill', Russian 'Korobushka', Yugoslav kolos and a number of dances new to us, including a Mexican 'Corrido'. We warmed up with 'Waltz Country Dance' a 'Boston Two-step' and 'Zillertaler Landler' which had us tied in knots although we recognized the various holds.

The Scandinavian hour consisted of many dances well-known to us and many seen by us for the first time. Often we find slight variations to the dances we know - 'Snurrbocken' has us completely confused, though of all the variations we have seen the one taught by Dr. Cyriax is the most attractive.

The demonstration team was excellent - confident and relaxed and able to give the dances a great deal of character (most of the dancers were Scandinavian): 'Atta Man Engel' from Finland was the first, 'Oxdansen' was demonstrated by two Swedes and finally 'Västgötapolska' whose acquaintance we renewed after more than two years. The dancers were led on by four fiddlers to the tune of a march which brought back Albert Hall memories for us. A Grand March brought everyone onto the floor - an unfortunate mistake, as there were 400 dancers in the hall and, as many of you will know, a Grand March can go on, and on, and on ....

After the Grand March much needed refreshments were served, in Scandinavian style, following which waltzes, polkas and schottisches were played by the orchestra in a gay 'Gammaldans'.

The dances ended all too early, at midnight - it was obvious that everyone could have gone on dancing for hours.

On the following morning we paid a visit to the Folklore Center run by the Director of Skandia and learned about the history of the group. Started by Scandinavian students studying at Washington University ten years previously, it became so popular that the founder, Gordon Tracie, now teaches on three nights of the week and is able to make a paying proposition of the Folklore Center which retails national music and instruments, recordings and dance instructions. As can be gathered from the Skandia Ball programme, the group still favours Scandinavian dances but includes many dances of other nationalities in its programme and many members, both students and non-students, belong to a separate Balkan group and learn Serbo-Croat in addition to the kolos. While we were talking with Gordon Tracie we played an excerpt from a recording by the Bulgarian national dance group which evoked memories of the gay

dancers and gifted feminine choir. On a trip to London, Gordon Tracie had visited both the S. I. F. D. and E. F. D. S. S. at Cecil Sharp House.

As yet Seattle is not on the circuit of well-known dance teachers, who during the summer holidays, travel from city to city in the States, holding workshop weekends - dancers like Dick Crum who has spent a number of years with a Yugoslav dance group - whose first visit to London was, I believe, in 1952.

In brilliant sunshine four tired dancers visited Seattle's well-stocked zoo, taking careful note of the notorious grizzly, that most unsociable of beasts, and toured the Art Gallery. After a quick tour of the huge department stores a comfortable coach was found to speed us back to Vancouver and the twilight hours found us sleepily meandering through the customs at the border - our all too brief excursion was over.

Why is it that when one has to make a visit to another country, involving elaborate plans, a folk dance appears even more interesting than a dance on one's own doorstep?

Len and Beryl Sawyer.

### HUNGARIAN COSTUMES

It is possible that the new Hungarian classes will have aroused a new interest in Hungarian costumes. With this in mind I am describing a costume for a man and a woman from Hungary. The costumes vary, of course, from region to region; from small matters of detail to widely diverse style. In some areas the influence of the military has left its imprint, whilst others are romantic-looking, glamorous, and picturesque. It is the latter category which I have described in this issue, and well-known to most of us.

#### Man's Costume

White shirt with very wide sleeves gathered into the shoulder yoke and falling loose to just below the wrist. The sleeve, from the scalloped wrist edge to six inches to twelve inches upward, is covered with embroidery. The shoulder yoke is embroidered, and so too is the shirt front. The shirt has a small Peter Pan collar also embroidered, and a length of decorated braid ties at the neck.

The white trousers are very full and gathered into the waist. The legs reach to the upper calf and hang loose, giving a skirt-like appearance. The bottom edge of the trousers has an edging of white fringe about 4" deep. The material should not be too thin, and a coarse linen would be admirable.



The apron is of a dark material and reaches to the calf. This is further lengthened by fringe and by gold tassels, so that the finished apron reaches almost to the ankle. Above the fringe there is a deep band of embroidery, about nine inches or more. Care should be taken to see that this apron material is not too flimsy, since originally it was probably made of leather, with cut-out leather designs fastened where now embroidery is worked.

A waistcoat is normally worn, originally of dark stained leather, but more recently of dark, thick material. It has a small flat collar and revers, and although double breasted and decorated with metal buttons, it is rarely worn fastened.

Black leather boots, and a tall, bowler-type hat of black felt with a clump of feathers at the side complete the outfit.

#### Woman's Costume.

White blouse with full sleeve reaching to just above the elbow. These sleeves are starched very stiffly, and usually pleated with  $\frac{1}{4}$ " pleats. The sleeve has a six inch frill of stiff lace or embroidery, and the neck of the blouse has a high, round, collar.

The bodice has a rounded neckline and fastens down the front. It is either of a very dark material or of white, and is covered with brilliantly coloured embroidery.

A shawl may be worn over this bodice, and it is white with a five to six inch band of embroidery along the edge. It has also a wide edging of stiffly starched lace or white embroidered material all around the outer edge. It is worn crossed at the front with the ends tied at the waist back.

The skirt is very full, and accordian pleated. It is usually of a dark, plain colour, or it may be of pastel coloured striped motif. Bands of embroidery are usually worked around the hem line. Many, many petticoats should be worn beneath it.

The apron is white, and completely covers the front of the skirt. It has an edging of wide stiff lace, gathered so that it stands out like a frill.

The head-dress varies greatly, but the most usual is a bonnet-shaped cap of white or cream, covered with embroidery.

Bands of decorated braid encircle the waist and hang in loops and ends over the front of the apron.

Black or red boots complete the costume.

This is a costume to be attempted only by those who love to sew, and who have the time. To miss out the embroidery is to lose the

whole point of the costume. The embroidery, which is carried out in reds, greens, yellows, and other similar bright colours, is usually of flowers and leaves, both natural and stylised.

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NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Iberian Group

As reported in last month's News Sheet, the Iberian Group have had a heavy programme of demonstrations in the last few weeks. With these demonstrations we have had mixed receptions.

On February 19th, members of the group had the wonderful experience of dancing at a 'See How They Dance' programme at the Languages Institute, Oxford Street, in company with an international team. We were given a marvellous reception, and felt that the audience really understood our dances. This was particularly gratifying to the Iberian Group, as four of their members had only joined us a few months ago, and were taking part in their first demonstration, where they gracefully performed a lively 'Jota'.

This reception was a marked contrast to the Folk Dance Festival at Bethnal Green Town Hall in which some of us took part on February 23rd. In view of our comparative lack of experience we hardly expected to gain a 'place', but in fact we might not even have been there at all. We received no mention, no criticism, no adjudication. We understand that the Harrow Green dancers regularly take part in this festival, and we should be pleased to hear their comments.

Subsequent demonstrations were more successful. A team took part with S. I. F. D. members in a demonstration at the Dick Sheppard School, Tulse Hill on February 28th. We had a very gay evening, which incidentally contributed £30 toward a project organised by the school to provide an English holiday for a Polish refugee child.

The audience at Woodmansterne, Surrey, Baptist Church, enjoyed our dances when we took part in a Spanish evening held at their church on March 7th, and we had an equally enthusiastic reception at the International Friendship League, Queen's Square, on March 12th, at their twenty fifth birthday party, where our beginners again danced jotas.

With only four dancers we managed to raise a great deal of enthusiasm when we danced a cabaret item at a Highland Ball at Watford Town Hall, in an enormous ballroom on March 13th. Here the bright Andalusian costumes contrasted with the tartans, but both countries' dances blended very well.

On March 20th, we took part in a demonstration at the Islington Olde Tyme Dance Club, in company with some Russian and Polish teams. Here the team was not so well received, but we hope it was only because the audience was overwhelmed at the variety of costume and dances exhibited by the three countries.

We were very proud to show off our new Valencian costumes when we gave a demonstration of Spanish dances from Valencia, Andalucia and Aragon, during the Cecil Sharp House dance on March 22nd. These costumes were just finished in time, and two dancers wore them to dance 'Jota Valenciana'. We tried to give as varied a programme as possible, and we were much encouraged by our reception from what was probably our most critical audience - fellow S. I. F. D. members.

Throughout our many demonstrations our sincere thanks are due to our two guitarists, who have travelled many miles with us, and who have given us all the support, encouragement, and rehearsal we required.

C. W.

#### Hornchurch Folk Dance Group

At the beginning of this month the Hornchurch Folk Dance Group gave a Festival of International Folk Dancing at the Bata Hotel, in aid of St. Catherine's Church, East Tilbury, Repair Fund.

Their reception was extremely good, and when it is considered that the group is only eighteen months old it is doubly commendable. The full length column in the local newspaper states that '... the colour, melody, and energy would put rock-'n-roll out of business in a week', and goes on to say that the precise, rapid steps, eloquent and vivid gestures, and perfectly-timed movements of the performers showed clearly that they danced because they enjoyed it. This group, is run by Mrs. Ivy Romney, who has also started the folk dancing group at Torrell's School, Grays, which meet each Monday at 7.30 p.m. Visitors and friends have been heartily welcomed to these groups, and have returned with glowing reports.

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#### NOTICES

The Twelfth International Festival of dancing will be held in Edinburgh from July 25th until August 1st, 1959. The festival includes the Scottish entries, and an International section. The standard of dance is expected to reach a high level; last year the winners of the International Festival Championship Challenge Cup were the Ukranian 'Orlyk' team, who so delighted us some years ago by their magnificent dancing at the Albert Hall 'See How They Dance'.

Enquiries should be made to the Organisers, International Festival of Dancing, 39 Abbeyhill, Edinburgh, Scotland, and entries must be sent not later than June 20th.



Henley-on-Thames Weekend

A weekend is being arranged for July 18th and 19th. These are most popular, and should be booked without delay. Please send your name and booking fee of ten shillings per person to Jack Richardson, 73 The Chine, N.21, as soon as possible.

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Many members had the pleasant surprise of meeting Jean (wife of Jimmy) Harding last week. Jean and Jimmy emigrated to Canada four years ago, and now Jean, complete with two baby folk dancers-to-be is back home on holiday. She has left Jimmy behind earning the daily bread, and all members will join with me in asking her to send him all our best wishes when next she writes to him. We are hoping that Jean will be able to attend some of our dances, so keep a sharp look-out for her.

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June Dances.      Inns of Court.

June 7	M.C. Richard Beckford
14	M.C. John Hughes
21	M.C. Simon Guest

June Dances.      Cecil Sharp House.

June 28      M.C. Bert Price.

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The Editor wishes to apologise for the late delivery of the previous News Sheet, but the delay was due to the hospitalization of the 'Dispersal Officer',

