

# S.I.F.D. NEWS

MAY 1972



SWAN CHIEF

1871-1872



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This month's cover is by Caroline Thomas and is a costume from Montafon in the Vorarlberg Province of Austria. The "Schapelli" headdress is worn by young girls on festive occasions.

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SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCING

Officers of the Committee:-

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Demonstration Secretary:	Margery Lathan, 14 Beechwood Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey. Home: 01-876 7055 Office: 01-930 7022 Ext.3447.
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BADGES S.I.F.D. Badges for lapel, scooter and car, @ 17<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>p, 37<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>p, and 62<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>p respectively, can be obtained from our Membership Secretary, Roland Minton.

RECORDS Our records are available from Magnegraph Recording Co., Ltd., 1 Hanway Place, London W.1. Price 85p each plus postage, and also from Frances Horrocks, 112 Kingston Avenue, North Cheam, Sutton, Surrey.

BOOKS Our books are published by Pergamon Press and are available, to order, through any bookseller, price 50p each, or from Frances Horrocks.

Discounts are obtainable on records and books purchased by members for their own use when purchased direct from the S.I.F.D. (i.e. from Frances Horrocks), but not when purchased from Magnegraph or booksellers.

ED. NOTE:

The first two pages of the bibliography which Dr. Towner has kindly prepared are on pages 6 & 7. We are printing two sides of the same page to enable readers wanting to keep the bibliography to detach the page easily. Dr. Towner would be pleased to supply further information to individual enquirers, and answer any queries. His address is 41 Water Street, Cambridge.

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T H E P O L K A

(From a talk delivered by Vyts Beliajus at the Idyllwild Folk Dance Camp)

Historians claim that the polka originated in Bohemia. It was brought to Paris during one of the Revolutions by a Czech maiden. The French fell in love with the polka and popularized it. From Paris it spread to the rest of the Western World. As with all else, when something popular spreads and becomes adopted for the use of another nation, it usually acquires a new characteristic more akin to the forms of that particular nation. This happened to the polka, too.

How the Czechs of the 18-19th century danced the polka we cannot be too sure. It seems that much of Northeastern Europe dances the polka with a constant bounce, and that includes the Czechs, although this is not the way that it has been recorded by the French and has become as the accepted or decreed form in the dance descriptive books, and as it was done throughout Western Europe. According to the books the polka should be done with a hop and a two-step. This form was used in the West, but with most Easterners, if they do the genuine polka, it comes out as hop-and, step step, and...

At one time, when the polka was a peasant or native dance step, the regional characteristics prevailed. However, things are changing. Regionalism is disappearing as far as the polka steps are concerned. The new dance teachers are usually not peasants from the soil. They are citybred people who attended danceschool and learned steps according to the books, and if the books say that a polka is a hop with a two-step, then that's what it will be. After all, the books know more than the illiterate peasants who were brought up with bad habits of doing dances not according to what someone dictates but naively. Thus, characteristics are disappearing among Lithuanians, Poles, and all others.

At one time, a nationality could have been recognized by the way they danced the polka. The Yugoslavs were marked for life, because those who did do polkas performed them with two steps and a dip-step; Ukrainians and Poles from the Falician section with a heavy Ukrainian population polka'd with a Pas de Basque; Polish polkas were free and bouncy with a great deal of individuality. Lithuanian polkas were like the Polish but with slight restriction mainly due to the fact that they wore wooden shoes. The Lithuanian wooden shoes consisted of a wooden sole-heel combination with a leather topping over the foot, but they had no leather behind the heel of the foot. Thus, if a foot had been lifted as freely as in Polish dances the wooden shoe would have flown off. Therefore, they developed a polka which had more body bounce and less foot lift. They always began their polka with two steps and then a hop-step. The Swiss, and a few other nations, did an ordinary Schottische step and called it "polka". In the United States and perhaps other areas the polka assumed its widest dimension. It was a step, two-step, no hop, but feet wide as if trying to cover the whole floor in two such steps.

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As said, all of these characteristics are disappearing. In fact, so much of the original dancing is disappearing that nothing but choreography will be left. So-called researchers spend half the night choreographing original dances so that they choreograph them to death. Any resemblance between the original folk dance and present results is usually purely coincidental. Moyseyev's influence has proved disastrous to many ethnic dance forms. Even the Ukrainians, who were normally strict traditionalists in their dance routines, are also succumbing. The interest right now is not recreationalism but exhibitionism. Of all Iron Curtain countries, only Yugoslavia still retains a large degree of traditional dance forms. What will eventually happen to the folk dance, one doesn't know as yet. It may reach a point where the fine line of distinction between ballet and folk will be minute. Folk dancers will be required to do bar work and setting-up exercises. Recreationally, it will be a great loss to the people for whom folk dancing would have been of the greatest service and joy.

(Acknowledgement to Vyts Beliajus)

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#### AFFILIATED GROUPS

BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCE GROUP now meet every Thursday evening in the Church Hall of St. Mary Magdalen, Hazelwell, at 7 p.m. Secretary: Miss Christine Butler, 76 Headingley Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B21 9QD.

KENSINGTON SLAVONIC GROUP meet every Wednesday and Thursday evenings from 7 to 10 p.m. On Wednesday they meet at Fox School, Kensington Place, Notting Hill Gate, London W.8., and on Thursdays at Isaac Newton School, Lancaster Road, W.11. (50 yards from Ladbroke Grove Underground). They learn and perform dances from Czechoslovakia and are taught by Mrs. Hedda Jolly-Klingerova, 69b Grange Road, London W5 5BU. Everyone welcome.

HARROW GREEN FOLK DANCE GROUP. Details from George Sweetland, 28 Hayes Court, Camberwell New Road, London S.E.5.

GUILDFORD INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCERS meet on the first Thursday in each month from 8 to 10 p.m. at St. Nicolas Small Hall, Millnead Terrace, Guildford, Surrey. Secretary: John Driver, Kilndown, 11 Mary Vale, Godalming, Surrey. Tel: Godalming 6259 (Home), Wornley 2122 (Work). Any offers in the way of local musicians and/or M.C.s would be welcome.

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### FOLK MUSIC OF THE WORLD

At Morley College, 61 Westminster Bridge Road, S.E.1., a series of eleven classes on Folk Music of the World, are being held each Monday evening from 6.30 to 8.30 p.m., by Dr. John Weissmann, commencing 10th April. Unfortunately I did not know of this until after the April issue of the NEWS had been sent out, but one may still enrol for the course, although having missed the first two or three classes.

### A WALK IN THE COUNTRY

The proposed date for the next Walk is Sunday, 25th June 1972, and the area will be South-West. More details will be given in the next issue.

### FESTIVALS

DIJON, FRANCE. The International Festival will take place at Dijon and surrounding towns from 9th to 16th September 1972.

LLANGOLLEN, WALES. The International Eisteddfod will take place at Llangollen from 4th to 9th July 1972.

### AN EVENING OF ISRAELI RUBBISH

If anyone is thinking of going to see the Israeli State Dance Company who toured various towns in England during March, should they continue their tour, my advice would be the same as that Punch gave to those about to get married, "Don't"; that is, not if you hope to see anything resembling folk dancing. The music was modern, loud, with electric guitar, jazzband drum ensemble, and resembled nothing like folk music of Israel or any other country. The girls' costumes were short and 'stagey'; the dancing stereotyped and completely without feeling (except for one Debka-type men's dance); and as for the singing, this would have been better fitted for a trans-Atlantic cabaret act (and a very bad one at that) than a State Company said to be representing Israel. This Show had nothing to commend it and I apologize to those people I recommended it to. The last Israeli Group I saw over here was a very good folk group who visited London many years ago and I had hoped that this would come up to that standard.

LILLY SOUTHGATE

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UKRAINIAN DANCE COMPANY - "DUKLA"

I write this article with no particular knowledge of dances of this region but because I am hotfoot from enjoying the programme, and purely with great enthusiasm for a spectacular 2½ hours entertainment by this Company at the Royal Albert Hall on Sunday, 2nd April.

From the programme notes, I learned that the Ukrainian Dance Company are a minority group of Ukrainians living in the Eastern part of Czechoslovakia, from a place called Prescov. Although they have maintained their Ukrainian characteristics, their culture shows the influence of the Hungarians, Poles, Germans and Romanians who have at various times occupied their land.

When I first saw the stage in the Albert Hall, I felt it was a pity that the tiered section at the rear of the stage was bare, apart from the respective flags of England and Czechoslovakia, and I was wondering whether some flowers or plants could have been used to relieve the bleakness. However, once the programme started the Company gave me no further time to consider this. The musicians, who were on the stage throughout the performance, were most competent and resulted in one item flowing smoothly into another with no wasted time.

The first half of the concert included Kolomiki, Gopak, Cheryana, Podgala, Verbunk, Cossack Whirlwind and White Fantasy. Whilst I would not presume to assess or criticize the quality of the dancing, for me the Company, consisting of 24 dancers, showed great speed, precision, and skill. In the White Fantasy item, which was a slow dance for girls, heralding the coming of Spring, I was impressed with the most effective intricate patterns the dancers made with their ornamental wreaths. During the Podgala and Cossack Whirlwind, the male dancers vied with each other in showing off their dancing prowess with great dexterity.

The costumes were very colourful, varied, and always bandbox fresh. Subtle use was made of the national colours of red, white and blue. Occasionally some of the skirts I felt were too short, which marred their effectiveness. The balance between song and dance in the programme was for me just right. The quality of the singing was very high, particularly that of one girl soloist who was very much appreciated by the audience. The singing group consisted of a quartet of girls and three men. They sang a selection of Ukrainian folksongs and they too had several changes of costume. One particular Slovak folksong, a solo lullaby, contrasted sharply with the previous lively dancer-packed stage item and this had great impact on the audience.

After the interval the items included Krucena, Polka, Kkellen-Kkellen, Russian Dance and a Gopak as a finale. The large audience responded wildly and warmly to this, as they did to the whole show. The Company was persuaded to give us not one, but two, encores, before they were finally allowed to leave the stage.

SHIRLEY ROGERS

S. I. F. D. CLASSES

Fees:	For one class a week ... ..	£2.15
	For two classes a week .. ...	£2.40
	For three classes a week ...	£2.90
	For four or more classes a week	£3.40.

MONDAY at Christopher Hatton SchoolTutor

6.00 to 8.00	International Advanced	Margery Latham
7.00 to 8.00	Polish, Beginners	Betty Harvey
8.00 to 10.00	Polish, General	Betty Harvey

TUESDAY at Hugh Myddelton SchoolTutor

6.30 to 8.30	Yugoslav, Beginners & Intermediate	Ken Ward
8.30 to 9.30	Yugoslav, Advanced	Ken Ward

TUESDAY at Greenwich InstituteTutor

7.30 to 9.30	European National	Bert Price
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WEDNESDAY at St. Albans HallTutor

6.30 to 7.30	International, Beginners	Margery Latham
7.30 to 9.30	International, Intermediate	Margery Latham

WEDNESDAY at Pimlico SchoolTutor

7.45 to 9.45	Israeli	J. Barkan
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FRIDAY at Millbank SchoolTutor

6.30 to 9.30	Hungarian & Romanian	Alan McLean
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CHRISTOPHER HATTON SCHOOL, Laystall Street, Rosebery Avenue, E.C.1.

HUGH MYDDELTON SCHOOL, Corporation Row, Clerkenwell Green, E.C.1.

GREENWICH INSTITUTE, Charlton Manor School, Hornfair Road, S.E.7.

MILLBANK SCHOOL, Erasmus Street, (off Vauxhall Bridge Road), S.W.1.

PIMLICO SCHOOL, Lupus Street, Chelsea, S.W.1.

ST. ALBANS HALL, Baldwin Gardens, Grays Inn Road, W.C.1.

PROGRAMME FOR SOCIAL DANCES

		<u>Musicians</u>	<u>M.C.</u>
Sunday, 7th May	Cecil Sharp House	C.S.H. Band	Bert Price
21st May	Dance Centre	Wilf Horrocks & Cliff Beck	Roland Minton
4th June	Cecil Sharp House	C.S.H. Band	Margery Latham

Time: 7 to 10 p.m. Admision: Cecil Sharp House, 25p members, 35p non-members.  
Dance Centre, 20p members, 25p non-members.

Cecil Sharp House: No.2 Regents Park Road, N.W.1. (Nearest Underground: Camden Town)  
Dance Centre: 12 Floral Street, W.C.2. (Nearest Underground: Leicester Square)

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WHAT'S ON

- April 30th A GREEK EVENING. Folk songs and dances in national costume, and popular music with bouzoukia. 7.30 p.m. Royal Albert Hall. Tickets from 35p to £2.00.
- April 30th SAFARI. Meet Charing Cross (Embankment) at 10.30 a.m.
- May 5th/7th HALSWAY MANOR WEEKEND. A weekend of dancing and walking in Somerset. Cost £4.20, with reductions for children. Bookings, with £1 deposit, to Michael Clark, 14 Weldon Close, Church Crookham, Aldershot, Hents.
- \*\*May 13th CHILDREN'S DANCE. 2.30 p.m. at Millbank School, Erasmus Street, London S.W.1. Admission 10p including refreshments.
- June 16th/18th UPLANDS WEEKEND. A weekend of dancing and walking at this very comfortable country house near High Wycombe. Bookings to Prof. J. Richardson, University College of Swansea, Singleton Park, Swansea, Glam. Total cost of weekend £5.75.

\*\* Please note change of date.

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A demonstration of Israeli dancing will be given by the S.I.F.D. Israeli Class at the Cecil Sharp House Dance on 7th May.

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MATERIAL FOR PUBLICATION MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE EDITOR BY THE 15TH OF THE MONTH PRECEDING PUBLICATION.