

SIFD NEWS



JULY 1998

SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCING

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The typing is done by Lily Avery. The printing, packaging and printing
is done by Doug and Maureen Wells.

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This month's cover shows Erkan Serge, a professional solo dancer who combines traditional Turkish folk movements with modern cabaret-style belly dance. He is much admired by the population of his home town, Bodrum, but divides his time between teaching and performing in Turkey and Germany. His dance style varies between extremely masculine with martial arts elements (hence the swords) and sinuous almost feminine belly dance movements. "He moves every limb of his body like a snake", the locals praise him. The swords are wooden. The costume is bright orange, adorned with sequins and strings of beads. Following the modern costume style for Turkish dance performers, the costume has "cut-outs" at the sleeves, and strong assymetrical elements. This drawing by Deolinda Caldeira is inspired by a photograph by Hilary Thacker. Copyright Christine Hall, who sent it in.

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London SE5 0TQ. Tel: 0171 701 3785.

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MUSIC. Two more tunes from Wilf Horrocks on p.10. If you would like to have
the music for a particular dance, please let Wilf know, on 0181 642 3629.

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All material for the August issue of SIFD NEWS must reach the Editor
IN WRITING by 17th July. Please write in BLOCK CAPITALS all names
of people, places and dances, unless typewritten.

S.I.F.D. PERFORMANCES AT THE VICTORIA EMBANKMENT GARDENS, LONDON

The S.I.F.D. season at the above Gardens started early, when the Romanian group "Martisorul" took the stage on the afternoon of Saturday, 23rd May. It was a cold day, with quite a wind, and so the audience were mainly passers-by. "Martisorul" is taught by Mihai, a Romanian who is married to one of the dancers, and their programmes are always worth seeing. On this occasion there were three costume changes. During the intervals there was first a violinist who played tunes from Oltenia and the Hungarian/Transylvanian area, and in the next interval Sue and Leslie Haddon did a Hungarian dance. Thank you, everyone in "Martisorul" who braved a cold Spring afternoon.

On the following day, 24th May, "Balaton" (Hungary) and "Philhellenes" (Greece) groups danced on a somewhat warmer afternoon, so there were more people sitting watching. "Balaton" had four men and six girls. The men did a stick dance which involved throwing their sticks across the stage to each other. In the past there has been the odd embarrassing moment when a stick or two was dropped, but the team are pleased to report that this year every stick was firmly grasped at the right time.

The Greek dancers from "Philhellenes" group took turns with "Balaton" to perform but unfortunately I have not been able to make contact with them to give an account of their dances and costumes. Nevertheless, I thank both groups warmly for braving late Spring weather, and shall hope to be able to put a bit in August's NEWS about the "Philhellenes".

KAY KEDGE

S.I.F.D. SUNDAY DANCES at Cecil Sharp house, 2 Regent's Park Road, London N.W.1.

July 5th M.C.s: Jeanette Hull and Helen Ezra, in Trefusis (See below)

Sept.6th M.C.s: Joan and Simon Guest

7.00 to 10.00 p.m. Admission £4.00 for S.I.F.D. members, £5.00 for non-members.

Sunday Dance With a Difference!



The next Sunday dance at Cecil Sharp House will be **July 5th**, MC'ed by Jeanette Hull and Helen Ezra, just as advertised. But the difference is that they have kindly agreed to let it be part of the British Heart Foundation's **Dance to the Heart Beat** fund-raising campaign.

We must all know people with heart problems, and by raising money we can try to help them - and it's great to know that the BHF is encouraging people to dance in order to keep fit.

So I am hoping for your sympathy, and generosity, at the dance.

There will be a collecting box by the door for any contributions, and a raffle, with tempting prizes, and a cake to guess the weight of. And of course, wonderful dances - and as if all these weren't enough, there will be *balloons*.....

Please come.



Alison Scrimshaw

S.I.F.D. books and cassettes are available from Eleanor Gordon, 70 Chestnut Grove, New Malden, Surrey KT13 3TS, Tel: 0181 942 9834. Other S.I.F.D. goods are available from Claire Steeley, 34 Broadwater Avenue, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 3HF. Tel: 01462 686419. For details, please contact Eleanor and Claire respectively.

URI GERSON

It is with deep regret that we have to announce that Uri Gerson died on 29th May aged 60. Uri took over as leader of the Wycombe Group in 1980 and continued as leader until he died, although in the last few months deteriorating health forced him to take a less active role.

Uri was born in Israel and moved to this country in 1961 where later he graduated in mathematics at Bristol University. By the mid-70s he had moved to the High Wycombe area and taken up international folk dancing. Not surprisingly, Israeli and Balkan dancing became his speciality and, as with all the interests which he pursued, his natural ability combined with a natural sense of rhythm meant he soon became a very accomplished dancer and an excellent leader. For a while, as well as leading the Wycombe club, he involved himself in various aspects of the work of the S.I.F.D.

Uri was a man of many parts which, in addition to dancing, included mountaineering and rock climbing, canoeing, skiing, ice dancing and stamp collecting. For some of these activities he attained proficiency certificate levels. His aim for perfection marked all that he did; thus some five years ago when he taught himself to play the clarinet it was not long before he had reached a high enough standard to play in a small orchestra. His keen interest in wildlife and walking in the countryside was one which, in addition to dancing, he shared fully with Averil.

A lively intellect and an unwillingness to compromise his principles were hall-marks of Uri's character - second best was never good enough for him. He will be sorely missed by Wycombe Dance Group and by Averil and his family to whom we offer our sympathy and condolences.

ALISON WHISKER
Secretary, Wycombe International Folk-
dance Group

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All those who knew Uri Gerson are deeply saddened by his untimely death. The large attendance at the very moving service at Amersham, and the expressed regrets of those who could not be there, attest to his special place in the hearts of international folk dancers.

In the 1980s I had experienced the then thriving folkdance scene in California and was ready to make waves back in England. Uri was equally missionary in his need to provide a regular London venue for line and circle dance enthusiasts. Our own clubs in Barnet and High Wycombe were already well-established and both had a high proportion of Balkan dances in their repertoires.

Credit must go to Uri for organizing the first Dance at Cecil Sharp House with a predominately "line and circle" programme. With solid support from such like-minded friends as Fiona Howarth, Frances Horrocks and Dunav, it was not long before Balkanplus evolved. In later years, Uri chose to shun most dancing activities outside his own group but we were particularly pleased that he could join us in celebrating the tenth birthday of Balkanplus in 1996. The birth and success of Balkanplus was, in great part, due to Uri's evident passion for Balkan music and his special talent to dance and inspire.

A favourite Dowsett family memory is of boarding a 'bus in St. Peter Port in Guernsey to return to our hotel in quiet Fermain Bay, and meeting the mutually astonished gazes of Uri and Averil. They had made the same decision as we had to get away for a few days to a peaceful haven. The subsequent evening get-together was the highlight of our stay. Our thoughts are with Averil now as we mourn the loss of one of the most energetic folkdance leaders of our time.

BRIAN DOWSETT

Dear Lily

Following our Gujarati day course and party in Harrow on May 30th, I'm writing to thank those people from the SIFD who did attend (and I hope had a good time) and to let other people know what an enjoyable event it was. The figures are not finalised yet, but unfortunately it doesn't look as though we managed to raise very much money for Mind in Harrow. Nevertheless it was a very worthwhile day, with some of Mind's service users and volunteers taking part. One Indian lady, who until recently would not go out and meet people at all, came to the party and performed a classical dance solo that she remembered from her childhood.

The course was great fun and quite exhausting. Although the dances are simple, they are by no means easy and they tend to go on for a very long time. Both Raas and Garba have many different variations and the movements involve the arms and the whole body, not just the legs. Relaxation is important, which is often difficult for us Westerners, especially if we don't know what we are doing. Rohini Patel is an excellent teacher and a great enthusiast for the dancing. In fact she couldn't always understand why the older and less fit among us couldn't carry on indefinitely the way she could! The dances themselves are wonderful to do, once you get into the flow of them, and in traditional Gujarati culture they still have a spiritual dimension which has often been lost from European folk dance.

At the party we had the chance to join in the dancing with people who have been doing the dances all their lives. The Gujarati ladies dressed up splendidly for the occasion (as did Frances, in a beautiful sari) and there was plenty of colour, live music and an excellent home-cooked meal. The band was somewhat over-amplified and not as traditional as I would have liked it to be, but most people seemed to enjoy it. Towards the end those who hadn't learnt the dances could get up and have a go at the bhangra, which ended in a general free-for-all that had people dancing who wouldn't normally dream of doing so. Not for the purists, perhaps, but very much an Indian occasion.

I must say I was rather disappointed that so few SIFD members attended either the day course or the party. Those who did were obviously very keen, having come from as far away as Bath and Ipswich, but local members were pretty thin on the ground. I don't know if the date was inconvenient, or whether the Indian flavour didn't appeal to people, or whether members are just not very keen on doing something a bit different. If so, all I can say is you don't know what you're missing. Rohini Patel would be very willing to teach a day course for the SIFD, and she has a repertoire of other Gujarati folk dances as well as Raas and Garba – though there was certainly enough in those two dances for a whole day. So what about trying it, some of you Balkanophiles?

Thanks again to those who did attend. If anyone would like a tape of the music from the day course (price £4) please ring me on 0181 452 4174.

Best wishes



Susan Jordan

Befriending Scheme, Elmwood Clinic, Francis Road, Kenton, Harrow, Middx.

Dear Lily,

I have received leaflets about two events that may be of interest to members. As one is in French, the other in Italian, it seems best to extract a few basic facts to put in the News.

The French leaflet concerns the festival at Confolens from 9 to 15 August which, besides the public displays, also includes workshops. Correspondence and registration forms to Francoise Brun, 11 rue Ste Anne, 87000 LIMOGES. Enquiries to +33 5 45 84 16 63, +33 5 55 10 22 78 or +33 6 07 15 19 75.

The Italian leaflet concerns one of the "Estadanza" series, this one on Sardinian dances on 17 to 28 August. The place is Sòrgono, which is too small to appear in my atlas but is described in the leaflet as "paese montano del centro dell'isola". My Italian is rudimentary, but I note the comment in the leaflet that Sardinia is "per eccellenza la terra del ballo etnico", a sentiment which those of us who were at Anna Cidu's workshops at Swansea will agree with. Information and registration Choreola/Taranta, Via Alfani 51, 50121 FIRENZE, tel/fax +39 55 29 51 78 / +39 338 679 4866.

No enquiries to me, please!

Yours sincerely,



Richard G Mellish

15 Lancaster Road, North Harrow,
Middx. HA2 7NN

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Dear Lily,

It all started with an "ad" in the SIFD NEWS, and a few weeks later six of us from Pembrokeshire I.F.D. Group joined the S.I.F.D. West Midlands Branch for a memorable weekend of celebrations and superb tuition. Marina: six of the course dances were in our repertoire by the following Tuesday and we had a go at some of your "warm-up" and social dances too, though less successfully. The six are, however, now permanent. Thank you. Thanks too to Maggie Kaye for help with "Ivanitsa" and to Janet Woolbar and co. for "Tarantella Montevergine". Both these dances have now joined our repertoire. Thanks also to Frances and Alf Garton and to Grace and John Pittman for videos - so important for reinforcing my ageing memory. But it is the friendship, not just the dance, that means so much to us.

Largely as a result of the Midlands weekend, Vic and I (and Sally, our dog) visited Frances and Alf Garton in Exmouth at Easter time, then in May we joined Peggy and Roy (Oscar) Haycock for several walks and meals in Malvern. It was they who kindly drove us up to the "Heart of England" group meeting which we so enjoyed.

The next week we visited Sybil Chapman at her home in Droitwich and the following week we made a trip to Frith Folk near Buxton. Had it not been Bank Holiday we'd have shown up at Marina Wolstenholme's class in Hope too.

Our travels have come to an end, until York Summer School that is, but with any luck some of you will visit us in Pembrokeshire. The grapevine has confirmed that Cynthia and Roy Lewis will be sharing our table in June, which is great.

Thanks to you all for hospitality and friendship. Happy dancing.

SUE & VIC CLARK (and Sally)
22 Church Road, Roch, Haverford-
west, Pembrokeshire SA62 6BG

Dear Lily,

On the subject of performances, we had one with a slight difference the other day. I wonder if anyone has had the delightful experience of having to teach a dance to one's group in the midst of a performance?

Six of us had just shown some Balkan dances in the theatre and were then asked to perform Greek at another space in front of the Greek stand. I had just led off into the first dance, Kalamatianos, when I realised to my horror that Joe, my second man, though an expert in Romanian and Bulgarian, doesn't dance much Greek. "Not to worry", I whispered to Joe, "I'll talk you through it". And he rose to the occasion perfectly, danced about five of them to a high standard (they are simpler for the most part than Bulgarian, aren't they?), and I don't think anyone noticed a thing. They probably thought my instructions were strigaturi!

Over wine and strawberries after, Joe thanked us and said he'd often taught and been taught dances, but this was the first time he'd had a lesson in full costume before an audience. He enjoyed it all immensely and might even now dance Greek more often.

Yours sincerely,

DAVID ROBERTS
La Chaumille, 74380 Lucinges
France.

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BALKANPLUS, 11th July 1998, in Trefusis at Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Rd. London N.W.1, 7.00-10.30 p.m. £3.00. M.C.: Brian Dowsett with Dunav and special guests from Macedonia. (See Brian's article below).

This will be a wonderful opportunity to "meet the team" and absorb the style and dances in their original form. Judging by last year, this is a date not to be missed. There is no Balkanplus in August. Enjoy your holiday and come to the next Balkanplus on 12th September when the M.C.s will be Barbara and Malcolm Shaffer with Dunav.

FRANCES HORROCKS

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LONDON VISIT OF "ILINDEN" DANCE GROUP FROM BITOLA, MACEDONIA

I can confirm that, following their participation at Llangollen, this superb ensemble plan to appear informally at Balkanplus at Cecil Sharp House on the evening of Saturday, 11th July, in the company of Dunav Balkan Group who were their guests at the Bitola Festival last year. It is an opportunity for some "magical moments" during an evening that will include the customary Balkanplus range of dances from the Balkans and beyond. I am sure the group would like to meet members of the Zivko Firfov Group who also made a very successful visit to the Bitola Festival some years ago.

The following day, Sunday, 12th July, "Ilinden" will perform in the gardens of the Horniman Museum (London Road, London S.E.23) as part of the museum's summer activities. The performance is scheduled to start at 3.00 p.m. and is free.

People travelling specially to see the group may wish to contact me for confirmation of their presence, and for news of any other events that may be arranged at a late stage. My telephone number is 01992 582717 (daytime or evening).

BRIAN DOWSETT

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Aug.2nd/7th "MACHOL - EUROPA 1998". Israeli Folkdance Seminar at De Montford University, Bedford. Advanced and Intermediate. Full information from Israel Folkdance Institute, Balfour House, 741 High Road, London N12 0BQ. Tel: 0181 446 6427 (day), 0181 455 6765 (evening).

Aug.7th/9th RESIDENTIAL WEEKEND OF ORIENTAL DANCES with Christine Hall at The Old Rectory, Fittleworth, W.Sussex. Belly dancing, Egyptian Stick Dance (both Raks al Asaya and Tahteeb), drumming Egyptian dance rhythms. Approx. £125 including meals, accommodation, tuition. Enquiries: Christine Hall, Finchden, Sandhurst TN18 5JS.

Aug.10th/14th SUMMER SCHOOL at Pyke House, Battle, E.Sussex, with Christine Hall. Middle Eastern music & dance. Belly dance, Tunisian scarf dance, Zaar "trance" dance. Moroccan tray dance, Persian veil dance; outings, picnics, boat trip, Arabic banquet, performance evening with guest dancers. Suitable for Beginners to Professionals. Approx. £185, including tuition, accommodation, meals, excursions. Tel: 01424 772495.

Sept.13th FRANCES HORROCKS will teach a day of BALKAN DANCES at Stone Cross Memorial Hall, near Eastbourne (at junction of B2104 and B2247, map on request). 10.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Cost £6.00. Drinks provided; please bring your own packed lunch or vegetarian lunch to share. Phone Rowena Martin on 01323 503991 to reserve your place.

Oct.24th ROMANIAN COURSE WITH SILVIU CIUCIUMIS, 11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. at Kingsway College, Grays Inn Centre, London W.C.1. £10.00. Tickets available from members of Martisorul Dance Group or from the group c/o 10 Parkview House, Eastbury Road, Watford WD1 4PZ. Cheques payable to Martisorul Dance Group.

Oct.30th/Nov.1st WEEKEND RESIDENTIAL COURSE OF ARMENIAN DANCING with Tineke Van Geel at Dovedale, Peak District. Excellent location for walking/sightseeing for non-dancing friends. Comfortable single and twin-bedded rooms. Plentiful choice of food. Full board and accommodation £76.00, two half-days tuition £14.00, two full days £28.00. For details, send s.a.e. to Cathy Meunier, 115 Chetwynd Road, London NW5 1DA.

Nov.15th PONTIC DANCE WORKSHOP WITH LIVE MUSIC at the Hellenic Centre. Book the date; it will be super. More details next month. Don't miss it; it promises to be better even than last time! DIKI GLEESON

Dec.5th ZIVKO FIRFOV GROUP'S CHRISTMAS PARTY.

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RESIDENTIAL COURSE OF ROMANIAN DANCING WITH SILVIU CIUCIUMIS, 16TH-19TH APRIL 1999

Silviu will be back to delight us with some more Romanian dances from his extensive repertoire, in April 1999. The venue will be Newfield Hall, Malhamdale, which has a heated indoor swimming pool and all rooms are en-suite. Dancers can choose between half or full days tuition.

Malhamdale is an excellent centre from which to go walking or sightseeing in the Yorkshire Dales. Non-dancing family and friends are welcome too. Full board for two or three nights is provided, a plentiful choice of food, and all the facilities of the house and grounds are available to residents.

For details and a booking form, send s.a.e. to me at 115 Chetwynd Road, London NW5 1DA.

CATHY MEUNIER

STAMBOLOVO WEDDING BAND FESTIVAL, 18TH-20TH SEPTEMBER 1998

British-Bulgarian Friendship Society are arranging a visit to the above Festival, departing London 16th September, returning from Sofia, 23rd September. Flights, transport and accommodation at a reasonable price. Contact Annie Kay at the British-Bulgarian Friendship Society, Finsbury Library Basement, 245 St. John Street, London EC1V 4NB. Tel: 0171 727 2916.

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NUTBROOK I.F.D.G. will be holding the following two Day Courses:-

ROMANIAN & JAPANESE, 7th November 1998

10.30-12.30 Romanian, taught by Celia Stone
1.30-4.00 Japanese, taught by Marina Wolstenholme

HISTORICAL EUROPEAN DANCE, 20th March 1998

10.00-4.00 Dances of the late Renaissance period to include dances from English, French and Italian sources, such as would have been danced in the courts of Europe during the late 16th and early 17th centuries. To be taught by Ann and Paul Kent.

Both courses to be held at Stevenson Junior School, Wadsworth Road, Stapleford.

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"BULGARIAN FOLK CUSTOMS", a book by Mercia MacDermott due to be published this summer or early autumn. 240 pages ISBN 1 85302 486 4, paper-back £14.95, or ISBN 1 85302 485 6 hard-back £45.00.

Mercia MacDermott has a longstanding association with Bulgaria. She was Chairman of the Society for Friendship with Bulgaria from 1957 to 1973 and spent many years teaching in Bulgaria and was a guest lecturer at Sofia University. She is author of "A History of Bulgaria 1393-1885" and of three biographies of Bulgarian national figures. (Ed. note: Older S.I.F.D. members may also remember Mercia as one of the dancers in Danny Lumley's Bulgarian group).

The book provides a wealth of information previously unobtainable in English, or in one volume, exploring the history and continuity of Bulgarian traditions, beliefs and lifestyles, the development and preservation of folk customs. Part One gives an introductory overview of Bulgarian history and looks at the background to traditional Bulgarian society, costumes, music and dance. Parts Two and Three detail the various festivals and customs that are related to almost every aspect of Bulgarian life.

The book will be obtainable from general bookshops (possibly on order) or, in the case of difficulty, you could approach the publishers: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 116 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JB. Tel: 0171 833 2307.

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BALKAN DANCE MUSIC BOOK

Due to popular demand both in the U.K. and the U.S.A., we now have available a second batch of music books. These are still at the same price of £8.50 which includes postage and packing. Orders to 10 Parkview House, Eastbury Road, Watford WD1 4PZ. Cheques to be made payable to Mrs. E.S.Mellish.

LIZ MELLISH