

SIFD

NEWS

SEPT.

2002



MENIDI, GREECE

SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCING

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The typing is done by Lily Avery. The printing, packaging and posting
is done by Dalila Heath.

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This month's cover showing a Greek costume from Menidi was drawn by
Caroline Thomas.

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S.I.F.D. DAY COURSE - ARMENIAN

The S.I.F.D. day course in September will be organized in conjunction with
the Armenian Institute. The tutor will be Shakeh Avanesian.

Date: 14th September 2002.

Place: Cecil Sharp House

Time: 10.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

Cost: £7.00 S.I.F.D. members
£9.00 non-members

N.B. ADMISSION WILL BE BY TICKET ONLY, and there are only 25 places reserved
for S.I.F.D. For tickets, please apply to:- Sr. Pam Radford, St.Saviour's
Priory, 18 Queensbridge Road, London E2 8NS. Please make cheques payable to
S.I.F.D. quoting your S.I.F.D. membership number. Please enclose s.a.e.

JANET WOOLBAR

An Ex-Publicity Officer

Most members will know by now that I am no longer the Publicity Officer for the Society.

While I am not happy about the necessity for such a step, I felt this was the only possible solution in the circumstances. The world, and the Society with it, have changed much in recent years and our management has also had to change with it and this has led to irreconcilable differences with regard to fundamental attitudes to our publicity, both its aims and forms and it has not been possible to reach agreement on certain projects, such as a new publicity leaflet and more recently, a proposed 'car sticker'. I have no doubt that the difficulties could have arisen from a somewhat heavy handed approach on my part, but it seems to me the only way to resolve this impasse is for me to step down so that the Committee can appoint someone whose views are more in line with their own and the Society publicity can proceed more smoothly.

I would like to thank everyone who have helped me in various ways in the past, by distributing literature, by taking photographs of folk dance events and donating them to us for publicity purposes, and so on. The pictures, and other material gathered over the last thirty-five years or so will be passed on to my successor.

For the moment, as the new DWTW Group List for 2002/03 is already in its early stages, unless a new P.O is appointed very soon, I will continue with the checking and arrangements for printing it.

George Sweetland

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VENTZI SOTIROV'S U.K. VISIT - TWO FURTHER WORKSHOPS IN OXFORD

While Ventzi Sotirov is in the U.K. for his Northleach weekend workshop on 28th/29th September, he will also give two further evening workshops at St.Margaret's Institute Hall, Polstead Road, Oxford, as follows:-

Thursday, 26th September 2002	8.00-10.00 p.m.	£5.00
Tuesday, 1st October 2002	7.30-10.00 p.m.	£5.00

For further details, please contact me on 01451 860289.

STEPHIE CLARK

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"LES PANARDS DANSANTS" present a Festival of Breton and French Traditional Music and Dance at Westfield Lodge, Upper Marsh, Oxenhope, W.Yorks., 11th-13th October 2002, with "Médjan", "Loerou Ruz", "Tro Breizh" and "Gars du Nord".

Friday, from 8.00 p.m., a Bal with Gars du Nord; Saturday, 9.45 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. workshops in French and Breton dances, musical instruments and singing, followed by a Fest-Noz from 8.00 p.m.; Sunday, 11.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., dance, music and singing workshops, followed by a Mini Bal/FestDeiz from 2.00 p.m. Weekend tickets or individual session tickets available.

For more information or booking forms or information regarding accommodation, contact Yannick Minvielle-Debat on 01274 833473.

Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod - 2002

On our way to North Wales the weather was atrocious, with a more or less continuous rain until we reached Whitchurch where it began to brighten up and from then on the only rain we saw was a heavy, but short shower until we were leaving on the Friday.

The visit this year was marred by a tragic incident at Tower Farm, where we and many other SIFD people usually stay. The elderly and helpful owner of the site, Mrs. Davis, and an equally elderly friend were brutally murdered some weeks before so that we had to find alternative accommodation and luckily found a B&B in Llantisillio a few miles to the West, but the campers including Jill Bransby, heard of a site a bit nearer to the field.

The costly solo prize has been dropped from the Eisteddfod this year, although the additional prizes for the different sections of folk song have been retained. As in the past the Folk Instrumental Competition preliminaries were held on the Wednesday morning, but this time in a church on the Abbey Road and the standard was as high as ever.

The first group to appear were a duval and zurna duo from the London Kurds with a single piece which was quite short. They were excellent but they really need the dancers to play for to give a real lift to the item. Next, a Bulgarian sextet including a kaval (pipe), a duval (drum), gadulka (short fiddle), a folk double bass, and a clarinet which was probably a last minute substitute player. Their two pieces were very exciting, the rhythms inviting you to dance, and they would perhaps have been placed except for the use of the modern instrument. A Lithuanian sextet, 'Lignette', followed and comprised two krankles (small cimbaloms), a scrabalai (vertical xylophone), a button accordion and so many different kinds of pipes it was impossible to count them and they made an absolutely beautiful sound. The Northern Irish group, 'Fiddlers Galore' produced a hard, driving rhythm which, had it not been part of the Competition would have had every foot tapping, but their second piece opened in a quiet, melodic mood. Then an Italian sound from the Sicilian group, I Saraceni with a piano accordion, guitar, jaws harp, pipe and tambourine and unsurprisingly they first played a tarantella, but the second piece started on a slow, plaintive note but soon became a fast and furious tempo. The first of the Ukrainian groups, 'Play' with two fiddles, button accordion, flute and drum, gave only one short item from the mountain region. The second group was a trio, 'Metalyk', based in the U.K. A cimbalom, fiddle and piano accordion gave a very impressive performance, and I am surprised that they have never been accorded a place on stage.

Before the Dance Competition the adjudicators gave their judgement on the final three entrants for the above competition but I was astonished at the winner, as it was a twelve year old boy from Hong Kong who had not appeared in the preliminaries. He was undoubtedly a virtuoso on his chosen instrument, a long necked fiddle, (an erhu perhaps), and his playing had a maturity beyond his years. In second place were the Ukrainians, 'Play' and the Sicilians in third place.

Adult Folk Dance Groups Competition

From the original twenty entrants there were four withdrawals.

Ukraine, 'Play', Carpathian Mountains

A mixed age group, with the girls in easily recognisable Ukrainian costume, but the men's were those of the highland region with light red trousers and soft shoes. The first dance was centred round the men's dexterity with their long handled axes with the women looking admiringly on. The style of the next was different with an odd sort of 'penguin' walk with slow and tuneful music. (80 marks)

Turkey, Istanbul.

This college group danced Karsulama and Galug in costumes from the Black Sea region, the men in black with silver ornaments and black boots. The girls were all in shocking pink with striped aprons and floral patterned 'bloomers', white socks and character shoes making them look like 'twenties flappers. The two dances were performed in the context of a wedding ceremony, to the accompaniment of a zurna and duval. The first, a couple dance in a circle with different movements for men and women and the second, an energetic dance for four men, with the sharper style and shoulder shakes peculiar to the region, were framed by the bridesmaids preparing the bride on one side with the groom being ritually shaved on the other.

Perhaps not to the adjudicators liking, but an interesting item. (90)

Bulgaria, 'Chavdar', Rhodope region.

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The men gave a spirited opening of a suite of dances from Srednogorska, West Thrace, later joined by the women in their lovely costumes, cream and red, with tasseled aprons, patterned socks and very elaborate head-dresses. This was followed by Po Gergiovdan, another suite of dances in honour of St. George. Both items were excitingly staged and perfectly danced and were enhanced by the singing and fine music. But perhaps they were a little too perfect and lacked individuality (83)

Sicily, I Saraceni, Ravanusa.

A small group of five couples danced first Ballo Miditerraneo, an invocation to Spring, and then Ballo Saraceno which commemorated the conflict between the native Sicilians and the Saracens before living together peacefully. I must say both seemed equally happy and boisterous. Well performed, with a real folk feel. (81)

Ukraine, Zhaivir, Khmelnitsky

Tchoomaky was for men only and depicted a party of ox-cart drivers relaxing by playing various musical instruments and dancing and singing to entertain themselves. The Cossack dance was chiefly for men, and as always, featured athletic jumps, leaps, and so on, then the girls joined to celebrate their safe return. A pleasant item, this time in the more usual Ukrainian costumes but with so much choreography that is reminiscent of the Soviet era. (85).

England, Adlington Dancers, Cheshire.

Five couples in authentic late Medieval styles danced Sellenger's Round very nicely and the good group of musicians played while a change was made into the well made Regency costumes for The Adieu. They conveyed very well the change in styles, but I felt the adjudication was wrong to emphasise the class differences as Playford and similar collections of dances have long been seen to be part of the English tradition. However, I did think, as with so many English dancers, on the whole they were expressionless and needed to look as if they were enjoying themselves. (84)

India, Heritage Dancers, Patiala

Dancers from this organisation have appeared at Llangollen before, but this year the dances were for women only. Ten attractive girls in vari-coloured dresses and elaborate yellow veils performed Jhoomar, a celebration of Spring and then, now in black dresses with an abundance of silver ornament in contrast gave us Jogia Dhamaal, asking for the blessing of the Snake Goddess, who then joined in the dance. The music for both were of the highest order and one began to feel part of the ritual. 1st. (94)

Kurdish Dancers, London.

This well established group presented two items, (not named in the programme); one, based round a fire, (in a box - very small !) in which the young men of the village demonstrated their bravery by their closeness to it. This merged into a harvest dance, the women miming sowing and bringing jugs of water to the men who were 'reaping' the corn. A commendable performance with good music. (90)

Estonia, Solvedaja, Tallinn.

Entering to the sound of a bagpipe, this young group showed first an old courting dance from one of the islands which opened with the girls removing the men's hats, dancing with them and returning them to their owners, presumably a sign of approval. Their second dance was Kaera-Jaan which apparently translates into John Barleycorn. Both items were pleasant but not exciting, nor was there sufficient contrast between the two. (81)

Bosnia-Hercegovina, Drvar

From Drvar, close to the Adriatic coast, this group performed one of the many examples of the 'silent kolo'. This one, Unascko Kolo, having similarities to 'Lindo'. Both are for four couples and the sound of shuffling and stamping feet is hypnotic, the movements changing as the leader calls. The costumes were lovely, all a hundred or so years old, but the dance lacked something, a kind of edge. The second item was a suite from Vranje, danced by three girls and three men. Both their costumes and style of dance showed clearly the gypsy and Turkish influences in the region. As an aside, in the evening concert this group gave an extended version of the Vranje suite which included our old friend, Vranjanka and their other item was a Serbian suite which also had many of our favourites. (80).

Switzerland, Arc-en-Ciel, Evolene.

A Carnival was the setting for the first item. The women, in long blue dresses, with red checkered aprons and little round hats, danced in the street until frightened off by the men in animal skins and carrying cow bells, after which

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the women returned with another simple dance but without music. Next, a tarantella, for all the girls and men who wore sombre brown suits. This was more conventional, but heavily choreographed, and certainly lacked the Italian spirit. (82)

Lithuania, Seltinis, Sianlial.

Both items were social dances, Po Dvi Greta and Anes Polka. The first for six couples featured clapping, arming and other simple movements. This was followed by a sort of musical chairs, or rather, barrels, with the last couple embracing as they won. Lithuanian costumes are charming, the girls wearing 'tarunas' or crowns which denoted their seniority and aprons which had to be stitched by the wearers. (82)

Northern Ireland, Loughgiel Dancers, Co. Antrim.

Both Cross Reel and Middleton Jig have been seen before at Llangollen. The group's ability to dance skilfully is not questioned but space forbids further notes. 2nd. (92).

Romania, Isvorasul, Cluj Napoca

This group, who, I understand were appearing in London later in the week, demonstrated Joc de Staeg, danced by the young unmarried men of the village in the house of the new bride. In Transylvanian costume with coloured tasseled jackets, their movements owed much to Hungarian military dances, but they had a loose-limbed style all of their own. Dansul Miresei is also a wedding dance, again largely for men but the girls in their white shifts, pink and blue aprons and straw hats were allowed in for a few moments. The groom also wore a straw hat, Stetson style, and the bride a head scarf. Both items were accompanied by a six man orchestra. (82).

Brittany, Kanbreizh.

These dancers, based in Paris I believe, wore Breton costumes of the early 20th century, (precise location not known). The two dances, the one from East Brittany not named, was a foursome, slow and very controlled. This was followed by Dans Keff, a dance in two parts, an open circle changing to a parade figure in couples. Both dances are completely traditional but because folk dances are meant to be danced not watched, they did seem rather long. 3rd. (91).

The adjudication given by Anca Giurchescu, was too detailed to include here, but she noted the need for more variation in costume, i.e., they are not uniforms, and that the dancers should react to one another, not be so expressionless. And, of course, there is the perennial problem of suites of dances. The marks were given by Frances Feybli.

Other Results

Children's Folk Dance Groups: Turkey 94, Wales 90, India, Heritage 88
Folk Song Solo, 15+ : China (Hong Kong), Ukraine, Wales.
Folk Song Groups : South Africa 176, Ukraine 175, Slovenia 173.

As a coda to all this I have to thank Opus television of Cardiff. On Thursday I went to the Sales Desk to buy a video of the Competition, only to hear they were no longer producing them, which was a disaster as I have grown to rely on it for costume details and so on. However, being somewhat obstinate, I followed it up, via the Sales Assistant and Eisteddfod officials to the Opus editing suite where I told the Editor of my problem. He gave me his card and suggested I should write to the Company HQ in Cardiff. To cut the story short, on the following Friday I received a copy of the master tape in the post. So, thank you very much Mr. Williams for your help and I am immensely grateful.

George Sweetland

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I am grateful to George for his detailed annual report as I feel this is one festival that aims to keep alive the traditional folk dances of the different countries, done in an authentic manner, with authentic costumes and musical instruments, and it deserves our support. Choreography, staginess and un-traditional music get no marks; a well-defined standard of authenticity is required. We do not always agree with the placing and marking by the adjudicators but we do acknowledge their dedication to preserving unadulterated folk dance and music. LILY AVERY

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Lily,

Referring back to Tony Latham's music and notes in the July issue of SIFD NEWS, I should like to remind those of you who still have a copy of the original S.I.F.D. Polish tape that Powolniak is played slowly on that. This was as a result of Zbigniew Strzalkowski's teaching of that dance when he came to London, and also later to the S.I.F.D. Summer School at Swansea in the early '70s. I agree with Tony that this seems to be played as a fast dance elsewhere but I still wonder why it was named Powolniak (slow) in the first place.

Following on to Richard Mellish's letter in the August issue, and thinking about when Polskor may have originated in Sweden, I would imagine at various times, and perhaps as early as the late 16th, early 17th, centuries. Huge struggles for power were going on at that time in Poland and then, when open elections for the throne were declared, it meant that various foreigners, including Swedes, either bid for it or held it for short periods. Likewise, a number of Polish princes from previous dynasties tried for the Swedish throne - quite a mix-up! Both countries were quite strong at the time and were struggling for domination of the Baltic states. Perhaps amongst all these exchanges the Swedes may have taken a fancy to some of the lively Polish dance steps!

BETTY HARVEY
30 Regent Square
London E3 3HQ

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"LUCNICA"

On Saturday, 22nd June, we went to the Linbury Studio, Royal Opera House, and we had a spectacular evening of entertainment. The music was delightful and we cannot equal Patricia Howard's words of praise (August SIFD NEWS). The only addition we could offer is that the design and colour of the costumes added to their splendid performance. With a packed audience, we hope their appearance will encourage them to come again to London and we will try to attend, with pleasure.

MARGARET & ALAN MORTON

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WINTER TOUR TO MACEDONIA, 24.12.02 TO 4.01.03

Martin Ihns and Ankie Bijl are organising a trip to Macedonia this Christmas. The itinerary includes:-

- Dance lessons with local dancers and live music.
- Special Christmas dinner.
- New Year celebration with live music and dancing.
- Excursions to Bitola, Skopje and Matka.

Accommodation is in hotels based on two people per room with bath/shower and toilet. Staying five nights in Bitola (full board) and six in Skopje (half board). Price includes flights from Amsterdam and will be approximately 925-985 Euros, depending on numbers. For further information contact Martin Ihns, Tel: 00 31 299 475071 or Ankie Bijl, Tel: 00 31 20 6957543.

JILL WATERS

TATRY



Not many people realise that the Poles are one of the largest ethnic minorities in Britain — more than half a million of them. For many years Poles were not allowed to express their culture at home and so they became accustomed to do so in their many host countries. Nowadays every major city has at least one Polish dance group and every two years they gather together for a festival. The next one is in February 2003 in Croydon. Each group specialises to some extent — Poland has a huge number of regions each with its own styles of dance and costume. *TATRY* had its initial inspiration in the highland peoples of the Tatra mountains and their energetic dances, but since its foundation in 1962 it has branched out to perform the dances of most Polish regions. The dance in the picture is a fast circle dance for men only. They wear broad studded leather belts and embroidered trousers in the form of the pattern on the top left. Many other dances from this region use long mountain axes (*ciupagi*) which can get quite dangerous!



Most dances from other regions are definitely for men and women together and can vary from the very stately *Polonez* which is really a court dance to lots of wild whirling and leaping. Bottom left is a typical bit of an *oberek* which with variations is danced over most of Poland. Particular fun is the *Kujawiak* which is the oldest of Polish dances and is rather slow and, to descend into technicalities ...smoochy.

TATRY is really quite insistent on getting it authentic. For many years Polish dancing was influenced by the great state dance groups like Mazowsze who danced brilliantly but whose choreography got rather theatrical and stylised. Many of our members have made the pilgrimage to Lublin and its famous summer school to learn how the dances were actually done in the villages rather than on the stage. We have been pleased to be praised for authenticity in our choreography by some very down to earth experts, though the real praise should go to our choreographer, Renata Urbaniak. We are very much a performing group and the last year's shows have taken us to many places. In fact, in the last year we have met Vera Lynn and the Queen!



Oberek

Although we are an amateur group, we do have to charge for performances. The cost of importing authentic costumes from Poland is astronomical. Some sets cost £1 000 per dancer. We are based at the Polish Cultural Centre (POSK) in Hammersmith in London where we have lessons most term-time Fridays. We are preparing a major show at POSK on 2 November to celebrate our 40th anniversary.

Why not look at our website and find out more about us. Next month, I will tell you what happened in those forty years.

Edek Truscoe

edek@tatry.org.uk

www.tatry.org.uk

Ed. Note: See "Dates for your Diary" on p.9 for information regarding the show to celebrate the 40th anniversary of "Tatry" on 2nd November.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Oct.1st WORKSHOP WITH VENTZI SOTIROV. See p.3.

Oct.11th/13th FESTIVAL OF BRETON & FRENCH MUSIC AND DANCE. See p.3.

Oct.12th BALKANPLUS.

Oct.12th/13th TURKISH WEEKEND WORKSHOP with Ersin Seyhan in Bognor Regis. £32. Optional meal on Saturday evening £10. Further details from Janet Douglas, 92 Rose Green Road, Bognor Regis PO21 3EQ. Tel: 01243 265010.

S.I. Oct.19th FRITH FOLK DAY COURSE. We are pleased to welcome Marina Wolstenholme as our tutor, with the theme "Mainly Israeli". At Town End Methodist Church, Chapel en le Frith, near Buxton, 10.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Cost not more than £6, depending on numbers. Contact Pat Phillips on 01298 24450 for details.

Oct.25th/27th ROMANIAN DANCE COURSE with Silviu Ciuciumis at Malhamdale. Choice of General or Advanced courses, or both courses, and social dancing in the evenings. Non-dancing friends and family welcome. Excellent location for walking and sight-seeing. Full board and accommodation £93.00 and each course £15.00. For full details and booking form, send s.a.e. to Cathy Meunier, 115 Chetwynd Road, London NW5 1DA.

S.I. Oct.26th TRADITIONAL DANCES FROM THE ARMENIAN HOMELAND with Shakeh Avanesian. 11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. at Bishop's Cleeve Tithe Barn, nr.Cheltenham. For details and bookings contact Chris Lee, The Studio, The Manor, Upper Slaughter, Cheltenham GL54 2JG. Tel: 01451 821487. No price given.

Nov.2nd TATRY 40TH ANNIVERSARY at POSK, 238-246 King Street, Ravenscourt Park, London W6. 6.00 p.m. A performance by Tetry and guest Polish groups. Tickets £10.00 from Tony Latham, Flat 9, 118 Avenue Road, London W3 8QG. Tel: 020 8992 9445, or from Edek Truscoe, Tel: 01293 410191. Also at POSK an exhibition of Tetry photographs and memorabilia, 27th October to 8th November. (See also p.8).

Nov.9th HALF-DAY WORKSHOP and SOCIAL BALKAN DANCE. Workshop with Frank Dowling 2.30-5.00 p.m. Social Dance (joint M.C.s) 6.00-9.30 p.m. At Moor Allerton Memorial Institute, Stonegate Road, Leeds. More details to follow next month, or contact Clyde Olliver on 01229 889 362. No price given.

Dec.7th ZIVKO FIRFOV FOLKLORE GROUP CHRISTMAS PARTY at Moorfields Primary School, London.

Dec.7th S.I.F.D. WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH CHRISTMAS PARTY, 7.30-10.30 p.m. M.C.: Maggie Kaye. £2.00. Bring-and-share supper. At Solihull Methodist Church Hall, Blossomfield Road (B4102), Solihull (corner of Station Approach).

S.I. Dec.13th/15th S.I.F.D. DANCING/WALKING WEEKEND at Dunford, Midhurst, West Sussex. Includes dancing, walks, carols, Christmas fare. All rooms en-suite (singles, doubles and twins). About £113.00 depending on numbers. For further details and bookings, contact Jack Richardson, Chemical Engineering Dept., University, Swansea SA2 8PP. Tel: 01792 295194 (work), 403153 (home).

Dec.31st S.I.F.D. WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY, 8.00 p.m. - 2003. At Downing Hall, Knowle. M.C.: Grace Pittman. £2.00. Bring-and-share supper.

S.I. Mar.15th/16th RUSSIAN FOLKDANCE COURSE with Hennie Konings at Chorlton, Manchester, and Calver, Derbyshire. Further information from Julie Korth, Holly Cottage, off Wigan Road, Aspull, Nr.Wigan WN2 1EF. Tel: 01942 831141.

Quite a few years ago, the late Uri Gerson sent me his "Notes for Intending Club Leaders". and as they cover a lot of useful points that could be of interest to anyone running a group, I thought I would repeat them. LILY AVERY, Ed.

The successful club leader must be a person of many parts. Yes, one must be a reasonable dancer and a reasonable teacher (which in itself involves several different skills). Other attributes, however, are just as important. The following notes are of course personal and for the sake of completeness I have tried to include every aspect. If some of the following appears obvious to you - good!

Having a well-defined philosophy is, to me anyway, the most important equipment. Clearly, success depends on first knowing what you are trying to achieve. The question is, what philosophy?, and following from it is another question, how to translate a theoretical "guide line" into a set of practical rules for the day to day running of a club? My answer to the first question is: the club leader is an entertainer; his primary job is to make people enjoy themselves. In this context folk dancing is simply the medium chosen and is of secondary importance as far as being a club leader is concerned. If people enjoy themselves they will continue to come, so, even if folk dancing is the most important thing to you, you must first be a successful "entertainer".

The trouble is that people come in all shapes and sizes; able or left-footed, frequent attenders, keen, slack, casual, fit, unfit, talkative, quiet, with good or bad memory. On top of that there always are (or should be) new people who are here for the first time; how to entertain them without boring the established members? Clearly, it is not possible to please everybody all the time, and the leader must make a conscious choice.

My choice was to aim at the frequent attenders, at people with a modicum of ability, and people who are keen and don't mind working at their hobby. All choices were to a certain extent selfish. I like dancing with people who dance well, so right at the outset I was determined to create a club with the highest possible standard, given the available material. Leading a club involves a lot of work, so naturally I concentrate on people who give me a good return for my efforts. I also believe that effort enhances our enjoyment of whatever activity; naturally I cultivate people with the same outlook.

Where does it leave the beginners, i.e. the new people who keep appearing? In the first place, it is unwise to "drop everything" when a new person appears; they might not stay, and the effort is wasted. Also, the new people expect to have to sit out some of the time. I certainly did when I started, and still do when visiting other clubs. If the club is happy and active, dancing good and music quality high, new people will enjoy watching, listening and absorbing the atmosphere so they will have plenty to do. Conversely, the club acts as a shop window for prospective members. My strategy for absorbing new people, as far as the evening is concerned, is more or less to ignore them. That does not mean that I won't talk to them; we make a point of welcoming visitors. What it means is that I will not change an evening's programme just because a new face has appeared. New people are of course encouraged to join in the simpler dances and are told that if they stay they will learn a new dance every week and will be absorbed gradually.

I come to the second question. How to translate my theory into practice? Here is the recipe I have been following:-

1. Organisation. The evening is divided into four parts:

- a) General dancing 30 mins. approx
- b) Teaching session 45 mins. approx
- c) Break 15 mins. approx
- d) General dancing 60 mins. approx

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The reason for a) is that people don't arrive on time. Generally speaking, no tuition during a) and d) and I always start with 4 to 6 circle dances, usually slow ones. About 3 to 4 dances are taught each evening, only one of which is completely new - the others have been taught the previous weeks. A new dance will be taught 3 to 4 consecutive weeks, thus allowing for people who are either slow learners or not regular attenders. If you are both slow and irregular - forget it! I try to make the teaching short, accepting that nobody is going to become perfect after 5 minutes, but I shall have other opportunities for corrections. I certainly do not believe in spending half the evening practising a particular step to get it "just right". It bores most people; some of them will never get it right so why waste their time; and what guarantee that my style is "spot on"? My motto is "a little and often".

After the interval - continuous dancing (d). As you see, the evening is heavily weighted towards the established members (90 minutes without tuition, 45 minutes with). However, new members are considered in the long term teaching programme and old dances are taught again from time to time.

2. Quality of Music. This is most important, and I am constantly trying to improve it. Dances for which I have only poor recording have been excluded, even if they are potentially enjoyable. Use poor music and you are doomed before you start.

3. Preparation. Everything should be done to make the evening smooth and flowing; no looking at instructions in the middle of the evening! I always have my tapes spooled to the right place (no records - they are precious) and for special events I record the whole programme on tape. The list of dances to be done (in large letters) is posted on a convenient wall. Result - I have less to do during the evening and can enjoy the dancing myself. It is worth pointing out that it is easy to lose people's attention and difficult to gain once lost. A leader should not allow a vacuum to develop.

Another aspect of preparation is the mental one; from morning I am aware that in the evening I shall be leading a dance and other people's enjoyment will depend on me, so I try getting into the right frame of mind - avoid haste and argument and even drive more slowly and considerately!

Preparation means efficiency and hence an active club. Not only is the evening more enjoyable but there is a bonus; on average we dance 35 dances per evening so we get plenty of practice on all our dances and the standard is improving all the time.

4. Choice of Dances. This is, of course, the prerogative of the leader; teach what you like and enjoy and your enjoyment will be transmitted. When you stop enjoying what you teach, it is time to retire. From time to time you will have to teach dances you don't like so much - make the best of it. There is nothing worse than "I don't like this dance but I suppose we had better do it because it's been requested". I like to mix the dances; fast and slow, easy and difficult, set dances, progressive etc. I don't like dances with many figures; their teaching is time-consuming, they are easy to forget and, quite often, once you have learnt them they are not exciting to dance. I prefer dances which can be described or shown easily but hard to do rather than those which take half an hour to explain and, once understood, can be done easily. In the last category are English and Scandinavian dances.

Personally, I prefer line and circle dances from the Balkans and Israel. I like the music and steps but circle dances have many other features to be considered. They are communal in the true meaning of the word; anybody can join in; ladies don't have to wait to be asked (not that they should anyway!); they are easier to teach because they tend to have fewer figures, and also people don't talk to each other as much as they do when in couples. Also, the teacher can demonstrate

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the steps more easily and continue to do so during the dance by dancing in the middle.

5. Accuracy. As a leader, one should try to be as accurate as possible when describing a dance. At the same time, one should realise one's limitations. No two people are the same and the same dance learnt from different teachers can be quite different. Style is more important than steps - and much more difficult to acquire. I don't think you should wait until you are perfect - you'll never do anything! Nor should people below a certain standard be encouraged to teach. But how do you tell a good friend that really they are not good enough? Difficult! However good or bad you are, you will always receive help and advice. Treat such help kindly; it is well meant and almost always useful. Comments should be stored in memory for later analysis as they might mean more than was said. Too much advice can mean (a) the leader is not decisive enough, (b) you have not done your homework, (c) someone is after your job. Some people have to be discouraged from giving too much advice, others will never say anything unless asked but their opinion is probably worth more!

6. Conduct of the Evening. It has already been said that an evening should run smoothly and that I believe in dancing as many dances as possible. It has also been stated that the leader should be in charge and not allow a vacuum to develop. However, a leader is not a dictator and members should have freedom of choice, e.g. to sit out even if we need just one person to complete a set. By all means ask (but ask the room in general; avoid looking at one person!) if somebody would like to step up. If nobody does, too bad. Trying to force people to dance when they do not wish to can be very annoying at the receiving end.

Whatever the club, you will find some members who are either able or willing (sometimes both) to teach a dance. Cultivate them! Variety is good for the club and good for the leader. If nothing else, it means that at least one other member knows one dance perfectly!

7. Finish of the Evening. I recommend a dance that everybody knows and likes. I even have a tape of such dances - the so-called "signatures". They are all slow circle dances.

8. Review. When coming home I enter the evening's dances in a book. This is an opportunity for review, deciding what needs revision (and making a note of it!) etc. It is an important part of the preparation. Of course, preparation and review are not enough. To make a success of running a club you must make it a full-time job. Some ideas take a long time to gel so they need a lot of thinking about. If you forget about the club between meetings you are falling down on the job.

9. Other Points. Preparing an evening's programme and teaching is sufficient for one person. Try to delegate all other aspects of the evening - notices, looking after refreshments, talking to new people, collecting money. You should not have to worry about these.

I promised to say the obvious and the need for personal hygiene should be obvious to any leader. Unfortunately, it isn't always. Enough said?

Conclusion. Every action of the leader, as well as his mood and attitude, has an effect on the club's life, both long and short term. It is important to be aware of these actions and to understand their long-term implications. Preparation, choice of dances, tempo, organisation of the evening, all determine the character of the club. A happy leader means a happy club and an enthusiastic leader means an active club. There is no shortage of new people appearing from time to time. Whether we keep them depends on us.

URI GERSON

WHAT'S ON IN SEPTEMBER

- S.I. Sept.14th S.I.F.D. DAY COURSE - ARMENIAN. See p.2
- S.I. Sept.14th BALKANPLUS. See below.
- Sept.21st RUSSIAN, JEWISH & GYPSY MUSIC, 8.15 p.m. at Cellar Upstairs Folk Club, Cock Tavern, 23 Phoenix Road, London N.W.1 £5 (unwaged £4). 'Phone 020 7281 7700 at least two days in advance if you wish to attend (to comply with local laws for clubs).
- Sept.26th WORKSHOP WITH VENTZI SOTIROV at Oxford. See p.3.
- S.I. Sept.27th RAINMAKERS ANNIVERSARY DANCE with Jill Bransby. Music: Martin Butler and Friends. At St.Michael's Church Hall, The Broadway, Letchworth, Herts. Cost about £4.00. (No time given). For details ring Katka Kessler on 01462 685645.
- S.I. Sept.28th WEST MIDLANDS S.I.F.D. BRANCH AUTUMN DAY OF MUSIC & DANCE with Anne Leach. 10.15 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. at Selly Oak Methodist Church Hall, Langleys Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham (just off A38 S.W. of City Centre). S.I.F.D. members £7.00 all day, £4.00 half day. Non-members £8/£5. Programme given last month. Further information from Maggie Kaye on 0121 608 1437.
- Sept.28th & 29th BULGARIAN WORKSHOP with Ventzi Sotirov at Westwoods Community Centre, Northleach, Glos. 10.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m., 2.30 to 5.00 p.m. Party on Saturday, 7.30 to 11.00 p.m. £16 each day; £12.00 for the party. Weekend ticket including party £36.00. Further information from Stephe Clark on 01451 860289.

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BALKANPLUS, 14th September at Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Road, London N.W.1, 7.00 to 10.30 p.m. £4.00. M.C.s: Madeleine Chapman and John Riley. Look forward to a relaxing evening with this favourite duo presenting something old, something new, and including dances from recent courses from Eddy, Paja and Madelon and Yves Moreau. After the long summer break, this is a great opportunity to meet up with all your friends - don't miss it.

The next Balkanplus will be on 12th October as part of the E.F.D.S.S. Dance Festival weekend.

FRANCES HORROCKS

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* Our Membership Secretary, Alan Morton, would like to *
* remind members that their membership subscriptions *
* expire on 1st September. If you wish to renew, and *
* to ensure continued delivery of the SIFD NEWS, please *
* help Alan by renewing promptly. Many thanks. Ed. *
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All material for the October issue of SIFD NEWS must be received by the Editor IN WRITING by 17th September. Please write in BLOCK CAPITALS all names of people, places and dances, unless typewritten.