

Society for International Folk Dancing

# SIFD News



# September 2020

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Packaging, posting & electronic distribution by Dalila Heath.

I have raided News Sheets from the '60s: a series on Indian Dancing from 1962, and the motif from a front page design of 1964. Another of Andrew Hardwick's photos: Kukeri performers from Stara Zagora at the front (*see page 11*) and something at the back. I will find more from the archives if necessary but hopefully you will send in some colourful pictures to grace future covers. Next month the music for **Debka Ha'abir** (Uria) will be published, I hope someone knows the dance or something about it.

**Ed.**



## **HF Dancing Holiday**

We're sorry to announce that our HF Dancing Holiday in November has been cancelled due to Coronavirus. We hope to be back next year!

**Phil & Brenda Steventon**



## **World Dances with Anne Leach**

We are disappointed to cancel our day of dances with Anne Leach on 3 October 2020 in Nottingham, but sadly such are the times we currently live in.

**Trish Griffiths**

Secretary

Nutbrooke International Folk Dance Group



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

S.I **Oct. 16: RAINMAKERS 44th ANNIVERSARY DANCE,**  
8pm-10.45pm at St Michael's Parish Hall, Broadway,  
Letchworth, Hertfordshire, SG6 3PQ. £10.00. MC Jill Bransby  
with live music from Cloudburst. Please bring food to share.  
More info from Mark (01462 454210). SUBJECT TO  
CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS BEING LIFTED.

*Events covered by SIFD insurance are marked S.I.*

*Please remember that the onus is on **you** to mark each event when  
sending in the notice if your event is covered by our insurance.*



**caption for Who's who?** (last month)



"Come and join the masquerade! (whoever you are)."

**Lily Avery**



"Vaccinate number Three"

**Janet Douglas**

## Phil & Brenda Steventon Zoom Dance Classes



We have been running our classes on Zoom for several weeks now. Our dances are mainly gentle ones that can be adapted to being danced at home on your own. The classes are 50 minutes long and take place at 8pm Wednesday Evening and 11am Thursday Morning - this will have the same programme as Wednesday evening.

You are welcome to join us! Email us or give us a call for details. If you're not a Zoom expert we'll help you get setup.

Set your Zoom in Speaker View so you can see "us on our own" while we dance. Then set in Gallery View to see "everyone in little boxes" when we chat over tea and coffee after dancing!

Take care everyone, **Phil & Brenda Steventon**

Email: [philip.steventon@btinternet.com](mailto:philip.steventon@btinternet.com)

Tel: 020 8397 9649



*(from SIFD News 1962)*

## **An Incomplete Guide to Indian Dancing**

### **or how to lay your own head on your own shoulder**

Now that quite a number of the Society have seen some Indian dancing, and before you all dislocate your necks, I propose to give a short account of the four different classical schools. You will appreciate that a hefty tome could, and has been written on the many different aspects, this account will but briefly sketch in the outline. For instance, I could include whole chapters on hand gestures, costumes, make-up, music, steps, theatre presentation and adaptation etc., but I will spare you, or the news sheet would be discarded unread.

I will start with the popular **Bharat Natyam** which comes from South-East India and properly belongs to the temples of Tanjore, where delightful young ladies danced in front of the images of gods, as part of Divine worship. These young ladies were chosen from one strata of society only, and were taught by a hereditary caste of professional musicians and dancers. However, the erotic nature of the dance did not go unnoticed by the local wealthy maharajahs, who soon got down to brass tacks and employed the girls to dance at court, developing the night club, strip-tease aspect. After things simmered down a bit, and the maharajahs had lost their money and their reputations the girls returned to serious dancing again in the temples and in the theatre.

The technique is complicated and exact, and the seeming ease with which dancers perform is merely the art which conceals art, perhaps the greatest art of all. The basic position is with the feet turned out and the knees bent. After assuming this posture, try jumping on to the toes and then back on to flat feet, meanwhile balancing a book on your head. A couple of hundred jumps will do. It is excellent exercise for the thigh muscles - guaranteed to make them ache for a week. The steps and movements have been written down in an ancient book called Bharata Sastra, which describes everything from the quiver of an erotic eyebrow down to the twitch of a tantalising toe.

Another great book is the Abhinaya Darpana which describes hand gestures only, for the hands are but another voice, and when used separately, or together in various combinations can express several hundred words.



Both men and women perform Bharat Natyam though preference seems to lie with the fair sex. Both wear silk trousers pleated at the waist and tight at the ankles. Over this, in the middle, hangs a pleated cloth or frill, reaching nearly to the knees.

P.T.O.

The girls wear a short blouse leaving a draughty gap in the middle, and both have many ornaments, not to mention about one hundred heavy brass bells round each ankle.

Musical accompaniment is provided by a long double ended drum, small cymbals only three to four inches across and a long stringed instrument which is plucked. There is usually a singer whose words the dancer interprets in gesture. At other times the elaborate gestures have no meaning and are purely decorative. Often other stringed and percussion instruments are added to this ensemble, although not strictly traditional.

Having read this, I hope, you will now be able to tell your friends all about it at the next performance. Don't miss next month's thrilling instalment on the Kathak school. (*below*)

**"Bhayji"**



## **An Incomplete Guide to Indian Dancing**

### **Part 2 Kathak**

If at any time you should see an Indian dancer whirling round as if imitating a Dancing Dervish, then it is ten to one he is performing a Kathak dance. Either that or the flies have become too much for him.

The Kathak school has its home in North India which was ruled by the Moghuls from about the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. They brought their own graceful, elegant court dances with them, which the Hindus patiently absorbed and injected with their own religion resulting in the present dance stories of the gentle, bewitching Radha, the milk-maid, and her mischeivous god-suitor Krishna. This arrangement leaves the door wide open for the usual erotic element so beloved by the Indians (and others), and so dancing fell into disrepute in the north also, just as Bharat Natyam did in the south, (remember?). If it hadn't been for a certain rich, and this time respectable, maharajah, Binda Din, Kathak might have perished.



This mighty maharajah maintained the best teachers and dancers at his palace throughout the "disreputable" period, and so preserved the traditions of the art. He was also the first to codify all the steps and gestures of Kathak, a dedicated life-time's work, and, one that shows he was a gifted performer himself.

The most spectacular feature of this school is the incredibly fast fly-swatting turns, punctuated by sudden halts, when the dancer must stay as still as a statue. The turns are so fast it is impossible to count them. There are two very difficult things about these turns, apart from their speed; the first is being able to turn on the same spot, and the second is knowing where the audience is for a sudden stop, so that they aren't presented with a back view by mistake. Old school teachers used to put bricks around the dancer's feet when practising, which achieved either remarkably quick results or badly bruised toes.

Other aspects of Kathak include the Radha - Krishna angle already mentioned, and a mime-section where the dancer kneels and tells a story through gesture and facial expression only.

There is also a rhythm section where the dancer beats out complicated rhythms with the feet, in conjunction, syncopation and counterpoint with the drummer. These rhythm sequences may have anything from four to a hundred beats, and dancer and musician are expected to finish at the same time.

The drummer may have two small drums resting in objects very much resembling padded tea-pot stands, or a long double-ended drum strapped round him. The melody may be played on the sarangi - a stringed instrument rather like a squared-off violin, held downward and played with a bow.

The dancer contributes to the rhythm with bare feet and bells. Costume varies a little as some girls wear saris, but much nicer are the white drainpipe trousers with a full gossamer-gauze skirt, and a tight-fitting, long-sleeved blouse, without the draughty gap in the middle this time, plus the usual jewellery. A similar costume is worn by the men, both being based on the delicately detailed miniature paintings of three and four centuries ago.

P.T.O.

Now we are half way through, and two more schools remain. Next month's offering will be on Manipuri. For this month's homework find out who Rabindranath Tagore was, as he has quite a bit to do with it. No prizes offered for the best effort - sorry. Hope you have recovered from last month's stiffness.

**"Bhayji"**

*to be continued next month; see the back page for a photo of Kathac dancers at the 2004 Eastbourne Festival*



## **Help needed**

The committee are disappointed not to have received a response from members to the request in the August News for help with the administration of the SIFD's Insurance policy.

If you think you could help please contact any committee member.

Thank you,

**Judith Payling**



## **Whats on in September?**

3rd September - Horo Sheffield commence weekly socially distanced dancing inside Ecclesall Parish Hall. Risk assessment available. Contact Greg on [gregboyd99@aol.com](mailto:gregboyd99@aol.com) for more information.

19th September - provisional date for recommencing monthly Saturday morning dance sessions at Calver. Contact Greg on [gregboyd99@aol.com](mailto:gregboyd99@aol.com) for more information.

**Greg Boyd**

## Breton costume

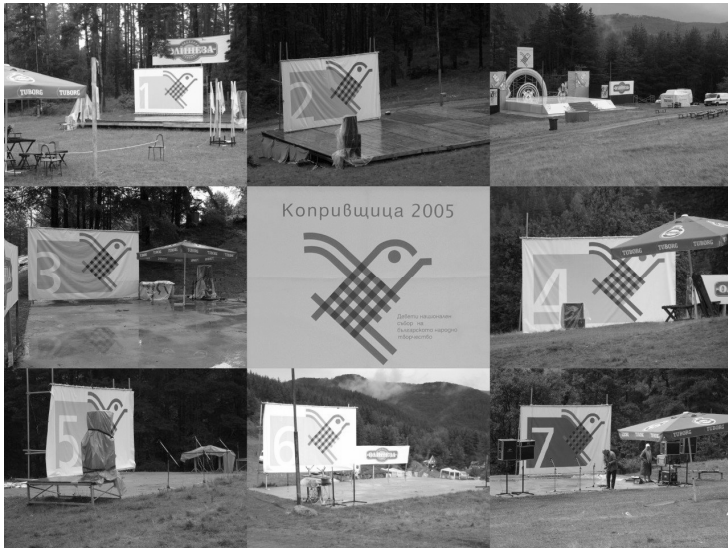
Kate Cleeland would like to sew a traditional Breton costume. Does anyone know where she might obtain a suitable pattern? I have sent her what information I could get from the Max Parrish books and also Harold Robert's book.

Her email is: <kccleeland@gmail.com>



**Last month's cover photograph** was taken at the 2005 Koprivshitsa Festival. It was appropriate for you to put in the August edition as the 2020 festival was going to start in barely a week later on August 7th.

Actually part of the 2005 festival was cancelled. The 3rd day had some torrential rain so the outdoor stages were abandoned and a much cut down set of performances were done in some halls in town. I went up the hill though to have a look at the empty festival.



**Andrew Hardwick**

## Dancing in lock down



Matlock dancers surviving lockdown.

Guess the dance?

We are lucky to have such enthusiastic dancers and a suitable place to dance out doors.

Matlock dancers have been entertaining the dog walkers in a field near our usual dance venue.



Although this is a Matlock group we have people joining us from Sheffield and Dronfield.

In addition some people have kindly allowed dancing to take place with strict social distancing in their gardens.

**Janet King**



## **Der Windmueller**

This 4-couple set dance has been in the SIFD repertoire since at least the 50s, and in mine for almost as long. I taught it to Woodvale as one of their first dances in 1968 (they probably dance it still!), and of course, to Loidis in the 80s (we're all too old to dance it these days!).

It was a great dance for demonstrations, and always went down well, along with the "flying" version of another German dance, Kreuz Koenig (being danced in the lovely photo attached at a Woodvale demo in 1970)

Incidentally, if you should get any queries concerning my contribution in the August edition (Why does he mention "similarly introduced"....), the answer is that the last paragraph got missed off the bottom of the page! It follows below:

"On one occasion I did pursue the subject further and persuaded the poor man to come along to a Cecil Sharp House evening. Such was my fate, that on this particular night we had a full-blooded African with a leopard-skin loin cloth and an ostrich feather headdress performing a fire eating dance. After that, my colleague pointedly avoided me, obviously under the impression that this was how I and the rest of us, spent a nice quiet evening!"

**Ian Willson**

# Der Windmill (The Miller)

Germany

The musical score is written in treble clef with a 3/8 time signature. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff starts with a repeat sign and a '2' above it, indicating a second ending. Chords are indicated below the notes: C, G, C, F. The second staff continues the melody with chords C, G, C, F, C, G7, C, F, C7, F. The third staff has chords F, C7, F, F, Bb, F, Bb, F. The fourth staff has chords C7, F. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

## "Wilf Horrocks' Collection"

SIFD has called this German dance "**Windmill**" for decades. You showed it on page 10 as "Der Windmill". That's the English word. A windmill in German is Windmühle, and the capital initial and two dots (Umlaut) over the u are vital. It's a feminine noun, so the definite article is "die", not the masculine "der". However, that's not the end of the story. The dance is not called "Die Windmühle" because it refers to the miller, not the mill. He is "der Windmühler", with the "r" on the end to show he is the man who operates it. So the correct title for the dance is "**Der Windmühler**". And it's still not the end of the story. Decades ago Stephen Ward, my accordion and I went with the Guildford folk-dancers, plus Cliff Beck with his honky-tonk squeeze-box, to spend Christmas in Menzenschwand in the Black Forest. We went to a local folk-dance and there they performed Der Windmühler, but so slowly and ponderously, though not without charm. We reported this to the SIFD, but whenever I played it like that at dances, jaws dropped and there were shouts of "Faster!". It was a losing battle and I gave up. Stephen got quite heated about it, because he felt SIFD should copy the original styles, not jazz it up for a bit of fun. He was right, don't you think?

Search for YouTubes of this dance and you will see what I mean.

**Caroline Thomas**



## **SIFD Committee**

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C.I.O. number **1189141**



## WHAT'S ON IN SEPTEMBER

*see pages 5 & 10*



*All material for the October issue of the SIFD NEWS must be received by the Editor in writing by 18th September.*