

# SIFD NEWS



**November 2020**

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Packaging, posting and electronic distribution is done by Dalila Heath.

Geoff Weston enjoyed reading the last newsletter and the thought occurred to him that it would be nice to be able to follow up some of the articles by corresponding with the authors and it would be useful if contributors supplied contact details. However, I cannot print (e)addresses unless I have permission from you. If when you send in an article for the News you would be happy to hear from anybody - please request that your contact details also be published.

The front cover has an image of a god from Kathakali to complement the last article on the series of Indian dancing (page 6); Austrians on the back page.

**Ed.**



S.I

## **December Dance in Pulborough**

**December 6th.** 1pm - 4pm.

Pulborough Social Centre, Swan View, Lower Street, Pulborough, West Sussex, RH20 2BF. Cost £5.

As there is space I shall advertise this event again in the hope that some will come and meet to dance international, non-contact folkdances in the huge main hall, with huge car park, situated half a mile from Pulborough railway station. The council assure me that we are a “fitness group” and thirty (I am an optimist but even so can’t see us reaching that number) are able to use the hall. The hall usually looks festive at that time of year - but who knows now? Are we allowed unhygienic baubles? Maybe we could wear some.

If you wish to share a dance, that doesn’t breach the tiresome rules of our times, please contact me in advance so that I can compile a tidy plan for the afternoon. Of course this could be spoilt by another lockdown but let’s hope not - if in doubt telephone 01243 265010 or [sifdnews@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sifdnews@hotmail.co.uk)

D.I.Y. refreshments will be provided - for solitary souls in the kitchen - who each obliterate the evidence of their own visit.

**Janet Douglas**



## **Awap-bop-a-loo-mop alop-zam-ZOOM**

Excuse the modification to Little Richard's immortal line. The continuing restriction on assembly means that Zoom will be with us for the foreseeable future. For all its limitations we can at least meet up, chat and participate in our favourite dances – albeit in a socially distanced way.

I wouldn't claim that the Barnet group's fortnightly sessions are world beating but we have honed the format to the general satisfaction of our club members. We request dances in good time for Philip to locate the music and devise the programme order and for Charlotte to provide YouTube links in case we have forgotten the steps. We welcome guests (Lola and Jim regularly join in from Finland) so don't hesitate to email me if you are interested. I am writing this piece on the eve of our departure from idyllic Borrowdale and with the pleasant prospect of another Barnet session tomorrow so there needs to be a lot of Vroom before the Zoom!

Our meetings start at 8pm every other Friday. The forthcoming ones are scheduled for 30th October and 13th November. We look forward to seeing you.

**Brian Dowsett**  
bvdowsett@aol.com



*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.*



Hello Janet

I suppose this will be the way we shall be dancing for the foreseeable future! Still, it's better than trying to do it on line!

Loidis has managed to resume dancing (albeit socially-distanced) indoors this autumn; we're fortunate in that we have a large (and heated, even though the windows are open) hall to dance in. We're holding our breath every Thursday hoping we can still continue, lockdowns permitting.

We hope that other Groups are similarly up and running.

Best wishes

**Ian Willson**



## **An Incomplete Guide to Indian Dancing Part 4 Kathakali**

Now, for the last time, we go south, south-west to the territory created by the warrior-sage, Bhargava, when he hurled his fiery battle-axe into the Indian Ocean and the waters receded to the point where the axe fell; south to the home of Kathakali, the blood-curdling, awe-inspiring dance-drama of Malabar. The ancient and ever present theme of the battle betwixt good and evil is told through stories taken from the holy books of the Ramayana and Mahabharata - stories of tremendous battles between gods and demons.

A student of this (at least) two thousand year old art must study, and undergo massage, for twelve years or more, to gain perfect control of his body, limbs and facial muscles, until he can laugh with one side of his face and cry with the other. He must learn to develop the stance, with knees well bent and turned out, and the weight taken on the outsides of the feet, which face straight forward. This is a stance which, when well-developed, will make him bandy legged and ruin him for any other style of dancing. He must also have tremendous stamina to endure the long performances and cope with the cumbersome costume, the most striking feature of which is the heavy make-up and the tremendous glittering head-dress, about two feet tall, like diminishing helmets one on top of another, backed by a halo. He wears twenty-four layers of wide, billowy white skirts, and a high necked, long sleeved jacket of red, yellow or green, a costume adopted to conform with the moral code of decency held by the Portuguese and Dutch "visitors" and emulating the crinolines fashionable in the west at that time. The ancient murals of Cochin show the dancers with the same head-dress and jewellery, but wearing only a dhoti, surely a perfect costume for such an exacting style of dancing, but the scantiness of which must have given respectable Dutch ladies severe palpitations.

The heavy, paste make-up, which takes an expert four hours to build up, is another unusual feature of Kathakali. As all the actors wear the same style of skirt and head-dress, the make-up helps to distinguish the gods from the demons. A god has a green face with the jaws outlined in a white stiff paste which stands out from the face. The worst type of devil has a red beard and a double row of red bristles on his cheeks. His face is also red with two large white "marbles" stuck on his nose and forehead. He wears a red fur coat and has an even larger head-dress to make him

look more terrible, and is allowed to emit cries, grunts, growls and shrieks whereas all "good" characters must remain dumb. All female parts are taken by boys aspiring to be gods and demons later in their careers.

If you lived in Malabar you might hear gongs and drum beats coming from the temple, announcing to all within earshot (a considerable radius) that a dance-drama would be performed the following evening. That would give you a day in which to prepare yourself and the family for the great event, to prepare food and bedding and the baby's bottle and stow it on the cart. Then you and your family join the general migration to the temple and settle yourselves comfortably in an advantageous position in the court yard where you will stay for the next sixteen hours.

The crowd gathers, and as dusk falls the huge oil lamp in the centre is lit, casting ghostly shadows all round. There is a sudden hush as a brightly coloured curtain is held up by two attendants, and the drumming increases in intensity. The curtain begins to shake and shudder and a growl rises to a spine-chilling scream as a hand with beautiful long, silver finger nails appears over the top of the curtain, grips it, and shakes it violently. The other hand appears and then we catch a glimpse of a golden head-dress, which seems to be caught in the eddies of a whirl-wind. The head-dress disappears and then reappears with more violent shaking of the curtain, and then drops out of sight. So it goes on, each tantalising glimpse showing more and more of the actor, until finally the whole terrible figure emerges, accompanied by deafening drumming, blood-curdling shrieks and the ominous sound of the couch. This is Dussasana the demon, resplendent in red beard and fur coat, Dussasana the pitiless, lustful, defiant. He is plotting to kill Bhima a just and benevolent god.

With much drawn-out, building-up of tension the drama reaches its climax when the two finally meet and begin their battle. Bhima chases Dussasana round and round, the latter emitting hair-raising cries and screams of defiance, heard even above the earth-shaking roar of the drums, until with the most awful shriek of all, Dussasana is slain and lies dead at Bhima's feet. With his beautiful, long, silver finger-nails Bhima triumphantly rips open his adversary's abdomen and pulls out the bloody entrails. These he strews round his neck and then begins to stuff them into his mouth with voracious appetite.

This is Kathakali.

**Bhayji**

## **Dance schools reopening**

from the Centre of International Dance Unesco.

Schools reopen after taking the necessary measures. The trouble is no one really knows what are the prescribed measures for dance schools, much less for each particular form of dance. We advise:

1. Act quickly; if you delay your students (less numerous this year) might go somewhere else.
2. Apply all general measures for indoor physical activities, plus ideas you will get from others (gyms, massage parlors, sports, music schools, beauty salons etc.) to be on the safe side.
3. Choose the stricter interpretation of rules and advertise it.
4. Inform students one by one and assure them that you care for their health and that dancing at your school is absolutely safe.
5. Adapt the program: no breaks, small classes, individual courses if necessary.
6. Redesign classes: new content, more relaxed pace, distancing, face protection, no contacting.
7. Spaces: clean classrooms very often; abolish waiting rooms; adapt dressing rooms for zero contacts; apply regulations for bathrooms; increase aeration; turn air conditioning to open-circuit.
8. Search for funding – measures are costly and sometimes not feasible. See if there are government subsidies for business affected by the pandemic.
9. Find opportunities for students to meet before or after class to compensate for social warmth lost during classes.
10. Offer International Certification to attract more students showing that your school takes seriously its educational role.

Be decisive, you have a need to inspire full confidence. Do not leave the slightest doubt that dance is your life under any circumstances and you will never abandon it. You chose to become a teacher, this is not a job like any other – honor it by acting responsibly at hard times.

The pandemic will pass but dance will never pass, it has always been there.

forwarded by **Elsa Perez**



**Neudeutscher**



**Austrian folk dancers (1935)**



# Neudeutscher

Austrian

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## "Wilf Horrocks' Collection"

### Neudeutscher:

A simple dance for unlimited number of couples in a circle in ballroom hold:

Two chassays a/c direction, starting with his right and her left foot; then two chassays in reverse,

Partners 4 waltz steps round.

(Picture of Neudeutscher being danced on the previous page).

Ed.



Next month the music for **Riabinuska** one of several of the former Balalaika Russian group manuscripts.



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## NOTHING IN NOVEMBER



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