

Society for International Folk Dancing

SIFD News



May 2021

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

Juhani Eistrat has notified us of the recent death of Aili Eistrat (p.8) from whom the Society learned many Estonian dances.

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This is a Basquecentric issue; the next item from the 'Dictionary of the Dance' - Auresku is republished on page 6, apparently a vigorous dance for Basque men. Just to show that not only Basque men perform vigorous dances the cover photo, taken by Roger Sturge at Llangollen, 2011, shows girls from San Sebastian. The two Basque motifs were both originally cover designs circa fifty years ago.

Ed.



Amazing Website

There is the most amazing website on (mostly) East European dance: Folkdance Footnotes it's a fascinating mixture of articles on dance and related matters - clothing etc., but also going into the difference



between village dancing, performance dancing and recreational dancing - and then on dances and culture of different regions - all with a cornucopia of links to videos or stills.

<https://folkdancefootnotes.org/>

You can spend hours there..

Toni Gutman



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- S.I **Jul. 4: SUMMER'S DAY DANCE** 1pm - 4pm. at Pulborough Social Centre, Swan View, Lower Street, Pulborough, West Sussex, RH20 2BF. Cost £5. tel: 01243 265010 or sifdnews@hotmail.co.uk
- S.I **Sep. 25: THANK YOU FOR THE DANCES** A Balkanplus day of dance at Cecil Sharp House led by Brian Dowsett. More details later. Subject to Covid restrictions being lifted. Contact: Brian email 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.*



Summer's Day Dance in Pulborough

July 4th. 1pm - 4pm.

Come and meet to dance international folkdances in the village hall (ample car park), situated half a mile from Pulborough railway station.

If you wish to share a dance, please contact me in advance so that I can compile a tidy plan for the afternoon. D.I.Y. refreshments will be provided.

See the Diary entry above for cost, venue address and contact details.

Janet Douglas





Saturday 25th September.

At last, a date for your diary!

Balkanplus has booked Kennedy hall at Cecil Sharp House from 10am to 10pm subject, of course, to the Covid restrictions being lifted. It will be (to borrow from ABBA) a day for us to say “Thank you for the Dances” as I pay tribute to the many teachers who have contributed to our ever growing repertoire of dances over a period of sixty years or more. Mainly Balkan, true, but there will be a number of gems from elsewhere. As I trawl through the repertoire, it might be difficult to whittle the dance selection down to fit in a day. I am still adding to the list at the moment. The teaching will be necessarily less intense than a typical workshop but some dances will be need longer scrutiny. The evening party will include all the day’s dances and more – with contributions from friends.

My personal introduction to dancing happened accidentally when, as a “folkie” with two left feet, I first encountered Balkan and Israeli dancing at the Hendon Folk Club run by Henry Morris shortly before he formed the Dunav Group. It was then a natural path of discovery through London dance groups, the SIFD, the American recreational folkdance scene and, subsequently, the connection with world-travelling teachers.

More details later, but for now you have a rare chance to enter a date in your diary. When is it? Saturday 25th September.

Brian Dowsett



Dance Alphabet

Aurresku (Basque)

A ceremonial dance, accompanied by piper and taborer (the 'txistulari'), and performed in the plaza before the Alcalde (Mayor) and town officials. First comes the Aurresku of Guison Dantza. Led by the best dancer (the 'aurresku'), a linked chain of young men circles the plaza, salutes the girl chosen by the leader to be his partner, and finishes facing the Alcalde. Flinging his red beret on the ground, the aurresku bows to the Alcalde and performs a solo displaying brilliant technique, which is challenged by the atzesku, the last man in the line. They perform a sort of dance contest, each trying to outdo the other in technical brilliance. An arch is then made and the file pass through. Next comes the Contrapas or Andreen 'deieco sonua'. Four dancers leave the chain and, with ceremony, bring the girl chosen by the aurresku to the centre of the plaza, where he meets her with beret in hand and hand on hip. Facing her he performs another brilliant solo, ending with three bows, to left, to right, and to his partner. Then, joined by a kerchief held between them they take their place in the chain. The atzesku then chooses his lady in similar manner, and all the young men should do likewise, but often there is a general rush for partners, the dancers re-forming in a long line. There follows the Zortziko in 5/8 time. The chain winds in circles, stopping from time to time while the aurresku pirouettes. A Fandango sometimes follows, the line breaking into couples, to be succeeded by the Arin-arin. Sometime a Zortziko in 2/4 time is danced after the first figure, or Aurresku; or, the Aceri Dantza (Fox Dance) may come between the choosing of partners and the Zortziko in 5/8 time.

In Aceri Dantza, the first couple dance to the end of the line each time the tune finishes, the melody being repeated until all couples have completed the figure. The Aurresku is performed in the Basque provinces, around San Sebastian and Pamplona. At Villafranca de Oria (Guipuzcoa) on 26th July, a traditional Aurresku is danced by young men, married during the preceding year.

Basque Dances (Dance singular: dantza; plural dantzak.)

Many traditional dances belong chiefly to annual festivals; as, for example, the Masquerade of Soule, including **Gavotta**, **Satan Dantza**, and **Godalet Dantza** (dance with goblet). Dances of Guisucaya (Gipuzkoaka Dantzak), include **Ezpatza dantza** (with daggers);

Eerreberentzia (Dance of Entry and Salute); and **Uztai Dantza** (Dance of the Basket-makers with wicker hoops). Besides widespread forms of **Fandango** and **Arin-Arin** there is **Makil dantza** (Stick Dance), **Jorrai Dantza** and **Batzan Dantza** (all dance-songs), with **Arku dantza** (Flower Arches, Biscayan version), **Soso dantza** (Song of the Blackbird), **Maigeneko** (Dance on table), or **Kaxarranka** (Dance with Coffin), or **Sagar dantza** (Apple Dance). Others include **Xan Petrike Dantza** ("John-Peter Dance" - humorous). The various **Inguru** are round dances, usually with simple rhythm and verse. The **Txakarenkua** is "Dance of the Dead Chief", used at funerals. Another series are called **Banako** (Dance of one person), **Binako** (Dance of two by two persons) and so on. The Janus dances are **Otxagabia** or "Two Face" dantza, and **Zagi Dantza** is a comic dance with a leather wine bottle.

Musical instruments used for Basque dances include (as development from pipe and tabor), the **Txistu** - predominant flute with three finger holes. The tambour is **Ttun-ttun** (tambourine) and **Atabel** (small tambour). The **Xirula** is a more primitive form of flute, shriller in sound. The **Dulzaina** is known most in Navarre; while the **Alboku** exists only in Biscaya. Accordion players are **Trikitrixax** they also sing couplets; and occasionally add the tambour.

Bacup Coco-Nut Dance (England)

Performed today by a team of morris dancers at Bacup in Lancashire. Eight men in black breeches and jerseys, with faces blackened, perform various figures in single file, circles, and squares. Wearing white socks and caps, and a short horizontally striped red-and-white skirt, they are accompanied by an accordion player and attended by the traditional Fool, with a whip. But the essential rhythms are provided by the dancers themselves, who beat small domes of wood, like half coconuts fastened to palms of hands, knees and waist. With those on the hands they clap their own and those of the other dancers. A similar dance exists in Provence, performed at Carnival, called **Li Coco** ('The Coco-nuts'). Men with blackened faces wear half-coconuts on knees, elbows, breast and hands. In the Philippino dance **Maglalatik**: the dancers click together polished coconut shells tied to various parts of the body. 'El Coco' in Spain means the "bogy-man".

by **W.G. Raffe**

first published in the SIFD News in the 60s

Aili Eistrat

With sadness I inform you of the passing of Aili Eistrat a long time honorary member of the SIFD.

She passed peacefully at home on April 10th - lucid and active to the end - perhaps a testament to the power of folk dancing!

A couple of memories attached.

Aili dancing with Bert Price (not sure of date probably 50's). (*below*)

Aili receiving flowers from Princess Alice 1948. (*opposite*)

Estonian Folk Dancers at the Albert Hall 1953

(Aili sitting in the middle).

Juhani Eistrat





Fandango

Basque

Allegro

9 C G7 C

18 G7 C G7 C

27 G7 C G C

35 Cm G7 Cm

43 Cm Fm Cm G7 Cm

"Wilf Horrocks' Collection"



Csibe Tánc from Hungary will be featured in the June issue. Let's hope someone knows something about it and shares it with us. **Ed.**





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NO EVENTS IN MAY



All material for the June issue of the SIFD NEWS must be received by the Editor in writing by 18th May.