

ETS DANCE

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FISH OR FOWL OR CORN

There is a tuneful folk song with the title, "I Know Where I'm Going." We who participate actively in folk dancing could profit in using this theme as a guiding philosophy. We might counter the thought and well ask where we are going and how? The increasing number of participants and their general genuine enthusiasm is indicative of their zeal which spreads in ever widening circles. If, however, we can guide our development with the necessary emphasis, we will be able to indicate for our mutual advantage whether we are fish, fowl, or corn.

Evidence has been shown that there has been a tendency to form a folk dancing elite, to arbitrarily effect limitations on individuals that wish to join the various groups. We can appreciate the limitations and problems of certain groups and their difficulty of admitting new members into advanced programs. However, we feel that the combined efforts of individuals in being helpful in a "neighborly" way can do much to draw interested participants. Further, a general effort to give information as to places where dances are taught would be a direct aid. Inter-fellowship between various folk groups is a cardinal tenet of our Federation constitution and its promulgation will be for the mutual advantage of all groups.

Folk dancing, as a communal institution, represented a social activity in which the community participated. Perhaps our richest contribution to recreational and cultural activities for adults lies in the fact that we provide in folk dancing an opportunity for a social evening with our fellow men. This quality of folk dancing should remain paramount in our folk dancing programs. If we as individuals can joyously mix, laugh, and relax with our neighbors, we are capturing the "raison d'etre" of our activity.

Many centuries ago, one Lucretius expounded on "The Nature of Things." One might well inquire into the nature of our folk dancing with a tendency to compete with dance technicians and a tendency toward complicated routines. A telescopic review of our various groups will focus our attention on programs that consist of too great an emphasis on working and learning rather than doing. If we lean too greatly toward the work aspect, we will endanger our own interest of relaxation and having fun. We, as Americans, with our inventive qualities seem to want to "improve" upon the traditional folk dances that are a part of our rich heritage. Literally, we sometimes want to dilute a good sauce with a liberal spread of catsup. Actually, we have neither fish nor fowl in our concoctions, but only corn which usually brings a monotonous prosaic quality to all dances. Again a survey of various National groups in their interpretation of their own dances will convincingly demonstrate that the participants are not mimicking the corps de ballet. We as folk dancers find a true richness in approximating the essence of a National dance. However, where we either consciously or unconsciously effect the ballet idiom as folk dancers, we are subscribing to a position that will unlike the trained technician put us flat on our backs.

The postulation of real folk dancing does not eliminate the interests and desires that are inherent in our stratum of dancers. The desire for challenging folk dances, the appetite for them, can be satisfied legitimately if taken in their stride. The arrangement of popular dances, tailored for various groups, can be sanctioned if correctly labeled and not promoted exclusively. The evolution of folk dancers to ballet, the modern dance, and National dancing is desirable as long as a distinction is made between folk dancing and the art forms. Technical skill in folk dancing is positive in bringing a greater depth and richness as long as it subordinates the spirit and joy of dancing.

The richness of traditional folk dances of simple and complex natures is being brought to us in a full abundance. Let us enjoy and share our cultural wealth mindful of the be-all and end-all in full realization of whether we have fish, fowl, or corn.

Henry Glass, Editor

AN ARTIST LOOKS AT FOLK DANCING

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by
Angelo Sottosanti

I have been asked to contribute my idea of what an artist sees in folk dancing. As an artist must be observant at all times, he finds a rich source of images impinging upon him within his folk dancing group. I am very much impressed by the vivid and beautiful color of costumes as well as the magnificent dances that each country has to offer us from all over the world. In total they form an effervescent mural that strikes the retina with new qualities with the sweep of the eye.

Art is and always has been universal. Folk art and folk dancing stem directly from the people and in their context draw upon human resources that overleap boundaries of language and geography. People throughout the centuries have incorporated into costumes and dances some of the most beautiful color and design known to art. It seems quite wonderful to see each country represented with its particular costumes; to note the weave of their fabrics, to note the organization and fine detail of design. The efforts of the dancers in gathering costumes filled with authentic color carry one beyond local confines to other climes and people.

The pattern of the dancer is another item of interest to the artist, for here, too, are revealed the particular customs and expressions of the various countries. The polka of Russia, the mazurka of Poland, and the Hambo of Sweden all lend great variety and symmetry of pattern to the eye.

When an artist sees folk dancing, he sees happiness. In many countries, that happiness has been suppressed by bondage and serfdom. This is the reason for the color, abandon, and gaiety of the dance.

The dance, as art, will always be important as an outlet for the expression and freedom of the people. An artist also sees that in spite of fascism and war, the people fostered by their common regard for their arts will unite and contribute their necessary culture to the world.

To the artist, whose palette and canvas mirror all qualities and hues of mankind, it is a tremendous joy to join hands with people of all backgrounds and to literally dance around the world.

Note: Angelo Sottosanti studied art at the Beaux Arts Institute, N. Y., traveled to Mexico to paint the native culture, and has exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Art, the Palace of the Legion of Honor, and various galleries in San Francisco.

In its early days on Broadway, near the "Monkey Block", Chang's consisted of an eager, friendly, enthusiastic group of people who to a great extent represented the arts in many phases. For this reason we have asked one of Chang's many outstanding artists to splash his reactions on the canvas of folk dancing. Angelo (not Irish) is naturally colorful, alive, and enthusiastic.

FOLK DANCE DEMONSTRATIONS--SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF ART

On consecutive Fridays in March, various groups affiliated with the Folk Dance Federation of California will present a series of folk dance exhibitions. This invitation follows the participation of the Federation in the "Dance in Our Society Series," San Francisco Dance League, which was received enthusiastically by the Museum officials and the general public. Dr. Morley, director of the Museum, issued the repeat invitation following the successful program presented last year. The aura of a Museum program is a direct compliment to the thousands of folk dancers in California and an acknowledgement that we are a cultural institution in our pursuit of folk dancing activities. The following groups will take part in the program:

March 8	Chang's International Folk Dancers, Redwood City Docey-Doe Club
March 15	Palomanians, Folk Art Group
March 22	Berkeley Folk Dancers, Scandinavian Folk Dancers, Stanford Folk D.
March 29	Festival Workshop Group, Czechoslovakian Sokol Group

A total of about 60 different dances will be presented at these four evenings of demonstrations, featuring the National costumes of various nationalities. The performances will be from 8:00 to 9:30 p.m., and will be free. More detailed information will be sent to each folk dance group. Walter Grothe is the general chairman of the program and is collaborating with Dr. Morley in making arrangements.

STATE-WIDE FESTIVAL TO BE HELD IN OJAI, CALIFORNIA

Betty and David Young, formerly of the Berkeley Folk Dancers, now of Ojai, are busy with plans for a State-wide festival in Ojai on Saturday evening, May 11 (tentative date.)

Groups belonging to the Federation are being sent questionnaires and full particulars, so be sure to attend your next business meeting or consult your bulletin board for all details.

This will be a wonderful opportunity to get together with our Southern neighbors. Enthusiasm for this festival runs high in the South, and we hope that many of our own dancers will be able to go. The festival will be held on the street in Ojai from 5:00 to 11:00 p.m. The street is charming, with shops of Spanish architecture and an arcade running along the shops on one side, and a lovely park on the other side.

Reservations for free accommodations can be made up to March 31, and accommodations in hotels, motels, etc., can be considered up to April 30.

This is going to be one of the largest folk dance affairs held in California and none of us can afford to miss this week-end in Ojai.

JANUARY FESTIVAL

One of our newest groups, the Glen Park Folk Dancers, sponsored by the San Francisco Recreation Department, were hosts to the Folk Dance Federation of California on Sunday, January 20, 1946.

During the afternoon three exhibitions were presented. The Russian Mazurka by Chang's International Folk Dancers; a Bavarian Laendler by the Festival Workshop; and Las Espuelas by the Oakland Folk Dancers. All were well received.

It was a very jolly afternoon, with a large group of dancers taking advantage of the good floor and dancing constantly from 1 to 6 p.m. The new and rustic type gym was decorated with green boughs and colorful painted folk dance figures. A large attractive program on one side with an arrow pointing to the next dance kept the dancers informed.

The Glen Park Folk Dancers really got the folk dancing New Year off to a good start with this fine and spirited festival.

SNOW FESTIVAL--FEBRUARY

A Snow Festival on February 24, 1946 from 1:30 to 5:00 p.m. is the next big date on your folk dance calendar. The Garfield Folk Dancers will be hosts to the Federation on that day at the Berkeley High School boys gymnasium in Berkeley. The Berkeley High School is one block west of Shattuck Avenue, three blocks south of University Avenue.

Music will be by the International Barn Dance Orchestra, and fun will continue into the evening with a banquet and dancing for 200. Advance reservations are requested.

BY THE WAY

by

"Buzz" Glass

Elsie Durant tells us that the Australian Magazine "Pick" in a recent issue had pictures of National groups participating in a folk festival in the country down under. We hope our Australian correspondent, Mr. Ortling-Black, will send us some material on dancing in the Antipodes.

Farmer Stephen Fairchild has a real going folk dancing group in Santa Maria in Southern California. Stephen was at the December festival and was pleased and entertained with the activities. He is quite enthusiastic in promoting pictures showing the style and pattern of authentic folk dances. Recently he arranged for pictures of members of his group, Danish-Americans, doing Danish folk dances in authentic costumes. We hope that folk dancers will be able to see these pictures at a future festival.

Speaking of pictures, we saw a Jewish picture "Tevya" with the famous actor Maurice Schwartz who did a wonderful characterization in his role as the father who guides his family living under the yoke of the Czar in a Ukrainian village. The costuming, the scenery, and the setting as well as the great depth of Schwartz in his role made this an appealing picture. Equally outstanding with the main billing was a Russian musical-dance short with Ukrainian dancers, dancers of the Red Navy, and a Georgian group. The costumes caught the eye, the music held the ear, and the Ukrainian dances defied the imagination. The lightness and flexibility of the solo dancers, the dazzling speed in the air turns, the dexterity in prysiadkas, and the gymnastics of the dance left one gasping and ohing. If you haven't seen this short picture, perhaps a letter to the Larkin Theater, San Francisco, would continue its run. At one time the Clay Theater provided a dance feast with various pictures of international dancing. These two San Francisco shows would have a long list of folk and other dancers if they would again give us a program of dance films. While you are writing your Congressman anent bread and butter, why not drop a hint to the Larkin, asking for some cultural spread.

Contrasted with the dynamic quality of the Ukrainian dances, the Georgian dancers in their colorful, long coated tunics, and the ladies in their elaborate costumes presented a vivid contrast in the dances they performed. These people of the Black Sea Republic danced quietly and lightly, the woman in her retreating steps beckoning to the man who kept his body erect and danced with a restrictive pulsating step--the posturing of the man with his hands held above his head and to the side gave a feeling of dignity as well as hinting at the subtle feelings propelling his movements.

Our friend Boris Abramson, who likes his "borsch" and Russian dancing, recently led us to a new discovery. That is, as we splashed the borsch and dunked the real Russian rye, we liked the setting of the Russian-American Social Club at 404 Clement Street, near Fifth Avenue in San Francisco. Madam Ladov is the hostess and she serves a Russian dinner daily from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. (except Monday), and Sunday from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

If you are down the peninsula near Los Gatos way, drop in and dance with Lee Owens and his new group of folk dancers. They meet at the Los Gatos High School every Wednesday from 7:15 to 9:15 p.m.

Along the literary trail--Must Men Hate by Livingstone is calculated to combat anti-Semitism. For your own personal clarification, as well as your friends, you will find this informative and edifying. The White Tower by J. R. Ullman should particularly please our friends who combine with folk dancing skiing and hiking. This gripping dramatic story, with its present day setting, outlines the varied personalities of a small group of people caught in a small Swiss resort during the war. Their deeds and thoughts are funneled through their attempt to climb an Alpine mountain, the White Tower. Well, we'll tell no more--we had to read from midnight to 5:00 a.m. to feel the climax. Enough said.

MEN SURPLUS--LADIES WANTED! Most of our folk dancing groups can actually post this notice on their bulletin boards. The ladies who have faithfully carried on during the relative dearth of men can happily sigh that "they're neither too young nor too old" and increasingly plentiful in supply.

"FOLK DANCES FROM NEAR AND FAR" AND "LET'S DANCE"

Some of our new subscribers have asked, "Just what is Volume I?" It is the book of folk dance descriptions compiled by the Federation Research Committee and published by the Folk Dance Federation of California under the title, "Folk Dances From Near and Far." It contains detailed dance descriptions of nineteen popular dances, a complete list of references, descriptions of steps used in folk dancing, and terms used in folk dancing. The book is now widely used and known throughout the United States, as copies have been sent to Alaska, New York, Washington, etc.; as well as to Universities in Utah, California; etc., and many school departments. To subscribers of "Let's Dance" the price is \$1.50 and to non-subscribers \$2.00. You may order by sending a check to: Mrs. Frances Glass, 3732 Buell Street, Oakland 2, California.

W. S. Ballou, 857 Third Avenue, San Bruno, California, Business Manager for "Let's Dance" will receive all subscription orders. In order to avoid missing any issues renew your subscription now if it is expiring or place a subscription order for a folk dance friend who is not a subscriber. (\$1.75 per year). Be a 100% Federation member by subscribing to "Let's Dance." Remember, "Let's Dance" issues monthly dance descriptions plus timely news items of interest regarding folk dancing and folk dancers.

YOUR CLUB AND MINE

GARFIELD FOLK DANCERS by Lotte Mohr

New officers have been elected and are as follows: Earl Bodenschatz, president; Bob Mortimer, vice-president; Billie Christiansen, secretary; Charlotte Johnson, treasurer; and Yvonne Keene and Lotte Mohr, Federation representatives. The 5th issue of the "News Letter" has just been published and is serving many useful purposes. Activities at present center around plans for the February festival.

BERKELEY FOLK DANCERS by Walter Grothe

In order to make the ties between the Berkeley Folk Dancers and Chang's closer, Cliff Rather, last year's president of Chang's, and Lois Rodecape, secretary of the Berkeley group, were united recently in marriage. Both groups wish them good luck. In view of the great success during the last two months, the Red Cross has asked Berkeley to continue the visits to the Oak Knoll Hospital. A group of dancers are presenting programs at the Hospital every second Tuesday.

CHANG'S by Joe Gordon

1946 folk dance activities for Chang's will be under these new officers: Robert Shinn, president; Ada Harris, registrar; Ray Isola, secretary; Willis Coleman, treasurer; Sherbi Ressegieu, floor chairman; Boris Abramson, dance chairman; Edna Vander Wiel, research chairman; Joe Gordon, bulletin chairman; Hilma Lenshaw, Marvin Hartfield, and Harry Dixon, trustees; Ruth Milovich and William Irving, Federation representatives.

SAN JOSE POLKATEERS by Don Woods

Girls: we have started a matrimonial bureau. Six of our members have recently been married. C. Romano and Maxine Gaskill were married, and Rachel Swayne, Helen Gomes, Arlena Jensen and Betty Germano also joined the ranks of newlyweds. Six or eight men have returned from the service, and as a result there were six extra men one night! A very successful demonstration was given January 24 for the American Legion Post.

GATE SWINGERS by Barbara Miller

Holly, mistletoe: golly! What a jolly good time was had at the Gate Swingers Christmas party, with Holly Holleufer dressed as the traditional Santa Claus and the girls all decked out with bright red hair ribbons, topped with jingle bells. As the old year came to an end we celebrated by having a gala New Year's party. The chairmen of the committees were: Laverne and Dick Muchmore, Mattie and Virginia Eskenazi, and Ida and Albert Krause.

PALOMANIANS by Annemarie Steinbiss

On December 15 the Palomanians held a very jolly Christmas party, with Carl Duncan as Santa Claus, distributing gifts to dancers and their guests. New Year's was ushered in by a gala party topped with fun, frolic, songs and good food. The midnight dinner, which delighted the active dancers, was followed by a fireside circle. Accompanied on the piano by "Lefty" May, the group ushered in the New Year with general singing and merriment. An exhibition of the Polish Polka by Clarice Dechent and Henry Koopmann was a highlight of the evening. Mr. and Mrs. Gene Bulf (Nancy Deering) announced the birth of a son, Jeffrey Bulf, on January 10.

TULARE FOLK DANCERS

The Tulare Folk Dancers on December 15 were hosts to the local groups from the Central Valley. Included among the 150 dancers attending were groups from Hanford, Visalia, Three Rivers, Fresno, and Tulare. Moving pictures of the Sausalito Festival were a highlight of the occasion. Some of the Bay Area dancers who made the long trek commented on the enthusiasm and hospitality of the dancers. Mr. and Mrs. Badgley, who have attended Bay Area festivals, treated the dancers royally in true folk fashion.

DO-C-DO DANCE CLUB--Santa Maria--by Stephen Fairchild

The DO-C-DO Dance Club of Santa Maria devoted their annual Christmas party largely to the children. Santa Claus, who was nearly trapped by the kiddies in donning his costume, had presents that delighted all. The program started auspiciously with a baked ham pot luck dinner. Special dances planned for the children included Jump Jim Crow, Hinky Dinky Parley Vous, Virginia Reel and the Stagecoach Quadrille. Following this the adults got in their licks with a full evening's dancing: Stephen J. Fairchild reports the dancers were "dancified" and "et-ified". (Editor's note--- all right, blame me.)

CASTLE PROMENADERS by Muriel F. Simpson

The December 1 party, held as usual at Durant Park, was featured by the group singing Christmas carols around the big open fireplace. Tasty refreshments topped the fun and frolic. On Saturday, January 5, the Fun Club, under the direction of Dan McDonald took charge of the dancing program and community singing. These monthly parties, held the first Saturday of each month at Durant Park, 98th Avenue and Mt. Blvd., Oakland, are popular with the Promenaders and their increasing number of guests. All folk dancers are invited to attend these monthly festive parties. Two popular Promenaders, Virginia Mattsson and Elmer Lane, recently announced their marriage. Virginia and Elmer are also active with the Oakland Folk Dancers, and it was there that they met several years ago.

TURNOBEES by Ethel Turner

The Turnobees report with pleasure and promise that they have moved to more spacious and commodious quarters. Their new meeting place is at the Jewish Community Center, 724 14th Street, Oakland. The friendly Turnobees invite all guests without charge. The last Monday night of each month is party night, complete with gastronomical delights. Co-directors Ethel Turner and Paul O'Bryne, state folk dancers will enjoy dancing with the Turnobees on Monday evenings.

HI NEIGHBOR CLUB

Joe Barry has announced that after a temporary suspension of activities this group will continue its dance program on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of the month at Webster School, Oakland, near 82nd Avenue and Birch Street. Squares with live music will be featured.

RECORD NEWS

1. For square dance albums and Henry Ford records, see the White House and Sherman Clay, San Francisco. 2. The California Music Shop on California Street, and the Offenbach's Radio Store on Market also have folk dance records. 3. The Record Exchange on Eddy Street has thousands of used records. 4. For reels, longways, and squares, try Melotone, Compo Co. Ltd., Lachine, Quebec, Canada.

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