

Anatol Joukowsky

Dancer, Teacher and Former Ballet Master in Europe Energized Folk Dance Community

BY MACK LUNDSTROM, Mercury News Staff Writer

Editor's Note: the following article appeared in the San Jose Mercury News on Thursday, October 15, 1998. It appears in Let's Dance by permission.

Anatol Joukowsky was a teenager in the Russian Revolution, the son of an officer in the monarchy's White Army in its doomed stand against the communist Red Army.

Before he died of heart illness at 92 Oct. 5 in his Menlo Park home, Mr. Joukowsky lived an odyssey filled with drama on stage and off, at one point a ballet master in two of Europe's major cities, at another one of the leading teachers of folk dance in California.

Mr. Joukowsky had studied at the Kiev Cadet military school and learned the traditions of the Russian Imperial Ballet before the communists took control.

In Belgrade, he studied at Mme. Poliakoff's ballet school and then danced for the National Theater, rising to ballet master in the 1930s. At Mme. Poliakoff's studio he met Yania Wassiliewa, a prima ballerina, and they married in 1932.

As the specter of war loomed, Mr. Joukowsky toured his ballet troupe through most of Europe's cities, said his trustee, Paul Urtiew. But when World War II began, he and Yania fled to Austria, where he became ballet master at the Vienna Opera House.

He was sent to a prisoner-of-war camp for a time but escaped, found his wife and made his way to France toward the end of the war. He returned to ballet in the French theater and later stayed in Belgium, awaiting a visa to America.

The Joukowskys came to San Francisco through Canada, with Mr. Joukowsky's first job as a machinist for United Airlines. Soon, however, he was energizing the folk dance community. Mr. Joukowsky had been a student of ethnic dance in Europe, researching the folk dances of Russia, Poland, Macedonia, Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Ukraine and France.

He became involved with the Folk Dance Federation of California and began teaching in both north and south.

Ruth Ruling, a longtime folk dance teacher and dance federation activist, worked with Mr. Joukowsky, writing notes for the many dances he described, performed and taught. The descriptions of those ethnic dances became a book, "The Teaching of Ethnic Dance," published in 1965. He also studied the dances of American Indian tribes.

Mr. Joukowsky became an instructor of classical ballet and a performing ethnic dance workshop at San Francisco State University in 1963, and taught for 11 years. "Among folk dancers during the '50s, '60s and '70s, he was sort of a god, an idol," said Bev Wilder, who taught with Mr. Joukowsky.

At Stanford University, Mr. Joukowsky taught special classes in the Russian folk form, said Susan Cashion, the coordinator of the dance division of the department of drama. "There was just an energy and vitality about Anatol that was unique," she said. "He had an incredible love of dance and life, and could get everybody excited about what he was doing."

Mr. Joukowsky led various exhibition dance groups and taught at the annual folk dance camp

(Continued)

at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, and another in Santa Barbara.

In those years, folk dance had a life, said Denise Heenan. Area colleges could fill folk dance classes, said Heenan, who teaches a Santa Clara folk dance group and one with the Menlo Park Recreation Department. She and Ruling agreed that with the competition of myriad other physical activities, it's harder today to interest young people in preserving the dances of their culture. "It's a case of attrition," Ruling said. "We're all getting older. There are not that many new people."

But if Anatol Joukowsky were still teaching to-

day, she said, "he would have exhibition groups. He was a good dancer himself and an intelligent man. He liked people." The Joukowskys, who were married for 66 years, had lived on the Peninsula for many years, for a time in East Palo Alto and later in Menlo Park. For a number of years, Yania Wassiliewa-Joukowsky operated a dance studio in Palo Alto. She alone survives him. They had no children.

A memorial gathering has been scheduled for 1 p.m. , Sunday, December 6, to plant a tree in Mr. Joukowsky's memory on the San Francisco State campus. Further details may be obtained from Susan Kennedy at (415) 586-5987.

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