

LET'S DANCE

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SOUTH OF THE BORDER

This month we are going to attempt to take a few coals away from Newcastle. South of our border is a vast storehouse of dance and costume material. We shall only attempt a few vignettes. Generous tribute is offered to the colorful tome called "Latin American Costumes" by Bartas and Spicer to which reference should be made for further material.

ARGENTINA

Argentina's Gaucho, the dashing cowboy of the Pampas, belongs as much to Argentina's national tradition as Robin Hood to the English. He has been celebrated by poets and immortalized by the great painter, de Quiros. He has molded the country's musical and dance idioms, and influenced its drama.

The original Gaucho was a semi-nomadic herdsman. Gaucho culture reached its height during the mid-nineteenth century when richly embroidered costumes with silver trappings were worn.

The modern Gaucho costume retains certain elements of the traditional dress of the semi-legendary hero of former times. Today, however, he has become the peon cowhand of the Pampas. Many of the cowboys dress more or less conventionally. But some still wear the typical black hats, baggy trousers tucked into high boots, and colorful ponchos.

The most characteristic feature of his costume is the chiripa, a woven blanket or piece of cloth wrapped around his hips and held in place by a leather belt, handsomely decorated with silver. The chiripa is worn apron-like over the baggy trousers or bombachos which disappear into the boot tops. A short, richly-embroidered jacket is worn over a loose white shirt with a kerchief around the neck. The costume is picturesquely accented with a large black felt hat (Andalusian style), a long silver-handled knife stuck through the belt, and a short riding whip.

The Gaucho costume appears when groups assemble for native folk dances and singing. On such occasions the Gato, the graceful dance of rural Catamarca, is performed to music of plaintive guitars.

In contrast to the Gato is the Melamba which is performed by two Gauchos and accompanied by guitars. One man crouches on the ground and watches. The other achieves an amazing variety of figures emphasized by kicks, leaps, and leg-crossing. Suddenly the music stops. The other man takes the performers place and the dance proceeds as before.

Most characteristic, however, is the dance called the Pericon, the national dance of Argentina and Uruguay (which was once united with Argentina). The Pericon is a group dance in which a number of couples participate. The Gauchos, with flying kerchiefs and tinkling spurs, the girls with flowered skirts and ribboned braids, go through various movements suggestive of life on the Pampas to the accompaniment of improvised stanzas and lusty shouts. Finally the couples unite, each man and girl holding up a white or blue kerchief which when combined, form Argentina's national flag.



CHILE

A Chilean Husso



The Huaso, Cowboy of Chile, although not as colorful as Argentina's Gaucho, nevertheless plays an important role in Chile's national life. He wears boots, ankle-length trousers (preferably blue), a hip length poncho of red, or red combined with soft tans, black, and white. A gay sash completes the attire.

Nowhere perhaps is the Huaso's costume more advantageously seen than in the Cueca, the national dance of Chile, combining elements of both the Spanish Fandango and an Indian War dance.

The dancers form into a large circle. To the accompaniment of guitar, tambourine, harp, and the rhythmic clapping of the dancers, the Huaso steps with his partner into the center of the circle. The girl is haughty at first and avoids her partner. The swaggering Huaso dances around the girl. The dance continues spiritedly, the girl fleeing and the Huaso pursuing, until finally she gives herself to his arms.

BRAZIL

Bahia, the first capital of Brazil, was the birthplace of Brazilian culture and the seat of early Portuguese colonial life. A fusion of African and Portuguese cultures was affected after the importation of Negro slaves from Africa in the sixteenth century.

The Bahiana, the free Negro woman of modern Bahia typifies this Afro-Portuguese tradition. And the Bahianas are as characteristic of Brazilian folk life as the Negro rhythms and percussion instruments in their music and dancing.

Today the modern Bahiana loves personal adornment as keenly as in olden times when, as her master's favorite slave, she was showered with jewels. On religious holidays, the Bahianas dance their exotic and mystic rhythms in riotously-colored, swinging skirts jangling gold bracelets and long chains of beads.

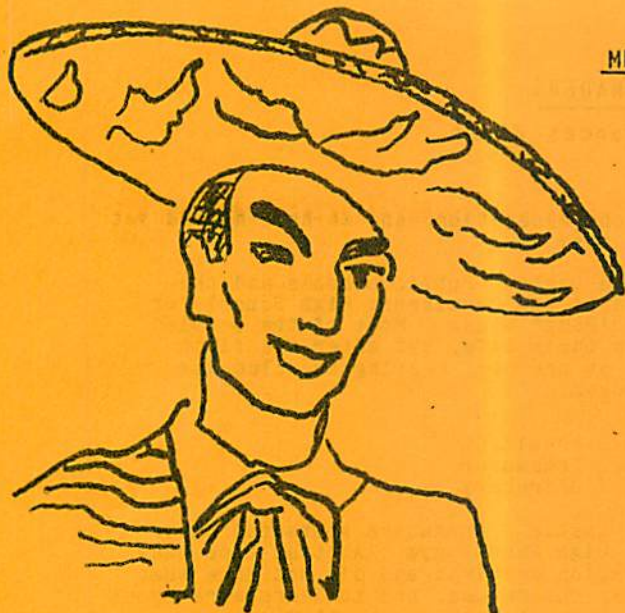
The Bahianan costume is quite striking. The traditional blouses, low-cut and short-sleeved, show beautiful eyelet or lace patterns against ebony skins. The skirts are very full and numerous, in bright pink, green, yellow, or red. Their skirts give them the appearance huge black priestesses, as they walk with stately grace through the streets, bearing on their kerchiefed heads, baskets of tropical fruits. Some go barefoot and others wear wooden clogs.



A Bahiana

MEXICO

By Grace Perryman



Our colorful next-door neighbor has several national costumes. The best known of course is the Charro costume of tight-fitting trousers and short jacket heavily braided and embroidered, topped with the characteristic huge felt sombrero embroidered in gold and silver. The Charro is primarily a horseman and his costume usually harmonizes with his elaborate mount, a carved leather saddle chased with gold and silver.

The woman's dress comparable to the Charro's, and probably as well-known, is the China Poblana costume. The skirt is long and full of red flannel with a black design on it and covered with many sequins to form a sparkling pattern. With this is worn a white blouse with a brightly embroidered or beaded square yoke and a fine rebozo (which is described below) worn over the shoulders, usually crossed in back and the ends pulled under itself at the waist in front. Earrings, bracelets, beads, and ribbons and flowers in the hair complete the costume.

The peon's costume, however, is just as purely Mexican and as characteristic. The Peon's wife wears an ankle-length full cotton skirt over several petticoats. Tucked into the skirt is a low-necked collarless blouse gathered full at the neck and short-sleeved. These may be in any gay color or combinations of colors. The blouse is usually white with lace ribbons and colored bands used as gay trimmings. It is completed with a bright sash or belt. Her hair is usually in two long braided pigtails. Her head is covered with a rebozo which is a long narrow shawl usually in navy blue, purple, or black, but interesting and arresting because Mexican women know how to drape them so gracefully over head and shoulders.

The peon wears a pajama-like suit of cotton. The shirt is usually collarless and can be worn either tucked in or the short-tails pulled tightly about the waist and tied in a large flat bow or knot in front. The shirt may be in a gay shade--brilliant purple, red, pink, yellow, or any gay shade. The trousers are worn long and loose or may be rolled up as high as the knee and fastened tightly about the leg. Sometimes a gay sash is wound about the waist. Every peon has his protection against weather. It is a woven blanket beautifully designed and worn by putting the head through a slit in the center. The sombrero may be embroidered with bright colored string or simply plain, but always large--so broad-brimmed that it keeps off the sun and rain and carries articles while being worn. The men almost never go bareheaded. There is one gesture however, as gracious as any in the world, that is most impressive. Even though the peon may be dirty and ragged, yet when he takes off his broad-brimmed hat and makes a low bow, he makes you feel that in heart he is a gallant courtier, a real gentlemen, rich in manners if poor in money.



CASTLE PROMENADERS

By Frances Glass

While our club is one of the youngest clubs in the Federation, and we have not as yet celebrated our first birthday, we do have a short history.

On January 28, 1944, under the sponsorship of the Oakland Public Schools and the Oakland Recreation Department, forty persons gathered at the Castlemont High School for the first dance session under the direction of Henry "Buzz" Glass. Most of the people attending that evening had never done a folk dance in their life, but after the first meeting were so enthusiastic about folk dancing that at the next meeting the club was officially formed and the name Castle Promenaders chosen.

Mr. Clyde Evans, President
Mrs. Peg Evans, Treasurer
Mrs. Ruby Biel, Secretary

After being organized only two short months the Castle Promenaders sponsored their first Federation Festival in April in the Castlemont High School gym. At that time many of the Castle Promenaders had never attended a Federation Festival and did not know what to expect, so were quite thrilled to see the costumes, the dances, and to learn more about the Federation. Since that time they have been very enthusiastic about all Federation activities and have taken an active part in the Federation.

During the ten months that have elapsed our club has continued to meet the second and fourth Friday of every month at Castlemont. "Buzz" has taught the members all but two or three of the Federation repertoire, plus a number of the new dances that have been introduced at the festivals.

The club has now grown to the point where we have a beginners' section and an advanced section. On our dance nights from 7:30 to 8:00 pm, one of the advanced members teaches the fundamental steps used in most of the dances. From 8:00 to 10:00 the club has a social time, during which "Buzz" introduces new dances for all. The advanced section meets on the same evening from 10:00 to 11:00 pm. This is purely a work period where new and advanced dances are learned. At the present time the group is working on an advanced version of La Chiapaneca, and in the near future will learn two more versions of this dance. Also in the offing are the La Vera and a Mazure. "Buzz" hopes to introduce many more advanced dances not now done by any of the Federation groups.

Recently the club purchased a loud speaker system complete with phonograph and mike. A "just for fun" dancing party is sponsored by the club on the first Saturday of every month at Durant Park. After a full evening of dancing, refreshments are served before the fireplace. Community singing and more dancing usually finishes the evening. We have had guests from many other clubs and we welcome them to join us at any of our parties. You are also welcome on dance nights as well.



BERKELEY CLICKS AGAIN

The B. F. D. are giving something new and different in the way of festivals. It will be given on Sunday, December 10th, from 3:00 pm until late the same night. It will be at the GERMAN PIONEER HOUSE at 52 Home Place East, Oakland. Go out Mac Arthur to Alma Avenue (one block west of Park Boulevard and Oakland HighL, and turn south two blocks to Home Place East, then left to Number 52.

There will be plenty of ice cold beer and maybe a few sandwiches too during the afternoon. Then a buffet supper between six and seven for fifty cents. Entertainment between seven and eight. Then dancing way off into the night.

The atmosphere will be Christmasy of course!

SUBSCRIBERS PLEASE NOTE

This month, two issues of LET'S DANCE are being combined into one. This is to adapt our publishing to the litho technique and get out our paper the very first part of the month. Last month four dances were sent out which might have been a great deal clearer. Therefore the same dances will be sent out this month. The publishing staff wishes to assuage you if you feel you didn't get quite as much as you should; It will be made up sometime during the ensuing year.

Thank you,
Your dear Publishing Staff

BERKELEY FOLK DANCE CONFERENCE

"To share your experiences, your fun and disappointments with fellow dancers; in turn to learn from their experiences; to dance; to improve skills and techniques in the (us) of folk-dancing as a means of serving people; to know the rich fellowship that results from folk-dancing"--all this is offered by this Conference of the Berkeley Folk Dancers.

With that as a greeting, Chairman DAVID BOYCE officially opened the conference of the Berkeley Folk Dancers.

First such venture in the west, the Conference proved to be an amazing hit--successful from the stand-points of both technical enlightenment and downright good fun. From the opening address at 1:30 'til the final waltz at 9:15, there was never a sign of lag.

We were a little disappointed that so many of our own Berkeley members had to miss the festivities, but were very pleased at the response of other Federation Clubs in sending representatives. There were present during the day some 75 BFD'S and 28 guests.

Well--here's what you missed--you who couldn't come; After being greeted at the door by ANN MIKESELL, registered and name-tagged, we got off to a bang-up start with CHERYL KLEINHAMMER leading community singing. This was followed immediately by LUCILLE CZARNOWSKI, associate supervisor of PE at UC, in an address on European folk-dancing--its origin and resistance to the onslaught of modern civilization.

Interest sections next, with MARJORIE ARONOVICI of Stagecraft Studios letting us in on a few of her trade secrets of costume-making, while JIMMIE KLEIN coached the fellows in the art of Square calling.

Then all together again for a group discussion of "Objectives and Standards of Folk Dancers" under the direction of THURSTON CARLETON.

This was followed by more interest sections, during which time RUTH RUBY gave us her approach to the job of teaching, while CONNIE MONCHARSH covered the problem of dance techniques, complete with demonstrations (Oh, brother). And in another part of the Park, CHARLES SMITH and MARY McCAUGHNA were leading discussions on recordings and music. Finally the group on folk art and handcraft met to hear OCTAVIE CARLETON speak on crafts dear to the folk-dancer and to inspect samples of peasant handwork and native dance instruments. Meanwhile, GEORGE MONCHARSH was holding his own on the subject of floor-chairmanship.



And if we hadn't already been raving about Berkeley's Conference--came the food! Following supper, CLARE MELBIN played the piano while C.K. again led in a few songs. Highlight of the evening was a talk given by MADELYNNE GREENE about her recent trip East, on the folk-dance groups she visited, and on comparisons of Eastern and Bay Area techniques, routines and spirit.

And then JON BITTMAN took over--which means assurance of a swell time. It was a fun-session--dancing, stunts, door prizes, and the like 'til closing, which came too soon.

From the November, 1944,
issue of "Berkeley Folk Dancers."

CLUB NEWS

Did ya know.... that the GATESWINGERS get letters from all over the globe... from boys who haven't seen a square dance for months reminiscing about the good times they had on Monday and Thursday nites?.... that Vera Holleuffer is getting out a special Christmas letter to send these boys?.... that Ken Wade recruits his gang from almost every firm in town to square dance for the War Chest drive?.... that Holly Holleuffer designed those lucky "Y".... that Dottie Sanderson was able to surprise us by a visit thanks to W.A.V.E. replacements?.... and that Aileen Wade has opened a new Thursday nite SQUARE Dancing course, not the least attraction being a very clever booklet given to everyone by Aileen and dedicated to the Monday Night GATESWINGERS.

ANNOUNCEMENT-----!

Who says folk dancers and square dancers never agree? Lt. Ed. Carpenter, formerly in charge of the Hoe Downers, and caller par excellence for many local groups has just presented Ellen Davis of the Stanford Folk Dancers with an engagement ring. Ed is located near Marysville.

The Stanford Folk Dancers are active again with a group which meets from 8:00 to 10:00 every Wednesday night in the Women's Gym on a Stanford campus. The group is making plans for a party soon. A number of soldiers on the campus are regular in attendance at these sessions.

The PALOMANIANS are learning the Neapolitan Tarantella, which was exhibited at the September Festival by the Festival Workshop. The group is particularly grateful to Madelynnne Greene for sharing the dance with them. Madelynnne may share it with some of you others too. Wouldn't it be fun to have a second tarantella on our monthly festival programs? It will be included as soon as enough know it.

The DOCEY DOE Club of Redwood City recently installed the officers for the new year at a dinner and party at Sequoia Union High School. Clarice Dechent served as installing officer of the evening. Songs were part of the dinner program, which was followed by dancing at the Women's Clubhouse.

The Folk Dance Federation of California has been invited by the Treasury Department and the City of Oakland to present the big bond show in the Oakland Auditorium on the closing night of the coming Bond Drive. Admission will be by Bond, only, and the Federation is to have ENTIRE CHARGE OF THE PROGRAM. The committee so far for the affair will be: Jon Bittman, Berkeley Folk Dancers, chairman; Mildred Buhler, Redwood City Docey Doe Club; Roy Zellick, Palomanians; Buzz Glass, Castle Promenaders; Madelynnne Greene, Festival Workshop and Chang's; and Ethel Turner, Golden Gate Folk Dancers. Many more assistants will be needed, and we ask you to please do all you can if you are called upon. We know you will.

The date: Saturday Night, December 2nd.

Each club will receive additional publicity and specific directions very soon. So shine up your boots, practice your kazaksakis and starch your petticoats..... 'cause we must live up to our growing reputation for fine performances.

A new group to add to your club list! The Petaluma Folk Dancers were voted in at the last Council meeting.

CLUB NEWS (CONTD)

It is with great pleasure that the Federation now welcomes as members the HOE DOWNERS (formerly, Palo Alto Juniors) whose exhibition of square dancing has been so often a part of the Festival program during the past several months. This group meets every Friday night at the Palo Alto Community Center.

Vilma Lenshaw celebrated her birthday CHANG'S on Friday, November 19th between dances. At a corner table a huge cake was served with wine, and there were some lovely flowers around, too! Many happy returns, Vilma!

Those of you who complained that the publicity about the November 12th Festival came out too late should be enlightened as to the reason. Until two weeks before the festival, we had no place to give it and no one to sponsor it. Dan MacDonald and his FUN CLUB Folk Dancers came to the fore at the last minute and handled the whole thing on very brief notice. We congratulate them for their fine spirit and assistance in the emergency. A good time was had by all.

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ADDITIONAL CLUB NEWS

The GARFIELD FOLK DANCERS proudly, but regretfully, have leaned their vice president, Dan Carrington, to Uncle Sam. He is now a Technical Observer for the Army Services Force. During his stay in New York, he was able to obtain rare folk dance records which he sent to his wife Roselle as a Christmas gift. We are counting the days 'til your return. Good luck, Dan!

The GARFIELD FOLK DANCERS had the pleasure of counting Lieutenant John Watson of the Royal Australian Air Force as one of their guests Thursday night, November 9th. He is on his return from England where he has been stationed for four years. He was introduced to the group by our three members of the "1411 Manage", Marjorie, Erwin, and Mary.

After a largely attended general membership meeting of the Golden Gate group it was decided to have one hour of instruction from 8 - 9 pm each Sunday evening. This to be followed by social dancing until 11 pm. It is hoped that this will appeal to all folk dancers, for beginners who feel they want to take advantage of the instruction and for all others, who may want to brush up, and then really dance. Come one, come all to the Golden Gate -- Sunday evenings at 8 pm.