

# Our Mr. "J"

By . . . Latrelle Hastings

(PETIT ENSEMBLE AND CHANGS INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCERS)

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## Part II - Conclusion (Part I in January Issue)

Has this change from top professional companies to amateur American groups affected his genius touch? His present groups still get the wonderful professional touch of his talent and experience throughout the year which infects them into the love and appreciation of dance on a higher and serious level. The professional comes out in him especially when he is producing his annual Ethnic Dance Concert during Kolo Festival week at Thanksgiving. Just ask anyone who has ever been in it! This concert costs him much time and money and what does he do with any small amount that may or not be left over? He and Yania put on a large party in their Palo Alto studio for all the participating dancers of the concert. He not only puts on this one large concert, but also several smaller ones throughout the year.

Mr. J's children are his "daughters in Petit Ensemble", his pet group, composed of young, unmarried girls from their late teens through their twenties. And believe me, he treats us as daughters, too. He is not just "Mr. J" to us, but "Papa J" as well. This group is his own, and is not plagued by club constitutions, by-laws, and what-not. This is his group of his own chosen dancers devoted entirely to exhibiting ethnic dances under his very capable direction and critical eyes. He strives to have us be a group of able and enthusiastic dancers rather than just a group of pretty, young girls in beautiful costumes. This is truly a family-like group, for not only does everyone just dance together, but we are also friends and company of each other outside our dance classes. "Papa J" is always ready with a soothing word and a bit of his philosophical belief and wonderful view of life to any girl with a problem, personal or otherwise, or to the group as a whole. It is such a wonderful experience to sit down and converse with him about his life and life in general.

## Our Mr. "J"

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Religion is important in Mr. J's life. He belongs to the Russian Orthodox Church. Once he was telling a few of us about his experience with the French Underground Army. He said he was riding with the troop and "bullets were flying everywhere, but none hit me. God was watching me surely".

I had heard that he'd danced with one of the greatest ballerinas that ever lived, the immortal Anna Pavlova. When I asked him if he really did, he replied, "My dear, I did not dance with Pavlova, I danced for her". He was dancing in the "Sleeping Beauty" ballet which Pavlova assisted at rehearsals. She individually singled him out for special commendation. This helped him decide on a lifetime career in dancing.

The Joukowskys know many of the famous dancing stars of today, ballet and ethnic. It is Mr. J's sincere belief and feeling that the ethnic dances should be the primum source and foster parent of ballet. He has believed this for years. Of dance, he says ballet is the leading professional dance today, and someday ballet, ethnic, and modern dance will meld into one school. The technique of ballet is needed for good modern and ethnic dancing, and vice-versa. He also says, "If you dance, you're not normal. Dance is a talent, abnormal, something higher than normal. It is your heart. Your heart giving orders to your brain makes a difference to you in how you dance". He also believes that a person should "be crazy about one thing and know a little about everything".

I truly feel that many people don't realize what a treasure full of culture, wisdom, and experience they have in this amazing couple, Anatol Joukowsky and Yania Wasilieva. How very fortunate we are to have them in America - California! And yet he can best remind us how lucky we are to have America after being through the hardest peasant conditions and having to see his people cruelly treated. Yes, it is they who can truly appreciate to the fullest what America has to offer us, for they know what it is to be without. And yet this marvelous man who has lived and associated with many cultures and speaks many languages, including Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Bulgarian, Czech, Greek, Polish, German, French, and English wants to share his great cultural realm with us who know practically nothing! So you really know Mr. J? Re-meet our Mr. J and Miss Yania with a new appreciation and some food for thought! We all love them both!

