Meet a Girl Who Lives Folk Dancing

The rewards are many and varied, says Pearl Preston, first in a series of personalities to be profiled in LET'S DANCE.

"FOLK DANCING TEACHES many things," says Pearl Preston, one of the Federation's most avid dancers. "It teaches patience, tolerance and neighborliness as well as developing the artistic nature and improving physical coordination."

Mrs. Preston literally lives folk dancing. She has classes in four of San Francisco's parochial schools as well as dance groups five evenings a week. Her Monday night teen-age folk dance group has a registration of 80 students. On the Primary and grade school level, Mrs. Preston teaches at St. Thomas Moore, St. Phillips, St. Paul's and Epiphany. In addition to her classes, Mrs. Preston has taught at Institute, is on the research committee and is the San Francisco Council representative for promoting LET'S DANCE.

"Just think," said Mrs. Preston. "A dozen years ago, I didn't know what the word folk dancing meant."

That was before a group of friends persuaded her to attend a YLI folk dance group.

"From that night on, I couldn't stay away from folk dancing," Mrs. Preston exclaimed.

What did she do before folk dancing came into her life?

"Well," said Mrs. Preston, hesitating just an instant. "I used to be pretty good at surf casting."

"Pretty good" means a collection of medals—and achieving Woman's World Championship in surf casting 17 years ago.

During the hours Mrs. Preston is away from folk dancing she takes care of her house and two sons. There is Bob, 21, a graduate of State College and a reserve in the Air Force. And there is Gary, 14, a student at Riordan High School.

Hand-in-hand with Mrs. Preston's folk-dance activities is her penchant for folk-dance costumes. Perhaps her most outstanding dress is the Italian costume a friend brought from Italy. The outfit, made especially for Mrs. Preston, was designed after a purse-doll costume.

The full skirt is burnt orange taffeta with two rows of double rick-rack (blue and white) and a row of gold braid trim. The white organdy blouse has white flower embroidery on the puff sleeves. The bodice is black with ribbons to match the skirt. The apron is green and black taffeta with felt flower applique. To complete the costume Mrs. Preston wears a headdress made to duplicate the apron color scheme with the lining of the burnt orange taffeta. Of course Mrs. Preston carries her purse doll when she wears the costume.

To complete statistics on Mrs. Preston, she is a native San Franciscan and her parents came from northern Italy. She can talk "shop" any day of the week to her sisters, Rita Fanucchi and Angela Shea. Rita has folk dance classes three nights a week and Angela — although she doesn't teach dancing—enjoys kicking up her heels at a folk-dance party.

—*Anne Alexander.*

COSTUME FROM ITALY — Pearl Preston models costume *made especially* for her in Italy. It was designed after a purse doll.

PEASANT GIRL—This smiling Italian peasant girl on the Isle of Capri displays her spools of wool and silken threads with which she handlooms handsome shawls.
—*ENIT photo.*

The Granddaddies of Dance

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the step pattern characteristic of the dance—five steps on the floor and a little or big jump into the air. The fifth count was always in the air—on the fifth count the dancers always executed either a little or a big jump and finished in cadent position on the count of six. In the Tourdion the jump was small, the jump for the Galliard was big, and in the Volte, the man lifted his partner on the count of five and perhaps with a turn brought her down on count six. This same style of lift is found today in our Landler and at the finish of many fast ¾ meter dances. In England at the time of the Volte, the jump or leap was called a "caper", and as such can be found in many of Shakespear's writings—"I can cut a caper", from Twelfth Night.

Probably an old, though not the gayest, Galliard tune is "God Save the King" ("My Country 'Tis of Thee.") Musically the Galliard is of great importance as it became the gay dance following the slow Pavane, and so the Suite was born.

Other important court forms of Italian origin are the Courante and the Gigue. It has been noted on good authority that the Courante is of two origins: Italy and the French province of Poiton. Both sources are probably correct. The first form was called Corrente (from the Latin word "curro", meaning "to run"), and this form was said to have come from Italy. It is in quick triple time, sometimes ¾ and sometimes ⅜. Catherine de Medici undoubtedly brought this dance directly from Italy, and with the exception of the Minuet no other dance sustained such popularity in the court (1550-1750).

The most interesting development of the Courante is the change in metric structure. Music that had been consistently ¾ meter was changed so that two measures of ¾ was now one measure of 6/4. Interesting rhythmic changes to music that had heretofore been dull were effected by writing some measures with a pulse or accent on 1 and 4 (*1* 2 3 *4 5* 6) and some with a pulse or accent on 1, 3 and 5. There was no rule as to when these changes were to occur, and a different rhythmic scheme may be found in each written Courante. So not only does the dance form of the Courante, but also the instrumental form of the Courante hold an important place in music and about 1620 it became the second movement of the four-part classic suite.

The Gigue is a very old dance form and probably belongs to many countries. The form best known, however, is the one that developed from the 16th century Irish or English jig. In music the Italian giga is much quicker than the French form with quick running passages over a harmonic basis, very similar to the Courante.

And so Italy, through these dances and musical forms of the Baroque period, contributed to the entire field of music—in the birth of the Suite. It was from this same Suite that the most important musical form of the entire classic period was developed, the Sonata form. This developmental period was one in which all great music was dance music, and one in which Italy served the whole picture of dance not only with its folk songs and folk dance music, but also with its court dances and court music.