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Camp is Coming!

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The deadline for registering for Texas Camp 2007 is fast approaching! November 7 is the last day that a camp registration can be postmarked; applications postmarked afterwards won't be accepted.

We're looking forward to a wonderful weekend of Romanian dances taught by Cristian Florescu and Sonia Dion, salsa and Latin dances taught by Nathan Zamaniego, singing lessons from Anne-Louise Schaffer, camp band sessions led by Don Weeda, and great food cooked by Laura LaGue.

Don't forget to pack all the essentials for a fun weekend: sheets, blankets, and pillow; an extra sheet or two to hang on your bunk if you want more privacy; towels and washcloth; toiletries and necessary medications; clothes for any possible weather and extra hangers; dancing shoes and musical instruments; costumes; ear plugs; cell phone charger; funds to spend at the Balkan Bazaar....

Have you decided on your costumes for the camp parties yet? Thursday night is the Diamond Jubilee party in honor of the 60th annual Camp. Perhaps you'll want to wear a favorite international costume, or maybe you'd rather play with the diamond theme and show up in your most glittery outfit. (Liberace? Rhinestone Cowboy? Arizona Diamondbacks?).

On Friday night, we'll celebrate the Romanian half of the weekend by Transforming Transylvania. Show us what that theme means to you! (Traditional costume or Romanian robots? King John Sigismund or Dr. Frankenfurter? Vlad the Impaler or Count von Count?)

For Saturday, we'll heat up the last night of the party with Salsa Sizzle. Latin costume (that's Latin *America*, though if you really want to go the Roman or Medieval Church Latin route, great!), fiery costumes (please observe the local fire code), anything hot or peppery....

We look forward to seeing everyone at Thanksgiving!

**Camp Trivia
from Wally Washington**

This is not only the 60th anniversary of Texas Thanksgiving Camp, but it is the 30th anniversary of having it at the Greene Family Camp; so half the Texas Camps have been held at Greene Family Camp!



From the Editor - The Camp Experience

By the time you read this, you will have made your plans for Thanksgiving week. You will either be spending the time at Texas Camp, or elsewhere. If "elsewhere" is your choice, I wish you a wonderful and safe holiday. If Texas Camp is your choice, I look forward to seeing people I know and meeting people I don't know, and hope you share the same anticipations. My first big dance camp experience was quite overwhelming; I was a fairly new dancer and was also new to the region, so the number of dances I didn't know, coupled with the number of dancers I didn't know left me feeling a bit isolated. I hope that as you see faces you don't recognize, you will introduce yourself *and* will go out of your way to check back with them throughout the weekend to be sure they are feeling comfortable. I really appreciated the people who did that for me at my first big camp. You never know who may turn out to become a valued friend. In the end, it's the "folks" who make the "folk dancing." Happy Thanksgiving!

About the contributors

Many thanks to all who contributed news, articles, or photos for this issue of the newsletter. If you would like to see your own name in print here, send news! When you read the calendar items and then attend the events advertised, please send your feedback and share your experiences and photos. Texas is a big state with lots of events. We can't all get to every event but love to read about them. editor@tifd.org

In this issue we heard from Franklin Houston of Austin, TX (featured artist in a recent issue of this newsletter); Bart Carpenter, formerly of Dallas, now of Harrisburg, PA (incidentally, Bart is active in coordinating teaching tours for teachers from Europe, including recent visits from Daniela Ivanova and Daniel Sandu to Texas and Oklahoma); Elaine Moczygemba of Hobson, TX (ask her if she knows anything about bees); Anne-Louise Schaffer, who will be teaching Croatian singing at camp this year; and David Holcombe, artistic director of the Louisiana Czech Heritage Dancers in Libuse, LA.

Deadline for the next issue of TIFD News is January 18

The TIFD Quarterly Newsletter is published on the first of the month, in February, May, August, and November; the eLetter is sent on the first of the remaining months. Uncertain who to send your news to? Send to Sally and Deborah, both at editor@tifd.org, and we will sort it out from there.

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CALENDAR LISTINGS: Send email to editor@tifd.org and webmaster@tifd.org.

ADDRESS CHANGES: For newsletter mailing list or TIFD Member Directory, contact TIFD, PO Box 4516, Austin, TX 78765, Attention: Chuck Roth, 512-453-8936, tifd@austin.rr.com.

SOUTHWEST FOLK DANCE DIRECTORY: Send additions and corrections to Leslie Gompf, SWFDD@tifd.org.

GENERAL CONTRIBUTIONS: Email editor@tifd.org or mail to TIFD News, PO Box 4516, Austin, TX 78765

TIFD Board of Directors

Chris Broad, President	713-791-1088	guy9bro@yahoo.com
Katie Pedersen, Vice President	281-463-2790	kpedersen2000@hotmail.com
Lisa Horn, Secretary	713-208-1491	lisaehorn@sbcglobal.net
Anne Alexander	512-453-4463	cervuli@mail.utexas.edu
Tom Miller	405-771-5021	tridanman@yahoo.com
Mike Revesz	512-302-5880	mrevesz@austin.rr.com
Misi Tsurikov	512-372-9193	tsurikov@mailcan.com
Rowena Young	713-806-3785	rowenay@stevesfamily.net
TIFD Treasurer: Georgia Horn	281-242-0598	georgiahorn@alltel.net
TIFD News Editor: Sally Jenkins	918-335-5908	dansingsal@hotmail.com
Membership Chair: Chuck Roth	512-453-8936	croth@austin.rr.com
Texas Camp Co-chairs: Georgia Horn and Lisa Horn		

TIFD Board elections

TIFD has a nine-member Board of Trustees. Board members serve a three-year term, with three members elected each December. The Board normally meets four times a year to oversee TIFD operations including Texas Camp, publications, and promoting folk dancing in Texas and surrounding states. Please consider running for TIFD Board this year. Members wishing to run for Board should fill out a copy of the TIFD Board of Trustees Filing Petition, which can be downloaded from www.tifd.org

Next Board Meeting: 11:00 a.m. Thursday, November 22, 2007, at Texas Camp. TIFD members should notify Chris Broad if they want to attend or if they have an issue they would like the Board to consider.

TIFD Membership

If you have registered for Texas Camp this year, your membership dues are already paid for 2008. If you are not attending camp, please renew your membership now. You can find a membership form at www.tifd.org. Dues are still only \$15 for an individual or \$25 for a family membership. Your continuing support of TIFD will be much appreciated.

News from Local Groups

Dallas News

The last I heard, the Dallas group was gearing up for the Greek Food Festival of Dallas (www.greekfestivalofdallas.com) by teaching a series of Greek dances prior to Saturday night (Sept 29) where they planned to meet as a group and dance to the bands, eating too much Souvlaki and drinking too much Ouzo and doing way too much Syrtos.

Oklahoma City IFD News

At Old Country Weekend this year the teacher, Yuli Yordanov, was great, young(?) and we did some serious ruchenitsa. He didn't overload us either, only 8 1/2 dances. (*8-1/2? Tommy, you got some 'splainin' to do! -ed.*) Carol Barry wrote an excellent introduction for the syllabus and included the information that Yuli sings (he conducted a mini-workshop in singing as well as the regular workshop for dance) and plays tupan and tambura.

Besides dancing, OKC IFD members Beverley Rapp, Noel Osborn, and Jock Campbell planned an outing for the club to the geologically unique Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Club members hiked, picnicked, and learned a lot about the natural world. Among other interesting sights, they saw bison, a rattlesnake, a tarantula, and a tarantula wasp.

Calendar

November 2-4, 2007 *Fire Ant Frolic* contra dance weekend, Austin, TX. Susan Michaels calling with the Syncopaths and Joseph Pimentel calling with Contraptions. Susan and the Syncopaths were a great hit at Solefest in Springfield, MO and you all know Joseph. This is a can't-miss weekend. www.fireantfrolic.com

November 3-12, 2007 *Wurstfest*, Landa Park, New Braunfels, TX. German food, music, dance, and heritage. Go to www.wurstfest.com for information.

November 9-11, 2007 *Mt. Nebo Dance Weekend* at Mt. Nebo State Park, Arkansas. Sponsored by the Arkansas Country Dance Society. Info Fran Laface, fcclaface@swbell.net

November 10-11, 2007 *Louisiana Czech Heritage Dancers* workshop. Children's and adult dances. See story in this issue. daniho402@gmail.com

November 16-18, 2007 *Pilgrim's Progression Contra Dance Weekend*, Lawrence, KS. Caller Sue Rosen, music Phantom Power. www.lawrencebardance.org

November 22-25, 2007 *Texas Camp*, 60th anniversary. www.tifd.org

December 28-31, 2007 *Fiddler's Dream*, Lake Texoma, OK (between Dallas and OKC). Worth it just for the T-shirt! www.nttds.org

January 2008 - looks like *Hibernation Month* for Dancers - ed. If you know of January events, send them to editor@tifd.org

February 15-17, 2008 *Bayou Bedlam*, Houston. Band: KGB. Caller: Carol Ormand. Info: www.hatds.org or bb08@hatds.org

February 8-10, 2008 *English Country Dance* in Oklahoma City, with Bare Necessities playing live music. Watch for more details as date approaches.

March 14-16, 2008 *50th Annual San Antonio Folk Dance Festival*. More details in the next newsletter.

Book Review: A Collaborative Effort

Balkan Fascination: Creating an Alternative Music Culture in America, by Mirjana Laušević (1966-2007), Oxford University Press, 2007.

From Sally Jenkins of Bartlesville, OK

Most of my folk dance books are collections of instructions. I have looked at (and passed over) a number of highly academic treatises. *Balkan Fascination* is one of the few folk dance books that is neither a collection of dance notes nor a dense, jargon-filled academic tome. It is very accessible to the average adult reader. The author, who was born in the former Yugoslavia but came to the U.S. as a young woman, started out to examine why so many Americans *with no ethnic or family ties to the Balkans* were so deeply involved in the music, dance, and lore of the region. The author traces the history and roots of international folk dancing in America, then zeroes in on Balkan dances. The frequent misspellings annoyed me, and I hope if it is ever revised, the publisher will employ a qualified proofreader.

Besides the CD/DVD, the book contains extensive footnotes and bibliographic references. Anyone who enjoys the music and dance of the Balkans will find something to enjoy and to learn from *Balkan Fascination*. **And it will be available for sale at this year's (2007) Texas Camp for \$35 from The Balkan Bazaar.**

From Bart Carpenter

Bart Carpenter was prominent in the Dallas IFD in the late 1970s but has lived and danced in Pennsylvania for the past 25 years. His report:

"Fascinated" by the concept of a sociological study of American folkies, I read it cover-to-cover in a few days (before releasing it to my wife). We were mesmerized by the DVD footage included with the book. You can read a little about, say, Michael Ginsburg, then you slip in the DVD and watch him in action.

The narrative is cross-referenced to both the DVD and the CD, and when the author writes about a particular singer or musician she also gives you the track reference to the DVD-CD. You play it face up as a DVD and face down as a CD.

The academic focus was interesting. I felt like a bug under a microscope—sort of like an aborigine reading Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*. This professor was writing about my world as if it were an exotic culture. The narrative

is a reflection on her research, and draws heavily on the eefc* archive/listserv and “Balkan camp” (especially Mendocino) as the sine qua non of American folk dancing. How little she knows of active dancing in Middle America places like Albuquerque or Milwaukee. But this is a minor quibble.

I have a much greater understanding of the historical nature of folk dance in America, including people I have never met, like Dick Crum and Michael Herman. One of our recurring discussion topics is “the future of folk dancing” in the post-Baby Boom era—and I can’t help but wonder if folks didn’t have the same discussion in the 1940s or 1950s. I also wonder what an ethnomusicologist will write about turn-of-the-century dancing in another 50 years.

From Franklin Houston of Austin, TX

Balkan Fascination explores the history of Balkan music (and, in a more general way, international folk dancing) in the United States over the past century. I found the book a thought-provoking commentary on what makes folk dancers and folk dance groups tick, as well as triggering revelations on what has helped and hurt the growth of Balkan and international folk dancing. Mirjana’s research is thorough, and the writing style flows well, despite the academic pace and tone.

Here are some of Mirjana’s observations as I perceived them:

The average Balkan folk dancer is Caucasian, 42 years old, urban, and highly educated, and has a professional vocation.

The attraction of folk dancing is “virtual tourism,” the opportunity to experience representations (both accurate and inaccurate) of other cultures, although the peasant/pastoral/rural qualities adopted by folk dancers are not adopted by “ethnics.”

Folk dancing is very accessible, as it doesn’t require social graces or socializing at dance events in order to participate.

International folk dancing has shifted over the last 100 years from “community” identification and “group and national interest” to self-fulfillment. It frequently invokes the local group’s orthodoxy and rules, is usually done to recorded music, and can easily slip into “calisthenics done to a rhythm.”

Disconnectedness from the material and the culture in which it was created tends to result in teaching without attention to style and detail

Cultural understanding comes from continued contact and thoughtful engagement with the people; the music and dance can never be reduced (in a true cultural sense) to notes, rhythms and step patterns.

Folk dancers have shifted from socializing and “communal work” to the acquisition of new repertoire; dancers want the product, not the process. The desire to accumulate has led to a hunger for new step patterns and dance tunes in order to quantify and assess one’s dedication and knowledge and to address one’s concern with the authenticity of music and dance material; this can be called a “museum attitude,” the collecting of authentic material and not letting it change, which discourages personal expression and enhancement of the experience, making it different from “popular” dance.

South Texas Polish Dancers perform by Elaine Moczygemba

The Dlugosz/Dugosh family of Bandera and other areas had a summer family reunion along the Medina River near the site of the family’s old molasses mill. Some of the land near the site had been sold and became the Flying A Resort.

For this reunion at the resort, Elenora Dugosh Goodley and her brother Roy Dugosh invited the South Texas Polish Folk Dancers to perform since the Dlugosz family was among the first Silesian settlers to Texas in 1854.



Six members of the dance group put on a lively program of dance and song and enjoyed the banquet that was served.

In this photo of the South Texas Polish Folk Dancers: Edwina Scinta, Elaine Moczygemba, George Parsley, Stephen Schoenfeldt, Karine von Fritsch, Tzarina Victoria von Fritsch.

* eefc = East European Folklife Center, www.eefc.org

The Georgian State Dance Company: A Review

Contributed by Anne-Louise Schaffer

Miller Outdoor Theater, Houston
Sunday, September 30, 2007

I first saw this group perform in 1974 in Washington, D.C., during its first tour of the U.S., and I remember being blown away by the show-stopping spectacle they presented. So I was curious to see if, 30-plus years later, they would live up to my expectations. I am now happy to report that Moiseyev is alive and well and living in Tbilisi!

The company, founded in 1945 by Nina Ramishvili and her husband Iliko Sukhishvili, both professional ballet dancers, is now directed by their son, Tengiz Sukhishvili, with the chief choreographer being their grandson, Ilia Sukhishvili, Jr. This unbroken tradition has preserved the style of folkloric dance ensembles created by Igor Moiseyev in Russia during the Soviet era, which is characterized by large numbers of dancers in perfect lines, rows, and circles moving in perfect unison through elaborate choreographies.

In this regard, the current company does it to perfection. One dance number near the beginning of the evening featured a line of 32 men (!), very closely linked in a tight arm-hold, moving slowly with tiny steps across the stage diagonally from the wings at upstage left to downstage right and back into the wings. The line was so straight it left me breathless. Later in the evening, men dressed in black and women in white, moving slowly and elegantly, did the classic pin-wheel figure (where a line breaks in half, one part swirls

around to face the other direction, and both rotate around a center point). But this line broke over and over with unbelievable precision, creating stunning visual geometry.

The evening was a continuous cornucopia of dance numbers, each flowing from one to another, broken only by an intermission and one long musical set spotlighting the ten musicians. Wearing black and seated evenly spaced across the stage against a red-lit backdrop, the musicians set the black-and-red tone for the entire evening. And the music? Two words sum it up: percussion rules!

The dancers in the company are all ballet-trained. The women glide smoothly around the stage wearing long flowing skirts that hide their tiny steps, resembling fairies floating across the surface. Their graceful arms and hands trace seductive undulations in the air, like small branches blowing in the breeze. One unusual dance for three women was inspired by a Byzantine fresco of a queen dressed in a jeweled gown and crown. The similarly dressed dancers, standing back-to-back, rotated slowly, looking like carved statues on a turning column. The second half of the program included several numbers in which the women—in a bow to modern times—did many of the fast steps that are characteristic of the men's dances.

As expected, the men were the stars of the show. Their astounding leaps, blinding spins, and rapid footwork are legendary. They kept their torsos straight and stiff while moving their legs and feet in blurring scissors steps and kicks...all while moving across the stage! Most of the time they were clad in soft tight-fitting black knee-high boots, slim black pants, black shirts, and contrasting full-skirted over-coats called *chokhas*, which were decorated with rows of bullet-holders on their chests. These and the daggers at their waists projected a forceful and intimidating military presence. This appropriately reflects Georgia's long tradition of mountain fighters, who fiercely defended this small mountainous Caucasian country from invasions over the centuries by Mongols, Persians, Turks, Arabs, and others. One exciting choreographed swordfight using short sabers and small shields brought this to life, with real sparks flying off in all directions as sabers clashed.

Georgian men are most famous, however, for their toe-dancing. Unlike classical ballet dancers who dance on the tips of their



toes using cotton wadding and a blocked shoe, the men who specialize in this type of dancing bandage their toes and dance on the curled-under knuckles of their feet, using only close-fitting, pliable leather boots. It takes years of training to build up the strength and balance to do this safely and effectively. When toe-dancing was done in the court couple dances, the men evoked storks courting and preening as they circled around the females. When used in other numbers while wearing black shirts with full sleeves extending a foot or two beyond their hands, the men's raised arms gave the impression of vultures about to pounce on their prey.



It was no surprise that the large audience went wild each time the men pulled out all the stops at the end of several dance numbers; this show of competitive virtuosity is another Moiseyev staple. The eight soloists each did their trademark “tricks”—knee-turns around the stage, leaps onto curled-under toes, flips and somersaults, dizzying spins in place, and one-armed hand-stands (precursors of break-dancing?)—all at a furious speed. An enthusiastic standing ovation at the end of the night forced multiple curtain calls and a short encore of the last number. As for me, I was exhausted and starving after all that strenuous dancing, and looked forward to going home and chowing down!

International Accordion Festival

The International Accordion Festival in San Antonio in mid-October was again a huge success, with participants and audience members from all over the world. Anyone who ever thought accordions were just for polkas is re-thinking that idea now! Franklin Houston attended this year, and had this thoughtful reflection (coupled with his reading of *Balkan Fascination*, reported elsewhere in this newsletter):

“Growing” folk dancing will require making it more meaningful and relevant to potential dancers, particularly within the context of their own life experiences. The folk dancing environment must become more like the popular dancing environment. A great example occurred at the International Accordion Festival in San Antonio recently. I was doing a simple Roma line dance next to a young man who was not a folk dancer, but who had obvious dance skills and was really enjoying the dance, due in no small part to the fantastic live music provided by Yuri Yunakov, his Roma ensemble, and Bulgarian accordionist Milen Slavov. He commented to me that it was not too unlike hip-hop dancing, which he spontaneously incorporated into the next line dance *without disturbing the dancers on either side of him*. If folk dancers want to “grow” their groups, they need to offer a dynamic cultural experience that speaks to the young folk who have traditionally been the focus of folk dancing around the world.

Obviously, the International Accordion Festival provided not only world-class entertainment, but room for thoughtfulness as well.

Trivia - Ermine from Armenia

The stoat is related to weasels, ferrets, and badgers. For most of the year, it is brown with an off-white belly. In winter, in regions that experience an inch or more of snow for at least forty days of the year, such as Armenia, the animal becomes white all over (except for the tip of the tail). This thick white fur is known as “ermine,” a term originating from the Latin phrase “*Armenius mūs*” (“Armenian rat”). Ermine was a trade item offered by Armenian merchants to the royalty of Europe.



Czech Workshop in Louisiana

The Louisiana Czech Heritage Dancers will be hosting Alice Janotova from the Czech Republic on November 10-11 at Libuse, Louisiana. She will be teaching both children's and adult dances. On Saturday, November 10, there will also be a kraslice making demonstration in the context of the Sugar Day at Kent House in Alexandria.

Kraslice are Easter eggs, made using a wax-resist technique. In Ukraine, they are known as Pysanki (singular, pysanka). You use a small metal funnel, called a kitska, and you melt beeswax, then draw on the egg. You then dye the egg, and repeat the process of applying wax and dye until the egg goes in the black dye. The wax is then melted off and the egg can be emptied and varnished. Kraslice are religious objects, which are blessed by the priest on Easter and then exchanged, or buried in the fields, or placed in the home for good luck. It is an art form done all over Eastern Europe from Lithuania down to Bulgaria. The most advanced techniques are used in Ukraine. Legend has it that the world will end when the last pysanka is made.

As for Sugar Day, our only surviving antebellum house in this area is the Kent House. Each year they fire up the kettles and make sugar from molasses. The day is dedicated to traditional art forms of which kraslice are one of many. Just outside of Alexandria are the two villages of Kolin and Libuse, Louisiana. They were founded in the 1900's by Czech immigrants who wanted to preserve their culture. It is the only Czech colony in Louisiana and has a surprisingly active community with a Louisiana Czech Heritage Association and the Louisiana Czech Heritage Dancers. Each year on the second weekend in March, they hold the Louisiana Czech Festival, which is a family oriented day of dancing, kraslice sales, and baked good sales, including kolaches, poppy cake, and strudel.

Alexandria is about 4 hours from Houston and about the same from New Orleans. If you've never had Czech kolaches, it's worth the drive!

For specifics, please contact David Holcombe daniho402@gmail.com. Please mention Czech Dance Workshop in your subject line.



Above: Kolaches
Below: Kraslice



In the News: Smoking Bans Save Accordions

The 2004 ban on smoking in Ireland has not only improved the air in pubs, but also has improved the quality of music, Dublin physicians report.

Particulates from secondhand smoke accumulate within and damage accordions, concertinas, melodeons and Uilleann bagpipes, which are favored by musicians for their traditional pub sessions.

The deposits on reeds in the instruments can become so thick that they change the instrument's pitch. One repairer said it was even possible to identify the key most commonly used by a musician from the distribution of particulates around specific reeds in his instrument.

The team contacted six of seven instrument repairers in Dublin, and all reported that damage to those instruments had declined sharply since the ban, which applies in virtually all public spaces.

The ban may have been controversial among smokers, they wrote, but it "has been music to the ears of the people of Ireland."