

GRAPEVINE



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Grapevine is the newsletter of the Perth International Folk Dance Group. The Group meets Monday evenings at **St Margarets Church Hall in Nedlands (Cnr Tyrell and Elizabeth)**. The evenings begin at 7:00pm with a 90 minute dance lesson, followed by general dancing until late. For further information please call John ((08) 9444 4736) or Joy (9386 7438)

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President's Report for 1999

The last year of the century has almost gone and it seems to have been another good year for the Group. Membership is up, Monday attendance has been steady and our financial situation has improved throughout the year.

The performance group has had a good year with regular events such as Fairbridge; involvement in new events such as the Multicultural Week, dancing in Forrest Place in the city; the Turkish Republic celebration in Victoria Park and more recently at the Darlington Arts Festival. The key performance event of the year was clearly the OzConcert in the Entertainment Centre on Australia Day. The extended performance group presented a Bulgarian programme in front of a packed house of over 9,000 people. A great experience to all involved and congratulations to John for his choreography.

We continued with the recent trend of a beginner's course although numbers were down on last year. This was followed by John turning his focus to Cajun workshops which ran in Fremantle until late October. Thanks go to John and Palenque.

The major workshop event for the year was given by André van de Plas in July. He introduced 13 new dances which as usual were well choreographed with great music.

In October Sara teamed up with Stuart Amphill for a morning workshop of Israeli partner dances. The workshop was well attended and well received.

In addition to the 16 new workshop dances, Monday night lessons also covered a further 80 dances. This year saw the introduction of Laurel de Vietri as a new teacher focusing on dances from central and southern France. In October Michiko Koike taught us a Japanese dance from Tokyo. Thanks go to them for their efforts. And many thanks of course to our regular teachers Palenque, Eve, Sara and John. We missed Eve for 3-months when she went 'up north' on long-service leave. Eve is off again soon, this time with Palenque, on a two-month holiday. Bon voyage!

We had few Committee meetings and fewer issues of Grapevine during the year but I do not see that as a big problem.

So what of next year, the year 2000? Well, I am looking forward to some good visiting teachers. I am also hoping that we can invite some of our more experienced dancers to reintroduce some of their favourite dances that we have 'lost' over the years. I'll set that as a challenge to you! Not necessarily to teach for a whole month, just to cover one or two dances to support the regular teachers.

So at the end of 1999 I say 'thanks' to all of you who helped or were involved in making this another good year for the Group.

All the very best for 2000!!

Martin Williams, President, PIFDG

**All the best for Christmas
and have a
Happy New Century!!**

Stop Press

We have just heard that we will not be dancing at OzConcert 2000. So the performers can relax. They now have lots of spare rehearsal time.

Contributions to *Grapevine*

1999 has been another year of travel for many in the Group including Tony Hoar who visited Réunion and Madagascar . We like to encourage articles on these world travels and trips. Do you have a story?

This month we focus on reports from Joy Hill and from Laurel de Vietri on their foreign trips:

Ramblings Overseas Of A Dancer Who Didn't Dance For Six Months

By Joy Hill

My dancing friends were incredulous - "Do you really mean you didn't do **ANY** dancing while you were away for six months?" Er, well, no, I didn't. It just happened that during the time we were overseas, for once I just wasn't in the right place at the right time to jag any dancing. On two previous trips to Europe I've attended the week-long Machol Europa in England. Machol Europa is the top Israeli dance seminar attended by about two hundred dancers from about thirty or so different countries. It is really a wonderful feeling to be part of a large group all dancing together. Machol Europa has taken place annually for the past twenty-three years at the De Montfort University in Bedford about an hour north of London. (Have you ever noticed that Londoners never quote distances in miles/kilometres but rather by the length of time it takes to drive to a destination?)

So instead of this being an article about folk dancing I did while overseas, it will be about why I **didn't** do or see any dancing.

Our six months began on tropical islands in the south west Indian Ocean. On Reunion Island we stayed with Sahondra (who has visited PIFDG three or four times), her surgeon husband Fleuris, and their three teenage boys. Staying with someone who is accustomed to serving large meals to four large men, and combined with the seven or eight magnificent French cheeses which were produced at every *déjeuner* and *diner* didn't help my diet very much. Before one meal Sahondra announced that she was preparing a popular Malagasy dish which sounded like "bread and rice". This didn't sound as appetising as her usual cooking until we discovered that "bread" is a green vegetable rather like spinach.. And very nice it was too. Reunion Island is something of a pinprick on most maps but there are many interesting things to see and do including an active volcano and some marvelous trekking through the cirques (a collapsed extinct volcano).

And the weather was perfect - all meals were eaten on the terrace with an expansive view of the sea - in May.

In Madagascar we were trying so hard to avoid becoming victims of the epidemic of cholera which began **after** we had had inoculations for seven other things that we didn't chase up any dancing. We've never washed our hands so often in our lives - and with antiseptic soap too. Twice our car had to stop at police road blocks where everyone was issued with tablets which supposedly helped you to avoid cholera or which may have reduced its severity, ie by preventing your death!! Fortunately we carried our own bottled water and cups as we didn't fancy the water or cups on issue. We also wondered if they were joking when we were told to wash our hands in a dirty looking tap nearby - no antiseptic soap there. There must be some folk-dancing in Madagascar as I bought a lovely wall hanging of dancers and musicians and also a tablecloth with dancers embroidered on it. Ron had a problem keeping me away from the markets and stalls selling embroidery.

Our next tropical island was Rodrigues - 600 km north-east of Mauritius and now part of Mauritius but nothing like it in "feel". Fortunately there were very few tourists – only the French and Mauritians seem to know of its existence. And on Rodrigues we **did** watch a performance of Segha dancing. The costumes were very colourful with full skirts for the women and matching shirts for the men. The Rodrigean version of the Segha is danced in sets of eight. I was asked to join in at the end but it looked too energetic. Seven weeks on tropical islands had made me even lazier than usual.

Rodrigues' dimensions are very nearly the same as Rottneest but it is mountainous with peaks up to 400m high and thick forest threaded with narrow winding roads along which the small crowded local buses bumped. But we loved Rodrigues - the early morning market (hot, spicy chili sauces), the clothing of the children (tiny girls wearing ornate nylon dresses setting off their brown skins) and the shy friendliness of the people. Not to mention the G and T's by the beach at sunset. Dreamy.

A twelve-hour flight from Mauritius took us to Belgium. On long-haul flights I love visiting the flight deck. If you time your request right you can share God's view – from about 35,000 feet up I saw the Sahara Desert, the eastern coast of Italy plus an island or two, and the Swiss Alps. Then friends, gardens and art galleries to see in Belgium before catching a car ferry to England.

Bliss to be able to converse in English after struggling with French in the tropics. The Society of International Folk Dancing in England publishes a list of venues and times of international dancing groups but many of these are in recess during July and August – the "summer". I have previously enjoyed visiting the group at Winchester but unfortunately wasn't anywhere near Winchester at the right time on this visit. The Winchester group dances roughly the same mix of dances as PIFDG.

So much to see and do in England - lots of friends to see or telephone, lots of magnificent gardens (I'm impressed by topiary), a total eclipse of the sun which was not seen in Australia, a play at Stratford-upon-Avon, a motor museum in the Cotswolds, the Gustav Holst Birthplace museum in Cheltenham, lots of National trust properties, and a needle museum (do you get the point?). Lee Jones, a member of PIFDG who has been living in England for some time, persuaded us to join the YHA and visit her and her boyfriend who is the warden at the YHA near Sherwood Forest. So we used YHA's in the Lake District and in the Bronte country in Yorkshire. But still no folk dancing.

We crossed the English Channel again by car ferry (you wouldn't catch us on the Chunnel train) from Portsmouth to Caen in France. In Caen we spent a day at the Peace Memorial Museum where Ron was presented with two medals for being a veteran of the D-Day landings in Normandy in 1944 which began the liberation of Europe. We also paid our third visit to the eighth wonder of the world - the Bayeux Tapestry - a work of embroidered art seventy metres long and nine hundred years old which tells the story of William the Conqueror's conquest of England in 1066. We were graphically reminded of the atrocities of war at a small village called Oradour-sur-Glane where on a summer Saturday afternoon in 1944 the Nazi S.S. forced all the men to the outskirts of the village and herded all the women and children into the church. The men were then shot and the church and the rest of the village set on fire. Six hundred and forty-two people perished in about two hours. There were two war crimes trials but no conclusive reason for the massacre was ever discovered though it is thought that the occupying Nazi's were not pleased at the activities of the French underground movement and wanted to set an example. General de Gaulle ordered that the village was to be rebuilt nearby together with a museum but that the burnt out remains were to be left as a reminder to future generations.

On a more cheerful note, at another small village in the Loire region, we bought a ten litre cardboard cask of the most delicious white wine we've ever tasted. It wasn't any cheaper than bottled wine but it was certainly good to know that we had ten litres of it!

Further south we visited a very accurate replica of the Lascaux caves where some remarkable prehistoric art was found. Near Provence we went to a bullfight Provençale-style ie the object is to capture a rosette placed between the bull's horns (how do they do **that**?) and the bull does not die.

Even in Spain where our daughter Sophie is currently living we didn't see any dancing though there were plenty of pictures of flamenco dancers in souvenir shops.

So it was back to Perth from Zurich (cheese fondue) via a few days in Mauritius and what did I do the day after arrival home? Return to PIFDG for folk dancing, of course.

Joy Hill

And some people do come back!!

We heard from Lee Jones recently that she is returning to Perth in January after many years living in the UK.....

.... and it was good to see Mei Wan back in Perth recently for a holiday. Mei Wan was a regular Monday night dancer in '93 before returning to China.

Performance News

Thanks to all those involved in organising, choreographing and performing at recent events. Particular thanks go to Palenque who has done a very good job as Performance Group choreographer this year.

Red Faces

The Red Faces night on 27th November was a great success. It was well attended and had an excellent mix of acts. Congratulations to Leone and her helpers for their hard work and organisation. Thanks too to Leone for her piano playing. The party was crowned by the two cakes for Marcia's 40th birthday!!

Le Grand Bal de l'Europe - Gennetines, France

The 10th Grand Bal de l'Europe held in July 1999 was an impressionable and unforgettable event. Situated near Gennetines in the farmlands of the department of Allier in central France, this eight-day dancing festival was held on an ancient bourbonnaise farm and was hugely successful and enjoyable for all lovers of folk music and dance.

Gennetines is, above all, a place of learning and exchange centred around traditional dance and dancing music. It is not the place to go for a holiday, but an opportunity to taste the pleasures of different types of dance by participating in the amazing program available to all members of the association.

The organisation required for such a festival is massive. Two thousand four hundred dancers attended the festival this year, most of whom camped on site. The facilities constructed to accommodate everyone were kept clean and in good working order with the help of every participant who respected the rules and kept the place tidy. Phones were easily accessible, as were power points. Meals were a gastronomic delight, thanks to the locals from Gennetines who volunteered their time for cooking and serving of meals and removing waste each day. The organisers must be congratulated for not only providing exciting and professional demonstrations and workshops but for the smooth day to day running of Gennetines

This year, workshops were given in Cajun, Kurdistan, Israeli, Swiss, Greek, Belgian, Italian, Slovakian, British country and Irish set dancing as well as Scandinavian, salsa and boléro, Portuguese, Argentinian, Balkan and Welsh dancing. My main interest was, however, in French dancing and my knowledge and repertoire has been greatly enriched by attending workshops in dancing from Limousin, Alsace, Dauphiné, Pays Basque, Bearn, Provence, Gascogne, Berry, Catalogne and Bretagne. For all workshops, the level of difficulty was indicated in the program and my only regret was that interesting workshops clashed with other interesting workshops which I could not therefore attend. Teaching was of the very highest level as was the accompanying live music. Many groups sold CDs through the 'forum' which was also a place to keep up with any day to day changes in the program and to learn about other festivals, courses, workshops and demonstrations and balls happening in Europe.

All day, every day, there was a program of workshops and lectures, followed each night by *bals* - but which *bal* to go to? That was the problem! After having learnt new dances during the day, I wanted to go to all the *bals* to practice them. But that was impossible, although dancing continued till three o'clock each morning and sometimes till eight o'clock in the morning! I now understand the meaning of the phrase "faire la nuit blanche". But one has to draw the line somewhere and regain some energy.

Because of increasing numbers each year it is necessary to register for Le Grand Bal de l'Europe in advance. It will be held again next year, mid July and I will gladly give anyone more information if they would like to contact me on (08) 9448 8179.

Laurel de Vietri

Two forthcoming Events – notes for your fridge

Xmas Party 20 December 1999

The PIFDG Christmas party will be on
Monday 20 December; 7pm start.

Please dress in Christmas colours and bring a plate of food to share. There will be some fun teaching before celebrations and food start followed by more dancing.

Please note that normal Monday night fees apply

A "\$2 night" 3 January 2000

We will be hosting a '\$2 night' on
3rd January; 7pm start.

No teaching, just a fun night of dance!!
It will be a chance to say 'Happy New Year' and to burn off some calories!! Be there!

Note that normally we would not meet on this holiday Monday. This is a special event.

If you would like to contribute to this or if you have any other articles of general interest please send them to me, preferably in soft copy.

Draft Teacher Programme

We have had lots of comments that you would like to know who is teaching when, so Palenque has put together the following programme for the next six months or so. It is still tentative at this stage:

Dec - Sara and Laurel

Jan - John

Feb - Eve

Mar - Palenque

April - Eve

May - John/Laurel??

June - Sara

July - Palenque??