

THE FOLK DANCER

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

FALL 2006 EDITION

EDITOR: EMILEE WRIGHT

GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

Hello from the World Dance Division at BYU-Provo! Time is flying by as usual and once again we are preparing for the upcoming Christmas Around the World concert in December. We were happy to celebrate with you this past summer the 50th anniversary of the Folk Dance Program here at Brigham Young University and hope to see many of you again in December.

In this Newsletter look for:

- Reports from our touring teams
 - News from our Division
 - Updates on current faculty
 - Christmas Around the World
- Achievements of some of our current students
 - Golden Jubilee recap
- Upcoming performances and calendar items

So, sit back and enjoy the news and we hope to see you soon at this year's very special celebration of Christmas Around the World!

CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

Tickets for the annual Christmas Around the World concert go on sale Saturday, November 4, 2006 at 8:00 am and are available at the Marriot Center Ticket Office. We are looking forward to an exciting concert celebrating 50 years since the Folk Dance Program began with Mary Bee Jensen. The Performing Arts Company will be presenting their new Slovakian suite which they learned last year from guest artist Ervin Varga. The new choreography and costumes were made possible by the contributions of Ira Fulton. The concert will be held in the Marriott Center at BYU on December 1st and 2nd and will be televised! The shows begin at 7:30 pm on Friday and Saturday evenings with a Saturday matinee at 2:00 pm. This year we will hold the Alumni Reception in the Museum of Art directly following the matinee performance at 4:30. We would love to see all of you there!

NEWS FROM OUR DIVISION

It seems that the semester just started, yet our division has been so busy with performances, parades and preparation for the upcoming months!

The Performing Arts Company started out busy with World of Dance in the DeJong Concert Hall, where they performed their Romanian choreography and Elkrigde Clog. They then performed for the Dance Devotional the following Tuesday and then the entire cast of World of Dance performed once again in Salt Lake City at the Conference Center the first weekend in October.

Just when the team thought they would slow down, Ed, along with four couples from PAC and a selection of students from Living Legends were off to Washington D.C. to perform for ambassadors and government officials at the Marriott farm BBQ. The travelers arrived home to busily prepare for the Homecoming Parade and Homecoming Spectacular.

This year's Homecoming events were especially exciting for our division as the University honors 50 years of the Folk Dance program at Brigham Young University. Mary Bee Jensen was honored at Homecoming Spectacular and was also the Grand Marshall of the parade - an honor very well deserved!!!

We also have some great achievements by students in our division. Erica Burgen and Ananda Henriksen received ORCA money last year to travel to Ireland to study Irish dancing for 2 weeks. Colleen West was their advisor for the project. Also, look for a report on the Ukrainian Dance research by Ben Watson and Quincy Robinson on page 3.

On a different note, tap dance will now be considered part of the World Dance Division. We are excited to have such a wonderful dance form and all that is associated with it!

As you can tell, we have been busy, busy, busy and are excited with all the progress and events taking place within our division!

PERFORMING ARTS COMPANY - A TOURING STORY

Courtesy of Performing Arts Management

After 50 years of performing, the Folk Dance Ensemble entertained audiences in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia for the first time this past summer. "This year we did what groups have been doing since 1964, when we started touring," said artistic director Ed Austin. "We entertained around the world."

This year's tour leadership included Jon Wood (Tour Director) and his wife Britney, Ed Austin (Artistic Director) and his wife Vickie, Mark Ohran (Technical Director) and his wife Marianne, and Ron Nuttall (Dance Medicine) and his wife, Leslie. They made a great team.

One of the goals of the Folk Dance Ensemble is to spread appreciation for international folk dance and serve as representatives of the United States in other countries.

On the tour, the performers had many opportunities to accomplish this.

While in Estonia, the Folk Dance Ensemble performed for the Independence Day party at the U.S. Embassy. Along with performing, the folk dancers also helped with the reception itself. They mixed and mingled with almost 1,000 dignitaries, including the prime minister of Estonia, military generals, attachés, consuls and other guests from many different countries.

Aldona Wos, the ambassador to Estonia, greatly appreciated the performance and the impact the performers had on her guests. "Thank you once again for sharing your gifts and superior talents with us at the U.S. Embassy's Fourth of July celebration here in Tallinn, Estonia," Wos said in a letter to the Ensemble. "While there were no guns or bonfires, you did help us to take the celebration not just from one end of the continent to the other but from America to Estonia – from one end of the world to the other."

The Folk Dance Ensemble truly took their enthusiasm from one end of the world to the other as they held more than 25 individual performances throughout the tour. Many of these performances were at folk festivals. Because of this type of performance, the dancers mingled with many other performers. "It was great to perform for them and also see what they performed for you," said dancer Myungjin Cha. "It was good to be a performer and an audience member at the festivals. We learned from them, too."

While the Ensemble performed at many folk festivals, they also performed in various prestigious halls. In Lithuania, the Folk Dance Ensemble performed at Siemens Arena where members of the Lithuanian parliament and other dignitaries were in the audience.

In Riga, Latvia, the group performed for almost 1,000 people at the Riga Congress Centre. This center formerly housed Communist Party meetings, but has since become the site for many concerts and gatherings.

Also in Riga, Jānis Purviņš, a renowned Latvian choreographer, took time to put on a Latvian dance workshop for the folk dancers. To maintain the accuracy of the folk dances, Austin has always stressed learning dances from a native or local dancer. "The closer you can come to the primary source, the better the experience," he said. "This was a really enjoyable exchange."

The Folk Dance Ensemble also learned from the Lithuanian group, Dainava, as they shared the stage with them at a performance in Druskininkai, Lithuania. The director of Dainava promoted the Folk Dance Ensemble in two cities in Lithuania.

While in Parnu, Estonia, the Folk Dance Ensemble performed for 600 guests. While it was not the Folk Dancers' largest audience during the tour, it was by far the largest audience the organizers had seen at the Parnu Concert Hall.

To end the tour, the Ensemble spent a few days at the 25th anniversary of the folk festival Mondial des Cultures in Drummondville, Quebec, Canada. "It was an honor to be invited back and so much fun to see many of our friends from the festival and also from other groups," Austin said. "The festival reminded us that our group has received more invitations than any other group to attend this festival."

The Folk Dance Ensemble shared 50 years of enthusiasm as they performed for more than 100,000 people on this successful tour. And it was full of variety: beautiful scenery, historical cities and other sites, and a vast array of performance opportunities for both members of the Church and non-members alike.

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

The BYU Folk Dancers will be visiting many places around the U.S. this spring. Listed are the performance sites and dates so that you can plan to see them if they are in your area. For more details see:

<http://pam.byu.edu>

(Remember, performance times and venues are subject to change, so be sure to check the website!)

12/1/06-12/2/06

Provo, UT

Christmas Around the World

12/1/06 7:30 pm

12/2/06 2:00 pm, 7:30 pm

2/23/07

St. George, UT

Dixie College

7:30 pm

2/26/07

Oxnard, CA

Oxnard Performing Arts Center, 7:30 pm

2/27/07

El Centro, CA

Southwest Performing Arts Theater

7:30 pm

3/1/07-3/2/07

Long Beach, CA

Long Beach Performing Arts Center

7:30 pm

3/3/07

Henderson, NV

Henderson Pavillion

7:30 pm

Summer 2007

Confens, France

FACULTY UPDATES

Colleen West and her husband Jeff were tour managers for PAC's mid-semester tour last March. The group traveled to Texas and New Mexico. Colleen also accompanied two of her students to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada and Ukraine to study Ukrainian dance.

Susanne Davis will be presenting a paper at the National Dance Association (NDA) Convention in Baltimore, Maryland in March of 2007. She is also serving on the National Dance Association committee for the next pedagogy conference in New York in June 07. Even though a while away, her paper of "The Historical Morris Dance of the English" has been accepted to present at the Conseil International de la Danse (CID) World Congress in Greece in fall 2007.

Ed and Vickie Austin toured the Baltic Countries with the IFDE this year. The team performed in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia as well as attended the Drummondville festival in Canada.

Delynne Peay was busy with SPAC during spring term and then travelled to Nauvoo with the group in August. She recently welcomed her youngest son home from a mission as a well as a new little grandson into her family!

Jeanette Geslison was sad to miss the reunion and not meet everyone, but was happy for her choice of spending time in Denmark with her family. She spent one month there with all 23 of her immediate family members. Her favorite parts of the trip were the countryside, the beach, train rides, Tivoli, meeting old friends, and shopping. She even met up with Tucker and Denise Johnson who were visiting there.

Tara Eyre spent a wonderful summer with her family and enjoyed seeing everyone at the reunion. She is back having a great time teaching Intermediate Irish and World Dance Technique 1.

Emilee Wright spent her summer teaching and touring with her husband Shane as he was the tour manager for the Living Legends tour to Germany. They are expecting a baby girl the beginning of November.

Cynthia Streeter was and is busy teaching clog, tap and world dance classes. She is getting married in November to Tim Gubler!

SPAC

Submitted by Delynne Peay

It was an engagement epidemic!! Several members of SPAC 2006 were bitten by the notorious "Lovebug". By the time we began our 63 shows around the state of Utah, we had 4 women and 3 men engaged, and by the time we boarded the plane for Nauvoo, we had 3 women married, two more engaged, 1 married man, 1 married couple, and two men stay home to get married!! Who says folk dance isn't a life-changing experience? But, even with all those emotions and changes, we had a very successful SPAC touring experience.

Everyone wants to go to Nauvoo, it seems, so along with myself, 31 dancers, and 6 musicians, Susanne and James Davis took the group out for the first five days, while I stayed at BYU to finish up the last week of summer term. Colleen and Jeff West flew out for four days, and Shane and Emilee Wright came out for the last few days to help get those vans back to the Provo campus.

Along with the scheduled nightly performances in the Joseph Smith Auditorium performing for over 6,000 people, the group spent their days experiencing a "trek" in pouring rain and mud to their knees, visiting Old Nauvoo sites, getting to know the YPMs (Young Performing Missionaries) and enjoying their staged productions along with the Senior Missionaries. We also had a variety of "out-reach" service opportunities in surrounding cities performing at malls, the Mark Twain Caves in Hannibal, Missouri, Old Settlers Park in Fort Madison, Iowa and dancing, singing and visiting folks in elderly care facilities, senior centers, and even a performing studio in Carthage. I believe that the highlights were during our "Sociable" on Sunday evening, visits to the temple, and our testimony meeting our last night there in the Seventies Hall.

We love the "City Beautiful" – Nauvoo.

A STUDY OF UKRAINIAN DANCE

As reported in the last newsletter, Ben Watson and Quincy Robinson, two members of the Performing Arts Company, were awarded money from the Fulton grant in the College of Health and Human Performance to complete a study comparing Ukrainian dance in Canada and Ukrainian dance in Ukraine. They, along with their faculty advisor, Colleen West, traveled to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada in May 2006 and attended a national Ukrainian dance competition where 200 dance groups participated. They videotaped many hours of Ukrainian dancing and interviewed many of the directors of the Ukrainian dance groups. They then traveled to Komsomolsk and Lutsk, Ukraine in August 2006, to conduct the same kind of research at two different CIOFF folk dance festivals. The results of the research study will be presented at BYU in a lectures series format and also at a national conference. A written research paper will also be published. For more information contact Colleen West at colleen_west@byu.edu.

50TH GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION

THE REUNION

Wow! What a party! The three-day celebration was even better than we had planned on paper. All the committees did such a great job (picnic in the park and performance by the current Performing Arts Company, workshops, recreation dance party, and banquet). The history book committee is doing an amazing job with the book. You're going to love it! It is right on target and we hope to have it ready to mail to you before the holidays. The best part of all was having Mary Bee with us, the reason for such a wonderful celebration. Thank you to her for her inspiration and dedication in forming the Folk Dance program!

It was so much fun to see so many old and new friends. Folk dancers really know how to make you feel welcome, even when you meet someone for the first time. Many of the comments heard surrounding the reunion were, "You made me fall in love again with dancing"; "Thank you for helping me remember all the good times I had with folk dancers"; "When you're with folk dancers, you're with family!"

FOLK DANCE ALUMNI WEBSITE

After nine months of planning, it was bitter-sweet to see it all end. However, we have some huge milestones that we can all be proud of going forward. One is the Folk Dance Alumni web site (www.byufolkdance.com/alumni.htm) and it just keeps getting better. We will continue to add to it posters, programs, histories, photos, and anything else you want.

Remember: If you have any 50th reunion photos you'd like to share, we'd love to put them up for you on the site.

EMAIL ADDRESSES

We will continue to gather email addresses from alumni and eventually move to an electronic version of the newsletter over the next year. Please continue to send your information (name, address, years danced with Folk Dancers, email address) to mblewis5@yahoo.com. So, please make sure you get your name on the email list.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!

We do not have the "Christmas Around the World" posters from 1959, 1961, 1962, 1967, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1980, 1981, and 1982. We would love the programs also if you have them! We also need help finding tour histories from 1981, 1982, and 1991. We are looking for the group tour photos of many of the years as well to add to the site.

Thank you to so many people who helped make this reunion a smashing success. It was a pleasure working with so many of you. Let's do it again!

With much heartfelt appreciation,
Brent & Maria Lewis
Reunion Committee Chairs