

The FOLK DANCER

Fall 2020



(by Tamara M. Chamberlain, folk dance alumni chair)

We hope this newsletter finds you all healthy and well. 2020 has certainly been a year of unexpected events but this newsletter will show you how the BYU Folk Dancers have made the sweetest lemons out of the most sour lemon situations.



Our team classes are rehearsing and even performing through BYU Dance Live (dance.byu.edu/byu-dance-live-streaming).

These live stream performances are happening every Friday at 5 p.m. (MST) and each week they feature a different performing group from the Dance Department.

The International Folk Dance Ensemble is scheduled to stream again **January 29th and 30th, and also March 5th**. Other team classes are scheduled to stream **March 6th**. Look for details concerning times on our social media pages leading up to the events. Our dancers have been extremely patient and supportive of the mask mandate as they try to be as safe as possible while dancing. We admire their courage and excitement as they keep progressing, even during these unusual times.



Back in July, the IFDE and Mountain Strings posted a great video titled, "[The Traveler](#)" on YouTube that highlighted ways they are able to dance through a quarantine!

As we look towards the future, pencil in the date October 8-9 for BYU Homecoming 2021 where we hope to gather and celebrate 65 Years of BYU Folk Dance! We pray that situations will allow us to connect, in some way, to commemorate this milestone. Watch for more details to come!



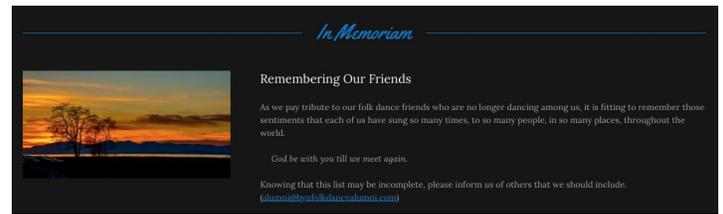
BYUFolkDanceAlumni.com

When was the last time you visited our folk dance alumni website? We have quick links to **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **Instagram**, **Pinterest**, and **YouTube** for all related activities the Folk Dancers are involved with. New video releases, updates of performances and highlights of featured dancers. Lots of featured folk dance videos can be seen throughout our website for easy viewing. As dates become available for 2021, folk dance events and activities will be listed on the homepage of the alumni website for easy access.

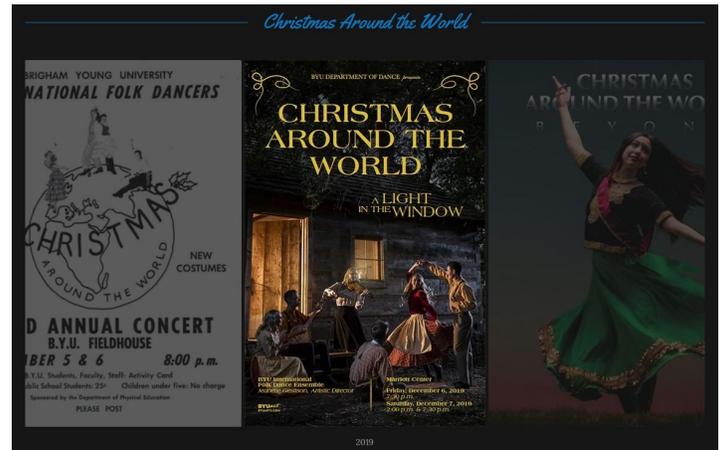


We are getting so close to having our [tour history archives](#) completed. **We need your help to finish this up with years 2016, 2018, and 2019 still missing.** Please participate and get your tour history submitted so you can be a part of this amazing legacy for all alumni to enjoy.

We have [The Folk Dancer newsletter archives](#) available from years **1991-present**. So fun to go back and read what was going on during the school years.



[The Memoriam page](#) is a beautiful tribute to those who have left us. Please let us know if someone may be missing from our remembrance list.



Since we weren't able to have a **Christmas Around the World** showcase in 2020, here's the link to the past [CAW concerts archives](#) that may be fun to go down memory lane. We have posters and programs from **1961-2019** for you to enjoy.

Did you miss the 2019 China Spectacular? Have you seen the *This Is Utah* PBS Documentary on the Folk Dancers? These links and more are available on the [alumni homepage](#). Please enjoy!

As always, thanks for your continued support and awesome ideas on how to make our website more meaningful and richer with your fond memories. As alumni, we are lucky to have all of this history and program information available for us to share with our friends and families.

Brent Lewis, Website and Alumni Committee Member

Dancing with IFDE through a Pandemic

By Kierica McPherson, IFDE Club President

IFDE has been a little different this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Thankfully, we are still able to meet and rehearse together in the studio as long as we wear masks and maintain social distancing when possible. It's taken a little time to get used to dancing in masks, but the team has approached this new situation with positive attitudes. We are just so thankful that we get to keep dancing together, even during this unprecedented time!

Unfortunately, this will be the first year in a long time that we won't be able to perform Christmas Around the World, which we are all very sad about, as this has been a tradition for many years. We do still have other performances, though, produced in a way that we have never done before. This year BYU began broadcasting live stream performances. As a fun side note, because we are required to wear masks during the performance, our costume designers got creative and designed matching masks. We are so grateful for this opportunity, not only to keep performing, but also to share our performances with so many additional friends and family around the world who normally don't have the chance to attend. This has been such an unexpected blessing to have people watch from the comfort of their homes, often far away. We have heard from BYU alumni, guest choreographers, and friends from international festivals, who expressed excitement with this new way of performing and reconnecting with BYU's Folk Dance team.

Not only are we performing our pieces through BYU's livestream, but IFDE was also invited to participate in a virtual international festival hosted by Cuba in December. The festival's participants will include teams from places as diverse as Botswana, Nepal, Brazil, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, India, Korea, Italy, Hungary, and more. Looking ahead to 2021, we aren't sure yet if our summer tour will go through, but we are excited for the opportunities we have now to dance at festivals, even if only virtually.



We also have been working on a film production for Boot Kickin', a classic American piece, which may be familiar to some alumni. The song's lyrics, sung by Mountain Strings, have been rewritten to talk about the BYU Creamery. We filmed at the Lehi Rodeo and the Creamery itself. Because they are open all day, the only time available was the middle of the night. We danced and filmed from midnight to 6 am, which made for quite a memorable night!

What's Happening in the IFDE Club?

The Folk Dance Club has also been very different this year. As our club is one of the largest on campus, we haven't been able to meet as a whole group this semester. So as far as club activities, we had to get creative in coming up with ways to connect as a club. For our club opening social, we did video introductions, where each team introduced their team individually and as a group, with a fun self-choreographed dance routine.

We shifted recreational nights to Zoom, which has been an adjustment. One crew of people make sure the technology is working properly, while the other rec night reps and volunteers demonstrate the dances on Zoom for everyone to watch and follow along. So far we have had over 100 people join our virtual dancing nights!

Each team also had the opportunity to perform a dance via livestream. Many people tuned in to the virtual broadcast, but we also were allowed to have about 40 people live in the audience (socially distant from each other). I have loved seeing how, even

though the club hasn't been able to meet in person yet, many people from different teams have joined the audience, both live and online, to support and cheer on members of the other teams! I love our Folk Dancers!

BYU International Folk Dancers Historical Archive (1956-2017)

by Ryan Purcell, BYU Folk Dance Historian

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For over six decades, the BYU International Folk Dancers have entertained millions of people around the world. During those years, thousands of young men and women have been taught by, performed with, and toured beside the organization's founder, Mary Bee Jensen, and her successors, Ed Austin and Jeanette Geslison. The fact that in its 60-plus year history, the club has had only three artistic directors, is as unprecedented as its unending list of accomplishments. In 1959, the Folk Dancers began touring as part of Janie Thompson's Program Bureau, and continues to the present day, making it the oldest and longest-running traveling performing company at Brigham Young University. In December of 1959, the first Christmas concert was performed under the banner of "Christmas Surprise." The following year, the name was changed to "Christmas Around the World" and since then, this annual performance has become the traditional beginning of the Christmas season for the public and countless alumni.

Other than a glimpse at club histories that were brought out at occasional reunions, very few people have any idea of what it took to make the organization what it was, and what led to the opportunities that so many alumni have enjoyed. That is now changing.

For the past 4 years, work has progressed in the creation of the BYU International Folk Dancers Historical Archive. The purpose is to collect all available records and documents pertaining to the IFD history into one location, digitize, organize, and document them, and make them available to alumni for their personal and family histories. But this is not just an academic endeavor. It is also, in every sense of

the word, a labor of love, dedicated to the memories of Mary Bee Jensen and Delynne Peay. It was the unexpected passing of our dear friend, Delynne, that inspired its creation as a way to make the pictures, memories, dancing, and experiences of this part of her life available to her family. That desire has been expanded with the intention of providing the same to ALL IFD alumni. It is the hope that the materials contained in the archive will allow the alumni and their families a way to reconnect to a time in their lives that was unlike any other, when talents were developed, unique experiences were plentiful, and lifelong friendships were formed.



All materials in the archive are being organized by academic school year, from Fall try-outs and workshops through the following summer tours, and cover the years from 1955 through the 2016-17 school year. Sources of these materials have come from the BYU Folk Dance Archives, BYU Performing Arts Management, BYU Harold B. Lee Library Special Collections, BYU Photographer's Office, LDS Motion Picture Studio, KBYU, the personal files of Mary Bee Jensen, personal files of Ed and Vickie Scholes Austin, and personal collections of various IFD alumni that have been generously donated. Each year's folder contains a log detailing every item found in that year's archive, and the sources that provided the original. All documents, pictures, and videos that tell the story of that year, and have been located and included, all in high-resolution.

The archive is a virtual "scrapbook" containing many thousands of items, including countless pictures, letters, programs, posters, and newspaper articles. Among the many, newly discovered treasures are actual color films and videos, dating back to the first Europe Tour in 1964, and beautiful footage of the IFD performance at the inauguration of the new BYU football stadium that Fall on 2 October 1964. There is also beautiful footage of the fieldhouse performances of "Christmas Around the World" from 1964, 1965,

1966, 1969, 1970, and 1971. In 1972, the concert moved to the newly built Marriott Center. These films have been uncovered in vaults, closets, cardboard boxes, and basements, and are in pristine condition, having never been seen before. All this has been carefully digitized and will be downloadable for personal and family history use, unless specifically noted. Locations and individuals shown in pictures have been identified according to the best information available.



While certain documents and letters of a highly personal nature have been excluded from the collection, many “behind-the-scenes” items, such as letters and memos, have been included in the annual archives for the purpose of showcasing the work of directors and university administrators, and helping those who have been part of the IFD story understand what it took to make those experiences possible. As is all too frequently the case, those who benefited the most from their time with Folk Dancers have no idea of what actually went into making those memories possible. It is also interesting to learn of what was hoped for, and never achieved. So far!



This is a massive project, covering several decades. As of this writing, the archive is complete from the 1955-56 school year, through 1969-70. The work will continue as quickly as time and resources allow. Eventually, all years included in the archive will be available. Any alumni who would like to donate their personal collections to the archive may do so by making arrangements with Ryan Purcell, the IFD Historian. Also, until online access can be provided, alumni are welcome to contact Ryan to get a digital copy of archive materials for the years of their participation.



It is our hope that all alumni might enjoy this tribute to the lives that provided the shoulders for others to stand on. Learn of the contributions of those that came before, which made it possible for you to have the experiences you enjoyed, just as yours will do for those who follow.

As this archive service becomes available for the alumni to access, we will continue to keep you informed and how to connect to the archives for your viewing enjoyment.