



# tradizioni

NEWSLETTER OF THE ITALIAN FOLK ART FEDERATION OF AMERICA

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## Dear Reader ,

I am writing to you because right now we need your help desperately.  
Let me explain.

For over four years we have managed to fulfill our commitment to publish at least two issues of *Tradizione* each year. The enthusiastic response to our newsletter has more than convinced us of the need for a newsletter devoted to Italian Folk Heritage.

However due to escalating costs and a diminishing source of funds, we are experiencing a severe financial crunch. This also explains why the last few issues of *Tradizione* have not come out on time. Please bear with us.

You, our readers, have supported us in the past. This is why I am asking for your help today. As a subscriber you know *Tradizione* and what it represents better than anyone else. You know that the range, scope and depth of the material presented is unusual, educational, and not easily available elsewhere.

You can help us enormously right now by sending your 1983 subscription plus a tax deductible contribution of \$20.00. We value and need your financial support. Unless you respond to our appeal quickly we will not be able to publish *Tradizione* in 1984.

The staff and I enjoy putting each issue together, as much as you enjoy reading it, as evidenced by your supportive and encouraging letters. We need your help. Do Not let us down. Please mail in your subscription and contribution now. Thank you.

Anthony F. LePera  
Editor in chief



## FOLK TOUR A SUCCESS

I.F.A.F.A., in cooperation with the Federazione Italiana Tradizioni Popolari (Rome) and Alitalia Airlines, sponsored the Spring-1983 folk tour of Southern Italy. The itinerary included the regions of Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, and the island of Sicily.

They participated in dance classes and cultural talks with native instructors; sang and danced with local folk groups; enjoyed fruits, regional cheeses, home-made wines amidst wonderful scenery and new-found friends.

A full report on the Spring Tour will appear in the next issue of this newsletter. However, highlights of the Tour will be discussed and active participation in the new dances will take place at the Annual Conference which is scheduled to be held in Philadelphia on October 21, 22 and 23, 1983.

## REVIEW OF N.E.A. PROJECT

The National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C. has awarded I.F.A.F.A. a matching grant. The purpose of the grant is to produce a series of L.P. albums of Italian folk music and songs performed by first generation Italian immigrants living in the U.S. Anna Chairetakakis is to supervise and direct the project.

Anna Chairetakakis has recorded the most extraordinary collection of live Italian Folk Music in the United States. The collection is intense, varied and with many regions represented. These are simple, wonderful genuine people willing to share and be themselves in their most primal expression; at times joyous, and hilarious, other times sad and mournful.

There are laments, stornelli, bands, unique sounds and rare instruments. All are represented in this most interesting cross-section of Italian Folk music and song performed by first generation Italian immigrants in the United States and Canada. At times, the sounds are strange for certain ears, but always enjoyable and the lyrics meaningful. The stereo sound is

of a high quality. In all its aspects, it is a project well-handled and one that we can all be proud of. Brava Anna!

Final editing is expected by the end of 1983. For inquiries on ordering and/or more information, please write I.F.A.F.A.

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The sixth Annual Conference and Workshop of I.F.A.F.A. is scheduled for the weekend of October 21st, 22nd and 23rd, in Philadelphia, Pa.

The conference is designed to bring together folk groups and other interested parties to share their knowledge and to participate in Italian folk singing and dancing and various other aspects of Italian folk art.

This year's conference will highlight memories of the Spring Folk Tour to Italy: new dances, new songs and update information on the revival of folk interest in Italy today.

Members and nonmembers are welcome. For additional details, write or call: LORETTA MARSELLA

1210 Federal St., Phila., Pa. 19147  
(215) 465-7493 (P.M. Only)

# Treasures Being Lost

by  
Professor Philip J. DiNovo

In the last few months, as I traveled throughout the United States from one Italian festival to another, it became quite clear to me that we are losing the beautiful character of the true Italian celebration.

In general, the music is foreign and not authentic. There is a very limited selection of Italian foods and very few cultural exhibits, with no craft displays or craftsmen at work. In many places, Italian feasts and festivals have been so changed that one can hardly recognize them as Italian celebrations.

What we can bring to Italian festivals in America is a small part of our heritage.

We all know that in Italy art is life and life is art; everywhere there is art and beauty. Whereas there may exist differences among Italians, we are all united in our love for color, music, art and celebrations. It is said that practically every Italian is an artist of some kind. What has happened to the Italo-American?

We need a revival in the United States of Italian Art, especially the folk arts. Italian celebrations need to include craftsmen and displays of their work in leather, glass, stone, wood; also pottery, embroidery, jewelry, etc.

The regional costumes of Italy are forms of art at its very best, yet few Italian-Americans have ever seen these beautiful treasures.

How many Italian-Americans can enjoy the appealing pastoral tone of the bagpipe, the launeddas, the ocarina, the scetavaiasse, the triccabballacco, the conch shell? The violins, accordions, guitars, jaw harps and madolins are also becoming scarce at Italian celebrations.

The stornelli style of singing, while generally popular throughout Italy, is seldom heard in the United States.

Italy has various folk dances such as the Quadriglia, Tarantella, N'drezzata or weaving dance, Ballo tondo, Monferina, Saltarello, etc. Besides the tarantella, few of these beautiful folk dances of Italy are ever performed.

Our celebrations enforce the idea that our food is limited and many Italian-Americans and Americans know only pasta, sausage & peppers and pizza. There are many pastries and breads being lost because very few people know about



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them or know how to prepare them. A friend of mine, in New York, makes a honey flat bread that is shaped into various figures. This bread has been made for generations in Italy from where she emigrated. It truly is folk-art. Before these valuable teachers are gone, we need to encourage them to pass it on privately and or to participate at various folk craft events.

We have done very little to preserve our rich heritage. One reason is that the Italian emigrant was mostly uneducated and therefore unaware of these treasures. Another reason is that the emigrants were too busy making a living while their offspring were trying to become accepted as Americans.

Let us stimulate, among the Italo American population, the interest and foresight to want to preserve the true character of the beautiful traditional Italian celebration. □

# Choreometrics

by Alan Lomax,

largest contributor of authentic recordings to the National Folk Archive of the Academia di Santa Cecilia Rome.

Mulling over the best way to sum up the results of a ten-year cross-cultural study of the dance, I thought of phrases like "sociology set to music"... "culture pattern in rhythm"... "the survival of the most fitting"... "a collage of adaptive strategies." Perhaps the last phrase is the most apt. In the comparison of profiles of dance performance from the whole range of human culture, as we had analyzed it, it began to appear that each cultural tradition enshrines in its dance style the patterns of movement essential to the survival of that group in its particular environment. These are not replications of everyday behavior, but rearrangements such as a poet or painter makes to celebrate a subject. The dance is also a selection and a rearrangement, but always out of the repertory of movement patterns familiar to the audience, always in the kinetic language employed in everyday life, though perhaps in a heightened form.

As in any collage, the elements are assembled in patterns that playfully, distort the humdrum procedures of everyday, combining them in some exciting way. Often, for example, a dance puts aspects of a society's food-producing effort together with its end product — the food itself or some symbol for it, so that struggle and reward occur simultaneously. Dancing gardeners carry the products of their season's agricultural work, while miming in body movement the main shape of their agricultural efforts. The dancing hunter, wearing the skin of the animal he pursues, shows off the nimbleness of step he uses in the chase and the forearm skill that guides his arrow to the prey. Process and reward, thus juxtaposed in dance, reinforce the adaptive techniques by means of which a people survive.

Of course, not every movement in dance is a direct reflection of some aspect of its culture's productive processes, although this is a potent source for dance symbolism. For example, the character of the dance team seems to stand for the key units of the social fabric. In Europe and America, where the nuclear family — society's mainstay — responsible for subsistence, child rearing, land upkeep, taxes, sex, and resettlement, to cite only a few of the demands on this overburdened institution — the mixed

couple is more conspicuous in the dance than anywhere else in the world. Among the Pueblo Indians, where clans control the land and marriage and deal with the divine powers, clan units dominate the dance formations. Wherever the lone individual is the keystone of social structure, as he tends to be among Arctic hunters, in the imperially organized Orient, or in alienated Western urban society, the virtuosic solo dancer takes stage center in a majority of cases.

These, and other discoveries, have emerged in a comparative study of hundreds of dance films, which depict the styles of almost every branch of the human family.

We used a pre-established rating system called "choreometrics" (meaning the measure of dance or dance as a measure of man), which scores the general features that persist all through a dance or through the dances of a culture. It provides ways to describe the body attitude and the trace form most markedly employed, to count the number of body parts in action and how arms and feet are moved, to score the level and kind of interpersonal coordination the group employs and to note the personnel of the dance group, the onlookers, and the orchestra. At the level of choreometric description, the differences between genres — such as religious or courtship dances — did not show up, but the distinctions between cultural movement styles did. Indeed, our aim was to find this cultural level in dance and to begin to learn how and why dance varies cross-culturally.

First, the geographic taxonomy of dance strongly resembles those previously found in computer-assisted taxonomies of culture and of singing style. Thus, there appears to be a codistribution of culture, dance, and song styles. Second, there are certain respects in which dance style appears to evolve with culture. As productive and administrative systems become more elaborate, so do the control systems that govern the manipulative and the choreographic aspects of dance. Third, another cluster of dance variables reflects the conditions of social interaction — sex role differentiation, the conventions of social distance, the dynamics of the interaction, and the level and kind of social coordination. The ordering of dancers and the degree of synchrony they employ seem to repeat and strengthen the system of coordination employed by the culture's teams in everyday pursuits. Here, quoted out of context so to speak, manipulated,

# La Tarantella

(The following is part I of a three part series on the Tarantella. Parts II & III in the next issues of Tradizione)

## PROLOGUE

When the spirit moves, the body dances; for dance is the natural flow of life's rhythms through the body.

It is as natural for man to dance as it is for the planets to turn. It is not something we have to create, fabricate or structure. It is something that flows. Al Huang writes in *Return to Mountain*, "Flow is not something you create. Flow flows until it is blocked. Only when the mind lets go of the body, the emotions and desires let go of the mind and both mind and body are in a renounced, annihilated, relaxed state" — empty and open to receive — can the rhythms flow and the spirit move, can the body dance.

Fatou — Carol Sylla,  
dancer, healer, West Africa

Dance is the path to the liberation of the free-flowing, intuitive and visionary genius within all who have the courage to draw near, confront and unravel themselves, to bare their souls and dance their way from inertia to ecstasy. Dance is a marriage of art and healing, a tapping of the creative force to unleash the power of self-knowledge.

The process is not merely about dancing, although movement is its central vehicle and metaphor. Nor is it merely about theater, although performance is one of its primary tools. Rather, it is a prayer — a moving, physical, sweaty prayer to be released from the prison of the past and the lure of the future, to be gathered up again into the always-present mystery of you and the moment.

The movement is now — in your body! DANCE!!!

Gabrielle Roth, creator, director,  
performer. Moving Center, U.S.A.

According to Anton Giulio Bragaglia, "dance is a dramatic language; so also in the field of folk dancing. These dances are primitive mime; its language mute; a primal theater. The original aspect of our theater is clearly preserved in its elementary forms in certain mime dances, such as the tarantella, which is the synthesis of a love story."

The realm of folklore has no limits: one aspect is tied to another and another as in a long chain whose links are connected by a psychological theme not easily understood. If folklore, whose origins are lost, has survived to the present, it must then have within itself an arcane vitality.

Isa Zari, teacher, editor  
"Danze di Folklore" Italy

The meaning of dance lies elsewhere. Dance is not performance as we customarily think of it. Strickly speaking, there is no theater, no audience, no acting. These features suggest an abstraction from life which is not present in this case. Dance is not simply a comment on life, nor a remembrance of things past, nor an entertainment; although some aspect of all of these is present. Ritual movement is part of a highly symbolic process by which life and a way of life for a specific people gains transcendent significance. The process functions to evoke fundamental structures and patterns from the tradition and thereby to establish a meaningful form in which the future may unfold. There is no message in the dance short of the meaning of life itself.

Professor Sam D. Gül,  
counseling editor to  
PARABOL, U.S.A.

and played with as aesthetic symbols, often in a highly erotic setting, dance movement hallows and reinforces everyday necessity.

Indeed, the whole of human dance, as choreometrics records it, may be considered as one aspect, and a not inconsiderable one, of man's way of adapting through his culture. As we come to know the whole of dance, we come to grips with the evolving layout of action

and interaction. This means that if there is to be a proper dance criticism, it must see dance as part of social and cultural contexts. It follows that dance can no longer be treated as a charming extra, reserved for the amusement of the effete, but that the whole of dance must be taken seriously as part of the very marrow of culture. □

(Editor's note: For selected bibliography write I.F.A.F.A.)

## ARTICLES NEEDED

**Tradizioni** is a "special interest newsletter" which focuses on various aspects of Italian Folklore.

**Needs:** original articles of general interest, historical, interviews, travel, humorous, brief news items, festivals, rituals, etc.

**Length:** Maximum 1500 words

**Terms:** We will be glad to publish any material approved by our editors free of any expense to you.

**Submissions:** send double spaced typewritten material to I.F.A.F.A. att: Editor in Chief

The Italian Folk Art Federation of America, Inc. is a non-profit, educational federation. Its purpose is to research, preserve and foster interest in the various aspects of Italian folklore.

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## In Brief:

In Italy: "Peace is in danger: Peace is possible: Peace is necessary." With this declaration, a group of prominent Italian intellectuals called for a 1000-mile march from Milan to Comiso in Sicily. Staged to protest planned deployment at Comiso of U.S. nuclear missiles, the march wound through the Italian boot. It reached Comiso four weeks later.

The Italian peace movement cuts across the political-religious-cultural spectrum: it includes the Communist Party (PCI), several ultraleft parties, all four labor unions, Christian groups such as the Valdese church, the Italian Ecumenical Center and Pax Christi, students and ecological groups.

**Italian folk group touring Canada:** I Danzerini di Lucinico, a town in Gorizia, Prov. Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, tours Canada in the fall. The Congresso dei Fogolars Furlans del Canada will host them in Montreal October 8-10; Furlans di Vancouver on October 12-15, and Edmonton and Calgary on October 16-19.

The writer had occasion to see them on their visit to the U.S. in 1980 and found them utterly delightful. Their show was well-paced and included comical skits which can be appreciated without knowledge of their language. Their dances are quite different from the Tarantellas which are most often associated with Italy.

**Prof. Philip Di Nova of Utica, N.Y.** is a third generation American of Italian background, who he is deeply interested in preserving Italian customs and traditions.

He has given slide talks on Christmas in Italy, Easter, and St. Joseph table.

He is now preparing a presentation of **ITALIAN - AMERICAN CELEBRATIONS FROM BIRTH TO DEATH.**

If you have or know of anyone who has photos or slides on the subject, please contact

Prof. Philip J. Di Novo Box 293  
Morrisville, N.Y. 13408  
1 (315) 684-9502

**Dr. Nicola Leotta of the University of Messina,** expert in folklore and multi-media communications, author of a book on the American folk song and researcher in Australian folk culture, is interested in doing the following project: **ORAL HISTORY** (a series of interviews) with Sicilians and Siculo-Americans in Philadelphia who still remember some of the stories and songs of their cultural heritage. If anyone knows "informants" they can contact:

Dr. Nicola Leotta  
Via Roma Is. 26/C No. 11  
98100 Messina, Italy

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