











\$CHOLAR\$HIP BALL



Sunday, November 14 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. Plummer Park's Fiesta Hall













































Winter Festival January 9th, 1994 1:30 - 5:30 Glendale Civic Auditorium



PASADENA CO-OP











































Dance keeps life in step

By Cris Cerdena Correspondent

The Slovakian czardas lured a smallish group at first — 30 to 40 colorfully clad dancers linked hand in hand in a circle, the women's peasant skirts bobbing and the men's ruffled shirts fluttering, as they heel-and-toed, shuffled, dipped and turned.

A couple cut in; then five people, a dozen, more, until easily a hundred people were swinging in

the ring!

From the sidelines, a 30ish woman, a beginner, observed the footwork. "It's deceptively simple. I tried, but it's not for me," she said with a shake of the head.

A trio of costumed women reached for chairs in a corner. Having traipsed through six or so of the 16 prior dances, their faces were flushed; one fanned herself.

Aaron Glaser, 74, leafed through the dance program. Frail of body and speech, he patiently waited for the *Hambo*, which is from Sweden and was a few numbers away. "That one I know," he confided, "although I'm sure I'll still make mistakes."

Throughout the afternoon Sunday, lines shifted, circles loosened and couples traded partners as about 200 dancers yielded to the beat of international folk dances at the annual Winter Festival at the Glendale Civic Auditorium.

Featured were 57 dances from 26 countries in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and the Americas.

Like the *Debka*, a heavy stomping dance originating in Israel but popular across the Middle East, the festival highlighted the bonds of friendship, even love, formed by movement among different peoples and lifestyles.

And like the story-telling Scottish country dances, the festival wove its own tale of an enduring, yet endangered, art form — folk

dancing.

The oldest folk dance group in Southern California, the Pasadena Folk Dance Co-op, sponsor of the Winter Festival, started in 1942. Eight months later, seven small groups banded together to form the Folk Dance Federation of California — South, precipitating the growth of similar groups and of folk dancing over the next 15 years.

Folk dancing "became big" in the '60s and '70s, says Beverly Barr, immediate past president of the federation, a dancer for 28 years and a dance teacher.

Schools contributed to the popu-

larity. "Folk dancing was part of the physical education program then," said Polly Danielsen, a fifthgrade teacher at Marshall Elementary School who learned the art at college in Northern California.

"It was the 'in' thing for the younger set in the '60s," remembered Mary Pilsecker, 61, a retired teacher who lives in

Lakewood.

Then came the budget cuts that took it out of the curriculum and relegated its teaching to volunteers. The decline became noticeable in the '80s and reached a low about two years ago. "The music of teen-agers today is just not the same." Pilsecker said.

Although folk dance teachers count youths among their students, folk dancing clearly appeals more to yesterday's youths. Only a few teen agers were at the festival, the prevailing ages being the 40s and up, with a smattering of 30-somethings. A couple of young girls watched seemingly bored as their parents danced.

Katrina Pisecker, 3, was the exception. Led by her mother, Bonnie, 37, who is Mary's daughter, she was happily twirling and whirl-

ing among the dancers.

'We encourage parents and



Katrina P. Ten/Glendale News-Press

Costumed dancers line up for one of 57 folk dances on the Winter Festival program this weekend.



CAMP HESS KRAMER INSTITUTE WEEKEND



JANUARY 28-30, 1994

TEACHERS:
Beverly Barr
Dick Julian
Dorothy Daw
Sherry Cochran





ter Festival of tolk dancing Sunday at the Glendale Civic Auditorium.

1½-year

and

grandparents to pass on folk dancing to the young ones," said Barr.
As children, Bonnie and her two sisters often went to festivals with

mom and dad. "We couldn't afford baby sitters," Mary explained. Bonnie has set the example for Katrina, whom she feels has caught onto the rhythm of the folk dances.

Volunteers have also come to the

rescue. Barr said a number of her younger students at the Westwood Co-op have started small afterschool groups. "There's an elementary schoolteacher who has formed a group that meets at lunchtime.

His pupils have performed exhibi-

tions in various schools," she said.

Danielsen is another such volunteer. Her club of fifth- and sixthgraders meets Tuesdays. "I teach them line dances," she said, laughing. "The children don't want to dance with partners. They act up."

Other efforts in promoting folk dancing are done by about 50 affiliates of the federation through classes, workshops and festivals. Festivals are held almost every month by various co-ops, which can have 20 to 200 members. Each co-op devotes at least one night a week to dancing. Fees are minimal

Pasadena group charges the \$1.50 a night. An annual statewide festival is held with the federation's Northern

California counterpart. For serious dancers, folk dance camps put them in touch with the masters, usually ethnic people who give a glimpse of their culture.

"Discovering the meaning be-

hind a dance can move you," said Irwin Barr, Beverly's husband. "For instance, in Romania, infant mortality is very high, so mothers

celebrate their babies' birthday with a dance. And serious dancers tend to in-

bright striped skirt

clude the costumes. "I remember a time when three-fourths of those who joined the festivals wore costumes," said Cheryl Cates, who was wearing a Portuguese costume white embroidered blouse.

broidered apron. She has invested in five outfits from other countries. Her husband, Marshall, wore an off-white tunic with embroidered neck and cuffs, loose pants and a from Transylvania in headdress Northern Romania.

Sadly, much of the folklore and culture surrounding the dances are lost on many dancers. But folk dancing has enriched their lives in "We form lasting ways. friendships since we see much of each other," said Beverly Barr.

Glaser, still a bachelor, said: "I am not very good with people. I'm not aggressive." But through folk dancing, which he learned 30 years ago, "I have met a lot of people. As a hobby, it is very sociable and a lot of fun.

Cheryl and Marshall Cates met in folk dancing classes in Altadena years ago. Indeed, said Beverly Barr, the dance hall has played Cupid to many a couple. "We have witnessed a lot of marriages and remarriage," she said.































