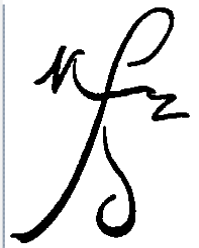




Let's Talk Folk Dance

Membership network email update and musings on local folk, historical, traditional and community dance

Read more at.....Folkdance.nz/members



Hi Everyone,

No doubt groups and classes are winding down for the year and planning their end-of-year events. I hope you have all had a successful and enjoyable year.

After the 'Gumboot Tango' at Wellyfest, I'm looking forwards to more festivals with wonderful dance programmes. In late January 2020 Auckland Folk Festival has a two day dance programme with regular and guest tutors and a diverse range of genres. Evening dances provide a popular meeting point for old and new friends.... and perhaps romance!

Easter 2020 sees the Canterbury Folk Festival, Hamilton Folk Festival (Hamsterfest) – both with 'big' dances as part of the programme; and of course the Big National Folk Festival of Australia with its 4 day dance programme. I don't know much about the dance programme at Whare Flat Festival outside of Dunedin over New Year - does anyone?

Anyway – plenty to look forwards to and I'm sure you all have in your diary - at the beginning of October 2020 - the FDNZ 25th Anniversary weekend workshop with Tineke and Maurits Van Geel. An announcement as to venue will be made shortly.

Regards ÷ ÷ ÷ **Fiona**

MEMBERS ARE THINKING ABOUT..... Elaine Prakash (FDNZ

Archivist) has been thinking about 'Brain Gym' - AKA the beneficial effects of dancing regularly - especially for us Golden Oldies!. Elaine has been reading the **National Folk Organisation News** which FDNZ library regularly receives from America and gives a summary of two recent pieces from the January 2018 issue. Page 12 "Dancing Can Reverse the Signs of Aging in the Brain" and page 13 "Circle Dance: A Spiritual Practice".

A new neuroscience study has shown that dancing regularly has the most profound effect on reversing the signs of aging in the brain which cause our decline in mental and physical capacity. This is because the benefits any regular fitness training program causes an increase in the hippocampus region of the brain, which in turn plays a role in memory and learning and keeping one's balance. Being regularly challenged to learn and recall a new dance routine or try a different dance style (which changes the rhythm, speed, arm patterns and steps) keeps participants in a constant learning process compared to other more repetitive forms of exercise training such as cycling, swimming, walking etc. These extra challenges are thought to account for the noticeable difference in balance dance participants gained compared to study participants doing endurance or flexibility training. The conclusion is that dancing regularly is a powerful tool to challenge body and mind and slow down age-related decline.

The second contribution (noted above) listed what made International Sacred Circle Dance so special. The inclusivity of circles or lines meant no partner was needed to participate. It was considered a low stress activity because each dance was always taught before being danced. Mistakes were OK because they were accepted as only "variations". Sacred circle dances were easily adaptable for people with physical limitations. There was something for everyone because of the dance variety of speed, difficulty, expression and intention and the huge selection of music from diverse origins. With simple repetition and focus causing a meditative mantra it can quiet the mind and centre one in the here and now. Although non-denominational, it can build community and spiritual practice for regular participants.

A shining example of long time participation in dance and yoga practice is a former member of the Hawke's Bay International Dancing Group, 88 year old Queensland resident Meredyth Howard. A March 2018 Seven News report showed her holding difficult yoga poses in class and we know she can still demonstrate her party trick of doing the splits! See Gail Phil's facebook post 1 March 2018 sharing this video [Ed: you'll need to copy the link manually]. https://www.facebook.com/gail.phil.7/videos/vb.529475814/10156362872805815/?type=2&video_source=user_video_tab

So folks make sure you keep hip, happy and healthy as long as possible by continuing to participate in regular dance activity. [Ed: Absolutely...thanks Elaine for this evidence-based update which could be very useful for promoting your dance classes / events in the coming year]

DANCING INGUMBOOTS AT FESTIVALS

FDNZ members were seen kicking up their heels at Wellyfest over Labour Weekend to the great music and dance calling of the Victoria University Ceilidh Club – fantastic to see a new generation of dance callers with their own nifty dances! I did need my gumboots once the marquee 'floor' had seen a few spins and polkas! I had fun learning some basic 'rapper dance' moves with the Wellington side (see FDNZ FB page); and guest tutor from Dunedin, Bernadette Maroney, led some contra dance and square dance workshops. I was a little disappointed in the lack of cultural diversity in the dance programme [remember there's always a call for workshop leaders every year – don't be shy]. Dance diversity was however elsewhere in Wellington with Machol Pacifica participants kicking up their heels in best Israeli dance fashion – but probably not in gumboots!!

Update from your committee: Our new President is keeping us on our toes....we have had a very productive committee meeting with lots of ideas to move us forwards on a couple of big items such as refreshing our website and reducing the burden of newsletter preparation on one person. Again we are very keen to know of any members who would be willing to share their skills - please let us know. Check out the Members page for the latest minutes as the AGM minutes should now be on the website.

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