

Dance Briefs...

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Örökségünk

With that mouthful of a program title name (it means "Our Heritage" in Hungarian), authenticity seems guaranteed. With the aid of several guests, the Hungarian Folk Dance Ensemble of New Brunswick brought an evening of instrumental music, song and dance to Julia Richman High School auditorium on April 18 that opened a window on Hungarian culture as sustained in America. Central New Jersey has acted as a magnet for successive waves of immigration from Hungary, the most recent following the failed 1956 uprising. Community organizations help maintain connections to the motherland and with its cultural and religious expressions. This summer this Ensemble will travel to sister city Debrecen in eastern Hungary to participate in a summer festival there.

Two groups that contributed singers and dancers to the Ensemble are the Hungarian American Athletic Club and the Regös Ensemble of the Hungarian Scout Association. The first has sponsored a dance group for the past five years under the direction of Maria Sárközi; the second, under László Hajdú-Németh, is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary. In the aftermath of WWII, the Scouts were disbanded within Hungary but quickly reorganized in the U.S. and Canada. The member boys and girls receive a full cultural immersion and all must speak Hungarian language fluently.

Choreographer Zoltán Zsuráfszki with his wife Zsuzsa Vincze has been in the forefront of preserving and presenting Hungarian dance. As artistic director and soloist for the Budapest Dance Ensemble, Mr. Zsuráfszki has traveled to New York many times to teach and perform. He offered a masterful demonstration of the splendid *Recruiting Dance*, which features rapid-fire heel clicking and boot slap-

ping. The two then offered a brisk couple's dance from the same Bodrogköz region of northeastern Hungary.

András Kocsis and Geneviève Cote of the Montreal dance ensemble "Pearly Bouquet" performed an equally interesting couple's dance from central Transylvania also with an extensive man's segment. Mr. Kocsis has a wonderful freedom and spontaneity to his movements. During the couple's portion, the two skillfully alternated between performing toward the audience and the traditional electric rapport with the onstage musicians.

Weighted more toward the second half, the dance portion of the program featured vigorous numbers mostly from Transylvania, now in Romania but once part of Hungary. The relative isolation of that region has ensured the preservation of traditions relatively free from extraneous influences. The downside is that the women's participation is largely confined to couples' dancing, although the spectacular men's dances almost compensate. An example is the "Barn Stamper", which the Ensemble dancers attacked with gusto. The dance derives from the community participation to erect a shed behind a person's house that would be used for storage of farm implements. The male villagers' packing down the dirt floor becomes the brisk stamping action in this dance. A finale for couples completes this translation from communal effort to celebration of that endeavor.

The Hungarian-American dancers brought an enthusiasm that most professional groups must work very hard to create. The seriousness with which they undertake their preparations clearly shows; even though few if any will become professionals, they are members in good standing in the dance community. As might be expected, the costumes were superb; the program was replete with informative notes.

Providing the evening's musical accompaniment, the Életfa folk music band were led by violin virtuoso Kalman "Ócsi" Magyar.