

Winter



## Hungarian-American Club of New Mexico

P.O. Box 3454

Albuquerque, NM 87190

[www.hacnm.org](http://www.hacnm.org)

### 2012 Upcoming Events:

End-of-Year  
Holidays  
December 9

### 2013 Events:

1848 Revolution  
March 10

Magyar Picnic  
June to be announced

St. Stephen's Day  
August 25

1956 October  
Revolution  
October 27

End-of-Year  
Holidays  
December 1

### Greetings from the President

Greetings to all as I am once again writing this article, this time from 30,000 feet, traveling on an airplane. How different life has become since I arrived into this country! At that time it took almost two weeks for a letter to arrive to Hungary and the same for the answer to arrive back from my mother. I now speak with my daughter every day in Washington DC and I can send her an email from the air which she will receive almost immediately. The stuff of books by Jules Verne! But some things have not changed in all these years. Hungarian wines are still as good as ever as many of us experienced at our last event. The wine tasting favorite was the Tokaji Aszu and a close second the Mad Cuvee both deliciously on the sweet side and enjoyed by most. My other personal favorite was the Lambrusco, surprised me with its light and refreshing taste. As usual, we had a core group of dedicated people who helped organize and I am most grateful to

them for all the work they did. The food was carefully chosen to complement the wines, was delicious once again, and looked great. Want to also thank everyone who stayed a little later to help us clean up. It was also nice to see new faces and welcome back some people who have not had a chance to come to the club for a while. You may have met the young couple who, although not Hungarian, just returned from Budapest after teaching English there for a couple of years. It would be interesting if they could share some of their experiences. Also the Rezler scholars Anita and Hajnalka. We also wanted to share with you the web address of a new company, Magyar Marketing – or at least new to us – which sells Hungarian products in this country. <http://magyarmarketing.com/> (You can call them for a catalog at **1-800-786-7851**) Hope many of you are enjoying the “treasures” you ended up taking home from the silent auction. I look forward to seeing you at our Christmas party on December 9.

## **SOME MAGYAR HOLIDAY TRADITIONS**

steve borbas

The first opportunity to give gifts to children (and of course many adults) is Mikulas on December 6. Many of the countries around us also celebrate Mikulas or Santa Claus. The night before, the kids polish their boot and place it on the window sill. Next morning they find the boot filled by Mikulas? With small toys, candy, maybe some fruits like tangerine, apples, dates, and walnuts. As a reminder to be good, some kids get switches or branches. If Mikulas appears dressed in traditional bishop's robes, he will be accompanied by boys representing good and mischief (krampusz). Mikulas day is celebrated everywhere, especially in schools, daycare centers, workplaces for employees' kids and at our Hungarian Club. The second opportunity for gift giving (and receiving – my favorite part) is at Christmas Eve. The tree is bought and decorated that day and the gifts are

placed under the tree. Kids are not allowed to enter the tree room or even see the decorations, because the little angels need time to bring in the presents. At our family event at my aunt's house, all the kids were in the next room ready to invade the tree room when the angels (my dad) rang the bell. We all raced into the room wide-eyed at the beauty of the decorations and the pile of presents. But first we had to sing some songs and politely thank the parents for the gifts as we attacked the find. The tree had glass ornaments, embroidered hangings, szaloncukor, and candles. The next 2 days were spent with family and relatives, eating 3 lunches, and 2 dinners daily. Some of the most traditional foods eaten at these holidays were wine soup, fried carp, goose, duck, nokedli, poppyseed guba, pears. Turkey was mentioned in some of the references, but that is mostly in the villages and more recent. If any of you still believe in Mikulas and angels, please disregard this story – it was necessary to invent something for this newsletter.

## **NEWS FROM THE BOTTLE**

by Steve Borbas

NEWS FROM THE BOTTLE Borbas Pityu Actually News from the Economist – At the “1956 Revolution” celebrations in Budapest, 2 large and separate rallies, instead of a national unity rally, were organized. The prime minister, Victor Orban's fans on one side and on the other were the followers of Gordon Bajnai who served as caretaker prime minister in 2009, 2010. Mr Bajnai is returning to politics and challenging Mr Orban in the national elections to be held in the spring of 2014. More than 50% of Hungarians are neither on the right or the left and are undecided. Mr Orban's popularity has diminished due to the poor

economy, the anti-European Union rhetoric and the rightist direction. Mr Bajnai's direction is more in the center and is working on uniting other groups into one movement. ....

Our March 2013 event will feature the Hungarian Dancers. Gary Diggs (see his article in this newsletter) and his dancers are working on new pieces to present to us.....

Please send me info about happenings within our Club (sborb@unm.edu or call at 265-7088), such as marriages, graduations, births, honors, birthdays, anniversaries, passings, etc.

## **THE HUNGARIAN IMPROVISATIONAL DANCE**

by Gary Diggs

Steve asked me to write an article on Hungarian dance, a task I hardly feel qualified for. I can, however, give a little of *my* perspective on dance in general with Hungarian dance as the centerpiece. Please take anything I say with a healthy grain of salt. At a certain point in life you feel like time has shifted into reverse and is going backwards. I feel like I'm in the youth of my old age, a dangerous time when old fools think like teenagers and where strong opinion can easily substitute for fact!

Why should this be? If there's any truth to the saying “What doesn't kill you makes you stronger”, then perhaps this is a clue, a factor in the evolution of what it means to be Hungarian. Magyar tribes, according to some sources, consolidated their control of the Carpathian Basin establishing an early Hungarian state in the 9<sup>th</sup> and early 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the millennia preceding, if the distribution of spoken language is any indication, pre-Hungarian tribes migrated some three thousand miles—about twice the distance pioneers had to travel going from Missouri to California. From a large expanse in central Russia just south of the arctic circle and east of the Urals, they arrived in the region of what is Hungary today.

My theory is that they were simply tired of freezing their tushes in the Western Siberian winters, but regardless of why they came, certainly only the very strongest and fit could attempt, much less survive, such a journey. But having arrived, it still must have been no picnic. Eastern Europe, being at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, and in the path of every invading army from east, west, south, or north, has for centuries been the proving ground for cultures with true grit. Geographically Hungary is at the epicenter. To survive and even flourish people there would indeed have to be something beyond the ordinary.

In nature, beauty is often the unlikely coincidence of many factors. Life itself on the planet earth is an example; you don't see that many sister planet earths spinning around out there. A natural diamond is formed only under unique circumstances involving extremely high pressure and temperature approximately a hundred miles beneath earth's surface. This process requires *billions* of years, and then the diamond is only brought near the surface by volcanic activity. A diamond is a rarity born of extreme conditions. In the universe of ethnic dance, Hungarian dance and culture is the diamond. I realize I'm preaching to the choir here, but I'll say it anyhow: Hungary is indeed special *and its depth, variety, and sophistication of music and dance reflect that*. Not only does each region have *its own unique set of dances* evolved over hundreds of years, in many instances *so does each village!* While every country in the world is, or at least should be, passionate about its folk traditions, only a handful in of countries are in my opinion even in the same league as Hungary. To explain and justify that statement I need to talk a bit about dance itself.

An *improvisational* dance is one that you make up as you go along, in the moment. Generally it is not without some structure; you could just mindlessly flail your body aimlessly about, but usually you don't, any more than when you speak you simply make random sounds. Usually there are a few rules, called *syntax*, and vocabulary, called *figures* and *steps*. And then of course there is the music that you *dance to*, and (in the case of couple dances) your partner *with whom you dance (lead and follow)*. You might even ask *why am I dancing*, or *what, if anything, am I trying to say* in this dance. Each of these factors introduces another layer, another dimension or level of complexity, of sophistication. In this sense, an improvisational couple dance is a little like a language or an extemporaneous conversation. By contrast, a *choreographed dance*, couple or line (almost all line dances tend to be choreographed), is like a scripted speech or scripted conversation. In high school chorus I remember singing a lot of words in Latin. We generally had little idea of the meaning of those words, we were just mouthing them phonetically. And certainly we were not picking or choosing which words to sing; we merely sang in sequence what was written in front of us.

Now while this is not evil, it can in fact be quite beautiful, it is a few notches down on the evolutionary scale from actually *knowing* a language and, further, *conversing meaningfully* in it. It is like comparing a *picture* of a scene taken from real life *with real life*, or like comparing a rock with a living organism. Certainly there are some very pretty rocks out there, but their possibilities are limited when compared with something that thinks, breathes, and moves around on its own.

Not surprisingly there are other countries that have wonderful dances. Bulgaria and Macedonia have evolved, in both their beauty and diversity, incredible line dances. There is something special, absolutely precious, in virtually every country's folk dance tradition, so much so that it is impossible to compare them to claim superiority of one country's dances over another. Nor would you even want to. Argentina has produced what may be the world's premier urban folk couple dance in the Argentine tango. A main reason for being passionate about international folk dancing is this amazing diversity.

But the point I want to make here is that *improvisational* couple dancing demands a sophistication an order of magnitude greater than that of line dancing (there, I said it, and damn the torpedoes of the line dancers) or that of *choreographed* couple dances (as in "Dancing With the Stars"). Each of the factors listed above (syntax, vocabulary, music, partner, purpose, etc.) play a role, and as well they are synergistic. I don't have time or space to go into great detail (another article), but just for example if you are a leader in a couple dance, the demands on you to know precisely what your partner is doing—where her center of balance is, which foot she's on, is she moving laterally, rotating, and so on—is exponentially greater than in a choreographed dance where he does his shtick, she does hers. Even then knowing where your partner is and what she's doing is helpful, but not nearly as crucial as in a lead-and-follow improvisational dance, dances like true Argentine tango, or Mezősegi (or Kalotaszegi, Szatmari, Székely, . . .) Csárdás. In these dances it is a different world; the *focus* is on the follower: he focuses on her; she focuses on him focusing on her. But ultimately it's about two people dancing as one—two bodies, two brains, but one mind: empathy. It's what gives true improvisational couple dancing a level of complexity, of magic, even spirituality, over dancing line or choreographed couple dances.

Finally, there is purpose. People dance for different reasons: to impress a girl, to gain attention, to be "the best", to be social, to relax, for exercise, etc. There are a few dancers however who get beyond this. They look for *their* dance; they try to dance "from the inside out", to dance *who they truly are*, and not *merely to mimic the moves or style of someone else*. Looking at dance as a language, it changes the focus from *how* you say something to *what* it is you are trying to say, from merely

*looking* good to actually *being* good. There's a difference. Thus leading a partner in an improvisational couple dance is like being in a different universe. And as a catalyst to get from one to the other, Hungarian improvisational dance forms are unsurpassed. I had a friend who passed away recently, an amazing dancer who was original, not flashy, who simply danced who he was, but to see him dance was to have goose bumps. His two favorite dances were Kalotaszegi Legenyés and Mezősegi Csárdás.

Improvisational folk couple dances are a rarity. There are very few cultures that have evolved to produce them, examples being Hungary with its many versions of the czardas and Argentina with its tango. But no country has produced the mind boggling depth, diversity, and sheer number of different improvisational dance forms as has Hungary. For myself they are on a very short list of the most challenging, most interesting, most *honest*, dances on earth.

## **Reflections (as best I can remember) on 2009**

### **Danube Cruise**

By Carolyn Simon

In 2009 my husband, Earl and I embarked on a Viking river cruise as a way to get acquainted with my Hungarian roots.

We sailed from Nuremberg, Germany to Budapest, Hungary on an 8 day cruise and extended for 3 nights in Budapest. We rapidly learned that a 3 night stay was not nearly enough time to explore my heritage or Hungary, in general. However, it did give us a taste of a fascinating country and a desire to see more.

For those of you whom have never tried a river cruise, we found it to be a most enjoyable way to see many lovely cities and sights. There is not quite as much entertainment as on a large ship, but local entertainers were brought onboard and were quite enjoyable. Yes, some gypsy dancers. The food was incredible and service excellent. There is so much to do during the day that most folks retired fairly early. We were not so wise and closed the lounge down most nights. Perhaps that is why this trip is a little fuzzy in our minds!

Here is just a brief synopsis of our trip:

Nuremberg was the unofficial capital of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation from the 12th to the 16th century. It was also the site of the Nuremberg trials after WWII. Here we had our first taste of apple strudel at coffee-drinking time.

Regensburg was originally a Celtic settlement named Radisbona. It later became a Roman garrison and evidence of the Roman occupation remains. During our walking tour we had the opportunity to visit the Jewish Quarter and Syna-

gogue. We were offered unleavened bread as a welcome there. An excursion through the Danube Gorge and visit to a baroque church were quite impressive.

Passau (home of the Passion play) and Melk were charming. We were treated to an organ concert at St. Stephan's Cathedral which houses one of the world's largest church organs. Melk features splendid baroque architecture. We were treated to a Mozart and Strauss concert in the evening.

Vienna, the capital of Austria, is a wonderful city, famous for its Sachertorte pastry, Lippizaner horses and the glass palace, Schonbrunn. Something to see. We loved it all.

Now it's on to the magnificent city of Budapest. Sailing into Budapest is quite inspiring. Though a little tired, one can just imagine the grandeur it once displayed. Of course we toured St. Stephan's which we have heard about at the Club. Also, seeing the evidence of the fighting that took place during the 1956 revolution gives one pause to reflect on what the people must have endured. We loved the small shops in Buda as well as the grand views from the mountains. The Pest side offered an opportunity to see the Hero's Square, spas, museums, designer shops and the huge market. The people were so helpful as we tried to navigate the street signs and buses without knowing a word of Hungarian. We stayed at the Andrassy Hotel which was lovely and sported a fine restaurant. We looked out from our window the first evening to find a festival

going on which included many street vendors where we could taste regional cuisine. The main event was a horse race; The National Gallop. The crowd was quite enthusiastic about their horse racing. Maybe this is where I got my love of

horses.

Speaking of horses, we also had the opportunity to visit a horse ranch where we saw cowboys putting their horses through amazing routines. Along with this came a banquet of more food than one could possibly imagine or eat. The platters of food just kept coming out and, of course, we had to sample all of it.

Food - a most fun part of traveling. We ate an evening meal at the famous Gundel restaurant. Fine dining at it's best. During dinner we were

treated to wonderful music played on an instrument that we were totally unfamiliar with. It was a Cimbalom, which is a Hungarian dulcimer or zither. It had the most pleasant sound. Could have listened all night.

We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves on this trip and it was wonderful to finally see my Grandfather's birth country. Hoping to return one day soon. Meanwhile, we will continue to enjoy the company of the fine Hungarian/Americans we have met here in Albuquerque.

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If you have news, or you need information, please call Steve Borbas 265-7088 or Albert Gáspár 892-0861.

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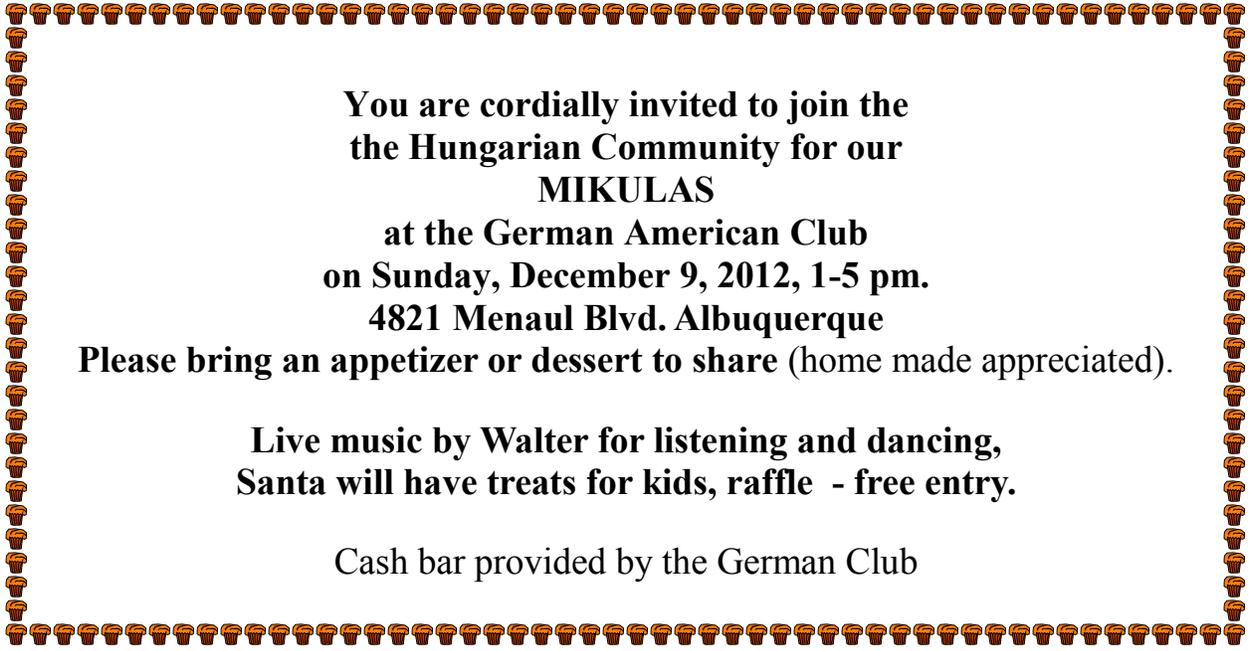
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The Newsletter staff members are Steve Borbas, Albert Gaspar, Rose Galko, with guest writers and articles.

### HUNGARIAN AMERICAN CLUB of NEW MEXICO

Purpose: To foster Hungarian culture among those residents of new Mexico who are of Hungarian descent, related people of Hungarian descent, or who may have Hungarian affiliation, but who are interested in preservation of ethnic cultures such as Hungarian, which may become lost without organizational effort.



**You are cordially invited to join the  
the Hungarian Community for our  
MIKULAS**

**at the German American Club  
on Sunday, December 9, 2012, 1-5 pm.  
4821 Menaul Blvd. Albuquerque**

**Please bring an appetizer or dessert to share (home made appreciated).**

**Live music by Walter for listening and dancing,  
Santa will have treats for kids, raffle - free entry.**

**Cash bar provided by the German Club**

**From:**  
The Hungarian-American Club of NM  
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Albuquerque NM 87190-3454

**To:**