

## Cyclical nature of things

It's fall, the autumnal equinox, a new beginning for the school year, the Jewish new year, election time for many organizations including NFDI and the US. (On a side note: please vote right away when you get your NFDI ballot in the mail.)

This time of year always reminds me of the cyclical nature of things. There are events that happen every year at the same time. Ritual has its place in our lives. It is comforting and predictable in the changing times we live in. There is great satisfaction in the known. Yet, fine balance between what we've always done and something new and different is desirable. There is room for novelty. You can even create new rituals. Then too, change happens despite our best efforts to keep things the same, often causing the predictable to become unpredictable.

In some ways, there is nothing new under the sun. We hear a lot about climate change now but did you know people were thinking about it hundreds of years ago? I'm currently reading The Invention of Nature, the story of Alexander von Humboldt, an intrepid explorer and the most famous scientist of his age who lived from 1769 to 1859. Even back then, he observed and documented man's negative effects on the environment and predicted human-induced climate change. You've probably heard this quote from Jena-Baptiste Alphonse Karr from 1849: "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose"—"the more it changes, the more it's the same thing".

Conversely, as Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher born in 544 b.c.e. said, "No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man." Even if we re-read a book, the self we bring to it is different and we can get different things from it. Sometimes we see the same old thing in a new way. Tweaking our attitude a bit is another way to modify our reality.

In the dance realm as everywhere, we see this pull between constancy and change. If we've been folkdancers for many years, the way we do a dance now is probably a bit different than how we danced it in our 20's. This may be due to increased skills and styling or perhaps compensating for current body conditions. Additionally, a group's repertoire changes over time.

So in our annual cycle with some new beginnings in the fall, the challenge for us may be to enjoy the tried and true while keeping things new and fresh, maybe by changing our attitude, maybe by changing our actions, allowing ourselves to change and see what happens, creating a new ritual. Best wishes to everyone for a wonderful fall.