

Virtual Folkdancing is a Happening Thing!

Thank you to Adony Beniares, team lead for the Peninsula Folk Dance Council who provided the background information on these events. The first week of March, the Peninsula Folk Dancers cancelled their Annual Heritage Festival scheduled for March 11-12 and decided to hold a virtual party. They put together a hold-the-date flyer for a virtual folk dance party on March 28th and sent it out to their normal channels, expecting to get their normal 75-125 person crowd. The concept and flyer took off and within a few days, it had reached around the world, more than 2,500 people had seen it and there were 100 emails in their inbox. Wow. They decided they were up for it and wanted to make it a bigger affair, so they reached out to friends in New Jersey, British Columbia, Oregon and Washington state. Washington contacts were Steve Himel and David and Laura Carman.

They split the duties, decided who would lead which dances, and started the party. They've received lots of great feedback and will hold these parties monthly until the crisis is over. Once it's over, they see a great opportunity to connect people across the world, help bring folk dancing to those who don't have a nearby group or don't get out like they used to, and have fun with everyone. There is one scheduled for Saturday, April 11, 3-6 pm, and also one for May 9, 3-6 pm. This is a zoom party <https://zoom.us/j/600066908> Meeting ID: 600 066 908 or <https://www.facebook.com/PFDCouncil/>.

What was it like as a dancer? The organizers took requests ahead, but also the day of the party. On Saturday, March 28th, 3-6 pm, over 1500 participants from Italy, the US, Korea, Germany, England, Mexico and Canada danced and watched and enjoyed many folk dances from all over. One could display lots of the people participating or focus on the leader for each dance. The party improved as it went along. Andy Taylor-Blenis and Roberto Bagnoli joined the party, completely spontaneously, they were on line and pinged the organizers to put them on and they led some of their dances from their well-lighted studio which showed their feet well. It was the next best thing to dancing in public.

I enjoyed seeing Kathy Sandstrom in Oregon, Katherine Hough, Barbara Haner and several other Seattle friends and lots of happy folkdancers from all over the country, including New Jersey. I hope to participate again in virtual folk dances until we can do the real thing again.

From their flyer:

Hosted by Peninsula Folk Dance Council and Folk Dance Federation of California, Inc. - North Peninsula Folk Dance Council is going to host a VIRTUAL FOLK DANCE PARTY! We'll be setting up a video and audio bridge for everybody to web or call into from their homes. A few of us will be playing music so we can all dance without being together.

Dance wherever you are; no need to get together to dance, we'll dance in our own homes, apartments, vans, yurts, cabins,.... With luck, you'll be able to show yourself with your webcam and we'll see and hear each other! Hey, wear a costume!

Let's keep dancing. We will:

- Connect and dance in our own homes
- Watch people leading dances from around the world
- Submit requests and chat online
- See each other; listen and dance to our favorites

There will be a couple of dances in the program for your 'housemate' and you to dance.

You can indeed send questions to virtualfolkdance@gmail.com

You will only need what space you have, we will probably not be doing Adama V'shamayim or Troika during the party =). Also, if you don't have any space, or can't currently dance, you can still listen in and brighten up your and our Saturday.

Free! If you can, help your local food bank with a donation. There are a lot of people out of work right now.

Email your dance requests to virtualfolkdance@gmail.com. We're also working on a way for you to request during the event.