

TEENAGE CLASS AT CANBERRA

Folk dance has a quality that I have never seen in other forms of dance, a warmth about it that is unrivalled. It's in the togetherness of the group when they are dancing: the shared smiles, big laughs, and the physical connection of holding hands in a circle or clinging on for dear life as you buzz yourself dizzy. It's the pure joy of moving with beautiful music and moving with beautiful people. We have been so lucky to experience this togetherness and this joy through Folk Dance Canberra. And we want to share it.

In Australia, folk dance is never associated with teenagers. It can be seen as too slow or boring and many people just do not know about it. But folk dance can be so much fun! Israeli dances with graceful turns and leaps, Bulgarian dances with footwork so fast that it leaves you exhilarated and breathless, South American dances with sass and sway, and rhythmic Pacific Islander dances where you feel strong and powerful. Folk dance has been a part of how we have grown up - we have gained so much from it and it's still giving us so much! And the great thing about how dance is taught here at FDC is that there is no pressure at all, the classes are purely for the joy of dance. I know many teenagers



who have done ballet, and said that they hated it. I am sure they love dancing, but the pressure is awful and it ruined whatever joy they felt. Folk dance is not like that.

This is why we wanted to teach our own class specifically for teenagers, and it's been really rewarding. Although most of our classes have been very small, there has always been a lightness and energy in the room that leaves your heart soaring a little afterwards. We have done a variety of dances, from Israel, the Pacific Islands, South America, Bulgaria, Romania, the USA, Germany, England, India and more! We generally do dances that are energetic and fun, and we've been keeping the dances simple. One person who came to the classes told us that they had never realised how awesome international folk dance was, and how there were so many rich stories behind the dances and they were so timeless as well. We also were lucky enough to have someone join our class who is Colombian and has

done Colombian dancing before. We were teaching a Colombian dance the day that she first came, and it was the most exciting thing to hear that she was from Colombia and to watch her do the dance so beautifully in the Colombian style. We have learned from her, and it's so great that our class gave her a chance to do a dance from Colombia.

We are so glad that we started up our teenage world dance classes. It has been rewarding to share something that has been a big part of our lives and given us so much joy, with other people. Hopefully, some day many Australian teenagers will experience the joy of folk dancing.

Evie

INTRODUCING - Gergana Panova



Dr. Gergana Panova-Tekath was born in Sofia, Bulgaria. She graduated from the National School for Dance Arts in Sofia and was selected by Margarita Dikova for the Filip Kutev Bulgarian National Folk Ensemble, where

she danced and choreographed until 1994.

Gergana has published numerous articles and has written two books on various aspects of Bulgarian traditional dance. Besides organizing annual summer seminars in Bulgaria (till 2011), Gergana has taught workshops in many countries: Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Israel, Turkey, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Brazil, Argentina, Japan, Canada, and the United States.

She regularly commutes between Bulgaria, where she heads the Ethnochoreology Department at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and Germany, where she is Professor of Dance at Folkwang University in Essen.

She graduated in Dance Pedagogy, Ethnochoreology, Choreography and Direction (Bulgaria), and Kinetography and Communicative Sciences (Germany) and has completed a Doctorate with "Summa cum laude" and awarded the prize "Dissertation 2004" from the Technical University of Dortmund (Germany) in the area of Cultural Philosophy. The title of her thesis is "Dance after Perestroika. The Communication between Eastern and Western Europe through the Bulgarian Folkdances." Gergana qualified in Ethnochoreology and Communication in 2011 in Sofia.