

Introduction for MVFD Demonstration at Dayton Art Institute

Grand Re-Opening, June 21, 1997

Good Afternoon. My name is Leslie Hyll. I have been dancing with the Miami Valley Folk Dancers since 1971 when my whole family began dancing with the club. I was 12 years old at the time, and my parents were not worried about my getting into trouble, because all these other people here acted as surrogate parents and grandparents.

This fall the Miami Valley Folk Dancers will celebrate its 45 th Anniversary.

Folk dancing in Dayton started in 1947 when Michael Solomon, a recreation employee for the City of Dayton, was introduced to international folk dancing by neighbors.

Miami Valley Folk Dancers started as a class in 1952 sponsored by the City of Dayton, Recreation Department. The class was so successful that a new club was formed, led by Michael Solomon. The initial membership fee was \$1.00 per month, which remained in effect until this year. Today, the club, about 80 members

strong, is led by a council with many people serving on committees and teaching and leading dances.

Over the years Miami Valley Folk Dancers has been dedicated to learning new dances, increasing members appreciation for many diverse cultures. (MVFD was into cultural diversity long before it was politically correct to tout cultural diversity.) In its history the club has sponsored 62 weekend workshops with nationally and internationally known instructors. With each workshop we immersed ourselves into the culture of other countries with dance, singing, costumes, food, and fellowship. These workshops introduced us to the cultures of Scotland, Ireland, the Balkans, Germany, Poland, Denmark, Israel, England, Hungary, Greece, Canada, Italy, Romania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Austria, and many others. Mini-workshops have introduced us to the cultures of Russia, Turkey, Scandinavia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Africa.

The Miami Valley Folk Dancers and its members have been very active in the Dayton community. We have done countless demonstrations for nursing homes, schools, festivals, and community groups. From 1957 to 1961 our group opened the winter Sunday Music Series at the Dayton Art Institute. Our members were instrumental in developing a significant folk dance program with the Girl Scouts in the 50's and 60's. Several of those

girl scout leaders became active members of our club. Other members have helped local ethnic clubs such as the Yugoslavs, French, and Italians, form their own dance groups and recapture the dances of their own cultures. In addition to our own weekly beginners class, members have taught folk dance classes for local night schools, the University of Dayton, and Wright State University. In fact we have a 16 year history of teaching folk dance at Wright State.

Today, our programs include a weekly beginners class on Thursdays from 7-8 pm, participatory dancing from 9 - 11 on Thursdays, and our "Ethnic Sunday" sessions on the 2nd Sunday of each month when we teach and do dances according to various ethnic themes. Our membership includes singles, couples, and families ranging in age from 9 to 90. Everyone is always welcome, no partners or experience is necessary. Your first visit is always free, and, after that, the "outrageous" sum of \$1.00 is charged.

The Miami Valley Folk Dancers are proud to be able to celebrate this grand re-opening of the Dayton Art Institute with you today. Thank you for humoring me for a few minutes. Please visit us at the Community Golf Course some Thursday. We'd love to have you.