

Folk dancers dress with ethnic flair

By ETHEL EDWARDS

Some dancers are in American folk costume (jeans, jackets or even minis). Others appear to have followed a directive of yourself-an-ethnic-outfit. Embroidered shirts and blouses with trousers and mid-length skirts, low-slung rope belts, boots.

The girl wears her hair in braids under a bandana kerchief. A few dancers have found the perfect shoes, with laces that look like they want to dance by themselves. "They're made in Yugoslavia," a dancer explains. "But I ordered mine from New York."

Recorded music plays by turns vibrant, soulful, but always lively. The dancers follow the leader at the head of the line, which snakes around the gymnasium floor. They join in a large circle that gets larger as the evening progresses and more dancers arrive. Everyone seems to be laughing and in good spirits.

Leader Ben Chang is slight and nimble. His feet move soft and light. Chang's wife Sylvia leads their two children, Jennifer Melissa, 3, and son Justin, 20 months. She joins Chang to demonstrate a new dance which is done with partners. "The Changs, who live in Troy, first met at the International Institute in Detroit at the folkdance club. He is an engineer for Fisher Body and she is a librarian."

CHANG WAS born in Shanghai, China, and came to the U.S. in 1960 to attend graduate school at the University of Michigan. He participated in folk dancing at the International Institute first as a student and then as an instructor for club members' classes and its performing group. Dance nights were held for 10 years at the Northern YMCA in Highland Park.

until last year when the club moved its meeting place to Brookside School.

About a third of the dancers are from Detroit, others from suburban areas, and some from as far away as Toledo and Ann Arbor.

Agers range from 16 to 60 and, surprisingly perhaps, most of the dancers are enthusiastic young people who want to share the heritage of other cultures.

"DANCING IS very good exercise," Chang said. "People can dance all night without getting tired."

with a partner mixing in square dancing, you have to have a partner."

The club doesn't keep the same dancers at a time, generally the proportion is two-thirds old dancers to one-third new dancers. There is also a performing group, ranging anywhere from four to 10 couples in size, which dances for local festivals.

Nationals represented by the dances include German, Austrian, Greek, Romanian, Polish, Israeli, Hungarian, Yugoslavian, Bulgarian, South American, Czech, Irish, French, Portuguese, Spanish—the list could go on and on.

A smiling guy walks by wearing a T-shirt that reads: Folk dancers have more fun. He's probably right.

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