

United German Hungarian Cultural Group Founded 1965

From singing groups grew theatrical productions. Themed nights with song, dance, and sketch ranged from reflections of our own cultural past to the exotic festivities of the gypsy and the royal nature of the Viennese court.

When sportsmen among us sought excitement, fun, and ultimately kinship off the field, dance groups were formed and strengthened.

Those dynamic young that brought the United German Hungarians into the modernity of the 1960s, revolutionized club-life. They pushed the boundaries and they took us to new places, but they maintained traditional viewpoints in the process. These men and women built for their children an institution that has lasted for 50 years and still has a bright and successful future.

What follows is our story:

In 1964 **Emily Fricker, Emma Mueller, and Antonia Kreutzer** decided to start a children's dance group, in which they would teach and thereby foster the continuance of the traditional and folk dances of our ethnic group. From this inauspicious start, in 1965 developed our Cultural Group, an accomplished ensemble of which all our members can be justly proud. Having expanded into several facets, we perform Danube Swabian Folk Dances, Viennese Waltzes, Hungarian Czardas, Schuhplattler, and Contemporary Dances.

Through the years, our Cultural Group has had many talented instructors that have dedicated their time teaching us and passing on past traditions as well as introducing us to contemporary styles.

FOUNDERS

Emily Fricker, Emma Mueller, Antonia Kreutzer

CHAIRS

Emily Fricker (1968-1976)
Antonia Kreutzer (1976-1980)
Ute Hahn (1980-1984)
Marlene Fricker (1984-1998)
Janet Fricker Malofiy (1998-2012)
Susan Hartmann (2012-Present)

INSTRUCTORS & COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Alex Blank
Eileen Blank
John M. Blank
Irene Bodnar
Marie Caporeletti
Nichole Blank Deely
Yvonne Frazier
Emily Fricker
Lisa Fricker
Marlene Fricker
Werner Fricker III
Susi Hartmann
Penny Jacoby
Antonia Kreuzer
Christine Krueger
Jeanette Lau
Karen David Mahadevan
Janet Malofiy
Sasha Malofiy
Emma Muller
Gary Plaagg
Connie Reiter
Hanni Reiter
Joe Reiter
John Reiter
Rolf Stielow
Loni Walter
Andy Weyershaeuser
Regina Weyershaeuser

Besides dance and song, discipline, respect, and healthy values have always been at the forefront. The members of the GH Cultural Group have been taught to respect others, respect our culture, and respect our customs, traditions, and tracht. We reach for high achievements while we enjoy the spirit of the dance or performance.

Our Cultural Group Chairman, Susi Hartmann once introduced the group as follows, *"This is our Cultural Group; they are the heart of the Schuhplattler Group, our Night in Vienna Dancers, and tonight they are our Kirchweih Group. You have never met a more hardworking group of young people."*

Involvement in the Cultural Group has become the young member's first foray into club-life. Over the years a majority of the men and women, who served on our Board of Governors, Executive Board, Chairmen, and Committees have "cut their teeth" so to say in the Cultural Group.

There are three active generations in this group who have learned so much from the founders and generations before us. We have worked very hard to be where we are and oh boy, we know how to have fun!

Since the founding days of the group we have performed at many local clubs' festivals and events. We have proudly taken part and performed at the **Cannstatter Volksfest**, the **Vereinigung Erzgebirge Sportfest**, the **Bayerischer Volksfest Verein Oktoberfest**, **Kolping Day**, and the **Philadelphia Tag der Donauschwaben**. We were participants in the very first **Steuben Parade** in Philadelphia and have participated in every parade since. When in February 1973 a destructive fire overtook our clubhouse clubs like these rallied behind us to raise money for our club in our hour of need. The **German Society of Trenton** sponsored a Fund Raising Affair for us at their club house on Friday, April 27. Our own Junior Dance Group performed.

At the time without a building, the Cultural Group strived on holding rehearsals in the Community Room in the Neshaminy Mall and at the Sandpiper Inn on Bristol Road.

In the early days together with several other local clubs and societies we were active members of the **Friends of German Folk Art**. This group promoted culture and performing art of our local German-American societies. Through this association we performed and participated for several years in the **Philadelphia Folk Fair**, which was a large event held annually and sponsored by the **Nationalities Services Center of Philadelphia**. We were always proud to perform at this event. Most importantly we were able to view many other nationalities and learn to respect and understand other customs and traditions.

Since 1965 the Cultural Group has provided the entertainment for many of the regular events at the United German Hungarians, including **A Night in Vienna**, **Hungarian Night**, **Mayfest**, the annual **Gala Anniversary Banquet**, **Christmas Parties**, and the **Children's Christmas Party**.

The Flight of the Century as it was named by our club took place in 1973. 150 members of the United German Hungarians and the Heimatklänge would all meet in **Waldhausen, Germany** for a huge festival. There we participated in a parade on the 4th of July and we performed six international dances and a Schuhplattler.

Special performances have been made for the **Zipser Reunions**, the Vereinigung Erzgebirge **Karnival Shows**, the **German Society of Pennsylvania**, the **German-American Chamber of Commerce** and **Heimatklänge** Orchestra concerts. A very special performance was given for the **United States Soccer Federation** on the occasion of their 75th Anniversary. Through our friendships in Vail, we were hired to perform in **Vail Colorado** for former **President Gerald Ford** and the Young Corporate Presidents of America. We also performed an entire floor show at the historic **Sunnybrook Ballroom** in Pottstown Pennsylvania to a packed house of special guests.

In recent years we have performed annually at the **Philadelphia Christmas Village**, and at the Oktoberfest and Maifest celebrations sponsored by **Brauhaus Schmitz** on South Street. In November 2015 at the request of Philadelphia Mayor Nutter we performed a special dance for the **Mayor of Frankfurt, Germany** as they signed a sister cities agreement at city hall.

Any one of the members will have a quick answer when asked, "What is the most beautiful day of the year?"

The answer of course is, "**KIRCHWEIHFEST!**"

The history of our Cultural Group cannot be told without the history of our Kirchweihfest celebrations. The festival itself illustrates what the Cultural Group does. Rituals help us to maintain memories of the past yet they are entirely based on notions of the future. The traditions are ancient, but celebrated by youth with vigor and energy. The Kirchweihfest then, is **the** event we most closely associate with.

Our Kirchweih festival grew over the years eventually expanding to a three-day event with a variety show Friday evening. From 1975 to 2001 we held a three-day festival with was a huge success. Our German Hungarian Dancers not only performed the ancient Kirchweih dances each year, but performed a colorful Musical Revue for 20 years. Under the direction of Marlene Fricker, each year a talented group of members worked to choreograph dances, write music, develop scripts, and build sets. Our

talented dancers, singers and musicians took our audiences around the world and from the earth to the moon with elaborate productions. We were challenged with performances that took us beyond our normal comfort zone.

Our show in 1983 featured a tribute to 300 years of Germans in America. The highlight of this show was a scene depicting the immigration of our ancestors to America. It featured a song written just for this show by our good friend Ron Kerber, "**America, Let's give it a Try**". Our final "Musical Revue" was performed in 2001. In 2002, our Kirchweih was held on a Sunday afternoon in September in our Picnic Grove and in 2006 the decision was made to move our Kirchweihfest from September to November and from an outside event to an inside one. This continues to the present day.

Each generation takes hold and has been educated about their past and their culture through these events. Our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents that remember the Kirchweihfest when they were children gain a twinkle in their eyes. They see the men marching in their flowered hats. They smile at the beautiful handmade Tracht that the even more beautiful girls wear. They tap their feet to the music and applaud the dancing. Tears of joy and of memory flow down when they see the Geld Herr take his place atop a table with the Rosmarein Strauss in hand so he can open his mouth and say the "spruch" reminding them of where they are from and how far they have come.

Ultimately, the elated, youthful faces of the Kirchweihgruppe, their high-spirited dancing and vibrant calls of excitement characterize the most wonderful fest of the year. After this Year's Kirchweih, Karina Fricker wrote:

"When the day finally arrived, the hall was set, the dancers prepared, and the German Hungarians ready for the evening to come. We buttoned our vests, tied our aprons and smoothed our handmade tracht before, with smiling faces, greeted our friends from many different clubs near and far. Soon we were on the dance floor for the first polka of the night!"

Throughout our history we have had a great assistance with music and the technology connected with our music, from huge record players, to reel to reel tapes, the cassette machine to the compact discs, and the MP3 music file played on iPods, phones and music players. Today we truly have music at our fingertips. However, it has been live music and the musicians that have contributed so much to our performances. Accordion players,

John Galgon, Lenny Hartmann, Haidy Kerber, Carl Meyer, Tommy Groeber, Jack Mattes, Joe Reiter and Maria Antoniak have accompanied us. With the power of technology, we still dance to the music recorded by our friends. Over the years we got jobs through Tony Walter and Jacob Titz, but it was **John Galgon** who took us with him everywhere. The German Hungarians and the Heimatklänge; what a lasting partnership! **Heinz Kerber** wrote and directed the music for our shows, **and to this day the Heimatklänge under the direction of Bill Galgon are our partners in fun.**

While we have listed our founders, leaders and instructors above, we are thankful to the many individuals who have contributed or helped in many ways through the years. Costumes, tracht, equipment, props, scenery, food and beverage! The friends, family members, parents and grandparents, who have supported us, we thank all of you. It must be mentioned that in the past 30 years no individual has had more of an impact on our dance and performance than **Marlene Fricker**. Through her experience, knowledge, and leadership, she has driven our group always toward excellence.

Our club is a member of the **Landesverband der Donauschwaben, USA**. This organization is dedicated to preserving the Donauschwaben Heritage and Culture in the USA. More recently, our Cultural Group has begun participating in international events hosted by member organizations. In 2010, our Club and Cultural Group had the pleasure of hosting the Donauschwaben Landestreffen. This is an annual national celebration dedicated to preserving the cultural heritage of the Danube-Swabian Peoples. This three-day event was attended by more than 1000 people from throughout the USA and Canada. At the time our President Bill Galgon stated, *"You (the members) deserve to walk around with your heads held high and tell everyone who wants to hear, 'I am a German Hungarian.'"*

In the late 1960s the Cultural Group began performing Schuhplattler dances. Our first chairman, Emily Fricker had often sent away for folk dances and music to teach to the dance groups. **Andy Weyershaeuser**, who had prior knowledge of the dance style and had once performed with the Philadelphia **GTV Almrausch**, later bolstered our instruction. He instilled in us his love and knowledge of this dance form. This eventually led to the official formation of the Schuhplattler group in 1976. Vorplattlers of our Schuhplattler Group have included: John M. Blank, Joe S. Reiter, John Reiter, and our current Vorplattler Alex Blank. In February of 2013,

John Reiter passed on the title to Alex Blank, as is the custom, bringing the next generation into leadership roles within our club. Shortly thereafter at the Gaufest in Sandusky, Ohio, Alex Blank, named **John Reiter**, our **Honorary Vorplattler** and presented him with a "Ehren Vorplattler" medal.

Through our friendship with the Auerhahn Schuhplattler Verein of Oley, PA (our Patenverein – Sponsoring Club), Alpenveilchen of Silver Springs, MD., and the Germania Almrausch of Poughkeepsie, NY, we became aware of an international organization known as the **Gauverband Nordamerika**. The organization preserves and perpetuates the cultural heritage of Bavaria (Germany) and Tyrol (Austria) including its customs, ethnic costumes, language, folk music, and folk dances. A biennial gathering of the Gauverband Nordamerika (Gaufest) is held in odd-numbered years. In 1985, several members of our Schuhplattler group traveled to Vail, Colorado to perform for the Vail Fourth of July festivities. While performing in Vail, we found out that there was a Gaufest being held in Denver, Colorado. We decided that we wanted to see what it was all about, so we hopped in our cars and drove two hours to Denver. We were in awe of what we experienced, so we decided then and there that we wanted to be part of this. In April, 1988, we applied for and were accepted as a member of the **Gauverband Nordamerika, Inc.**

One of the highlights of the Gaufest is the Schuhplattler Competitions: In addition to the Gruppen Preisplatteln (Group Competition), individual couples may also compete in the Jugend (Youth) or Adult Einzel Preisplatteln. The German Hungarians began competing in Parsippany, New Jersey in 1989. By 1993 we achieved our initial goal and placed third in Buffalo, New York. For the next two Gaufests in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (1995) and Newark, Delaware (1997) we maintained third place. In St. Paul, Minnesota (1999), we achieved our ultimate goal taking home the **Wanderpreis**, and **First Place Gold Medals!**

In 2003, the United German Hungarians hosted the 19th Gaufest in Philadelphia. In addition to undertaking this task of hosting the event, our group was also able to place second in the Gruppen Preisplatteln. This win led to an invitation to perform in **Ingolstadt, Bavaria**. In 2007, in Hershey, Pennsylvania, the group once again placed **first in Gruppen Preisplatteln**. In addition to this win, Sasha and Janet Malofiy placed first in the Adult Einzel Preisplatteln. After the 2007 win, the group was again invited and competed in **Planegg, Bavaria**.

Together with our Landsleit from the **Philadelphia and Trenton Donauschwaben Clubs**, we have co-sponsored Trachtenfests, in 1992, 1999, and 2006. We have hosted cultural exhibits and events with groups from Germany. In 2014, our three clubs hosted the "Living History Days" that featured a Cultural Exhibit at Philadelphia, and a "Taste of Everyday Life," at Trenton and a Trachtenfest at our club in our hall. Our Cultural Group shared in dancing, song, music and prose with the dance groups from the other clubs and the bonds that go back to the past were strengthened with youth.

Michael Fricker wrote after the yearlong celebration, *"I believe the club-to-club-to-club relationship is strong and growing because of the individuals that make them up. As we do more to mesh, we understand one another in newfound ways.... These three events that make up Living History Days 2014 are great in that they put on display the strong suits of each organization."*

Through this our young members became friends with the young dancers from the Banater Schwaben Groups from Germany. In 2014 we took part and performed at the **Volkstanzfest der Banater Trachtengruppen aus Baden-Wurtemberg**, in Freiburg Germany. Sofi Walter attended this event and wrote:

"We participated in a parade around the city with six different groups in it and performed in the town square for the mayor of Freiburg! This was a once in a lifetime experience because the dancers accumulated a crowd of spectators! After marching back to the dance hall we were delighted to be served dinner and not long after we finally performed our two dances, Windmüller and a polka called Kovarovska! The feeling of performing in front of the whole hall in a different country and in front of all of the other dance groups from around Germany too, gave me so much pleasure and I wish I could have done it a million times! Overall Freiburg was a great start to our trip and I will never forget the amazing performance that we gave that night!"

On that same 2014 tour of Germany and Austria our group participated in the opening ceremonies of the **Munich Oktoberfest**. Together with members from the Gauverband Nordamerika we were honored to be a part of these historic festivities. After the trip Anna Martini wrote:

"Walking in a parade is like stepping into familiar territory. So when we were asked to march in the opening sequence of the world famous

Munich Oktoberfest, these things we already knew: we'd have to be dressed in our best Tracht and we'd have to smile and wave happily and endlessly. These are immutable parade truths after all and we wouldn't want to have it any other way. What we didn't realize was this was just the starting point for this international and over-the-top cultural extravaganza. To add just a sprinkling of paprika to this huge honor (we're Schwowe after all) was the fact that this would be the first time the Gauverband von Nordamerika, or simply "the Americans" as we were called, were invited to take to the streets of the storied Bavarian city.

The pride and joy of our Cultural Group, has always been our youth. We continue to instill in them the importance of our cultural heritage so that they will continue in our footsteps and become future leaders of our organization. More importantly, a sense of pride has been instilled in all of our members. We continue to teach this to our young ones. They will become good strong men and women. We share in this pride, and we can call ourselves not just a group or a club, we are a family, in every sense of the word.

We are **"Continuing a Proud Tradition"**, and will always remain **"Treu der Sitte, Treu Der Tracht, Treu Der Heimat"**

*Historical text by: Werner Fricker Jr.
Joseph S. Reiter
Michael Fricker*