

MacCulloch Dancers in France 2005



On July 6th, 2005 the MacCulloch Dancers traveled to Marseilles, France where they represented Canada at the 41st International Folk festival of Château Gombert. The international festival stages were animated with music and dance from Brazil, France, Republic of Bielorussie, Serbia, Slovakia, Togo, Turkey, Vanuato, and Venezuela and of course, Canada. The MacCulloch Dancers excited the crowds enticing many to get up and make attempts at the intricate footwork.

We were surprised to see the similarities between our highland dance movements and those of our hosts "le Roudelet Felibren". The France dancers were equally excited to see us executed movements that were part of their training and repertoire.

While in France the troupe had the privilege of staying with families living in the Château Gombert area. Car trips to and from our new homes were always an adventure as the roads were narrow, winding and encased by stone walls. When two cars met one would have to back up to the nearest drive way so that the other could pass. We were fortunate to share in family tradition of a large Sunday meal which lasted several hours. We enjoyed great wine, French cuisine and much laughter.

On the day of our arrival we were informed that Canada would be performing a full hour and a half show the following day. We quickly began rehearsing despite the fact that we had just spent many long hours on the plane. This set the pace for the week as "change" became the theme word for this trip and the dancers quickly learned to go with the flow. The MacCulloch Dancers performed in parades, theatres, and on large outdoor stages, danced with audience members, taught workshops and proudly handed out Canadian Flags to enthusiastic crowds.

Traveling with the troupe were directors, Rae MacCulloch and Heather Forbes, and dancers, Katie Allen, Laura Bablitz, Christopher Bergeron, Sheena Blaney, Kristine Boucher, Meghan Bourbonnais, Emilie Callan, Courtney Connors, Heather Godsoe, Marie Gorman, Sheena Hillier, Melanie Hollington, Nadine Hollington, Stephanie Kaleta, Katrina Kroeze, Christine Ladouceur, Katlyn Ladouceur, Amanda MacDonell, Alyssa Main, Stephanie Main, Anais Mercier, Laura Mount and Kristy Thompson.



Musicians included The Brigadoons, Robb Taylor and Denis Carr, Base Guitarist, Martin Gaudet & Piper, James Forbes. It was a bonus having Martin Gaudet along, as he held a mountain of knowledge and never left us stranded in a sea of uncertainty. We enjoyed his quick wit.



Our Festival guide, Sandrine was anxious to wear one of our traditional costumes_ French braids with red ribbon and all. Musicians, Martin & Denis parade arm in arm with our beautiful guides.

Our site seeing tours included le Vieux Port, Notre-Dane de la Garde, and sea side visits to the Mediterranean. We enjoyed backyards gardens featuring lavender, oranges, lemons, almonds apricots and figs. Many of us returned home with ceramic cigales. A cigale is an insect unique to Southern France It most apparent characteristics are two pairs of transparent wings with a network of veins and a loud cricket like sound which can be heard throughout the day. Interestingly, this insect takes several years to develop underground and only lives for a few weeks in the trees.



Once again our young Canadian Ambassadors made friends from around the world, sharing traditions and culture and creating new memories and once again I am deeply touched by the energy and enthusiasm these young people bring to stages around the world. They were a pleasure to travel with.

Heather Forbes