

Fame□e Furlane Balletto – Fifty Years Together **1958 to 2008**

1958 – The Birth of the Fame□e Furlane Balletto

In 1958, Attilio Paronuzzi, Aldo Belluz and Mario Castellani gathered a group of young immigrants to form the first Balletto and singing quartet. Their wish was to bring the Furlan heritage and culture to Canada. They practiced the dances in private homes and performed with live accordion music.

One of their most memorable performances was at the famous Cave Night Club, downtown in Vancouver, for the Italian Festival of Music. The dancers also performed at the Hotel Vancouver, were invited to CBC TV, the Queen Elizabeth Theatre and at the ‘Theatre Under the Stars’, in Stanley Park, with Robert Goulet and his cast. By 1963, most of our group decided to get married and start families, thus interrupting their dancing careers!

1966 to 1971

The Balletto was revived, in 1966, in preparation for Canada’s 100th birthday celebration - Confederation 1967, with Sergio Salvador as the coordinator of this group. The practice sessions were held at Sacred Heart Church Hall and accordionists provided the musical accompaniment for the weekly practices. Throughout this time, we also performed at Swedish Park, the P.N.E., the Malkin Bowl at Stanley Park and the Queen Elizabeth Theatre. Our dancers wore the original costumes from the 1950s.

1978 to 2008 – Three Decades of the Balletto

In 1978, the third group of the Balletto was formed to perform at the Congresso, hosted by the Fame□e Furlane, in October, 1979. Mario Castellani and Aldo Belluz organized a group of twenty young Furlans and taught them several folk dances. These young dancers were ready for their first performance during the cultural evening at the ‘Fogolârs 1979’, held at the Italian Cultural Centre, in front of 750 attendees.

By the end of 1979, the Fame□e Furlane had five groups of dancers from the ages of four to twenty-five, totaling seventy-five young people in all, along with six young accordionists who played during our performances. Several years later, taped music originating from Friuli was used and the choreography was provided by Teresa Melatti. A few years later, Rosetta Traversa became the director and Teresa Melatti, the instructor. Recognition is also due to the ladies who sewed the beautiful traditional costumes worn for the performances.

In 1987, the adult group was formed and we are still dancing today. At this same time, the teenagers of the Balletto began the Youth Group, which was very successful for many years.

During our thirty years together, the dancers have been invited to perform at numerous Congressi: Montreal (also had an exchange visit with their Balletto), Windsor, Calgary, Edmonton, Sudbury, twice in Vancouver and most recently again in Calgary. Our dancers

greeted Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip, in 1983 and danced at the ceremonies for Pope John Paul II. We performed and were interviewed on CKVU 13, by Laurier La Pierre. Our group danced during Expo '86 and, with regards to the P.N.E., we have continued to perform there on a yearly basis. During Mr. Bill Vander Zalm's term in office as the Premier of British Columbia, he invited the dancers to perform for his wife, Lillian Vander Zalm's 50th birthday party, as well as other occasions hosted by the couple throughout the years. We also performed for the Bishop of Kamloop's anniversary celebration.

In Trail, B.C., the Balletto won first prize for best costumes. In Revelstoke, the dancers were the 'talk of the town'. In Metro Vancouver, we performed at the opening of B.C. Place Stadium, Canada Day festivals, parades, hospitals, seniors' homes, wine festivals, hotels, department stores and yearly at the Kitsilano Show Boat. At 'The Bay', downtown, the dancers performed for one week while other members of the Famè Furlane provided cooking demonstrations.

Our dancers have many years of unforgettable memories in Walla Walla and Seattle! Walla Walla: the ten hour bus rides, the fun and laughter, the grape stomps and the many times we won 1st and 2nd prizes. Bus loads of both children and adults have also crossed the Canada/U.S.A. border headed for the Seattle Italian Festival. In the past ten years, the Balletto has added Portland on our resume of performances. **Throughout these 30 years, we have performed extensively at community events and yearly festivals and each year more are added to our list of accomplishments.**

Three very special men helped to create the many stories that are kept alive today. Lorenzo Bortolussi was not only one of the dancers, but also the bus driver during many of the long trips. Giorgio Oballa, our photographer, was always 'clicking' his camera. Many of the photographs of the Balletto, within this book, are his masterpieces! Our video man, Luigi Dreszach, recorded us 'live'. It is through his efforts that we have all the wonderful recorded videos of the dances of the past.

In order to raise funds for our out-of-town trips, the dance groups united together for car washes, chicken sales, bake sales, yard sales, chocolate sales and several fashion shows. Our girls also served at the banquets and other events hosted by the Famè Furlane.

In honor of the 50th Anniversary of the Famè Furlane of Vancouver, which was celebrated on November 14th, 15th and 16th of 2008, the Balletto showcased one of their costumes in the Library/Museum of the Italian Cultural Centre during the month of November.

Dressed in their costumes, some dancers escorted attendees to their tables while others served hors d'oeuvres and wine to invited guest before escorting them into the banquet hall at the Gala Dinner, held at the Italian Cultural Center on Friday evening.

Saturday at a "Taste of Friuli", held in our hall, dancers again in costumes, helped at the buffet tables as well as the booth with the "mostra".

On Sunday afternoon at the Mass in Furlan, which was held at St. Helen's Church, all three groups (children, original seniors and adults) participated in the entrance procession. Heartfelt emotions from the congregation were obvious as the Children's Balletto presented the special gifts of polenta and tojco, muset and brovada, crustoli and gubana, to name a few, at the Offertory of the Mass.

During the Cultural Evening on Sunday, the Children's group consisting of 'Tiny Tots' and 'I Zovins', performed their signature dance 'La Furlane', which was a huge hit with the audience. The original Seniors Dancers regrouped after ten years to perform a polka and a waltz. Their enthusiasm was clearly evident to the delighted audience, many of whom commented that it was as though the group had never stopped dancing! Today's adult group performed two dances, 'La Glesiute in Campagna' (one of Dario Zampa's original songs) and a quadriglia.

Over the last fifty years, the dancers of the Balletto have been recognized and applauded for their hard work and dedication in sharing a bit of their culture. **with a variety of audiences throughout British Columbia, the rest of Canada and Washington State.** This would not have been possible if it weren't for the time, effort and dedication of all of our dancers, both young and old. To this day, we continue to bring new life, enjoyment, happiness and humor with each performance of our cultural Furlan folk dances. We are hopeful that all of the past and present dancers, who are an integral part of the history of the Furlane, will always remember these amazing times together.