

# FRED BERK — THE LIFE OF A JEWISH DANCER

By Judith Brin Ingber  
(Excerpts from a biography)

## CHRONOLOGY

Born Fritz Berger, January 25, 1911, Vienna.  
Studied and performed with the Gertrud Kraus Dance Company, 1931-33  
First solo concert with Otto Werberg, 8 November 1932.  
Won Bronze medal in the International Competition in Vienna (sponsored by Archives Internationales de la Danse), 1934.  
Toured Austria, Italy, Yugoslavia, Holland in addition to running a school and performing at the esteemed Burgtheater in Vienna until he fled the Nazis, 1934-1939.  
Lived in Cuba performing and teaching, 1939-1941.  
Moved to New York City in 1941; performed with Katya Delakova until 1951.

Started "Stage for Dancers" in Brooklyn and many theater locations in Manhattan, 1950-1953.  
Directed the Israel Folk Dance Festival in New York, 1953-1978.  
Co-founder of Merry-Go-Rounders at 92nd Street Y, 1953, with Doris Humphrey.  
Created and directed the Jewish Dance Division of the 92nd Street YMHA beginning in 1952.  
Author and editor of several books on Jewish dance and on Labanotation.  
Bibliographer on Jewish dance for New York Public Library Dance Collection at Lincoln Center at the time of his death.  
Died February 26, 1980, New York.

## The Goldsmith's Apprentice

"My school work became more and more difficult for me. Nobody listened to me at school or at home. I gave up trying to do my homework and closed out everything but stolen outings to join my friends at the stage door. I got terrible grades, but still I found no way to study. I could not seem to learn anything from a book. I was expelled from school.

"To make matters worse, my father constantly yelled at me and then he would end up beating me. Finally, I remember my father screamed, 'You cannot spend your days at home anymore. You are fourteen and a half years old and it is time you start working. I will find you work as a furrier or a goldsmith apprentice, whichever allows you time off for the Sabbath.' When he could get no response from me, he took his cane and beat me until it broke."

Berk told this story with indignation 51 years later in May, 1978 in New York. Despite his block with formal education, which concluded in his ninth year of schooling, he wrote and published in English and was fluent in Spanish, Hebrew, and Yiddish as well as his native German. (He also knew Labanotation and published two dance books in this unique movement language.)

"That week I began working for a goldsmith". Fritz was terribly bored and hated the work. His only escape was running errands.

The longer Fritz worked for the goldsmith, stooping over his workbench, the more round-shouldered he became. His mother became upset by his posture and sent him to a doctor. Gymnastics or some kind of exercise was recommended to Fritz as a cure.

"My sister, who usually had nothing to say to me, knew about a school of rhythm-gymnastics run by a dancer named Gertrud Kraus. On my walks through the city I began to notice Kraus's name on billboards and kiosks." A Kraus performance outdoors in one of the city parks with pantomimist Cilly Wang appealed to Fritz and he went to watch.

"I was very impressed by her solos with their eerie and evocative quality. During intermission, I went backstage as I was used to, to soak in the atmosphere and perhaps even to see Gertrud Kraus. Instead, I met her mother who asked what I wanted. Quite spontaneously I said, 'To study with Kraus.' Her mother gave me the studio address and instructed me to go there the following Saturday afternoon."

## Gertrud Kraus's Studio

"Despite my family's strict Sabbath observance (no traveling and no activity except prayer and study until sundown) the Saturday following the concert, I went. A spiral staircase wound up to the studio and I saw Kraus standing at the top

wearing a kind of sarong. She seemed like a vision. I was awed, and stood there dumbly looking up, feeling worse than my usual tongue-tied self. Even so, Kraus invited me to her classes.

"I went there every Saturday afternoon to dance. Maybe after half a year of study, Kraus suddenly said once, 'Class, turn around. Watch Fritz and do the exercise exactly his way. *That* is what I want.' It was the very first time I ever heard praise! She was not aware of what she had done to me. Her words gave me the biggest encouragement I had yet experienced. As a matter of fact, I later learned, as a teacher you never know how your words affect your students. Kraus moved me!"

"Modern dance was altogether new in its approach, its philosophy and its technique. Kraus's approach was unlike the other Viennese dancers and their schools who tried to make their students into carbon copies of their particular styles. Gertrud encouraged us to choreograph and to be conscious of form despite training us to be emotional. The trend was to express yourself and when we danced, it was all consuming."

"Kraus encouraged us to choreograph, to bring in new dance studies to class. I remember my first suite of dances was choreographed for myself and two young women. The first was the *Marseillaise*, the second a Russian dance capitalizing on everyone's interest in the Russian Revolution and the third was about a capitalist. I played the central figure exploiting the two workers, struggling with them. Of course, the workers triumphed in the end and I was beaten, one of our hopes at the time.

"We decided that the two workers should be in red and I in black. Because there was no money I had no idea how I would get a costume. So I asked my mother. By then she knew I danced seriously, but she forbade that my father should know. 'Do you know we have a black flag in the attic?' she asked. 'In 1916 when Kaiser Franz Josef died every house was required to hang a black flag out the window.' Well, 15 years later I went up to the attic and found the flag, nicely rolled and wrapped, never having been used since. I took it to the seamstress next door. I was so skinny that she made me a pair of pants, a cummerbund and a loose Russian shirt from the flag. The performance came and on stage when I bent down, the pants split. Not on a seam, but the rotting material itself tore. That was the end of my capitalist dance."

One of the dancers in his worker's piece was a young woman from Yugoslavia named Claudia Vall. Her father owned a brick and tile factory in Zagreb so he could afford the best for his youngest daughter. By the time she was 16 she was an

accomplished musician and dancer. Her parents wanted her to attend a kind of Viennese finishing school after high school, so they sent both Claudia and the governess off to Vienna.

"Although I stayed at the school they'd chosen for me, I went to auditions and was accepted to study at the State Academy for Music and Performing Arts (Akademie für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, where Berk also studied in 1933)."

Claudia remained in Vienna three years and during that time studied and performed with Kraus.

The year that Fritz concluded his apprenticeship with the goldsmith, 1931, marked his entree into the backstage life. Instead of waiting at the stage door or applauding the theatre stars, he actually began to participate.

"My first experience lasted about two months as an extra, playing the role of a coolie in a big pageant about China, *Brülle China*."

"Next I was in a revue, *Quer durch Wien*, [Across Vienna], dancing as a member of a football team. Then Anna May Wong came from Hollywood and I found out she was to star in a revue also at the same theatre. Six young men who could sing and dance were needed. I was the only one picked from the revue even though I had never studied singing! We had to sing and do social dancing with Wong. This was my luckiest, happiest year. I was on the stage and nothing could stop me!"

Ominous evidence of anti-Semitism was growing daily. It had always been a simple fact of Viennese life, and somehow the Jews always coped.

Fritz was invited to join the Kraus dance company in 1931. "What an experience! The two years that I worked with Gertrud opened me up. She gave me confidence, a new direction and the beginnings of my real identity. None of us dancers who were Jewish were aware of our backgrounds. We all considered ourselves well assimilated into the city life and we thought that was good. Nevertheless, Gertrud would challenge us often with themes from our heritage, Jewish themes."

Kraus's first solo dance tour to Haifa, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Cairo in April of 1931 "was very impressive for us," recalled Berk. She was consumed by the rhythms and sights of those exotic places and they influenced us all. She choreographed *The Yemenite Boy* for four women and me as the Yemenite. She dressed me in the materials and cloth she had bought in the Jerusalem *shuk* or market. This dance intro-

duced me for the first time to the concept of Oriental Jews (Jews from Arab countries) and their very wiry, delicate movements. Later on, I also danced in her previously staged *Songs of the Ghetto*.

"Gertrud choreographed *The Chassidic Wedding*, she as the bride and I as her groom. This was not only a starring role, but it was also something deeply emotional for me, the first taste of an element of Jewish life that really appealed to me. I also remember her *Miriam's Dance*. I was one of four youths dressed like slaves. On stage, we performed on several different levels. Gertrud was on a big platform in the center with steps that led down to the different levels. The men joined her for a triumphal dance — we had big discs in our hands and she held a tambourine creating a very effective tableau.

"Later too, I remember her *Wailing Wall*. This was the most moving dance experience of my life. During the rehearsal Gertrud stretched a sheet across the studio space. She said it represented the western wall of the ancient Temple of Solomon, still standing today in the heart of Jerusalem. Traditionally Jews have taken their prayers and hopes there, crying to God to hear them, hence, the name the Wailing Wall. She placed our heads and hands in certain positions as if we were peering up over the wall; she sculpted us using images of Chassidim praying. I had the feeling she was hewing us from stone from some deep place in her heart."

In the foreword to his book, *The Chasidic [sic] Dance* Berk wrote, "This dance awakened in me untapped feelings of Jewish identification. I never before realized the presence of these emotions...only when I came to the United States in 1941 during the Holocaust did these dormant feelings crystallize into a deep ongoing commitment to Jewish dance."

### The Bronze Medal

Dance had brought Fritz self-esteem, a coterie of friends and a public who cared. With another Kraus dancer, Otto Werberg, Fritz produced some dance concerts. They would rent a small hall, often a beer hall with a little stage at the back — something like an off-off Broadway theatre. There were also three "Volkshochschulen" of the Socialist parties. In these theatre halls, lectures and cultural programs were held for the members.

Fritz's father began to take notice. "All the years that I had been studying and the two years performing with Gertrud I was terrified my father would find out. I finally found the courage to tell my father there was a course in dance history and music at the Staats Academy that I wanted to take on

Saturdays. My father asked if I was riding the trolley. When I answered in the affirmative, knowing full well this broke the ban on travel during the Sabbath, my father yelled, 'Well, just don't get off on our street where the neighbors might see.'"

On another occasion the senior Berger heard from a friend in shul (synagogue) one Sabbath that his son's name was advertised on a billboard. "He came home and asked me if I danced in public." "Yes," I said. "Do you make money?" asked my father. "Yes," I said nervously. "Then it's all right with me."

Fritz took heart as his successes in dance continued and he decided to open his own studio, a first floor conventional-looking dance studio in a district near the Ringstrasse. He was able to build up his studio so successfully that he could afford to help his parents financially as their business began to fail.

In Vienna an international dance competition was announced for June of 1934. The competition's "object was to discover new talents." There were divisions for solo works and company pieces; each entry was allocated fifteen minutes to perform. The winners of each day continued until the fifth day when finalists were selected for the winning Gala performance. That evening the Mayor of Vienna would award a gold medal, a silver medal and five bronze medals.

The jury was international. Fritz was first too intimidated to even consider entering the competition. His childhood inferiority complex seemed to overwhelm him. But his friends and dance colleagues urged him to complete. He knew there were three prizes of 1000 shillings offered by the Ministry of Public Education of Austria, as well as a prize for soloists by the honored dancer Grete Wiesenthal and commemorative medals.

He chose three solo dances that he had created during his apprenticeship to Gertrud Kraus. *Argentinian Dance Song* was a light, joyful dance with spectacular backfalls and attitude turns. *Chorale*, to César Franck's music, was Fritz's mystical impression of Catholic ritual in a cathedral. *The Tyrant* was his own social statement about Hitler, although he took what he considered a more universal statement by using the image of Pharaoh.

On the fifth day of the competition, Fritz was still in the running. He began the day quaking, the tension of the competition threatening his composure and stage presence. At the end of the day, posted amongst the winning names of the competition was that of Fritz Berger, bronze medal winner.

Of all the seven medal winners he was the only Viennese chosen.

Fritz veritably flew into the world of established Viennese dance. One of the famous and beloved dance soloists from the Vienna Opera, Hedy Pfundmayr, came backstage after the performance. Fritz knew her from the opera, especially that of Potiphar's wife in the *Legend of Joseph*. She asked to see him at her home. He was flabbergasted. What did she want with him?

When they met, Pfundmayr explained she wanted to expand her own solo performance repertoire. Perhaps Fritz could teach her the hora for a solo she wanted to do called *A Girl from Palestine*. He gladly taught her the hora in exchange for authentic Austrian ländler, a gliding waltz-like partner dance.

Pfundmayr took Fritz under her wing; she got him into a few movies including a filmed version of the opera, *Prince Igor*. The prestigious Burgtheater occasionally needed extra dancers and pantomimists. Through Hedy Pfundmayr, Fritz was recommended as a substitute dancer and pantomimist for the Burgtheater. "I thought it was a dream. I had long ago left the stage door and had long ago stopped collecting photographs and autographs, but the Burgtheater still remained a kind of holy temple for me. As I walked to my dressing room, entering through the stage door for the first time, passing the name plates on all the doors, I remembered my dreams and yearnings of my younger days. I was sure I had arrived in heaven.

"Word got round that I was to appear at the Burgtheater. My family, my old friends and my neighborhood took notice of me. I felt so accomplished! Suddenly for all those in my old neighborhood, I was somebody."

His friend Claudia had written to him from Italy. He knew she'd left Gertrud's to study in Berlin with Vera Skoronel and Palucca, had danced with Kurt Jooss and later in Italy.

The dance company was short of men so Claudia wrote to Fritz to join the company through a tour of Italy, France, and Switzerland. Would he like to come to Florence? This was not his first invitation to dance in Italy. He had come first at the invitation of Trudy Goth, also a former student of Gertrud's. Goth also worked as Angela Sartorio's assistant and teacher, later fled to Cuba and eventually to New York, where she established herself as a critic and initiator of a series of experimental dance. She had returned to her native Italy in the early 30's to create a modern dance company. She had worked on occasion as an impresario for other per-

formers in the arts, and because she was from a very well-to-do family she could entertain artists of international standing in high style.

Berk accepted a position to dance in the Goth group more because he wanted to go to Italy than to perform with her. He had considered her creations pedestrian and dry, but the positive side was that she allowed him to insert his own solos into the program. He soon discovered the Italian audiences responded to his humor and his dances and he began to love performing for them.

He was happy to accept Claudia's invitation to join the Bal-lato company. It was all the more enticing because he would dance with Claudia again. She was so happy and bubbly on their first walk through Florence. She put her arm around him and exclaimed, "Oh Fritz, come meet the man I'm going to marry!" Upstairs in the pensione's biggest suite, she introduced Fritz to someone his complete opposite physically. George Kauffman was tall and elegantly dressed. Whereas Fritz was talkative and always had a twinkle in his eye, a joke, Kauffman was pensive. He would have preferred to devote himself to reading books and listening to fine music than to social exchanges or working with groups like Fritz. But the two men struck it off. They enjoyed talking to each other. And they both adored Claudia.

Fritz stayed to dance in Florence only for a brief time. The proposed tour through Europe had to be postponed and Fritz couldn't stay on. He returned to Vienna.

Hitler invaded Austria on Friday, March 11, 1938. "I remember I was at the grocery store at noon and heard the news. I ran home to alert my parents and said it was all over for us Jews. They said, 'Don't be silly. They have lived with him in Germany since 1933. It will not be that bad.' How hopelessly wrong they were! People were so frightened they committed suicide, others took to swimming across the river illegally, or found ways to smuggle through the borders. In the first days of the 'Anschluss' no one realized what a thorough job the Nazis had done in paralyzing the Jews.

"My landlord for the dance studio told me I could not teach any more, but if I wanted to rehearse she would let me. But what would I rehearse for, I wondered? No one would hire me. The pianist, who had played for me for years, working in the studio and in performance, was seemingly a very close friend. However, he told me he did not dare to continue working for a Jew. Someone might report him. Whatever Jewish pupils I had gave up their studies, frightened to go out. The gentile students would not go to a Jewish teacher. All contracts for my performances were cancelled. The sud-

den realization that we were paralyzed in our professional life and our personal life was terrifying.

"Out of the blue, I received a telegram offering me a job in Switzerland. I could receive legal working papers for nine months! I asked no questions, not about salary, not about who I was to dance with, not where we were to go. I accepted! I left with one suitcase filled with costumes and music. My parents still clung to the outdated faith that all would be well and we would soon meet again in happy times."

Claudia and Kauffman decided to leave Italy for Switzerland. They were married in Zurich. And they tried to find a country that would allow them in. "In Zurich we started combing the different foreign consuls to see who would give us a visa. I had my Yugoslavian passport, but George's German passport made it much more difficult. It seemed like a lark and an adventure at first, but then it began to seem impossible to get passage anywhere. Then we discovered that Cuba would take us in! We went back to our hotel to pack up our belongings and I had a wire waiting for me from Trudy Goth. She had left Italy for Cuba and wired me to come to Havana because there was a job as a dancer!"

It was in the train station leaving Zurich that Claudia and George Kauffman ran into Fritz. He was on his way to Vienna to try to figure out what to do next. "We barely had time to tell him a thing, only that we were going to Havana. We gave him our address."

## Havana

Fritz left for Cuba from Liverpool, England in June, 1939. From letters, he knew that his sister was taken to a concentration camp during this period, but that his parents arrived safely in London from Vienna. Fritz himself was very lucky, for the R.M.S. Orbita, on which he sailed, was the last ship carrying European refugees allowed to disembark in Havana.

It was a hot Friday when Fritz disembarked at the quay in Havana. He sweated profusely in his English summer suit, looking for his friends the Kauffmans whom he had informed of his arrival by letter. They were nowhere to be seen. By showing the Kauffman's address on a piece of paper to passers-by, he somehow negotiated a bus ride to the right place. They were astonished! They had assumed Berk's arrival was impossible because all newspapers reported the port closed for fear of German submarines. There was also a backlash against immigration from Europe where Cuba became known as a transit point on the way to the United States. The authorities wanted no more immigrants. The dire econ-

omic straits of the Jewish immigrants to Cuba caused Jewish welfare organizations in the U.S. to open offices in Havana some ten years before. All of these groups attempted to help the Jewish immigrants, of which by 1934 there were 12,000. Fritz and Claudia and George fell into each other's arms. They could hardly hear each other for all the excited questions and answers about where all their old friends were, what had happened to each of them and where they had all been in the months since they had last seen each other. Claudia told him there were eager audiences, cultured audiences for dance in Cuba.

The most imposing cultural force was the Sociedad Pro-Arte Musical, an organization founded by Cuba's wealthy class in 1918 to enrich the life of the city by bringing in world-renowned performing artists. The Teatro Auditorium housed impressive facilities, including a small hall where ballet classes were held. From 1931-1938, these were run by Nicolai Yavorsky, a dancer who had come to Havana with the Opera Privé de Paris. His students included the talented Alicia Martinez and her husband-to-be Fernando Alonso and his brother Alberto Alonso, who were to become famous dancers in years to come.

Fritz wanted to know how he could work. Where could he live? Where could he and Claudia start rehearsing? They would make a program together! He had been able to bring his costumes and music. Somehow his mother had thought to bring some of them to London and, before he left, surprised him with them.

Claudia laughed her infectious, hearty laugh. He did not need to be so anxious! He would soon see that things were different in Havana. There was no hurry. The pace was so slow, people enjoyed themselves so much. She and George served him pineapples and cakes, and strong Cuban coffee. Eventually they went back to the port area to visit friends who told Fritz about a room for rent.

He found accommodations by the port, one of the deteriorated areas of Havana along with pimps, prostitutes and refugees, because there were cheap lodgings. He had a two-room apartment, one window facing the sea. There he taught classes for women refugees. They had nothing to do but wait for their visas to America and go to the beach and eat. "He was able to fill his classes by advertising the benefits of exercise to offset overeating and the boredom of leisure life." He loved the accompanying manner of life, and the informality of Havana. "It's still all so innocent," he once said. "People ask me why I left Europe and I'd say because I'm Jewish. 'What's that?' they asked."

He had much success with his work. Only one month after

Fritz's arrival, an agent who was a friend of Claudia's was able to book them into the prestigious theatre of Pro-Arte Musical de Habana at the end of the concert season. On June 19, 1939, they presented a combination of duets to Chopin, Graupner and Liszt as well as national dances from Russia, Croatia and Austria. "I was not used to such an expressive audience, yelling and screaming for us. I was familiar, however, with the theatrics at the stage door, but this time, instead of being a fan, I was the star."

The agent had staged a little performance at the stage door. He sent the dancers outside in their make-up and dressing gowns, which was considered taboo in Vienna, so that the dancers could sign autographs. "We were met with an uproar of cheering and the waiting clique begged for our signatures. Then we dramatically departed," Fritz remembered.

They received critical notice in the "Havana Post" by Clotilde Pujol. She wrote favorably that the dancers' "interpretation of the characterizations were done with much knowledge and gusto and good team work. The costumes were picturesque."

Claudia and Fritz became part of the artists' colony of Havana. "We all worked in the clubs all over the city," said Claudia. "It was a wonderful time. We didn't suffer from changing to a new life like those who were only dreaming of life in America."

Fritz and Claudia toured the island, sometimes performing with an orchestra and other times with a pianist. Their programs were combinations of solos and duets based on folk motifs like Scottish dance, Russian Trepak, Croatian Svatovka and Ländlers of Austria to music by Strauss and Schubert. Fritz also performed his signature dances from Vienna that had won him his bronze medal.

"I remember," said Claudia, "once we toured to a city, Santiago de Cuba, on the other side of the island from Havana. When we got there, we found they had no orchestra to accompany us as we had been promised. The stage was in terrible shape. Somehow we found a violinist, who was also the shoemaker at the time, and a trumpeter. I remember once I suddenly faced Fritz on stage and I asked him during the performance 'Do you want me to follow the trumpeter or the violinist?' We both started laughing so hard I did not think we could go on."

During this time, Yavorsky, who had left the Pro-Arte ballet school in 1938, opened his own studio. He also started a small company. He asked Fritz to join him as a character dancer. Fritz's friends began to leave the island, and among

them, the Kauffmans. They promised to secure him an affidavit so he, too, could get a visa to the United States.

He decided to dance in Yavorsky's six weeks of concerts and then try to join Claudia and George. He talked it over with his Cuban manager who had taken care of his bookings for two years. The manager suggested that he change his name to something that sounded less Germanic. Such a name as Fritz Berger did not invite a very friendly reception while the world was at war with Germany. Fritz came up with the simpler name Fred Berk, which he used first when applying for the legal papers to enter the United States. He received his visa to immigrate to America in November, 1940. He was given three months in which to make the trip, barely long enough to finish rehearsals and complete his contract with the company.

One day Fred went to the beach, did walk-overs and hand springs in the sand, and visited with friends from the Ballet Russe company, who were stranded in Cuba at the time. He felt wonderful. The next morning, he awoke with shivers and horrible pains in his leg. He limped out of his apartment at the appointed time on his way to class, and somehow made it to the bus stop. But he was unable to bear the pain trying to board the bus. He was so alarmed that he barely managed to return home. He spent days in bed, unable to teach or rehearse.

A Latvian refugee doctor lived in his building and Fred called him for help. The old man concocted a crude method of traction by hanging a tea kettle to Fred's foot, dangling the kettle down over the end of the bed. He instructed the feverish Fred to continue to lie in bed for many days. Day and night he suffered the pains of severe muscle spasms and joint pain in his hip.

After several weeks, a former student came to visit and was shocked at his condition. She contacted an organization which aids Jewish refugees, the Joint Distribution Committee. They sent a Cuban doctor who arrived with a social worker. Thinking Fred, the German-speaking foreigner, did not understand Spanish, the doctor told the social worker that he had a very advanced case of Osteoarthritis. There was hardly any hope for recuperation.

"My Spanish was fluent and I had no problems understanding the dire situation I was in. I was terrified, but what could I do? I was put into a hospital with eighty people, no nurse and only one orderly on our floor. In my ward there were eight patients, but only one was mobile, a young boy who would hop on one leg and get around doing favors for all of us. The pain and spasms in my hip began to disappear with

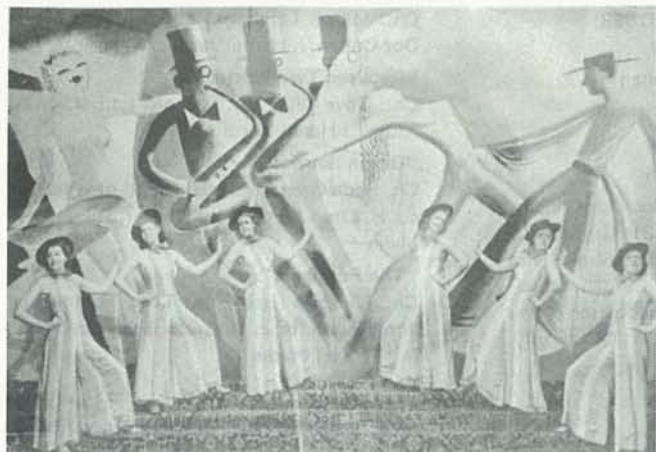
proper traction, but the whole area was so inflamed that I could not bear the therapy. However, the doctor said I would be paralyzed if I did not go through with the treatment. The conditions in the hospital were appalling and there was little food, but on Fridays the Joint Distribution Committee would send me a chicken for the Sabbath. I split it eight ways and we all felt it was a holiday.

"In the hospital, friends brought me my first dance books in English. One was about Serge Diaghilev and the other about the ballerina Anna Pavlova. My three months in the hospital were spent reading the books over and over again with the help of a dictionary. Not only did I learn the details of the lives of the two artists, but my English improved."



Fred Berk and Claudia Vall in a Russian folk dance — Cuba 1939–41

Fred Berk's first production in Basle (Switzerland) — 1938 (?)



"I left the hospital on crutches. I would treat myself to swimming and lying in the hot sand on the beach. It took me a full year to recover and begin dancing again."

"My visa had expired while I was hospitalized and I had no idea how I could pass the physical examination at the consulate. To be taken into America you had to be in good shape. Well, once I got into the Embassy I put my crutches down and somehow, clinging to the walls and sort of leaning, as if nonchalant, the examiner didn't even notice my condition. I got a new visa."

He left for the United States in June, 1941. ■



Claudia Vall and Fred Berk in one of their folk dance suites in Cuba