

Kate Grace

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Kate, a native of France, grew up in the Burgundy region where, during her teens she immersed herself in the local folk-dance revival of the 1970s. In her early adulthood she discovered African dance and Contact Improvisation and became a devoted student of African dance and drumming.

Life eventually led her to New Zealand, where she settled in Dunedin with her Kiwi husband and their children. Over a decade, she taught African dance accompanied by the live drumming ensemble Songbong. She organized and participated in numerous events showcasing live drumming and dance.

In 2005, Kate and her family embarked on a 3-year stay in France, where she reconnected with dancers, musicians, and friends interested in traditional forms of dance from France and Europe. She actively participated in '*néo-trad*' music and dance workshops and events, forming close connections with leading musicians in the "*Musiques traditionnelles de Demain*" community in France.

Upon returning to New Zealand, with the assistance of Marcus Turner, she formed a five-piece band that played European music for dance and organized several Bastille Day bals and other French bals. Kate's interests extended to the historical crossroads of different dance forms. She taught historical dance and hosted several Jane Austen costumed balls. She created a 4-piece amateur historical dance performance group called "*Les Belles Vilaines*."

Kate's life took a significant turn when she crossed paths with Michael Parmenter in mid-2022 during his 6-month Caroline Plummer fellowship in Community Dance at the University of Otago. After Michael returned to Auckland Kate continued to run the monthly Balfolk Minibals he initiated at Toitū Otago Settlers Museum.

Kate started collaborating with Michael to spread Balfolk in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Together, they were invited to several festivals to teach workshops and lead bals, including the Wellington Folk Festival, the Auckland Folk Festival, the Wanaka Festival of Colour, the Canterbury Folk Festival, and the Gisborne Folk Dance New Zealand festival. They also presented events independently as well as collaboratively, including a performance with the visiting Italian ensemble Lyradanz in Auckland.