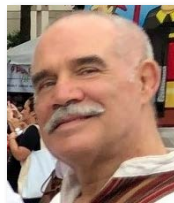




# President's Message by Gary Berke

Dear dancers,

This has been a busy month for everyone. We just had a wonderful fling at Ruth Ann's in Deland, and my only regret is that I didn't see more of you. Ruth Ann's resort is the easiest and most comfortable place to fling. It's free, no tables need to be set up or taken down and there's even a pool.



Regarding next year's camp, the manager at the Ramada has just sent me the long awaited and contested part of the contract. All our problems were ironed out last year, but she wants to charge us what would amount to over \$20/ person more than last year just for the ballroom, plus increased room charges which would come to about \$40 per person more, based on double occupancy. This does not count the inevitable raise in meal and other prices, so I am looking into other alternatives. Five proposals to be exact, if they come through. It seems that once a hotel knows we want to keep coming back, it takes advantage, an old story experienced by many former presidents.

For next year's camp, I hired Michael Ginsburg, who does mostly Balkan dancing, but is quite flexible and one of the nicest guys with whom I've ever spoken. The second teacher is Bata Marcetic, who does Serbian and also seems like a great guy. This choice was based on the few votes I received from the list of teachers I sent out. The funny thing about the vote is that except for Mike, the vote was an eight way tie until I realized that I failed to count one vote: mine. Bata, a write in, got as many votes as the rest until I broke the tie. I wish more members would show enough interest to respond to my polls. I get lots of feedback in person, when I am least able to act on it. A call or email, when I'm not busy, has much more weight.

I continue to invite people to dance with us wherever I go, and sometimes, someone even shows up.

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## Message From The Editor...

Please send articles for insertion to [newsletter@floridafolkdancer.org](mailto:newsletter@floridafolkdancer.org) email address.

Take care, Vicki Kulifay

# President's Message (Continued)

Continued From Page 1

I often say that folkdancers are at least as nice as people who greet you at church for your first visit, but stay that way, because we want people to keep coming back. Talk to people you know and invite them. Let's keep folk dancing alive for future generations. Some groups like Orlando are doing quite well at this. I'm here for any group who could use my input and would be happy to visit. Don't hesitate to contact me. That's why my home email is listed in the newsletter.

## Message From The Editor: Regarding Getting Articles Submitted for the Newsletter (and Getting FFDC Blast Emails in General)

I'm hearing from a number of you that the "Request for Articles for Newsletter" email that is sent to all members doesn't seem to be arriving into inboxes.

I'm going to work with Andy Pollock to see if we can figure out what is happening.

But one key thing is making sure that you have added [mbrmail@floridafolkdancer.org](mailto:mbrmail@floridafolkdancer.org) to your contacts.

So take a minute as you are reading this and check your contacts on your phone. Make sure [mbrmail@floridafolkdancer.org](mailto:mbrmail@floridafolkdancer.org) is in there.

If it isn't, please do the following:

- 1) Create a new contact on your phone with "FFDC" as a name (first or last!).
- 2) Then type in [mbrmail@floridafolkdancer.org](mailto:mbrmail@floridafolkdancer.org) as the contact's email address.
- 3) Save!

If you don't have this contact record, there is a high probability any notifications from FFDC will be going to junk email or categorized as spam. And you then miss announcements (*like the one asking for newsletter articles!*).

Another option is to create a calendar reminder on your mobile phone's calendar so you are reminded when articles are due, without having to wait for the announcement.

The Florida Folk Dancer is published six times a year:

January-February March-April May-June July-August September-October November-December

Setup a reminder for the 15th of every February, April, June, August, October, and December that articles are coming due for the next issue of the newsletter. Submit articles around the 25th of those months to the [newsletter@floridafolkdancer.org](mailto:newsletter@floridafolkdancer.org) email address.

Hope this helps and give me a call or email if I can help.

Vicki Kulifay

# Club Reports In

## Orlando International Folk Dance Club by Pat Henderson

We danced into spring in March and celebrated St. Patrick's Day on March 15. You can see plenty of green that night. Pearl Roth and her son, Charles, from Jacksonville visited us that night. It was also Cathy's birthday that week so we had a lot to celebrate. It turns out that Charles and Cathy shared the St. Patrick's Day birthday.

Nicki had a birthday party at her clubhouse on April 1 and several of us enjoyed welcoming her to a new decade. Gary came to Orlando early for Spring Fling and danced with us again on April 12. It was Carla's birthday that night and then two days later was Rich's birthday so he and Linda came from Cocoa Beach to celebrate with us. See the photo of the late March-April birthdays which includes Nicki and Ann.

Most of our active dancers attended the Spring Fling at Ruth Ann's for a wonderful potluck lunch and afternoon of dancing.

The following day, Bobby and I hosted Games Day and the Tampa folks joined us until late in the afternoon. We ended up having lunch in the house thanks to a lot of leftovers from Saturday. Then we had a potluck dinner after more players came in the afternoon. We always have a lot of fun

playing a variety of games.

Those traveling recently were Carla and her sister-in-law going on a Caribbean cruise right before her birthday.

Everyone, have a wonderful summer. Remember that our group does not meet in July and August but stay tuned to a special dance day in August - Summer Fling!!!



# Orlando International Folk Dance Club (Continued)

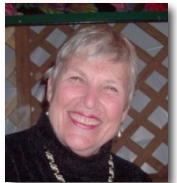
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## Summer flat available in Strasbourg, France

*Editor's Note: Pat Henderson is sharing this information with us. Kiera dances with the Orlando group when she is visiting Florida.*

*Cosy, fully furnished 67sqm flat in a 1920s house w/ small garden within a 15 minute walk of the centre of Strasbourg, France. Available for monthly rental July-August, possibly first 2 weeks of September (\$1300/month). Wonderful base to explore the Route du Vin (both in Alsace and across the border in Germany), castles in the Vosges/Black Forest, historic town of Basel (Switzerland) and much more! One bedroom, living room/guest room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom w/washer (sleeps up to 2 couples). For more information contact me on [kierastras@gmail.com](mailto:kierastras@gmail.com) or text me on WhatsApp +33665181590.*

## Tampa Trivia by Terry Abrahams



Time goes slowly sometimes, but it seems like it's always time for another article for the newsletter! So here's us. No great pictures like Gainesville, no big trips like Orlando, no game days. But the big news is that Judith had her other hip replaced and is doing wonderfully. She's even dancing! Ya just can't keep a good woman down. Andi has left the fold for her six months in Vancouver and she is sorely missed.

So last week, Gary had a sore throat, Hansen and Joann had theatre tickets, Judith hardly moving, and we decided to cancel. Sad when there's so few of us to begin with and then we can't do much in times like this. Well, thank goodness for Zoom - I at least kept in touch that way. As many of you know, I belong to a group that "does" a second night Passover Seder every year. This year we did a take-off on Guys and Dolls. Lots of writing, rehearsing, costuming, etc. I

choreographed the Opening number for only four of us – the rest didn't, couldn't, shouldn't dance. They sang instead. Three hundred and ten people in the audience and we were a big hit.

We did all come to the Spring Fling (no, not Judith, she had just gotten out of the hospital) and had our usual wonderful time. Played games the next day, ate some more, talked some more. Hey – friends are a wonderful thing to have!

Oops, I forgot that we did have one person "tripping" – Vicki – I'll let her take over from here...

*So Terry tossed the ball to me...and I started writing. And the next thing I knew it turned into an article. So look for my article on the holiday (see Page 10) that caused the newsletter to come out so late this time!*

# Balkan By The Beach by Alice Kazin



The Balkan by the Beach folk dance group run by Janet Higgs meets at Veterans Park in Delray Beach, Florida. We had a very good season this year with 15 to 25 people coming every week. A few people visited us during their travels to Florida. There were only a couple of newcomers.

To celebrate New Year's Eve, we had a pizza lunch sponsored by Janet Higgs and some of us brought salads and desserts to share.

In February, we lost one of our longtime members, Frank Rubin. We will miss him and Carole, his wife, who is moving to be near their children.

On March 31st, we ended the session with an Ice Cream social with all the toppings. Most of us

brought our lunches that week. After dancing, we smoozed and picknicked outdoors.

Each week we danced some old favorites and some new dances taught by Janet, Ernie Clish, Rob McCollum, and Sarah Sheard. Among the dances taught were Lubili Se Dvama Mladi from Bulgaria, Julud from Western Sahara and the Israeli dance Adir Adirim. Ernie Clish reviewed Roata Femeilor.

March 31st was Janet's last session. Next week Rob and Sarah will run one more session at Veterans Park before we close up for the season.

See you all again in the fall!



# Heard It From The Sarasota Grapeviners by Carol Spangler



Well, here we are and our snowbirds are on the wing again. It seems like they just got here. However, we have much to celebrate and that is my theme for our short article this month. I'm happy to report that life is good here "on the vine" as you can see from our happy campers pictured below.

First on our list is a snowbird we always miss when she takes off for Vancouver to reconnect with family and friends. In the pic below all the Grapeviners raised a glass of bubbly to thank our leader, Andi Kaplan, for all her efforts to keep us challenged with new dances and enjoying all the "oldies but goodies." We wished her safe travels and look forward to her return in the fall.



Second on our list is a birthday girl, Kathy Fico, getting a kiss from her favorite husband, Ron. Aging another year hasn't slowed her down one bit from what I can tell.



Finally, we congratulated June and Tom Morse on their 60th Wedding Anniversary; truly a labor of love, deserving of a standing ovation!!!



# Gainesville Update by Joyce Dewsbury



Our group has been doing well and there has in recent weeks been an upswing in the number of those attending. On a quick personal note, I have not been able to dance because of recovery from back surgery and I just got COVID. Anyway, this first photo is from March 22, 2023 and the group was meeting in Hawthorne. Pearl was able to join them. Her son drove her from Jacksonville where she lives.



The group was still dancing on Wednesday nights in Hawthorne except for some dancing elsewhere... soon to be explained. But first, some of us went to John Ward's art exhibit at the Thomas Center Main Gallery on March 24. He is a phenomenal artist and his painting "Self Portrait with Puzzle Pieces" is a masterpiece. I am delighted that I saw him painting it years ago.

This first photo shows the main group of folk dancers who attended. Left to right are Max, Peter, Anthony (more on his studio soon), John Ward, Julieta, Phillipe, Diane, and June.



This photo was taken after I had arrived at the opening - late as usual.



Now about Anthony's studio. Some folks wanted to dance in town rather than traveling to Hawthorne. So for a month or two Anthony kindly let the group dance in his art studio. It is a very large room with

## Gainesville Update (Continued)

Continued from Page 7

glass windows and plenty of space to dance. The group had more folks showing up which was a delight. Also, some of Anthony's artwork can be seen on a couple of the walls. This photo was taken on April 19.



The final photo was taken on May 5 and shows the group back in the Hawthorne space. Everyone loved dancing in Anthony's studio but there is no air conditioning and it really became extremely hot to dance so another migration to Hawthorne took place. Anthony is to the right in the back row.



I hope everyone is well and dancing happily. In several weeks I am hopeful that I can rejoin our wonderful group and again take photos.

Take care and do not get COVID.



# Events

## Spring Fling Recap by Terry Abrahams

Small but mighty, a gang of us gathered for this year's Spring Fling held at Ruth Ann's house on April 15th. Luckily, we didn't do any taxes – just ate and danced.

The only unexciting thing was that I had a pain in my chest along with other pains in shoulder etc. So Gary Berke massaged, Dr. Barry Sieger MD looked, Vivian Calobrisi NP observed, and Kelly Fagan PT minded.

I spent most of the day on the couch watching everyone, much to my dismay. The end of the story - I did go to the hospital last Saturday, and I am not

having a heart attack. Thanks all of you who were worried. It probably was muscular pain from fencing!

Back to the dancing – I think only Tampa and Orlando and Ocala were represented, but those who were there danced their hearts out and had a good time. Next day people showed up for games days at P and B's and finished off the good food from Saturday with a few excellent additions and a few extra people who were not dancers. Hope to see more of you at the Summer Fling, whenever that is.



# Footnotes

## Traversing the Atlantic by Vicki Kulifay



Soooo the reason for the delay in the newsletter this time, is on a whim, my husband and I decided to take a “repositioning” cruise from Tampa to Barcelona (booked three weeks before the sail date). We generally are not into ocean cruises, but this seemed like a cool experience. It was 14 day cruise – most of which were days at sea (the longest stretch was crossing the Atlantic – five days). The ship did stop in Bermuda, Madeira Island (Portugal), then Cadiz and Malaga (Spain), before finally docking in Barcelona. We then spent several more days in Barcelona.

We were never bored. Working out in the fitness center, eating a lot of really good food, read for hours on our deck, and enjoying the great entertainment on board. As the ship was only half full of passengers (benefit of a repositioning cruise), and there was a full crew, we never waited for anything. There were definitely highlights. Both Bernie and I ended up on the main show stage at two different nights (he during the hypnotist’s act, and me during the mentalist’s act). It was fun getting to interact directly with these unusual performers.

We had a fabulous dinner in one of the restaurants on board – called “Le Petit Chef.” Not even sure how to describe this, other than a fantastical graphic

interpretation of our dinner displayed on our tabletop. The host was Le Petit Chef (a little cartoon character) who took us on a food journey before every course. The photo shows only one of the videos used (this one describing how tomatoes came from South America). The vibrant images changed frequently as the stories were told, with the Chef dancing, hopping, and sauntering all over the table top. (Note: the glasses and flatware are real.) The tabletop was white as were the plates and the room was darkened to highlight the videos. Just amazing.

On the Island of Madeira, we did the most interesting and exciting excursion...riding in a Straw Toboggan.

Madeira is hilly, and toboggans are still used today to bring produce, fire wood, etc., down the mountain to the city. And of course, it is a huge tourist attraction, but well worth it. Each toboggan holds two passengers (and yes, it is made of woven straw with two

wooden rails to slide on and no seat belts). There are two drivers who each can steer with ropes attached to the front corners, and brake by dragging their feet.



# Traversing the Atlantic (Continued)

Continued from Page 10

their feet. It is a two kilometer trip downhill, at sometimes very fast speeds. The drivers wear special shoes with soles made of car tires which must wear out frequently. And yes that it our cruise ship way in the distance - you can see how far up we are. But what a blast!

We also enjoyed touring palaces and castles and museums in Spain. But the Sagrada Família in



Barcelona was another definite highlight. We spent two hours in this church, taking the elevator up a tower, then walking the 400 steps down. Construction started on the



church in 1882, with a traditional neo-Gothic design. Antoni Gaudí took over the project in 1883, and moved the design in a much different direction. The Basilica is still under construction – several towers remain to be completed (no expected date given). But what a masterpiece. Gaudí was a genius, pushing the limits as to what could be done architecturally to reach his vision. And all without even a slide rule or CGI. Astounding.

About a one hour train ride outside Barcelona is the Monastery at Monserrate. The tram ride up the mountain to the Monastery from the train station is breath-taking and stomach churning. The area around the Monastery is pretty commercialized though – a bit of a disappointment.

But we found a trail that looked interesting, with many plaques and memorials along the way. I don't speak or read Spanish or Catalan, but one particular plaque caught my eye. I've included the brass marker which was beside it. Perhaps one of my folk dance friends can translate for me! Because it certainly looks like they are dancing.



## Message From The Editor...

Two different but seemingly related articles showed up this month. Not being one to ever turn away a submittal, here they both are. They are long, but fascinating. I hope you enjoy.

# International Dance Day – Polkomania

*Editor's Note: Linda Nicoli shared this article from the April 2023 issue of the CSA Fraternal Life Journal (Published by the Czechoslovak Society of America)*

**Polka is a dance and genre of dance music originating in nineteenth-century Bohemia, now part of the Czech Republic.** Though associated with Czech culture, polka is popular throughout Europe and the Americas.

The term polka referring to the dance is derived from the Czech word Polka meaning “Polish woman.” Czech cultural historian Čeněk Zíbrt also attributes the term to the Czech word půlka (half), referring to both the half-tempo and the half-jump step of the dance. The word was widely introduced into the major European languages in the early 1840s.

The story of polka’s origin first appears in the periodical “Bohemia” in 1844, in which it was attributed to a young Bohemian woman named Anna Slezáková. As told by Čeněk Zíbrt, the music teacher Josef Neruda noticed her dancing in an unusual way to accompany a local folk song called “Strýček Nimra koupil šimla” or “Uncle Nimra Bought a White Horse” in 1830. The dance was further propagated by Neruda, who put the tune to paper and taught other young men to dance it. Some versions of this story placed the first polka as being danced in Hradec Kralove, while others claimed it occurred in the village of Labska Tynica. Historians believe the polka evolved as a quicker version of the waltz, and associate the rapid burgeoning in popularity of the polka across Europe in the mid-1800s with the spread of the Romantic movement, which emphasized an idealized version of peasant culture.



By 1835, this dance had spread to the ballrooms of Prague. From there, it spread to classical music hub Vienna by 1839, and in 1840 was introduced in Paris by Johaan Raab, a Prague dance instructor. It was so well received in Paris that its popularity was referred to as “polkomania.” The dance soon spread to London in 1844, where it was considered highly fashionable, and was also introduced to America. It remained a popular ballroom dance in America, especially with growing Central, Northern, and Eastern European immigrant groups until the late 19th century.

There are various styles of contemporary polka besides the original Czech dance, which is still the chief dance at any formal or countryside ball in the Czech Republic.

# International Dance Day – Polkomania (Continued)

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## Belarus

In the 1850s, the polka was expanded among Belarusians. Although the polka is a borrowed dance, close to Belarusian folk choreography, it has been greatly transformed in the national plan, while having a strong influence on other dances. Having entered the life of the Belarusians, it was transformed into the national spirit. In different regions, local variants arose, which assimilated with local choreographic folklore and became popular. The ease of penetration of the polka into Belarusian choreography is due to its certain proximity to Belarusian national choreographic traditions. The 2/4 meter polka merged well with the Belarusian traditional dance, which had a similar meter. So, for example, “Trjasucha” (Belarusian: “Трясуха”, “Trjasucha” or “Пацяруха”, “Paciaruchais”) a symbol of a typical folk dance, from which it got its name, and polka. Most often in Belarus, the polka is performed in pairs, moving half a step with turns in a circle. The dance is decorated with a variety of small pas, often accompanied by chastushkae. Belarusian polkas are extremely rich in their choreographic and musical patterns, they are distinguished by great modal and intonation diversity. Polka demands from the dancers both skill and physical endurance. Like the square dance, the polka also has many local variants and the names were also given according to the peculiarities of the choreography: “Through the leg,” “With a podkindes,” “With squats,” “On the heel,” “Screw,” and others.

## The Polka - Part of US Entertainment

Comedy musician “Weird Al” Yankovic is a fan of polka, and on every album since 1984 (with the exception of “Even Worse”), Al has taken bits of famous songs and modified them to fit polka style. The Grammy Awards were first presented for polka in 1985. The first award went to Frankie Yankovic, known as “America’s Polka King,” for his “70 Years of Hits” album on Cleveland International Records. Cleveland International Records had another polka Grammy winner with Brave Combo’s “Polkasonic” in 1999. Other polka Grammy nominees included Frankie Yankovic’s “America’s Favorites” (1986), “Songs of the Polka King Vol. I,” “Songs of the Polka King Vol. II” (1997), and Brave Combo’s “Kick Ass Polkas” (2000). Jimmy Sturr & His Orchestra is one of the most popular polka bands in America, having won 18 of the 24 awards for Grammy Award for Best Polka Album.

“Polka Varieties” was an hour-long television program of polka music originating from Cleveland, Ohio. The show, which aired in several U.S. cities, ran from 1956 until 1983. At that time, it was the only television program for this type of music in the United States. A number of polka shows originated from the Buffalo Niagara Region in the 1960s, including WKBW-TV’s “Polka Time,” which was hosted for its first half-year on air by Frankie Yankovic, and cross-border station CHCH-TV’s “Polka Party,” hosted by Walter Ostanek. In 2015, Buffalo station WBBZ-TV launched the weekly “Polka Buzz” hosted by Ron Dombrowski, who also hosts the “Drive Time Polkas” radio show on WXRL Mondays through Saturdays from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. and on WECK Sundays from 8 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Beginning with its inception in 2001, the RFD-TV Network aired “The Big Joe Show,” a television program that included polka music and dancing. It was filmed on location in various venues throughout the United States from 1973 through 2009. RFD-TV replaced “The Big Joe Show” with “Mollie Busta’s Polka Fest” in January 2011. After Big Joe’s death, reruns of “The Big Joe Show” returned to RFD-TV in 2015.

In 2009, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, which hosts the Grammy Awards, announced that it was eliminating the polka category “to ensure the awards process remains representative

# International Dance Day – Polkamania (Continued)

Continued from Page 13

## **The United States**

### Chicago

In the United States, polka is promoted by the International Polka Association based in Chicago, which works to preserve the cultural heritage of polka music and to honor its musicians through the Polka Hall of Fame. Chicago is associated with “Polish-style polka,” and its sub-styles including “The Chicago Honky” (using clarinet and one trumpet) and “Chicago Push” featuring the accordion, Chemnitzer and Star concertinas, upright bass or bass guitar, drums, and (almost always) two trumpets.

### Wisconsin

Polka is popular in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where the “Beer Barrel Polka” is played during the seventh inning stretch and halftime of Milwaukee Brewers and Milwaukee Bucks games. Polka is also the official state dance of Wisconsin.

### Ohio

The United States Polka Association is a non-profit organization based in Cleveland, Ohio. Cleveland is associated with North American “Slovenianstyle polka,” which is fast and features piano accordion, chromatic accordion, and/or diatonic button box accordion. North American “Dutchmen-style” features an oom-pah sound often with a tuba and banjo, and has roots in the American Midwest.

### Texas

“Conjunto-style” polkas have roots in northern Mexico and Texas, and are also called “Norteño.” Traditional dances from this region reflect the influence of polka-dancing European immigrants. In the 1980s and 1990s, several American bands began to combine polka with various rock styles, sometimes referred to as “punk polka,” “alternative polka,” or “San Francisco-style”.

More information and articles on the Polka can be found in that issue of the Journal:

<https://csalife.com/doc/journal/April.pdf?v=93>

There is also a list of dance types by country on Wikipedia, which can be referenced at this link.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_national\\_dances](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_national_dances)

# The Evolution of Croatian Folk Dancing in the United States

*Editor's Note: This article is from the February 2022 issue of Folklife Magazine (Published by the Smithsonian Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage). Aaron Rovan, the author, is an intern at the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, a PhD candidate in English at West Virginia University, and a staff member at Ohio Humanities. He would like to thank those experts and community members whose conversations helped guide this story, especially James Deutsch, Rob McCollum, and Sarah Sheard.*

While dancing Kriči, Kriči Tiček, there is a moment when you feel utterly weightless. You've grasped hands and woven arms behind the backs of your neighbors. Rounding the circle, you hop-step-step in unison to the harmonized voices. As the song picks up speed, you lean back against the hands clasped behind you. Inertia pulls at your body, propelling you outward and around—you sense this resistance in the muscles of your calves. For a moment, you feel as if your feet have left the floor and that the small community of your circle is hovering together, transcendent and timeless.

For many folk dancers in the United States, Kriči, Kriči Tiček (pronounced KREE-chee KREE-chee TEE-chek) epitomizes Croatian dance. The lively music, straightforward steps, and fostered community makes dancers feel that they have dropped knee-deep into European culture. But while the movements of Kriči, Kriči Tiček are traditional to Croatia, the standard version performed by many folk dancers in the United States does not correlate to a particular Croatian dance. In Croatia, the name “Kriči, Kriči Tiček” (which translates to “Chirp, Chirp, Little Bird”) references the song, and each village community performs its own signature movements to the tune. Usually, the Croatian versions feature a drmeš step (a surprisingly strenuous yet subtle movement—nothing more than standing still and shaking), walking, and hopping.



The U.S. version brings various Croatian steps into a standard pattern: sixteen walking steps alternating with sixteen sets of hop-step-steps. In the mid-twentieth century, visiting teacher-choreographers from Croatia introduced the distinct versions that they had learned to “recreational” folk dancers in the United States, those who dance mainly for pleasure rather than professionally. Regional groups of recreational dancers would occasionally meet at weekend camps and share dances they had learned. Eventually, through contact and cultural fusion, the regional variations of Kriči, Kriči Tiček settled into a standard form, one danced by both recreational groups and professional performing troupes.

The story of Kriči, Kriči Tiček embodies a tension that many folk dance teachers feel: how to faithfully represent their cultural heritage while appealing both to audiences and to recreational dancers.

Željko Jergan, a Croatian immigrant who moved to Pittsburgh in 1986, has grappled with these challenges. Born in Varaždin, a town on the Drava River in northern Croatia, Jergan’s introduction to folk expressions came through the songs he heard there.

# The Evolution of Croatian Folk Dancing in the United States (Continued)

Continued from Page 15

“I was very, very amused by all those harmonies that ladies were putting together,” he explains. “That’s where my love for folklore starts.” At eighteen, he joined LADO, Croatia’s national folk ensemble, and for twelve years performed with them as a lead dancer. “I was never satisfied with just performing,” he says, despite his prestigious role in the troupe. Instead, he explored communities throughout his home country and beyond its borders, traveling to Croatian communities in Hungary, Austria, and Romania. There, he began to record and document Croatian songs and dances.

Jergan’s life changed when Cindy Cubelic (in Croatian, Čubelić), a young American woman from a family with a deep passion for Croatian dance, arrived in Zagreb in the mid-1980s to study and perform with LADO. Cubelic had performed with the Duquesne University Tamburitzans, a highly acclaimed folk-dance group based in Pittsburgh made up of college students. When they met, Cubelic spoke no Croatian, and Jergan spoke no English. Within two years, they were married and living in Pittsburgh.

While romance may have brought him to the United States, a love of Croatian culture propelled Jergan’s career. He arrived with a personal mandate: “My goal when I came to North America was to preserve and perpetuate my Croatian culture, my traditional culture.”

He decided that the best way to strengthen Croatian identity outside of his homeland was to teach what he knew. However, Jergan’s story came to illustrate the tension between safeguarding one’s dances and adapting them to U.S. expectations. His efforts to spread authentic Croatian dance forms were met with some opposition due to the diverse groups he had to appeal to.

“In the village, it’s a circle dance for ten minutes,” he says. “You can’t do that here.” Recreational folk dancers as well as American audiences “like more movement,” he explains. “Americans need faster changes.”

As a professional choreographer, he realized he had to modify the village dances that he was familiar with. His technique in choreographing dances that appeal to Americans echoes the cultural process that standardized Kriči, Kriči Tiček: “I always use traditional steps, traditional music, and just put them in the way that an American audience will accept.”

Settling in Pittsburgh, Jergan found a well-established Croatian American community. As a significant part of the wave of Eastern European immigration at the turn of the twentieth century, many Croatians settled in western Pennsylvania and established a robust system of churches and social organizations to support Croatian families.





# The Evolution of Croatian Folk Dancing in the United States (Continued)

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“One thing that the old timers did when they first got here is they formed corporations and sold insurance,” explains David Vinski, a lifelong folk dancer who grew up in a Croatian American household. But he remembers that these associations, organized under the Croatian Fraternal Union (CFU), offered more than just life insurance; they provided a community of people who spoke your language.

“Lodges in the United States started offering Culture Corner kind of classes for kids,” Vinski says. “And so we went there to learn how to play the tamburitza instrument, how to sing a couple of the songs, and how to do the kolo”—a simple circle dance ubiquitous across many Balkan cultures.

Now retired from his position as managing director of the Pittsburgh Playhouse, Vinski remembers the formative role his local CFU lodge played in his life. “A bunch of guys would form a combo and they’d play, even if it wasn’t a day for rehearsal. Or they’d go play for a wedding. We did that when I was sixteen or seventeen years old. We all belonged to a combo. We’d play at weddings. So, I learned to dance Kriči, Kriči and a bunch of these little kolos. And I learned how to play.” Rooted in his own experience as a member of a Croatian American household, Vinski translated his mastery of Croatian music and dance into a college scholarship and a coveted role with the Duquesne University Tamburitians.

The Tamburitians were central to the continued life of Croatian culture in the Pittsburgh region. Because the group was made up solely of college students, it established a scholarship program at Duquesne University that, as Vinski explains, “helped stitch together all these clubs on the youth side.” Organized in ways similar to athletic extracurriculars, the Tamburitians required members to attend an annual camp where they learned the year’s repertoire and maintained a demanding schedule of performances. The group gave Vinski the capacity to better understand his own Croatian background.

“I had found my home,” Vinski says of his experience with the Tamburitians. “It was a very nice place to be involved. Playing all this music, learning dances. We had learned a bunch of little things as kids in the lodge. But now we were learning real, full choreographies and all the dances that make them up. Learning more about the culture and where on the map you can find this place. Even how to put on the costume, how to wear it.”

The college students who comprise the Tamburitians, as well as choreographers like Jergan who teach the dances, are invested in safeguarding their culture. Many of the performers come from Europe to attend the university and perform in the group, while others, like Vinski, are American-born but have deep roots in their immigrant communities. These knowledgeable individuals project a certain ineffable quality that Martin Koenig, co-founder of the Center for Traditional Music and Dance and a Smithsonian Folkways producer, calls “virtuosity of movement.”

“Not so much in terms of technique,” Koenig explains, “but in terms of synchronicity of movement with the other dancers, complete commitment to each movement, and the depth of feeling expressed.”

Koenig suggests we think of this as we might think of a vocalist singing to us in a foreign language. “If they’re singing from the heart, you don’t have to understand what they’re singing to be moved by them. You get tearful. You get happy. They reach you.” American audiences and recreational folk dancers feel similar emotions when they encounter representations that feel particularly authentic. “There are some Americans whose whole reason for dancing is to get as close to that virtuosity of movement as possible,” Koenig says.

# The Evolution of Croatian Folk Dancing in the United States (Continued)

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Given the deep emotional connections people draw from melody, movement, and heritage, dance becomes a powerful way for individuals to connect with their ancestral cultures. “If you know the dances from a region, that’s more an expression of being proud of your heritage,” explains Jim Shustrick, a second-generation Croatian immigrant, the leader of a performing dance group, and an avid recreational folk dancer. For Shustrick, the expressive movements of folk dance put him in touch with his ethnic heritage in ways that other activities don’t: “Listening to or appreciating music or food—anyone can do that.”

But for him, participating in dance is different. Growing up, he heard stories from his mom and aunt about doing the *drmeš* together at the local VFW. Only as an adult, when he saw Croatian dances performed at a local festival, did he begin to appreciate folk dance as a connection to his cultural heritage. “I felt like I had to learn it to feel like I was Croatian or something. It made something click inside of me.”

But for many, there remains a sense that these dances are authentic representations of European life. This idea of “authenticity” can often overshadow the transformation of folk dances and other expressive forms. Macedonian immigrant Filip Petkovski explains, “Once you are concerned with the authenticity, you are not talking about heritage. You are talking about something that doesn’t exist anymore and you want to revive it.” Petkovski, who earned his PhD in culture and performance from UCLA and is also an alum of the Duquesne Tamburitians, finds that reaching for authenticity is unhealthy, like reaching for an ideal that may have never existed. Instead, he suggests that any discussion of authenticity should first recognize that communities change and adapt.

“A lot of recreational folk dancers—they have nothing to do with Eastern Europe. They have nothing to do with the Balkans,” he argues. “They just love the way this looks, and they love the community aspect of it, that everyone in the circle is equal and holding hands, and you’re doing the exact same step. You cannot be different from the group. And that whole idea of communality and community and unisonality is what attracts people, and that is why they are interested.”

When Petkovski was living in Los Angeles, he joined a local recreational folk-dance group. Being from Macedonia and studying folk dance, he wanted to teach them some traditional Macedonian dances. He remembers when he first visited the group, they put on records of Macedonian music and started doing dances that he had never seen before. “So, I ended up not knowing any of those dances, and people kept looking at me, like, what are you doing here? Why did you come to teach us if you don’t know these dances?” He reassured them that he did know his stuff, but that those dances weren’t “authentic” to Macedonia. He surmised that a previous folk dance teacher had run out of material to teach but still needed money. So, the teacher started creating new dances and songs that mimicked those of Macedonian heritage.

Therein lies the paradox of Balkan folk dancing in America: what to do about those folk dances that were “created”? And what about dances like *Kriči*, *Kriči Tiček* that combine traditional music and movements in a form that is attractive to Americans but aren’t necessarily copies of existing dances?

Teachers like Jergan, who recognizes that Croatian dance traditions “have to be saved one generation at a time,” might intend to bring an authentically Croatian tradition to the United States. Yet, given the number of folk-dance communities and teachers here, the fruits of that labor can never be pure.

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# The Evolution of Croatian Folk Dancing in the United States (Continued)

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Jergan's own ruminations illustrate this contradiction. "The saddest part," he explains plaintively, "is that even in Europe, people start accepting something that's not the tradition."

Rather than perpetuating an authentically Croatian tradition in America, Jergan's work—and the work of others like him—emphasizes a blended culture, one that transcends borders and time. This hybrid culture weaves between "Croatian" and "American" like the arms and clasped hands of dancers whose hold on one another ensures the circle's integrity. Despite the changes he has witnessed, when Jergan notices a folk-dance group modifying some parts of the original choreography to suit their own needs, he chooses pragmatism.

"I'm actually pleased that they are using the correct steps and style," he says. "I'm actually proud."

*(Photos in article courtesy of Željko Jergan)*



# Calendar and Tours

Look for more information on events, tours, and cruises on the FFDC website calendar: [www.folkdance.org](http://www.folkdance.org)

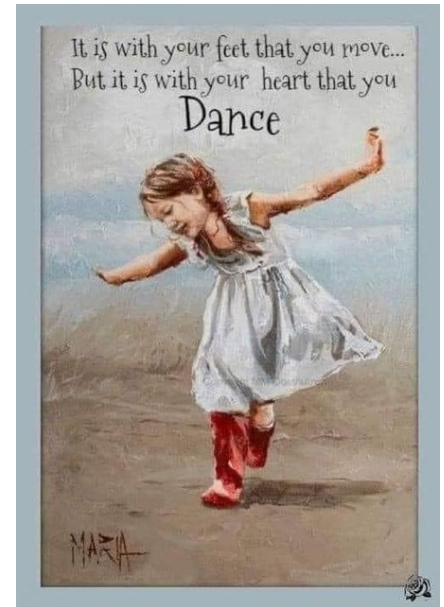
## Event Calendar

- 2023-05-12 International Folk Dance Camp, Hopewell Junction, NY, [www.ifc-ny.com](http://www.ifc-ny.com)
- 2023-05-19 California Statewide Folk Dance Festival, San Pedro, CA, [www.socalfolkdance.com/statewide.htm](http://www.socalfolkdance.com/statewide.htm), Folk Dance Federation of California, South
- 2023-05-19 Ontario Folk Dance Camp, [www.ontariofolkdancecamp.ca](http://www.ontariofolkdancecamp.ca)
- 2023-05-26 Florida Folk Festival, White Springs, FL, [www.floridastateparks.org/FloridaFolkFestival](http://www.floridastateparks.org/FloridaFolkFestival), Florida State Parks
- 2023-05-26 Northwest Folklife Festival, Seattle, WA, [www.nwfolklife.org](http://www.nwfolklife.org)
- 2023-06-01 June Camp: An International Folk Dance Weekend, Deerfield, IL, [www.sites.google.com/site/junecampifd](http://www.sites.google.com/site/junecampifd)
- 2023-06-04 International Folkfest, Murfreesboro, TN, [www.mboro-international-folkfest.org](http://www.mboro-international-folkfest.org)
- 2023-06-10 Scandia Camp Mendocino, Mendocino, GA, [www.scandiacampmendocino.org](http://www.scandiacampmendocino.org), Scandia Camp
- 2023-06-17 West Coast Balkan Music and Dance Workshop, Mendocino Woodlands, CA, [www.eefc.org/balkan-camp/west-coast](http://www.eefc.org/balkan-camp/west-coast)
- 2023-06-22 Toronto Israeli Dance Festival, Toronto, Canada, [www.israelidancetoronto.com](http://www.israelidancetoronto.com)
- 2023-06-22 International Dance and Music at Pinewoods Camp, Plymouth, MA, [www.facone.org](http://www.facone.org), Folk Arts Center of New England
- 2023-07-07 Door County Folk Festival (In person and virtual), Egg Harbor, WI, [www.dcff.net](http://www.dcff.net)
- 2023-07-08 Nordic Fiddles and Feet, Lyman, NH, [www.nordicfiddlesandfeet.org](http://www.nordicfiddlesandfeet.org), Nordic Fiddles and Feet
- 2023-07-14 Montana Folk Festival, Butte, MT, [www.montanafolkfestival.com](http://www.montanafolkfestival.com)
- 2023-07-16 Stockton Folk Dance Camp - Week 1, Stockton, CA, [www.folkdancecamp.org](http://www.folkdancecamp.org), Stockton Folk Dance Camp
- 2023-07-16 KDI Dance Camp, Murray, KY, [www.knobtiger.com](http://www.knobtiger.com)
- 2023-07-20 New Mexico August Camp, Socorro, NM, [www.swifdi.org](http://www.swifdi.org), Southwest International Folk Dance Institute
- 2023-07-20 Hardanger Fiddle Music and Dance Workshop, Dodgeville, WI, [www.folkloreillage.org](http://www.folkloreillage.org)
- 2023-07-23 Stockton Folk Dance Camp - Week 2, Stockton, CA, [www.folkdancecamp.org](http://www.folkdancecamp.org), Stockton Folk Dance Camp
- 2023-07-27 Folkmoot USA, Waynesville, NC, [www.folkmootusa.org](http://www.folkmootusa.org), Folkmoot USA
- 2023-07-28 Lark Camp, Woodlands, CA, [www.larkcamp.com](http://www.larkcamp.com)
- 2023-07-29 Workshop with Sonia and Cristian, Dayton, OH, [www.miamivalleyfolkdancers.org](http://www.miamivalleyfolkdancers.org), Miami Valley International Folk Dancers
- 2023-08-02 World Folkfest, Springville, UT, [www.worldfolkfest.org](http://www.worldfolkfest.org)
- 2023-08-05 East Coast Balkan Music and Dance Workshop, Rock Hill, NY, [www.eefc.org/balkan-camp/east-coast-balkan-music-dance-workshop/](http://www.eefc.org/balkan-camp/east-coast-balkan-music-dance-workshop/), East European Folklife Center
- 2023-08-06 Ti Ti Tabor Hungarian Folk Camp, Gig Harbor, WA, [www.tititabor.org](http://www.tititabor.org)
- 2023-08-20 Mainewoods Dance Camp Week 1, Fryeburg, ME, [www.mainewoodsdancecamp.org](http://www.mainewoodsdancecamp.org)
- 2023-08-27 Mainewoods Dance Camp Week 2, Fryeburg, ME, [www.mainewoodsdancecamp.org](http://www.mainewoodsdancecamp.org)
- 2023-09-01 Karmiel USA - Israeli Folk Dance Weekend, Highlands, NC
- 2023-09-01 Balkanalia, Corbett, OR, [www.balkanalia.org](http://www.balkanalia.org), Balkan Festival Northwest
- 2023-09-01 Labor Day Weekend at Pinewoods, Plymouth, MA, [www.facone.org/labor-day-weekend/labor-day-weekend.html](http://www.facone.org/labor-day-weekend/labor-day-weekend.html)
- 2023-09-03 Scandinavian Fest, Budd Lake, NJ, [www.scanfest.org](http://www.scanfest.org)
- 2023-09-22 Enon Valley Folk Dance Camp, Enon Valley, PA, [www.folkdancepittsburgh.com](http://www.folkdancepittsburgh.com)
- 2023-09-22 Fandango Dance Weekend, Atlanta, GA, [www.ecdatlanta.org](http://www.ecdatlanta.org), English Country Dance Atlanta

# Event Calendar (continued)

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2023-09-29	Mountain Playshop, Black Mountain, NC, <a href="http://www.mountainplayshop.org">www.mountainplayshop.org</a>
2023-10-04	Tamburitza Extravaganza, Independence, OH, <a href="http://www.tamburitza.org">www.tamburitza.org</a> , Tamburitza Association of America
2023-10-06	Super Greek Festival, St. Petersburg, FL, <a href="http://www.ststefanos.org">www.ststefanos.org</a>
2023-10-06	Oktoberfest International Dance and Music Weekend, Fairlee, VT, <a href="http://www.facone.org/oktoberfest/oktoberfest.html">www.facone.org/oktoberfest/oktoberfest.html</a> , Folk Art Center of New England
2023-10-06	Oconomowoc Fall Folk Dance Camp, Oconomowoc, WI, <a href="http://www.argonneifd.blogspot.com">www.argonneifd.blogspot.com</a> , Lake Geneva Folk Dancers
2023-10-20	Fall Swedish Music and Dance Weekend, Dodgeville, Wisconsin, <a href="http://www.folkloreivillage.org">www.folkloreivillage.org</a>
2023-10-20	Old Country Weekend, Kingston, OK, <a href="http://www.okcifd.org">www.okcifd.org</a> , Oklahoma City International Folk Dancers
2023-10-23	SPIFFS International Folk Fair, St. Petersburg, FL, <a href="http://www.spiffs.org">www.spiffs.org</a>
2023-10-26	Pourparler, Dodgeville, WI, <a href="http://www.nfo-usa.org/pourparler">www.nfo-usa.org/pourparler</a> , NFO



Judith English has created a calendar for virtual dancing:

Use this link to access the calendar: <https://daleadamson.com/events-calendar/>

Use this link if you want to submit something to the calendar: <https://daleadamson.com/event-submission/>

Use this link to access various other items (including Andy Pollock's calendar!): <https://daleadamson.com/other-online-event-calendars-of-interest/> - Andy's calendar also resides here: <https://tinyurl.com/andyscaler>

## Folk Dance Tour Contacts

For Dance on the Water Folk Tours, see <http://folkdanceonthewater.org> or contact David and Marija Hillis at [folkdanceonthewater@gmail.com](mailto:folkdanceonthewater@gmail.com) or 510-459-0092.

For Seminars of Greek Dance with Kyriakos Moisidis, contact [moisidiskyriakos@gmail.com](mailto:moisidiskyriakos@gmail.com).

For tours with Sonia and Cristian, see <http://www.soniacristian.net> or contact Sonia at [sonia\\_dion@hotmail.com](mailto:sonia_dion@hotmail.com).

For Jim Gold Folk Tours, see <http://www.jimgold.com> or contact Jim Gold at [jimgold@jimgold.com](mailto:jimgold@jimgold.com) or 201-836-0362.

For tours with Zeljko Jergen, contact Fusae Senzaki Carroll at [fusaec@aol.com](mailto:fusaec@aol.com) or 916-798-4675

For tours with Tineke van Geel (sometimes assisted by Maurits), contact them at <http://www.tinekevangeel.nl>.

For the Macedonian and Bulgarian Folk Tour, please contact Vlasto at [sunstagecompany@gmail.com](mailto:sunstagecompany@gmail.com) or visit <https://sunstagecompany.wixsite.com/arts>

Please note: The Florida Folk Dancer prints information on folk dance tours, camps, and other events that may be of interest to our readers. This does not imply an endorsement or recommendation of any tour or camp (except our own FFDC events!)

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