

Greek and Macedonian Serbian and Croatian Dance Music



Steve Jugloff and Bill Skimos

**From the collections of the
Archives of Traditional Music
Indiana University**

**Recorded in the field and produced by
Paul L. Tyler**

**ETHNIC DANCE MUSIC
IN NORTHERN INDIANA**

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Project supported by the Indiana Arts Commission
And the National Endowment for the Arts

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"Nasdrovia!"

Side A

Greek and Macedonian Music

Neo Kyma (New Wave)

Merrillville, 4-24-87 *

- 1) Paraponiariko
- 2) untitled tsifgegeli

The Kastorians

Fort Wayne, 4-20-80

- 3) Elenicha (Ellen) / Samiotisa

Elia E. Calcoff Orchestra

WOWO, Fort Wayne, ca 1950 **

- 4) Bulgarsko
- 5) Albanska

Bill Skimos Orchestra

Fort Wayne, 11-1-87

- 6) Shana
- 7) untitled kasapsko
- 8) Eleno Mome

Side B

"Ziveli!"

Serbian and Croatian Music

United Serbs

Merrillville, 5-24-87 *

- 1) Chicago Kolo
- 2) Dodji Mile U Nas Kraj
- 3) Ravno Oro

Drina Orchestra

Merrillville, 11-8-87

- 4) Rastao Sam Pored/Dunave/
Biserija/My-Mother-in-law

Star Serenaders

Highland, 5-3-87

& Chicago, 3-28-87

- 6) Guantanamera
(H. Angulo & P. Seeger)
- 7) Krcmarice/ Kolo in G

Recorded by Paul L. Tyler,
Flawn Williams (*), or unknown (**)

THE DANCES

The music heard on this tape emerges from four notable and culturally overlapping immigrant colonies in northern Indiana: **Greek, Macedonian, Serbian, and Croatian**. This is music for social dancing; the kind of dancing that enhances community celebrations such as church picnics, holidays, weddings, and fund-raisers for fraternal organizations.

Social dancing is distinct from folk dancing, though the steps are mostly the same. The latter is usually presented in formal performances by church youth groups costumed in traditional old-world dress. These groups rehearse weekly and travel regularly to other parishes for folk dance festivals. Social dances, which are for everyone, start when the formal program on stage is finished. These dances are often called 'circle' dances, but be they Macedonian *oros* (also spelled 'horos') or Serbian *kolos*, they are more on the order of serpentine lines that weave throughout the hall.

Partners are not needed for the social dances of the Greeks and the South Slavs (whose homelands are now Yugoslavia). In theory, anyone can join the line at any point, except at the right end, where two or three dancers have staked a claim to lead the steps. In actual practice, young people and adults often form separate lines which perform with the vigor and style characteristic of each generation. For both young and old, however, the dance is both an instrument and a symbol of group solidarity. It affirms the identity of Greek-, Macedonian-, Serbian-, and Croatian-Americans. In the words of a Macedonian from Crown Point: *"The music and the dancing will always stay."*

Note: Paul L. Tyler's collection of field recordings of ethnic music from Indiana is deposited at the Archives of Traditional Music under accession numbers 86-677-F, 80-105-F/C, and 80-108-F/C.

THE MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

With the exception of the two *tamburitza* ensembles on the second side, all of the musicians perform on modern Western instruments. The music is a mixture of new and old, including traditional melodies that crossed the ocean, starting with earlier immigrants, and newer songs that were composed here or were learned from records and tapes obtained from the Old Country. The Greek and Macedonian bands can handle a variety of irregular time signatures, such as 7/8 and 9/8, while the Serbian and Croatian groups stick mostly to duple and triple meters.

Neo Kyma (or "New Wave") is a Greek band from Chicago, led by **Louis Zarakas**, a young man born and raised in the Calumet region. The band, with a lineup formed just for this occasion, was recorded at SS. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Louie's home parish. They played for a dance that opened a weekend of workshops and performances at the annual Chicago Diocese Greek Folk Dance Festival.

"**Paraponiariko**" is a *syrtos*, a lively dance in 4/4 time. The *tsifgageli*, essentially belly dance music, was composed by the band from rhythms that reflect the Turkish influence on Greek music. The synthesizer imitates a *santuri*, a middle Eastern hammered dulcimer.

The **Kastorians** play an older style of dance music from the Macedonian region of Northern Greece. Led by **Pete Tsouklis**, a native of Kastoria now living in Crown Point, the band has played for weddings and church dances in the Calumet Region, Fort Wayne, and Indianapolis for nearly thirty years. They also perform for Macedonian events under the name **Kostur**.

"**Elenicha**" and "**Samiotisa**," recorded at a dance for the Philip of Macedon Society at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, are *kalamantianos* in 7/8 time, counted '123-12-12' or 'slow-quick-quick.' The steps and rhythm are similar to the dance the Macedonians call *syrtos*, which can be played in either 7/8 or 4/4 (counted '1234-12-12'), both danced as 'slow-quick-quick.' The differences between the Macedonian *syrtos* and the Greek *syrtos* and *kalamantianos* are subtle, if they even exist.

The **Elia E. Calcoff Orchestra** was the first Macedonian band in the United States. **Elia Calcoff** was born in 1891 in Vishini near Kostur or Kastoria. A shepherd boy, he played a *kaval*, a Macedonian flute, which he made for himself. After his first trip to Fort Wayne at the age of seventeen, he returned home with a clarinet. In 1913 he emigrated permanently to join Fort Wayne's sizeable colony of immigrants from Vishini. A short time later he started an orchestra that played for Macedonian weddings, Sunday picnics, and dances in Fort Wayne and other Midwestern cities. Mr. Calcoff died in 1962.

These recordings are two of fourteen pieces **Elia Calcoff** issued on seven 78 rpm discs sold to raise money for St. Nicholas Macedonian Orthodox Church. "**Bulgarsko**" is one of twelve sides identified as a *hora*. "**Albansko**," labeled an *ezgia*, is a melancholy air that a solitary shepherd might play for himself, or that might be played at a wedding when the guests sit down.

The **Bill Skimos Band** plays every year at St. Nicholas' Macedonian Ball, and at Macedonian, Bulgarian, and Romanian dances in Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan. **Bill Skimos** was born in northern Greece. His family emigrated to Fort Wayne when he was eleven. At the age of fifteen he got interested in the clarinet, and began to study with **Elia Calcoff**: "*He got me going...took me along.*" After eight years with the Calcoff Orchestra, Bill started his own band. They have recorded two LPs titled *Balkan Folk Music*.

Bill Skimos not only followed in the footsteps of his teacher, **Elia Calcoff**, his band includes the latter's grandson, **Steve Jugloff**, a keyboard artist. In the mid-1970s, Steve recorded two LPs titled *Electric Macedonian* and *Son of...*, traditional music performed on synthesizers. He now plays the button-box accordion, and Bill's son Jim is now on synthesizer.

Both "**Shana**" and "**Eleno Mome**," each with its own dance, are tunes in 7/8, though the former is counted '123-12-12' while the latter is counted '12-12-123' (or 'quick-quick-slow'). The *kasapsko* is a type of dance in 2/4 that speeds up midway through.

The **United Serbs** are especially popular with young people in the Serbian-American community. The band was formed in 1981 as a union of two bands, one from each side of the Illinois-Indiana state line. The United Serbs chose their name also to express a desire for their music to build a bridge between two political factions in their church. According to **Dan Danilovich**, one of the group's two accordionists: "*It would kind of bring the two sides together, at least as far as the kids are concerned.... Besides the church, dancing [and] the music is the only thing that brings us together.*"

These pieces were recorded at a social dance at a Serbian folk festival at St. Elijah's Serbian Orthodox Church. "**Chicago Kolo**" is a recent tune for the *kolo*, a vigorous circle dance regarded as the national dance of the Serbs. "**Dodji Mile U Nas Kraji**" is a song played for a slow walking dance sometimes called *setnja*. "**Ravno Oro**" is the band's version of Macedonian *hora*. The slow first part is played in 7/8 (counted '123-12-12'), while the fast part is in 2/4.

The **Drina Orchestra** represents an older tradition of music in Serbian and Croatian communities in America that is especially popular among those whose families immigrated from the South Slavic countries of Europe before World War II. *Tamburitza* ensembles, which number nearly two dozen in the Chicago area alone, feature primarily stringed instruments of the *tambura* family. The smallest of these, the *prima*, looks like a miniature mandolin; others, such as the *brac* and *bugarja*, or 'bug,' resemble the guitar.

Milan Opacich and **Jack Tomlin**, the core of the Drina Orchestra, have performed together for over forty years. When a third longtime member, violinist **Mel Dokich**, passed away, Milan switched from the supporting *brac* to lead *prima*. They play every Saturday night at a restaurant, The Old Mill, where they perform without a sound system, enabling them to stroll from table to table to fill requests and shape their performance to the audience at hand.

The first medley, a mixture of dance tunes (*kolos*) and popular songs ("**Rastao Sam Pored Dunava**," for example), reflects the tastes of their regular clientele. A song may be started in Serbo-Croatian and finished in English, as is the case with "**My Mother-in-Law**," though members of the audience may sing along in both languages. Late in the evening, some people get up to dance *kolo* steps to such pieces as "**Biserija**" or "**Haj Iman Otsa**."

The **Star Serenaders** are another Calumet Region *tamburitza* group that has played together for over forty years. The band grew out of *Zvijezda* (or 'The Star'), an earlier East Chicago ensemble composed of fathers and older brothers of current band members. **Steve Deanovich** is the only Serb in the group - the others are Dalmatians - and the only one born in Europe.

The Star Serenaders performed strictly Slavic music in their early years, before adding American pieces to their repertoire. After the recent death of original member **Dick Refkin**, **Harry Zuvich**, **Jerry Banina**, and **Deanovich** kept performing. These recordings were made at Marvin's, a restaurant in Highland, and at the Golden Shell in Chicago. The latter has a varied, weekly music schedule that features small *tamburitza* ensembles around the Midwest.

Most American songs are played straight by *tamburitza* ensembles, but some pop standards, such as "**Guantanamera**," are rendered as parodies. Croatian *kolos* are danced at a variety of tempos, to both songs ("**Krcmarice**") and instrumental pieces (*Kolo in G*). The dancers often form closed circles, instead of the open lines favored for the Serbian *kolo*.

- Paul L. Tyler
Chicago, 1989