

Ethnic Dance Music in Northern Indiana

Drina Orchestra

IH201 Merrillville - November 8, 1986. Tamburitza music [Croatian, Serbian].

Milan Opacich (prima), Jack Tomlin (tamburitza cello), Nic Rakich (bugarija) & Mark Moe Brajak (bass).

Performance at The Old Mill, a restaurant; recorded by Paul L. Tyler.

PLT: (to older man in corner) Do you like tamburitza music?

Man: I am tamburitza music...tamburitza and hillbilly. I like them both.

Four men near retirement age sat at a table in the corner to the right of the band. They were there the whole night, laughing, joking, drinking beer and singing along. As the night went on they got more and more friendly with me, calling me by my first name, and asking if I had recorded their singing on the last song. Later in the evening they were joined by a younger man who asked me if I was taping the music for a course at IU-Northwest.

There were three other tables in the lower section of the room. One was claimed by the waitresses for their friends, and the daughter of one of them. I claimed another, where I was joined by Mike S., for my recording equipment. A large round table was not filled till later in the evening when several couples of various ages came and sat there. They got involved with banter with the band.

There were about a dozen tables in the higher part of the room, beyond the railing. Right next to the railing, to the right of the band, sat a group of several young men, a fewer number of young women, and one older couple. They were there most of the night with some change in personnel. Older Couples sat at the smaller tables to the left of the band. In the center and toward the back of the room were large tables of a number of couples of various ages. There was a lot of turnover throughout the night at these tables. Later in the evening some couples came in who had been at a wedding.

Overall, the crowd included groups men and groups of couples of various ages. The room was never filled, as it often is. A Croatian wedding taking place that night might have been the reason. Mike S. had gone to the wedding. He said there was nothing particularly Croatian about it, except for the food. The younger generation is not interested in tamburitza music.

There was no dancing until the very end of the evening, when two or three younger women got up to form a circle. They persuaded another young woman to join them for two kolos. Finally, an older man also joined in for one kolo and for Miserlou. The circle was small. It was kept open except for one short part of a dance when was closed. The step patterns involved three different steps that were each repeated several times in both directions. The circle never turned very far at any time.