

Ethnic Dance Music in Northern Indiana

Star Serenaders

IH209 Hammond & Highland - March 26, 1987. Tamburitza ensemble

Dave Nanista (1st brach-vocals), Harry Zuvich (2nd brach-vocals-maracas), Jerry Banina (bugarija-vocals) & Steve Deanovich (bass-vocals)

Performance at The Golden Shell in Chicago; recorded by Paul L. Tyler.

IH214 Hammond & Highland - May 3, 1987. Tamburitza ensemble

Performance at Marvin's, a restaurant in Highland; recorded by Paul L. Tyler.

Steve Deanovich

IH216 Highland - November 29, 1987. Interview.

The Star Serenaders are a tamburitza ensemble that grew out of another ensemble of fathers and older brothers of the current members. The band came from the Croatian, Dalmatian, and Serbian communities of Indiana Harbor and East Chicago. Harry Zuvich, Jerry Banina, and Steve Deanovich have been playing together since right after World War II. Another original member, Dick Refkin, suffered a stroke seven years ago and had to quit playing. The band used a violin player for several years until when Dave Nanista joined two years ago as lead player on first brach. Dick Refkin had sung lead and played lead on prima, the smallest instrument in the tambura family. Dick's instrument, with four strings tuned to the same pitch, was constructed and tuned according to the older Zremsky [sp?] type of tambura. The braches used by Dave and Harry are also Zremsky type, in contrast to the new Farkash [sp?] type which is much more common among tamburitza ensembles in North America [cf. The Drina Orchestra]. The bugarija provides, in the words of Steve Deanovich, "the guitar part."

The Golden Shell is a bar and restaurant on Chicago's south side, in the heart of South Slavic neighborhoods. Many of the regions twenty or so tamburitza ensembles perform regularly at the Golden Shell, where bands are booked three to four nights a week. The bands set up on a foot-high riser at the west end of the long narrow family room that will hold fifty to seventy diners. On this Saturday night, only about twenty people were present for the band's last set, which started around 9:00. As most of those present were seated at the far east end of the room, there was little interaction between the musicians and audience members. Since they had started playing at 6:00, the band was finished early and there was time for several members to travel the few blocks to the Rafters, where Jesen, a Chicago-based tamburitza ensemble would be playing until well after midnight.

Marvin's is a much smaller bar and restaurant in Highland, Indiana. The Star Serenaders, the only entertainment engaged by the owner, play there every third Sunday during the dinner hour. The band set up in a small space along the wall in a hallway between the bar and family room. They could be heard and seen in both halves. From thirty to forty people were there at

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various times to listen to the music. Several regulars, including one older couple who had brought along two grandchildren, were very committed fans of the band. Two young women, college students, danced a kolo in the narrow aisle between tables. The women had both learned to dance and play as members of the Indiana Harbor Junior Tamburitzans, a large orchestra and folk dance group. One of the young women was Croatian, the other was Polish.