

# EAST EUROPEAN FOLKLIFE CENTER KEFTIMES

SPRING 2013 VOL. 16, NO. 1



## Tzvetanka Varimezova

Interview by  
Julie Lancaster

Tzvetanka Varimezova has been teaching Bulgarian singing at EEFC Balkan Music & Dance Workshops since 2002. This year will be her ninth at Mendocino; she has also taught twice at East Coast camp.

Tzvetanka at the 2011 Seattle Folklife Festival, where she and her family were special guests (PHOTO BY EVGENIA ANGELOVA).

Tzvetanka Varimezova was born in Pazardžik, Bulgaria, into a musical family—her father played the kaval and her mother was a good singer—but there was not much music making in the household as she was growing up. Her parents divorced when she was two years old. It was her grandmother who recognized her talent and helped her.

“I was around 4 years old when my grandmother took me to see the operetta *The Merry Widow*—that’s what she told me; of course I don’t remember anything about it,” Tzvetanka says. “About five or six months later, she and my aunts and uncles were all together cooking, preparing for Christmas. We had a very old radio and the radio was playing music—again, I don’t remember this—we were making *banitsi* [layered cheese pies], cooking, talking, laughing. The voices were very noisy.

“I was a very little girl, 3, 4, 5 years old, and I said: ‘Hey, stop it! Stop talking so loudly! Because there is music! And I know that music—I was with my grandma!’ And finally, after three or four times, my grandmother said to the others, ‘Hey, stop it. Let’s see if that’s true.’ And when the music finished, the person on the radio said, ‘You have just heard music from *The Merry Widow*. And my grandmother said, ‘Oh, my goodness.’”

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### EEFC MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the East European Folklife Center (EEFC) is to promote, celebrate and educate the public about traditional and traditionally based music, dance and cultures of the Balkans.



*Tzvetanka has always been a charismatic performer. Here solo and with her husband Ivan in 1995 (PHOTOS BY MIKE HARKIN). With Ivan and daughters Radka and Tanya (PHOTO PROVIDED BY TZVETANKA). With longtime friend and fellow musician Ivanka Paunova on gudulka (PHOTO BY CB STEVENSON).*

## LEARNING TO SHARE THE MUSIC

Within a few years, her grandmother brought her to the local children's ensemble and the director, Alexander Nachev, allowed Tzvetanka to join.

"He was my first teacher," she says. "He couldn't sing, but he taught me so many things about singing and conducting. Of course, I was a little girl, but I was so thirsty for music. Thirsty, like I really needed not only water and food but something spiritual, too."

She started singing in the ensemble, and began learning accordion. By age 11, she was also playing tambura and piano. It was easy to learn and get into the music with this talented group of children; they attended concerts and performed in Pazardžik and elsewhere in Bulgaria. "We were living like we were in one family, we were so close," she says.

When the children wondered about their futures, Alexander Nachev told them about the folk music high schools in Kotel and Široka Lūka, where they could continue to share the music and go on to be great performers and directors of ensembles. Tzvetanka and her friends thought, "That would be great, let's try."

In 1974 she applied for and was accepted to the Kotel High School for Folk Music. It was far from home but had an excellent program and had schooled many excellent

musicians. Once she got there, it was just as her teacher had said: besides learning and studying, she and her friends met many "talented, incredible musicians who later became great performers and directors."

After high school, Tzvetanka went on to attend the Academy of Music and Dance in Plovdiv. There she got to know Ivan Varimezov, a *gajda* player. They had met at Kotel, where he was two years ahead of her class, but there they were just colleagues. After he finished his army service and she finished high school, they met again and discovered what a great match they were for one another. (Ivan's family, rich in musical tradition, is described in Timothy Rice's 1994 book, *May It Fill Your Soul: Experiencing Bulgarian Music*.)

## PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

When Tzvetanka and Ivan enrolled at the academy in 1979, they were also accepted into the National Folk Ensemble "Trakia" in Plovdiv, one of the largest professional ensembles in Bulgaria—a highly disciplined, elite group. Being able to learn in this professional setting, having a job as a performer while also being a student, was a huge opportunity for them.

Tzvetanka and Ivan married in 1981 and their first daughter, Radka, was born in 1982. They finished the



*Tzvetanka is very busy at the EEFC workshops. At top, teaching a singing class (PHOTO BY ARLENE IMAGAWA) and below, performing with Ivan Milev (PHOTO BY MARGARET LOOMIS). But there's always a little time to relax and dig the scene, here with husband Ivan (PHOTO BY GEORGE CHITTENDEN).*

academy in 1983 with bachelor's degrees: Tzvetanka's in choral conducting and folk instrument pedagogy and Ivan's in folk instrument performance and ensemble conducting. As a couple, they were offered the position of directing a regional professional folk ensemble in Pazardžik: Tzvetanka would direct the choir and Ivan the orchestra. They hesitated, not knowing how it would be to work with this smaller, less professional group.

"We were so happy to be going back to our town, but at the same time we were a little unhappy, wondering how it would be," Tzvetanka says.

For the first few weeks it was difficult. On the first day, the ensemble's singers were knitting, laughing and talking. "It was like a *sedjanka* [work party]," Tzvetanka says, rather than a professional rehearsal. But she didn't push them. Instead, step by step, over time, she showed them how "the magic" could flow and become normal when the group worked together in a focused way.

"We really worked at a very high level, with intonation, precisely joining and matching voices. It was really hard but it was really great," she says. "That was the best time in our career, working with that ensemble."

## IN SOFIA

For years Tzvetanka and Ivan had dreamed about applying to join one of the large national ensembles in Sofia. That

wasn't possible under the communist regime—only citizens of Sofia could live there; others had to stay in the towns where they were born. But after communism fell in 1989, things changed. In 1991 Ivan was accepted at Filip Kutev National Folklore Ensemble in Sofia. But the couple's second child, Tanya, was a baby. Tzvetanka felt she couldn't go. Then the director of Filip Kutev, Stefan Dragostinov, called and urged her to come. Soloist Nadka Karadžova was retiring and he needed Tzvetanka's voice. Ivan said, "Let's try."

The family had been living with Tzvetanka's grandmother in Pazardžik and didn't want to leave her, but she told them she was determined to come and help, and see their musical careers develop. So in 1991 the family, including Grandmother with her two suitcases, left for Sofia. Ivan's mother offered to take care of Tanya until she was ready for first grade, so Tanya went to live with her paternal grandparents in Sredec for a few years; Tzvetanka and family visited her on the weekends.

During the 1990s Tzvetanka worked with the Kutev Ensemble and also other choirs, including Cosmic Voices from Bulgaria, Les Grandes Voix Bulgares, the Bulgarian Radio Choir and Trio Bojura. With these ensembles and others, she toured throughout Europe, Russia, Japan, Latin America and the U.S., and began working with Bulgarian choirs in Western Europe.



*Tzvetanka chilling with Kalin Kirilov, Vassil Bebelev and Nikolay Doctorov (PHOTO BY BILL LANPHIER). Stepping out on the dance floor (PHOTO BY MARGARET LOOMIS). Quality time with Radka (PHOTO BY BIZ HERTZBERG). Cracking up the band with Nikolay Kolev, Stoyan Kostov and Kalin (PHOTO BY MARGARET LOOMIS).*

## COMING TO THE U.S.

In 2001 Professor Timothy Rice invited the Varimezovs to come for a one-year residency at University of California-Los Angeles. Tanya was 9 and Radka 20. The family came at the end of September, after 9/11; friends in Bulgaria asked why they were going to that crazy country.

Tzvetanka and Ivan became master artists in residence in the ethnomusicology department at UCLA, and the residency continues. Now an adjunct associate professor, Tzvetanka teaches Bulgarian singing technique and conducts two choirs, the UCLA Bulgarian Women's Choir Superdevoiche and a mixed choir.

Soon after they arrived in the U.S., they started meeting American singers and musicians. They were impressed that Americans were so interested in the Bulgarian sound and already knew a lot about it, having made many contacts with Bulgarian teachers and musicians.

In 2002 Tzvetanka was invited to teach at her first EEFC Balkan Music & Dance Workshop, in Mendocino. (Ivan has taught at Mendocino twice, in 2004 and 2005.) She brought Radka with her that first year. Radka and Tanya have both attended many times since; the girls are themselves accomplished singers and instrumentalists.

"I was totally impressed and shocked how people were acting like a big family at camp," Tzvetanka says. "And I found another piece of my land; it felt like my country here.

We opened our hearts, of course, to help people produce a better sound and learn Bulgarian music, especially ornamentation. And we had such a nice time. Seeing happy faces, happy hearts, sharing the music.

"On the first evening, when we introduced ourselves as teachers, I was so impressed with the other teachers from the Balkans," she continues. "I realized that they really want not only to teach the students, not only to meet people and have fun, but to share their culture, share their emotions, their hearts, their memories. It seemed that all of us wanted to build our small Balkan community, to continue. We really appreciate you [people who come to camp], coming to study something from us.

"Because life is so short. I'm happy to give as much I can to people, because, after us, they can continue—you know, our kids, our friends, our grandkids, our friends' grandkids, the next generation. They can continue to share our culture, and other cultures in the world in the future, and to appreciate each other, which is the best thing. That evening when everybody announced, 'OK, I'm going to teach you Macedonian music.' 'OK, I'm going to teach you Greek music.' 'I'm going to teach you Albanian,' and so on. That made me so happy."

Tzvetanka has gone on to work with numerous American choirs and bands, presenting workshops and collaborating. In 2010, to celebrate her 50th birthday, she invited choirs



Asked to front a world-class band like *Grupa Maistori—nyama problem!* Nedyalko Nedyalkov, Vassil Bebelev, Georgi Petrov, Nikolay Georgiev and Ivaylo Koutchev (PHOTO BY MARGARET LOOMIS).

she has worked with to join her in presenting concerts in Sofia, Pazardžik and Koprivštica. More than 150 singers representing two professional Bulgarian ensembles; groups from France, Denmark and Greece; and Kitka and Superdevoiche from the United States; traveled together in three buses to deliver these concerts with her.

## GETTING PHILOSOPHICAL

On the deeper meaning of Balkan camp, Tzvetanka says, “I think each one of us living on the earth has something like empty space in our hearts. I mean empty space that we really want to use, not just to have fun but to discover ourselves. People want to challenge themselves with something. The community that we’re in at Balkan camp, we want to challenge ourselves with music. And some of us discover, ‘Oh, that kind of music I missed, probably I don’t have it in my heart. Let’s put that piece in our picture, in our spirit.’ They say, ‘Aha! This is the last piece (or the third piece or the sixth piece, you know) of the puzzle.’ They’re happy that they found something that they have missed before.

“For me, as a musician living right now in your country, my puzzle is not exactly the music, but to meet people, to have conversations, to share the culture, and not only through one-on-one lesson teaching or learning music; I want to see where the puzzle is and how to finish the puzzle. To learn what I’ve missed and what I need more of.

“That’s what I see for Balkan camp; everybody wants to do the best with their puzzle,” she continues. “To find themselves in the world, not only to make themselves happy but also to help each other live better. Everything is about that. To help each other, to try to find a better world, a better time.”

**END**

## A Peak Experience from Mendocino Camp 2002

For me and many others lucky enough to be there, the undisputed highlight was Tzvetanka and Goce [Dimovski]’s set in the kafana on the last night at camp. I should say two sets, as first Tzvetanka sang several beautiful slow songs in a voice as crystalline and effortless as it was the first day of camp. Then Goce tore the roof off with several smoking dance numbers. Things were so high energy at that point that two things happened: first Raif [Hyseni] got out of bed and came down and danced **in his pajamas**, and Tzvetanka came back and started singing again. This time she dialogued (some will say it was a duel, but regardless it was in good spirit) with Goce in a manner that would be familiar to anyone who has attended an Indian music concert. This went on, remarkably, for quite a while. We asked her daughter if Tzvetanka had ever done scat singing before; her daughter said, “Only at home!” So it was a first for her, too. Finally it finished. It was one of the peak camp experiences I certainly have ever had, and I think that holds true for others as well.

From a post by  
**David Bilides**  
to the EEFC listserv, July 9, 2002



PHOTOS BY MARTIN KOENIG

# BALKAN ARTS SERIES

*By Jay House Samios*

This January saw the first release in a 13-part series of EPs under the name Balkan Arts Series, in a joint venture between Evergreene Music and the Center for Traditional Music and Dance (CTMD). The original recordings, from Bulgaria, East Serbia, Greek Macedonia and Thrace, and Romania, were done predominantly in the 1960s and 1970s by Martin Koenig, the founder and director of CTMD (then New York's Balkan Arts Center) and were originally self-released via Koenig's own Balkan Arts imprint.

This collaboration between Evergreene and CTMD was borne of a chance discovery by Evergreene Music's Label Manager, Mark Roberts, who happened upon "a large number of cardboard boxes filled with vinyl of some sorts" while taking a break from a meeting at CTMD's headquarters. Roberts says that after hearing some of the records, he understood that he had stumbled upon an "exceptional treasure."

Martin Koenig talked with me about the reissue, and told me, "I'm delighted there is a whole new generation that has no prior relationship to the music." He cited that, for example, a group like Kočani

Orkestar can tour six cities in the U.S., something that would not have been possible at the time he was doing his fieldwork. "Now," he said, "there is a whole new audience for the music."

The Balkan Arts Series features powerful and authentic performances by local master musicians from the various areas. The recordings are available as state-of-the-art restored digital EP downloads or as collectible "new-old stock" 7-inch records with print liner notes; if you purchase the vinyl record, you also get access to the digital EP tracks. Each release includes Koenig's own photographs, detailed audio commentary and liner notes, as well as a stunning 12-page digital booklet.

All 13 individual EPs are being released in sequence. The series kicked off with a magnificent EP of Bulgarian folk dances, followed by three extraordinary EPs from East Serbia in February, Greek rarities from Macedonia and Thrace in the spring, and will wrap up with some of the most intense and exuberant music from Romania and Bulgaria in the summer of 2013.

For more information and to order visit <http://evergreenemusic.com/balkanarts>

# LETTER *from* THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Greetings! I'm excited to be writing something for the first *Kef Times* issued since I joined the EEFC as your executive director. As you probably know, I started in October of last year, having attended our workshops at Iroquois Springs (once in 2007 and again in 2009). I'm really looking forward to attending Mendocino for the first time and Iroquois Springs again this summer. I'll be bringing my daughter to both, for her first time. She is three, and I hope it's the beginning of a lifelong love for her.

I wrote about my first six months on the job in a [post on the EEFC website](#) and hope you have had a chance to take a look at this update. We have accomplished a great deal so far, but it really feels like things have just gotten started. After an inspiring Board meeting this April, the Board, staff and I have our marching orders and are ready to go.

One change you will notice right away is that I will be issuing a twice-monthly e-newsletter to our contact list. These newsletters will include updates on official EEFC activity, notable community updates and the like. Some things will also be posted to the listserv, but not everything, so I encourage you to sign up to receive these newsletters.

You should know that we are in the midst of a "lapsed-member" campaign to reconnect with members from the last several years. As you may or may not realize, EEFC membership, when combined with individual contributions from our community, comprises nearly 20% of the organization's budget. This is a not-insignificant chunk that helps make our workshops, the listserv, and publications like *Forum Folkloristika* and *Kef Times* possible. I urge you to renew or increase your gift to the EEFC at this time. As a reminder, EEFC membership runs on the calendar year (January-December), so it's still a good time to re-up.

For those of you planning to be at one of the Balkan Music & Dance Workshops this year, I'd love to meet and talk one-on-one with anyone who is interested. I invite any of you to contact me at [jay@eeec.org](mailto:jay@eeec.org) to schedule a time to talk, or find me on site. There is so much to learn from our amazing community. You are a passionate, committed and incredibly knowledgeable group of people, and I am grateful to have this opportunity to learn from you while I lead the organization into the future.

**Jay House Samios**  
*Executive Director*

## KEF TIMES

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*Kef* is a word used in various forms throughout the Balkans to convey a spirit of pleasure and enjoyment, such as one experiences when partaking of good food, music, dancing and friendship.

For information about the East European Folklife Center, the Balkan Music & Dance Workshops, or to be included on our mailing list, contact us at the address above, or

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## LETTER *from* THE BOARD

Every year the Board is extremely busy, and this year was no different. As this is my first time writing the “From the Board” note, I went back to look at my predecessors’ messages, to see how they tackled the effort. I came away humbled by the hard work done by previous Boards to make the workshops affordable and available to as many as possible, hire the highest quality staff, create new ways for us to bring the joy of Balkan music and dance to more people, and keep open lines of communication with our community. Here’s a quick look at what this year’s Board is doing to continue along that path.

### **A Much Upgraded Financial Recordkeeping System**

The Finance Committee, chaired by Biz Hertzberg, worked hard over the last six months to align our financial records with the industry standard Unified Chart of Accounts for not-for-profit organizations. The result is a much cleaner and clearer view of our expenses and income, and we finally have the ability to take a look at our budget any time we want and understand exactly where we are against our goals—and that means we can make much more informed financial decisions. Using this industry standard also gives us more credibility with grantors, who want to be sure that the organizations they fund are able to manage themselves financially. If you see Biz, Doug Allen, Nancy Leeper, Traci Speed or Jay any time soon, please congratulate them for hard work well done. They have put in place a very necessary financial framework for the EEFC.

### **A Fundraising Strategy with Short-, Medium- and Long-term Goals**

This year, at our spring meeting (because of our updated financials!) we were able to review all the different ways we currently raise funds, and discuss what we could be doing differently to raise more money. We identified some immediate (next three months) changes we can make, and many of you should be seeing or participating in some of those efforts already, like renewing your lapsed membership (nudge, nudge). We brainstormed a number of medium-term changes and some long-term ones as well. Jay and the development committee (Nancy, Doug, Biz and I) are working on a comprehensive fundraising strategy. It will be the first really robust fundraising strategy that the organization has seen in a while, and we are looking forward to sharing it with you after the workshops.



**The EEFC Board of Directors and Executive Director:**  
*Biz Hertzberg, Eva Salina Primack, Corinna Snyder,*

### **A Well-Designed Organization That Supports Its Staff**

This year the Board led the hiring process that brought two new staff people to the organization—our ED Jay House Samios, and our Administrative Assistant Traci Speed—and Jay led the hiring process that saw Rachel MacFarlane’s return to the organization in the role of Workshop Manager. We put in place good, clear job descriptions, and an annual review process for our staff that has everyone reviewing and discussing their efforts with their manager on a regular basis—not just once a year. We documented the process and the steps that need to be taken to create the workshops every year. We defined the roles and responsibilities of each Board Position and each Board Committee. We got a process in place to get our meeting notes out in 24 hours, not 24 days. We’re slogging through our multi-versioned Policies and Procedures document to make sure everything lines up . . . in short, we grew up!

### **A Board That’s Focused on the Future**

In the past, especially since 2012, the Board has sometimes been very tactical and operational—and that was great, because there was work that needed to happen, and our volunteer Board was there to contribute in any way needed. Over time, though, the Board realized that if it continued to be so operational, it would not also have the time to do some of the other things that responsible not-for-profit boards usually do for their organizations, i.e., set strategic goals, raise money and help raise the visibility and the reach of their beloved organizations.

So, we agreed to get ourselves out of the habit of running the EEFC, and focus on leading the EEFC. We have a





*Douglas Allen, Jay Samios, Ann Norton, Demetri Tashie, Erica George and Nancy Leeper (PHOTO BY DAN AUVIL).*

really wonderful team in place now—Jay, Rachel and Traci are cooking and are getting an enormous amount of great work done. When we try to help out by tossing seven plus volunteer Board members into the mix, we often make things more complicated, and the work in fact takes longer to do because of us. We agreed we need to step aside and let our three powerhouse employees run the business, and let Jay bring us the issues or decisions she knows need our input.

For example, we recognized that some of our Board members were putting in a LOT of time supporting our publications—*Forum Folkloristika*, the website and *Kef Times*—but that it wasn't necessary to be on the Board to do that work. Demetri and Nancy are working with Jay now to figure out how we can move that work off the Board's plate.

On our last day of our spring meeting, the Board did three things that we think will help us become a better Board, and give more needed support to the EEFC.

First, we discussed the value of the EEFC—what we do best. We asked ourselves what the EEFC does best—what are we most proud of, and what makes the EEFC distinctive. We agreed on the following:

- The quality of our staff
- The community that we create—amateurs and professionals, old and young, ethnically diverse
- Our ability to give greater context to the music—the dance, the *kefi*, the culture
- The cornucopia of music and dance we provide—regional diversity and depth

Second, based on what we do best, and what will best sustain the organization and let it continue to deliver on its mission, the Board agreed to keep our focus on three top goals:

- Transition the Board out of operations—Chart the Course
- Demonstrate reach beyond the workshop programming—More Than Camp
- Raise the profile of the EEFC, so that EEFC = The Most Trusted Source

We did not set fundraising as a distinct goal, but clearly it needs to happen if we want to achieve these three goals, so fundraising is a part of every one of these goals.

Lastly, the Board discussed new programs that could build on our mission and help us achieve our vision. Discussion pulled forward that our best opportunities were:

- Online Resources—creating a robust and definitive online resource site that curates content already out there, and makes more available the great content we have internally.
- Interactive Instruction—supporting distance and online learning opportunities between teachers and students outside the workshops.
- Arts Education—reaching out to communities we do not reach well via the workshops, e.g. seniors, K-12, music/movement teachers, ethnic communities, learners who don't have access to instruments, and people who are looking for a shorter or differently located workshop, to bring more music and dance to more people.
- Co-Branding Activities—seeking opportunities for us to partner with other organizations and raise the profile of the EEFC in the process, so that more people know who we are and what we do, and know that if the EEFC has its name on something, it's sure to be excellent.

We are very excited to develop proposals for these ideas, and we welcome volunteers who have experience in any of these areas who want to help design pilots that will help us test out our ideas. Contact Jay if you're interested in volunteering.

Thank you for giving us on the Board the opportunity—and the responsibility—to keep the EEFC vibrant and fun.

Yours in music and dance,

**Corinna Škëma Snyder**

*President, Board Liaison, Family Liaison*

## LETTER *from* THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The Program Committee is dedicated to organizing and bringing you one of the best parts of our Workshops: the amazing teaching staff and program that express the essence of our mission: to further our understanding of Balkan music, dance and culture.

I'd personally like to recognize the members of the committee for their hard work and dedication. Without their tireless participation and many hours of volunteer labor, we could not enjoy and take advantage of the dynamic slates that they present year after year. So, thank you, Committee members **Belle Birchfield, Paul Brown, Lacey Cope, Joe Kaloyanides Graziosi, Lise Liepman, Brenna MacCrimmon** and **Rachel MacFarlane!**

The 2013 season is shaping up to be quite exciting. Besides welcoming back many favorite teachers, we are excited to welcome the following new ones—and a few who haven't been to camp in many years:

*Mendocino*—**Blagoja “Baže” Smilevski** (clarinet and sax), **Milo Destanovski** (zurla/zurna and Macedonian village ensemble) and **Alexander Marković** (Serbian dance); *Iroquois Springs*—**Sergiu Popa** (accordion and Trans-Carpathian ensemble), **Maria Bebelekova** (Rhodope Bulgarian singing), **Mensur Hatić** (Bosnian singing), **Ljubomir Živkov** (Serbian singing and tamburica ensemble) and **Alex Marković** (Serbian dance).

Registration has begun for both workshops. See our website ([www.eefc.org](http://www.eefc.org)) for full information on the Workshops, the teaching staffs and to register using our easy online forms. Sign up today!

In the coming months, we hope to release blog posts on the program selection process, as well as on the work involved in the whole puzzle of putting together the cohesive, well-organized, exciting and fun slate of teachers and musicians that you enjoy every summer. Check our website

# Forum Folkloristika

Folklore about walled-in wives . . . Greek-American dancing and identity in a community in Florida . . . Roma brass musicians in Vranje, Serbia . . . downright mouthwatering pictures, recipes for and stories about Balkan pepper dishes . . . and much more. What's going on here?

It's *Forum Folkloristika*, the online journal of the East European Folklife Center. The first issue appeared in 2012 and a second issue was released this spring; all articles are available at the website. The publication aims to educate and inspire by offering information on traditional arts of the Balkans, ethnomusicology, historic and living dance forms, domestic arts and other material cultures of the Balkans.

“We wanted to reach people who are interested in Balkan cultures but who don't necessarily go to the workshops,” says Nancy Leeper, EEFC Board member and *Forum Folkloristika* editor. “For example, there are a lot of people on the listserv who are interested in Balkan arts but don't come to camp and may never come to camp.

“Part of it is that we have this incredible resource of information available in the form of our community's knowledge, which we want to share,” she continues. “Another part is that we have quite a few scholars involved within the EEFC and this gives us another way to reach out to academic communities.”

EEFC Boards past and present have long discussed the question, “What is the East European Folklife Center beyond camp?” A greatly enriched EEFC website and *Forum Folkloristika* are recent developments in answer to that question.

When Nancy Leeper came onto the board in 2011, Board members Demetri Tashie and former President Brenna MacCrimmon were already working on the journal idea with Ian MacMillen. They invited Nancy, who has years of experience in publishing, to help. She set about at once writing a grant proposal to the California Alliance for Traditional Arts, which, along with matching funds



## LETTER *from* THE EDITOR

often for updates.

In the meantime, if you have any other questions or suggestions, contact us at [board@eefc.org](mailto:board@eefc.org). We are always interested in your opinions. And if you are involved in a Balkan ethnic community and know of great musicians, dancers, and teachers who may be off our radar, let us know! Finally, if you would like to get involved with the Program Committee, please drop us an email.

We hope to see you at one (or both) of the Workshops!

### **Demetri Tashie**

*Program Committee Chair*

raised at the 2011 and 2012 camp auctions, provided funding for 2012, much of which has gone to support *Forum Folkloristika*.

The editorial committee for the journal also includes Julie Lancaster, Rachel MacFarlane, Ian MacMillen and Demetri Tashie.

“As we move forward with *Forum Folkloristika*, we plan to reach out to Balkan immigrant communities in North America and scholars in the Balkans for material, in addition to cultivating material from within our own EEFC community,” Nancy says. “We’re also exploring ways to incorporate images, video and sound to provide a richly informative, multimedia experience for our readers. We might even have some surprises in store for the near future.”

So visit the website often and you won’t miss out on these great offerings!

This issue of *Kef Times*—the first since 2011—is special for a couple of reasons.

First, because the EEFC Board authorized production of this issue at all, after budgetary constraints nixed a 2012 issue.

Second, because this issue features our first Bulgarian staff member to be profiled: Tzvetanka Varimezova. In the 12 years since *Kef Times* has been featuring in-depth interviews, we’ve focused mostly on people who have been part of Balkan camp since the early days. With the exception of Christos Govetas, who was profiled along with his family, including long-timer Ruth Hunter, to date our interview subjects have all been born in North America. Of course, there have been staff members born in the Balkans since the early days of camp, including some who are still involved and also certainly deserve to be featured.

But since the fall of communism and the breakdown of Bulgaria’s state sponsorship of folk music and dance ensembles, more and more musicians and dancers from Bulgaria have been teaching at the EEFC workshops. Several of them are on their way to becoming long-timers themselves. It was exciting and an honor to have an opportunity to talk with Tzvetanka about her life and her insights about the phenomenon of Balkan camp.

In this issue you’ll find twice as many photo spreads as usual because we want to bring you images from the East and West Coast camps for both 2011 and 2012. (A big thank you to the photographers who sent the images for these lush spreads.) You’ll also find impressions from the Dick Crum/Kef Scholarship recipients for 2012; the 2011 scholarship recipients’ stories are available [online](#). Plus our regular features and other stories.

Even though the EEFC stays in touch with our community these days better than ever before—with a twice-monthly email newsletter; an active listserv; and *Forum Folkloristika*, already becoming a deep trove of folkloric and cultural treasures—some of us remain convinced that there is a place for longer-format articles about our own community, i.e., for *Kef Times*.

If you agree, or disagree, or have requests for what you’d like to see in future issues, please let us know by sending your comments to [office@eefc.org](mailto:office@eefc.org).

Enjoy!

**Julie Lancaster**  
*Editor*

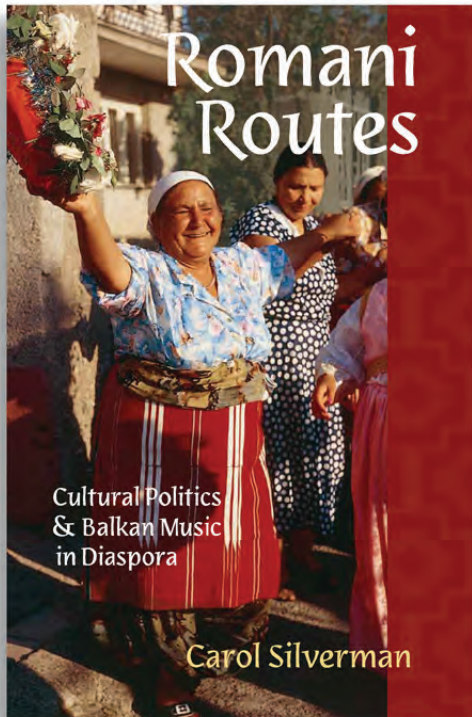


NEW

AND

# Notable

New recordings and books by EEFC associates, including workshop campers, staff and teachers, and other EEFC supporters, whose names are noted in **bold type** in each entry.



**ROMANI ROUTES: CULTURAL POLITICS AND BALKAN MUSIC IN DIASPORA**  
 OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2012  
 CAROL SILVERMAN

Over the past two decades, a steady stream of recordings, videos, feature films, festivals and concerts has presented the music of Balkan Gypsies, or Roma, to Western audiences, who have greeted them with exceptional enthusiasm. Yet, as author **Carol Silverman** notes, “Roma are revered as musicians and reviled as people.”

Carol Silverman is a longtime staff member at the EEFC Balkan Music & Dance Workshops, a professor of cultural anthropology and folklore at the University of Oregon, and both a performer and presenter on the world music scene. She has worked extensively with Romani communities for more than two decades, both in their home countries and in the diaspora. In this book she introduces readers to the people and cultures who produce this music, offering a sensitive and incisive analysis of how Romani musicians address the challenges of discrimination. Focusing on southeastern Europe then moving to the diaspora, her book examines the music within Gypsy communities, the lives and careers of outstanding musicians, and the marketing of music in the electronic media and “world music” concert circuit.

The book has a website with numerous photographs, audio clips, text supplements, song words and over 100 video clips.

\$55.00, hardback, ISBN: 9780195300949. The book is available from the author at a 20% discount and with free shipping: [csilverm@uoregon.edu](mailto:csilverm@uoregon.edu)



**THE VILLAGE TABLE: RECIPES FROM THE COMMUNITY OF THE FOLK ARTS CENTER OF NEW ENGLAND**

A collection of more than 200 cherished ethnic recipes, celebrating the richness of the New England world music and dance community. Recipes include modern favorites as well as family treasures passed down through the generations. Many of the recipes are accompanied by stories and personal memories. *The Village Table* cookbook shares a wide variety of dishes including appetizers, soups and main dishes to suit all tastes.

Order online: <http://www.facone.org/villagetable/index.html>



### AZRA SINGS - AZRA

Azra's singing reflects the lyrical melancholy of *sevdah* and Balkan folk music with sultry elements of Gypsy jazz and Andalucian flamenco. *Sevdah*, which is a traditional musical form sung for centuries throughout Bosnia, Macedonia, Serbia and across the Balkans, has a mystical quality such that every breath is appreciated, every note cherished. In her performances Azra illuminates an inner world forever marked by the war in the Former Yugoslavia and her subsequent immigrant life in the United States. **Petar Teodosijev**, arrangements and accordion; **Valerie Brown**, backup vocals and percussion; **Meg York**, clarinet; guest appearances by **Michael Ginsburg** (trumpet) and **James Hoskins** (cello).

<http://www.azrasings.com> Order at: <http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/azra1>



### LOST AND FOUND - RUMELIA

Rumelia is a group playing songs and instrumental tunes from all around the Balkans. Their debut CD is a collection of popular folk dance tunes. Their arrangements are both traditional and original, with a repertoire ranging from Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece to Georgia, Hungary and the Roma people. The music director at KUNM Radio in Albuquerque had this to say about *Lost and Found*: "This is an astoundingly good album and I'll make sure it gets lots of spins."

Rumelia features **Nicolle Jensen** on vocals and percussion; **Sitara Schauer** on violin, guitar, mandolin and vocals, **Deborah Ungar** on accordion and clarinet; and a cameo appearance by **Polly Tapia Ferber**.

To order *Lost and Found* visit: <http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/rumelia>

Visit the band at: [www.rumeliainmusic.com](http://www.rumeliainmusic.com) and <http://www.facebook.com/rumelia.music>



### SOLO - EVA SALINA

**Eva Salina's** new album features nine of her favorite songs from the first 20 years of a love affair with Balkan music, performed both a cappella and with accordion accompaniment.

[www.evasalina.com](http://www.evasalina.com) [www.evasalinaprimack.com](http://www.evasalinaprimack.com)

### TELEGRAM ON THE WIND - PLANINA

Planina - Songs of Eastern Europe is celebrating the release of its new CD, *Telegram on the Wind*.

Whether singing of a wartime telegram's arrival or a mysterious message delivered by the wind, the group will transport you to another place and time with music learned via travels to Bulgaria and collaborations with musicians from the Balkans. The motif of wind sweeps through several of the songs, conveying the beauty and mystery of distant times and places.

*Telegram on the Wind* features soulful and rousing harmonies from Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Russia, Ukraine and beyond. Planina is based in Denver and Boulder. **Jessica Bondy**, **Valerie Brown**, **Michael DeLalla**, **Laima Gaigalas Haley**, **Jamie Halladay**, **Wendi Kiss**, **Julie Lancaster**, **Erika Lenz**, **Adam Loomis**, **Nicole McMaster**, **Karen Niedermier**, **Loren Olds**, **Laura Olson Osterman**, **Thorn Roby**, **Mary Ann Sausotte**, **Azra**. Special guests: **James Hoskins**, **Elka Kepcheleva**, **Milyo Kepchelev**, **Svetoslav Kepchelev**, **Jesse Manno**, **Petar Teodosijev**.

Order *Telegram on the Wind* and other Planina CDs at:

<http://www.cdbaby.com/Artist/PLANINASongsofEasternEurope>



### 12TH ANNUAL EAST COAST CAMP PHOTO DVD - 2012

Balkan camp was incredible, as always—full of fantastic music, dancing, classes, parties, food, kafanas and friends. These photos will bring back a lot of memories if you were at camp, or give you a very good idea of the week, if you weren't there. The photos make a great slide show—enjoy it yourself, or use it to convince your friends to come to camp! The collection is a lot of fun, and it also makes a nice gift.

The 2012 DVD contains just over 1,000 photos, including:

- evening parties and kafanas
- Friday afternoon soccer game in the rain
- music and dance classes in action
- candid and semi-candid shots throughout the week
- group sing
- kids at camp
- auction on Tuesday night
- scenic views of Iroquois Springs
- classes performing at Friday's student concert
- many spontaneous moments

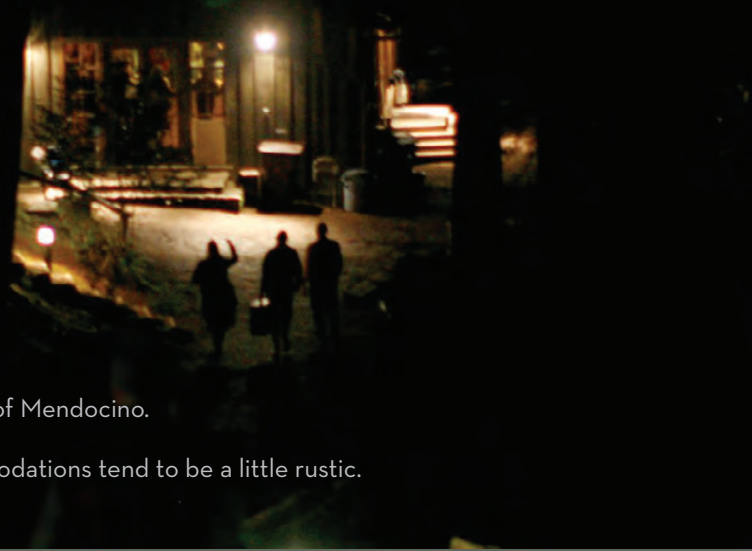
This photo DVD was produced as a fundraiser; all proceeds go to EEFC. It is available for \$30 plus \$2 shipping/handling in the U.S. from Margaret Loomis, 10206 Day Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910. Phone 301/565-0539; email [mloom@mac.com](mailto:mloom@mac.com). Photo collections from most past years are also still available.



# 2011 MENDOCINO

The Mendocino Woodlands is a National Historic Landmark built in the 1930s. It's nestled in 700 acres of redwood trees, ferns and glades along both sides of the Little North Fork of the Big River in Northern California, near the coastal village of Mendocino.

The weeklong workshop has a "village" feel and the accommodations tend to be a little rustic.



Gathering for the evening party in the dance hall. (April Renae)



A typical cabin. Beautifully simple. (Helen Stuart)



The evening parties feature great dance bands, like this ad hoc bitov ensemble. FRONT ROW: Vassil Bebelev, Rumen "Sali" Shopov, Stoyan Kostov MIDDLE ROW: Tzvetanka Varimezova, Ivanka Paunova, Radka Varimezova BACK ROW: Valeri Georgiev, Paul Brown. (April Renae)



The Pet Šop Boys. Kalin Kirilov, Paul Brown, Jesse Kotansky, Adam Good and Raif Hyseni sing a tune from western Bulgaria. (April Renae)



Eric Frumin, Mary Marshall and Sarah Manno don't miss a beat during their student concert. (April Renae)



If a tree falls in the forest ... Susan Reagel collects donations for a first-time camper whose violin was crushed by a falling branch (a Mendo first!). Also shown are Erin Kurtz, Steve Ramsey, Sommer Halligan, Nick Maroussis and Benji Bloom Rifati. (April Renae)



Soulful Epirot music in the kafana with Mathew Good, Greg Jenkins, Nick, and Eleni Govetas (April Renae)



Clara Dykstra, Arlene Imagawa, Briget Boyle, Joseph Friedman and Maria Noel are among the singers who graced the dance during student ensemble night. (April Renae)



Christos creates a little Kefi at the Kafana. (April Renae)



"Our dances & songs have survived as the quintessence of our history" is a beautiful quilt made by Helen Stuart on display at camp. (April Renae)



The Feta Tones, always a late-night hit. Jesse Kotansky, Christos Govetas, Ruth Hunter, Steve Ramsey, Polly Tapia-Ferber, Ryan Francesconi and Paul Brown. (April Renae)



Radka presents a birthday cake to Mina Kirkova. (April Renae)



The Feta Tones circa 2010. (Kathy Fors)



After a procession through camp, everyone parades down to the amphitheater for the beginning of the student concert. (Joan Friedberg)



The student ensembles conclude in the dance hall, beginning the evening's party. Here Michael Ginsburg's brass ensemble class makes their presence known. (Helen Stuart)



Site Manager Helen Stuart takes a rare break from her appointed rounds. (Biz Hertzberg)



Nancy Leeper and Ann Norton present a card made by Susan Reagal to Rachel MacFarlane. (Helen Stuart)



Steve Borzilleri and Bill Cope join in in a tamburica jam. (Biz Hertzberg)





Corinne Sykes and Bobby Govetas on their way down to the amphitheater. (April Renae)



The party gets in-tents. Gergana Petkova, Evan Stuart and Camille Holmes relax between classes in one of the tents in the meadow. (Biz Hertzberg)



Michael Ginsburg shows some styling tips in his dance class. (April Renae)



Rocking in the dance hall. Kate Norton, Clara Dykstra, Jenavieve Kachmarik, Joseph Friedman, Lacey Cope among others. (Helen Stuart)



The kids' band, led by Greg Jenkins, always gets a lot of tips. In 2011 they donated all their baksheesh to a camper whose violin was crushed by a falling branch. (Helen Stuart)



Innovative ambient music provided by Marchette DuBois and James Hoskins at the Board of Director's reception. (April Renae)



Rachel and Demetri Tashie await customers for their traditional spoon sweets at the Board of Directors' reception. (April Renae)



Zina von Bozzay shows that it's okay to have a baby on board at the workshop. (April Renae)



Clarinet comrades April Renae, Souren Baronian and Kate Gerson. (April Renae)



The kafana always features a beautiful painting by Susan Reagel. (April Renae)



The Flying Govetii (Bobby, Christos, Eleni) play dance music from Christos' birthplace in Northern Greece. (April Renae)



Jarek Makarchuk finds an isolated spot to practice music from his class. (April Renae)



The food is great! Craig Kurumada, Vassil Bebelev and Valeri Georgiev enjoy a delectable repast. (April Renae)



Ivan Velez and Mavrothi Kontanis play an outdoor serenade. (Biz Hertzberg)



Souren's serenade at Kate Gerson's Van o' Fun turns into an awesome party with Denys Carrillo, Laura Blumenthal, Mathew Good, Michele Simon, Sanna Rosengren, Bill Cope and others. (April Renae)



Erik Peters, Whitney Neufeld-Kaiser, Stefanie Brendler and others listen as Clara Dykstra takes a beautiful solo in the brass ensemble. (April Renae)

These photos (and many more) are by Margaret Loomis and are available on a Photo DVD. [More info.](#)

# 2011 IROQUOIS SPRINGS



Dragi Spasovski entertains his large Macedonian singing class with stories of his youth and performing career.



David Bilides gives a count to the tapan section of his Macedonian Izvorno ensemble class.



The music of Stefće Stojkovski was a camp highlight. Here he's joined by Dragi, David, Jeff Fine, Adam Good, Ralph Iverson, Alan Zemel and Jerry Kisslinger.



Site Manager Nancy Butowski and Wendy Shearer have a confab.



The Annual Melon Bowl soccer game—as always, a hotly contested affair.



Peter Sieck gets a drum adjustment from his grandpa John Uhlemann.



Sophie Kropf is happily surrounded by accordions.



Black Sea Hotel members Sarah Small, Willa Roberts and Corinna Snyder enthral the crowd in the kafana.



Scrumptious snacks for partying until dawn.



Alan Zemel, Morgan Clark and Yianni Roussos enjoy a late night jam at the kafana grill.

All photos on these spreads are by Margaret Loomis  
and are available on a Photo DVD.

[More info.](#)

# 2012 IROQUOIS SPRINGS



Beth Bahia Cohen (inset) conducts a large Greek ensemble. Many classes are held outdoors, weather permitting.



Pirates Kristina Vaskys, Leslie Clark, Lynette Garlan, Jerry Kisslinger, Steve Kotansky, Dan Auvil and Jim Rumbaugh ran the auction, an important fun(d) raiser.



Sarah Ferholt leads Čoček Nation in a serenade after dinner. A delightful digestif.



Joe Kaloyanides Graziosi conducts a fun dance class with Nancy Peterson, Fanche Nastev, Emily Cohen, Terri Taggart and Shulamit Locker.



Power Pontic played by Christos Tiktapanidis.



Dave Golber seems surprised that Dragi Spasovski looks like he enjoys being a year older.



But if the weather doesn't permit, then it's indoors. Here students practice in the cabin named "Santouropoli."



Demetri Tashie and Chris Rietz on laoutos.



It was great to have Sophia Bilides back. Here she's joined by Yianni Roussos, Beth, David Bilides, Demetri and Chris.



By all accounts, Sal Mamudoski's class was challenging but rewarding.



It's always a wonderful performance by Raif Hyseni and Merita Halli.



Souren Baronian directs his improvisation class (on stage) with the assistance of Mal Stein's doumbek class (foreground).





Nikolay Doctorov, Dzenko Andreev and EEFC founder Mark Levy enjoy a sip at the Board reception.



A smoking Bulgarian band with Nikolay Doctorov, Dzenko Andreev, Ivan Handzhiev, Paul Brown, Adam Good, Michael Ginsburg, Ivaylo Koutchev and Donka Koleva (inset).



Sazet Band rocks the joint.



Carol Silverman helps Ferdi Demir in his class on Romani singing.



Raif gazes onto a sea of red in his Albanian American ensemble.



# Dick Crum / Kef Scholars

**NAME:** Marchette DuBois

**LOCATION:** Seattle, Wash.

**OCCUPATION:** Part-time musician, part-time Southeast Asian Library Specialist at the University of Washington

**CONNECTION TO BALKAN MUSIC/DANCE:** Most significantly with Bucharest Drinking Team ([bucharestdrinkingteam.com](http://bucharestdrinkingteam.com)), a Balkan musical cacophony which I coach/lead.

**NUMBER OF TIMES AT BALKAN CAMP:** My first West Coast camp was 2005. My first East Coast camp was in 2004. I have attended almost every year since then.

**EXPERIENCE AT CAMP:**

When we make that left turn off of Highway 1, every year I get a slightly unreal feeling. As I lose cell phone reception and say goodbye to the world as I know it, it's a bit like going through the wardrobe to Narnia, only we're not going to Narnia, we're going to camp.

In this alternate reality, everyone is a musician or dancer or combination of these, and we all have a common language. It took some years to learn, and everyone—everyone—has their own personal accent. The first year I went I was overwhelmed with the amazingness of every teacher, every musician, everyone. Now I can hear where the ornaments should be, and weirder still, I can sometimes play them.

In this alternate reality of Balkan music camp, one of my jobs is working in the Donation Store, which I love. I love working with the Donation Store team to help the other campers look good. I love encouraging people to try things on they might not wear in that other world, but here, at camp, they can go a little crazy and show their true colors.

I've described camp to friends as a huge family reunion. Only this isn't the family I was born into, it's the family I've chosen (complete with eccentric aunts who want me to cut my hair and behave, and dirty uncles who make off-color jokes at inappropriate moments).

Some of my favorite times are the shared meals: sitting with friends, some I've known for years, some I'm meeting for the first time. We have nothing to do and nowhere to be, and only music to discuss.

In addition to enjoying communal meals, there is the nightly swirling of energy raised in the dance hall. George [Chittenden] played a solo on his G clarinet that moved me to tears, and all around me



everyone else is moved to move. I think to myself. Holy crap. George. Right here. And I get to hear him play like this all week! Wow.

At one point during the week, I managed to get a burn on my back, and Sommer [Halligan, Camp Medic] dressed it for me. Took time out of her day to help me out. I'd just like to say thanks for that.

Several years back I went to brass band with only my accordion and discovered I couldn't hear a single note I was playing. James Hoskins at the time said to me, "Oh, yeah, I decided to take up trombone so I could play in the brass band. You only need to know three notes so you can play the offbeats." "Three notes," I thought to myself, "I can handle that." The next year I showed up with a horn on which I could barely make a sound. Another year under my belt and I can almost keep up with the mid-brass parts. But the reward of being part of the wall of brass is a blissful rush. When I'm playing in the middle of the floor with the dancers winding around the outside, there is nowhere I'd rather be.

I find Balkan camp at the Mendocino Woodlands to be restorative and inspirational on so many levels. Being surrounded by wild nature and being surprised by the random beauty of it.

# 2012 Mendocino / West Coast



**NAME:** Lyra (Hannah) Goldberg

**LOCATION:** Portland, Ore.

**OCCUPATION:** Student at Portland State University, working on an Education degree

**CONNECTION TO BALKAN MUSIC/DANCE:** I go Balkan dancing regularly in Portland and at Folklife [Northwest Folklife Festival, Seattle].

**NUMBER OF TIMES AT BALKAN CAMP:** This was my first time at camp.

**EXPERIENCE AT BALKAN CAMP:**

Balkan camp was such an amazing experience. One of my favorite things about camp was walking across camp in the middle of the day and being able to hear people making music everywhere I went. I feel like I developed a deeper connection to the music and the cultures involved and feel more confidence in my ability to lead and jump into dances. The singing workshops I went to were amazing and make me want to seek out similar opportunities in my own community. Overall I feel a much deeper tie to the music and feel reinvigorated to pursue Balkan dance and music in my own community.

**NAME:** Matty Miller

**LOCATION:** Denver, Colo.

**OCCUPATION:** Performing Arts Teacher at a K-8 school, teaching music, movement and drama

**CONNECTION TO BALKAN MUSIC/DANCE:** Over the last few years I've taken a few Balkan singing workshops and spent a year playing with a Balkan brass band in Boulder. I'm looking forward to integrating some of the things I learned at camp into my classroom.

**NUMBER OF TIMES AT BALKAN CAMP:** This was my first year at camp!

**EXPERIENCE AT BALKAN CAMP:**

I loved the feeling of driving far down a dirt road, so far that I wasn't sure if I had made a wrong turn. Arriving at camp was like uncovering a time capsule—a highly specialized community preserved and growing deep in the redwoods. I could feel that there was a sense of home and something long-lasting in the way that people interacted and understood the layout of the woods. I loved searching in the dark for my cabin and uncovering friendships as I walked beneath massive redwoods.

Some moments that I was privileged to experience were playing in a circle full of accordions, straining my ears to hear over a brass band bellowing through the trees, being warmed by harmonizing voices on a chilly morning, the thrill of pulling myself away from the dance hall to discover a cappella voices resonating in the kafana, hearing makams bleed through historic cabin walls as dedicated musicians practiced their new licks.

I'm so grateful to have been a part of camp this year and hope that I can return to share more beautiful music, laughter and dance!





# Dick Crum / Kef Scholars

**NAME:** Christi Proffitt

**LOCATION:** Seattle, Wash.

**OCCUPATION:** Graduate Student at Antioch University (Master's in Mental Health Counseling/Drama & Music Therapy). I am also a Personal Assistant/Professional Organizer, as well as the Head Administrator for an online consulting company. Yes, I am WAY too busy.

**CONNECTION TO BALKAN MUSIC/DANCE:** I am a member of [Dunava](#) as well as the Bucharest Drinking Team. I love listening to and dancing to the various other Balkan bands in the area, and was intricately involved in the first annual Balkan Night Northwest here in Seattle.



**NAME:** Ema Sheehan

**LOCATION:** Seattle, Wash.

**OCCUPATION:** Student at Lakeside High School

**CONNECTION TO BALKAN MUSIC/DANCE:** My best friend, Eleni Govetas, and her family have been talking about, playing, and being a part of the Balkan music scene for as long as I can remember, and as a byproduct, I've been lucky enough to be introduced to camp. Outside of camp, I don't participate directly with Balkan ensemble—except when I walk into Eleni's house and hear them rehearsing, or when I accompany the Govetas family to the Russian Dance Center, or to a gig.

**NUMBER OF TIMES AT BALKAN CAMP:** I've been to Balkan camp twice, this being the second consecutive year (2nd of many to come).

**EXPERIENCE AT BALKAN CAMP:**

One thing that impressed me this year—one out of a list of many—was the way people showed their eagerness for a set to continue, for musicians to keep playing in the kafana. An encore often and without direction turned into a bunch of intersecting, clapped-out rhythms. One person started clapping, and then the next a different tempo—one hand curled around a glass, or one foot stamping—and it was like telephone, every person doing something a little different, something individual; asking for more music by making their own. It's one of those things you don't think about too much as it's happening because it seems so natural, but in retrospect, I realize that it's an experience unique to the time I've spent at Mendo. To me, it's a perfect example of how personalized music becomes at Balkan camp. This is one of the details I realized impressed me the most from this year's camp, as I explained camp to my mom when I got home after two beautiful weeks in California.



**WHAT DID YOU STUDY AT BALKAN CAMP?** Violin. This year I wasn't able to do an ensemble, unfortunately, but Kids' Band was fun. The Improv class conflicted with the Kids' Band schedule, but that would have been the class I'd have most liked to take.

# 2012 Mendocino / West Coast

**NUMBER OF TIMES AT BALKAN CAMP:** I've been coming since 2006, but I skipped a random couple years. This was my fifth time.

**EXPERIENCE AT BALKAN CAMP:**

I'm always moved by the camaraderie between the camp participants and the cooks in the kitchen, by the feeling of living in a village of like-minded folks for a week, and by the spontaneous dancing or singing that can happen at a meal. This year, I was floored by the musicianship of the brass band led by Michael—the condensed version of the Brass Band class. Amazing. The incredible performance of Tzvetanka [Varimezova], Radka [Varimezova] and Eva [Primack] was absolutely memorable. I loved Souren [Baronian]'s improv class—both the class and the performance at the feast. Every year, I think I will make it to the river to swim, and every year there is just too much going on, what with classes, performances and the ever-present need for a nap!

**NAME:** Anton Shekerdzhiev

**LOCATION:** Tucson, Ariz.

**OCCUPATION:** Musician, Artist and Patient Sitter at the UMC hospital

**CONNECTION TO BALKAN MUSIC/DANCE:** My dad was a popular musician in Plovdiv, Bulgaria and I grew up listening to traditional Bulgarian music. In Tucson, I'm very grateful to have the band Balkan Spirit, and I play music from the Balkans with them. In Madrid, Spain, I began to take traditional music more seriously. I started a band there with Nasko Hristov called Nestinarka, which later continued under the names Los Rodopis and Lafra.

**TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR DAD:** My dad passed away in 2009. His name was Ivan Shekerdzhiev and he was known as "Shekera." He was a good friend of Ivo Papasov and played with him in the early years. My dad played mainly electric guitar, Stambolovo-style wedding music, and later on his life focused more on Flamenco and Latin music with classical guitar.

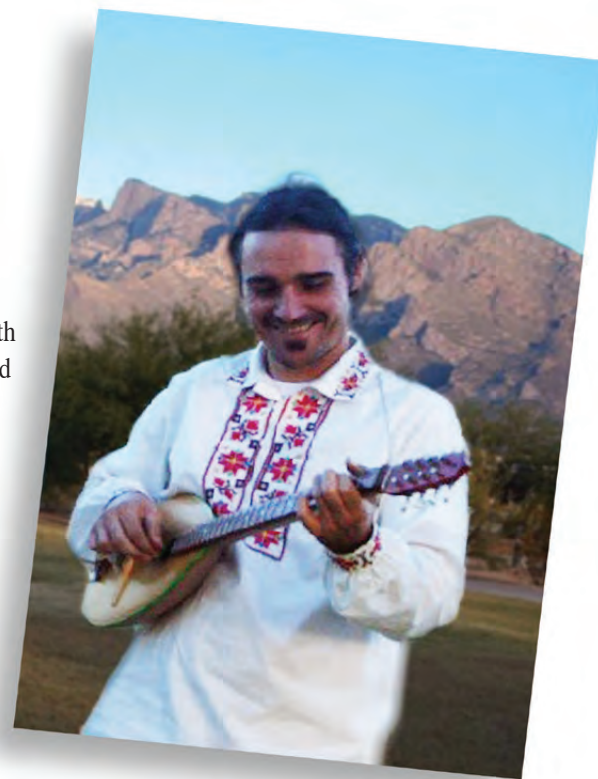
**NUMBER OF TIMES AT BALKAN CAMP:** This was my first time at a Balkan camp in the U.S. I have camped before at traditional music festivals in Bulgaria many times.

**EXPERIENCE AT BALKAN CAMP:**

What mostly impressed me was that there were so many Americans who are great musicians and lovers of Balkan music. I was impressed. I haven't experienced such an event before even in the Balkans, one so organized and filled with joy, with a mixture of Balkan teachers and cultures gathering together, performing and teaching.

The campground itself is also impressive, settled into the magical deep forest. Waking up every morning with the doumbek class, and then walking to grab my coffee from the kitchen area, I could hear sounds of different instruments from the forest resounding with and expressing the culture of the Balkans. So lovely.

Every evening after the classes the performances were amazing, and of course the parties that continued through the night.



Some links to Anton's performances:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViLrVYheBOY&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtmqEWN0ljo&feature=related>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVW\\_Lr6-SQQ&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVW_Lr6-SQQ&feature=related)



# Dick Crum / Kef Scholars



**NAME:** Alexander Marković

**LOCATION:** Chicago, Ill.

**OCCUPATION:** I am a Ph.D. student in the Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois-Chicago. I am currently writing my dissertation on music, ritual, and the identity politics of Romani musicians in Vranje, Serbia.

**CONNECTION TO BALKAN MUSIC/DANCE:** I instruct and perform with a Greek folk dance group, [Ellas](#), in Chicago. I also research and instruct Serbian, Romani and Greek folk dance for various events, festivals and institutions. I also play Balkan percussion (tapan/goč, darabuka, def).

**NUMBER OF TIMES AT BALKAN CAMP:** This was my first time at camp.

#### EXPERIENCE AT BALKAN CAMP:

Camp was an amazing experience from top to bottom—excellent instructors, the wonderful classes I took in Balkan dance and percussion, hearing and seeing fellow campers playing music and dancing all around me, day and night, for the entire week. The most intense, unforgettable, moving experiences of camp for me, though, were moments where people, music and dance came together to make time stand still. “Kef” in the truest sense of the word, as it were. All the performances, the evening dances, the late nights in kafana, were incredible. Romani, Albanian, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Greek, Turkish music—people were carried away by it all again and again, night after night without tiring, even after spending their days dedicated to learning it, dancing to it, playing it.

And yet, the greatest moments for me were those when musicians at camp transported me back to Vranje, to the weddings and music I experienced there while doing my Ph.D. research. One late kafana night, Jerry Kisslinger masterfully played tapan for me while I danced a *teško* from Vranje, while the Harris brothers’ trumpet and clarinet brought me to near ecstasy. Jerry and I agreed later that we had shared a moment, the type of powerful engagement between dancer and musician that he eagerly encouraged his beginner students to understand in preparation for this, the most important role of the tapan player. Even earlier in the week, Catherine Foster’s clarinet crooned an improvisation on *Vranjanka* practically in my ear as she played to me while I danced, and Zlatne Uste’s trumpets followed Michael Ginsburg closer to me as I danced the heavy moves of Vranje’s dances that I have come to love. They, too, gave me a little piece of Vranje, of the Balkans, of “kef heaven,” even so far from Serbia.

Toward the end of the week, they played the beautiful tune for *Svekrvino*, the ritual dance of the groom’s mother; Steve Kotansky smiled as he handed me his kerchief, and dancing next to me Carol Silverman raised her arms in tandem with me at every gorgeous turn of the music as we danced Vranje-style yet again. The phenomenal music, the delicious dancing, the camp community joining us in these moments of absolute ecstasy—the hairs on my arms stood up in sheer, overwhelming joy and pleasure. They are moments I will never forget, and that I treasure. Music, dance and people came together to bring us all “into the Balkans”—I can think of nothing more powerful than that.



Read Alex’s Forum Folkloristika article

#### Beat That Drum!

Exploring the Politics of Performance  
among Roma Brass Musicians in Vranje, Serbia

# 2012 Iroquois Springs / East Coast

**NAME:** Toni Schenider

**LOCATION:** Washington, D.C.

**OCCUPATION:** I am a grant writer at National Geographic. One of my major roles is to ensure that we're reporting our progress back to our funders.

**CONNECTION TO BALKAN MUSIC/DANCE:** My main goal in life is to Balkanize people when they least expect it! That means occasional busking on the streets with other D.C. friends, or staying up all night on Sundays singing songs and dancing. Or busting out into song at non-Balkan parties . . . More formally, I sing with [Slaveya](#), an all-women's vocal ensemble in D.C. that specializes in music from Eastern Europe. We learn our songs from community members and master teachers, and we were so pleased to work with Eva Salina Primack this year, and also to integrate a song we learned from Dragi [Spasovski] into our concert repertoire. Outside of music, as a former Peace Corps volunteer who served in Bulgaria, the language and culture of this region feel like they're part of me, and I try to share that beauty whenever I can.

**NUMBER OF TIMES AT BALKAN CAMP:** This is my second year at camp. I heard the experience described as "life changing." That's probably not a stretch of the imagination.

**EXPERIENCE AT BALKAN CAMP:**

Though I'm really new to Balkan music and EEFC, I think that the "Blender Bands" come awfully close to the original idea of these camps. I thought it was a fantastic moment to see everyone thrown together—and then come together—as we shared ideas, musical motifs, jokes and talent to create something larger than ourselves. For me this was a great moment of community and an opportunity to meet some of the veterans of this group. If I had to sum up my entire experience, I think "community" is the integral word.

I am so grateful for this scholarship and for the chance to learn from incredible teachers and to be wowed and welcomed by this group. I really appreciate all the contributions people have made over the years to the Balkan music community. For me, a real highlight were the small moments—dancing next to someone or finding a moment between classes to listen as stories of their love and passion for the Balkans unfold right in front of you. Everyone has their own unique path to this world, to our community, and every story is a great one.



**NAME:** Zlatomira Simeonova

**LOCATION:** Silver Spring, Md.

**OCCUPATION:** Attorney

**CONNECTION TO BALKAN MUSIC/DANCE:** I dance with [Zharava](#), a local Bulgarian folk-dance group, and I also sing with [Slaveya](#).

**NUMBER OF TIMES AT BALKAN CAMP:** This was my first time at camp.

**EXPERIENCE AT BALKAN CAMP:**

The whole week of camp was filled with special moments for me. What I always talk about at length, though, when I tell people about Balkan camp, are the little kids I met. I was so impressed with their involvement in camp life, with their poise during performances, with their purpose when I saw them hurrying to their classes, and, of course, with their talent. I can't lavish enough praise on these fabulous little artists, their parents and Balkan camp, for making sure that the folklore traditions are being passed on.



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(Arcata, CA)

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[GAFS/Greek-American Folklore Society](#)  
(Astoria, NY)

Grupa Dunbarov (Vancouver, BC)

Humboldt Folk Dancers (Arcata, CA)

Mixed Bag (Columbus, OH)

[Musiki Parea](#) (Vancouver, BC)

Sladki Doumi Women's Balkan Chorus  
(Rochester, NY)

[Svirači](#) (Santa Clara, CA)

[Tuesday Night Revival Balkan Dancing](#)  
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*Thank you!*



## Kremena Stancheva

It is with extreme sadness that we mourn the passing of legendary Bulgarian vocalist and treasured friend of the EEFC community, Kremena Stancheva. Kremena was revered in Bulgaria and throughout the world as both an extraordinary singer and a remarkable person.

Kremena excelled at all styles of Bulgarian singing, but was especially noted for her performance of the stunningly complex microtonal repertoire of her native Šopluk. She was awe-inspiring as she sang the harvest songs and ballads from the different parts of the Šop region, songs with a unique and complex style of vocal embellishment that she executed perfectly.

Kremena was born on October 21, 1941, in the village of Kovačevci, in the Samokov district, not far from Sofia, where she developed her love of singing from a very early age. At the age of 14 she left the village for Sofia to study economics, and soon found her way into a municipal choir. It was here that she met her lifelong singing partner, Vasilka Andonova. At the age of nineteen Kremena entered a competition that won her a coveted spot in the Bulgarian State Radio and Television Choir, which ultimately became the world-renowned *Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares*. At the



same time she was also offered a position in the prestigious Filip Kutev Bulgarian National Folklore Ensemble. She chose the Radio Choir for practical reasons, and in October 1960 became the youngest member of the choir. She later joked that 50 years later she was the oldest and longest-lasting member.

A singer with a master's degree in political economics, Kremena was a brilliant woman, with a keen understanding of human nature and an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. She learned her songs from the old village women by accompanying them into the fields as they worked, or by arranging meetings with the best singers in the village. She developed close relationships with them, and they cherished her as much as she loved them. She made a conscious decision to sing the songs exactly as she learned them, and actively championed the cause of microtonal singing within the more Western musical orientation of the choir. Forever musically curious, Kremena continued to take great pleasure in researching lesser-known styles of singing up until the end of her life.

Kremena was an excellent teacher, skillfully guiding her many students in Bulgaria and the U.S. (including at our own EEFC workshops) through the intricacies of microtonal melodies, dissonant drones, *tresane* [shaking] and *čukane* [knocking], and all of the other delicious complexities of Šop vocal music. She regaled them with wonderful stories about the *babi* [grandmas] from whom she originally learned so many of her songs. She sang for kings and queens around the world, but took as much pride in the performances of her young students as she did in her own accomplishments. In later years she purchased and renovated her grandfather's inn in Kovačevci and turned it into a retreat where aspiring singers could come and study Bulgarian song and folklore in grand style.

Kremena was, simply put, a truly wonderful person with a magnificent spirit. She was thoughtful and serious, but with an ever-present warmth and sparkling, playful humor. She was honest, supportive and gracious, and was the embodiment of integrity. Always elegantly dressed and beautifully spoken, Kremena was the rare kind of person who was both refined and completely down to earth at the same time. She was open to any experience, and nothing was beneath her. Her goal as a singer was not to be in the



limelight, but rather to share the music that she loved. Kremena was devoted to her family and was a loyal and true friend. She was generous with her hospitality, gift giving, friendship, and especially with her knowledge and wisdom. Kremena admired singers who performed with rare emotional depth, and was profoundly moved in the presence of artistic greatness.



Kremena at an EEFC Balkan workshop  
(PHOTO BY MARGARET LOOMIS).

As a soloist with Le Mystère for more than 50 years, Kremena made numerous recordings with the ensemble and more than a hundred recordings of her own, mostly duets with Vasilka, many of which became huge hits in Bulgaria, as well as wonderful solo songs. She became well-known to American listeners when the duet "Vetür vee," featuring Kremena and Vasilka, was included on the 1970 Nonesuch recording *A Harvest, a Shepherd, a Bride: Village Music of Bulgaria*. Kremena's heartfelt singing and natural radiance and joy caused her to shine on stage, and she stood out from her fellow singers as she seemed to make a personal connection with each member of the audience. Kremena was a star in the true sense of the word, not because of

ambition, but rather because of her extraordinary love for the music and the way she excelled at what she did. Kremena embodied the voice of reason in a world where humility, integrity and historical perspective are increasingly difficult to find. She was a part of an elite group whose mission it was to present the very best of Bulgarian singing to the world. Those of us who were blessed to have known her, called her friend, worked with her, and even those who were fortunate enough to have just heard her music, will hold her extraordinary singing and magnificent spirit forever in our hearts.

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Carol Freeman