

EAST EUROPEAN FOLKLIFE CENTER KEFTIMES

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Ruth Hunter, Christos Govetas and Family

By Julie Lancaster

Ruth Hunter and Christos Govetas have taught at EEFC's Balkan Music & Dance Workshops many times, Ruth teaching beginning Balkan singing and beginning tambura and Christos teaching Greek singing, bouzouki, Greek clarinet and Greek ensemble. They and their children, Eleni, 13, and Bobby, 10, live in Seattle.

As teachers, they both attract a fervent following of students at camp. Playing and singing together or with others, they're a hot draw in the dance hall or kafana. But beyond music and dance, their lives are intertwined with the Balkan camp community, which has witnessed their courtship and the evolution of their marriage, parenting and musical careers—and is now seeing their children come into their own musicianship.



"I HEARD THE GAJDA AND IT WAS ALL OVER."

As a high school student in Honolulu in the mid 1970s, Ruth Hunter loved to dance and was drawn to international things. She had already studied Chinese, German and French; growing up in a musical family with an anthropologist stepdad, she had been exposed to many kinds of music. So she joined the school's folk dance performing group.

"I heard the gajda and it was all over," she says. After high school, she and some friends started a band, playing folk dance music with mandolins and recorders.

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2010 WORKSHOPS

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Mendocino, California
June 26-July 3

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August 7-14

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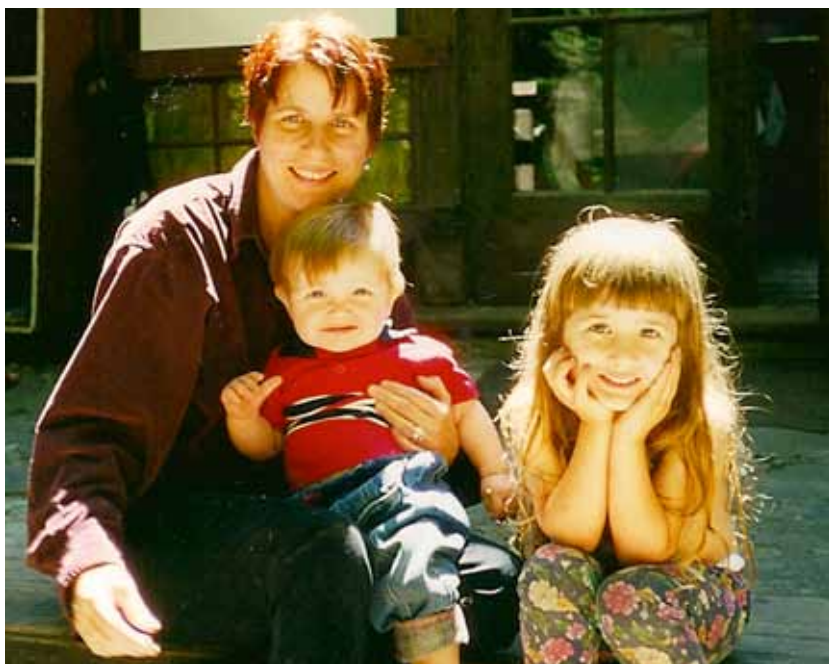
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Or visit:

www.eefc.org

EEFC MISSION STATEMENT

The East European Folklife Center (EEFC) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to educate the general public about the folk music, folk dance and folklore of the Balkans through promoting and sponsoring activities which honor and celebrate the richness of these cultures; and to foster understanding and respect of all peoples through shared experiences of Balkan cultures.



Ruth with lifelong campers Bobby and Eleni at Mendocino.

Around age 19, when a friend brought her a recording from Balkan camp, it dawned on Ruth that “real people actually played this music,” and she started saving money to travel to camp. She attended her first Balkan camp in 1981, at Mendocino Woodlands Camp 2.

“I very shortly stopped going to classes so I could stay up until 4 in the morning,” she says. “My focus was on singing with Lauren Brody and Zora Tammer—I was crazy about her—and playing tambura with Bill Cope.”

For the next few years, Ruth made trips to the mainland for Balkan camp. She visited Europe in 1983, including Greece, where she was excited about the music she found. Then she started spending six weeks each summer in the Mendocino Woodlands on Jeff O’Connor’s kitchen crew, cooking for various international folk dance camps—hard work but rich in musical experiences.

Ruth decided she needed music in her life year-round and moved to Santa Cruz. She and Anne Cleveland started the group Medna Usta, which included, at various times, Dena Bjornlie, Barb Cordes, Karen Guggenheim, Jana Niernburger and Mark Forry. They performed traditional Bulgarian and Macedonian music around the Bay Area and made two recordings. Ruth began being invited to teach beginning singing and beginning tambura at Mendocino Balkan camp.

Around 1986 she also started playing with the Balkan Noyz Boyz: Bill Cope, Dan Auvil, Steve Finney, Allan Cline and



teacher Joe Graziosi, “Who’s THAT?” Joe said, “Don’t look. He’s engaged.” It took time to work out complications in both Ruth’s and Christos’ lives before they became a couple.

Ruth continued to play music in Northern California, adding more groups: the Balkan Appliances (with Lisa Ekström, Jeff Andrews, Stephen Cope, Eric Foster and Brenna MacCrimmon as guest singer) and the Bay Area Balkan Ensemble (with George Chittenden, David Bilides, Susan Rafael, and Dan Auvil).

In 1993, she moved to Boston to be with Christos. They were married in Proti, Greece, in 1995, with many Balkan camp friends in attendance.

While living in Boston, Ruth met violinist Ruthie Dorn and they played accordion and violin together, later recording as the duo Cerise. And by a stroke of luck, one day Ruth heard a neighbor, a music student, struggling with a *gankino* tune. The student turned out to be strings player Adam



Christos at Mendo circa 1990 just before linking up with Ruth.

Kip McAtee. She describes the group’s sound as “Balkan garage band music—a little less folkloric and more fusion.”

Traveling to Buffalo Gap, W.V., for a 1989 Labor Day weekend folk dance camp, Ruth glimpsed Christos across the room and said to Greek dance



And what a couple! Here performing at Mendo.



Eleni learns early the isolation of the zournadji.



Bobby getting ready for yet another show.

Good. Soon she and Christos were playing Macedonian and Bulgarian music with Adam and Jamie Moore under the name Tito’s Revenge.

Eleni was born while they lived in Boston. Soon after, the family moved to Puyallup, Wash., where Bobby was born, and eventually to Seattle.

Some years ago, after many years of working as a baker, Ruth earned a master’s degree in education and now teaches English in a public high school.

“The EEFC,” Ruth muses, “took me away from Hawaii. I ended up with a husband and kids. I thought I would go to Georgetown University and be a diplomat.”

“DO YOU HAVE ANY ZOURNA MUSIC?”

When Christos Govetas was growing up in the village of Proti, in Serres province in Greek Macedonia, he heard a lot of folk music played on zourna and daouli, the traditional instrumentation of his region, although he and his friends were more interested in playing guitar.

“Sometimes the old men would call us into the café where they were sitting around, and they’d have us hold drones on the guitar so they could sing table songs,” he says. “We poo-pooed on their singing. Old people’s music—who’d want to sing that?” (Now he treasures it.)

In 1978, the 15-year old Christos and his mother and sister came to the U.S. and settled in Lawrence, Mass. Leaving Greece wasn’t Christos’ idea. He missed home and cheered himself up with the idea that he would become a multi-millionaire and go back one day.

During high school he played Bob Dylan tunes on guitar and harmonica. After graduation, he moved to Boston to study architecture, originally at Wentworth Institute of Technology and later at Boston Architectural Center. In Boston he met some MIT students from Athens.



And checking out sister’s snare technique.



Christos grew up hearing zourna in his village and has passed that tradition to his children. Here he plays with George Chittenden.

“The beauty of the Greek language was rekindled in me again,” he says. “For the first two to three years in this country, I had desperately wanted to assimilate, to blend in. In the process, I lost aspects of Greek culture that I didn’t realize I was losing.”

He became roommates with these friends and started listening to rebetika music, a gritty, urban style from port cities in Greece. Much of the music was verboten in Greece at the time; recordings had to be procured “under the counter.”

He started playing baglamas and, in 1983, went back to Greece for the first time and bought his first bouzouki.

While studying in Boston, Christos worked as a waiter at a popular Greek restaurant, where the band played mostly contemporary Greek music. Toward the end of the night, the band leader would call Christos up to perform. Still in his apron, he would play and sing rebetika songs for the last 10 minutes of the show, with the band backing him up. A year later, the band leader proposed they start a new band together.

Their band, Taxími, played at the Middle East restaurant in Cambridge, a major hub for Greek and Arabic music, where they got to know some great Arab musicians. They devoted one night per week to rebetika and another to Greek folk music played on bouzoukis because they didn’t have other instruments.

One night around 1984 violinist Beth Bahia Cohen came in. She fell in love with the rebetika music, and soon thereafter, Christos and his musical partner heard Beth playing a *patinada* (walking tune)—an elaborate island song—seemingly effortlessly, with all nuances in place. They invited her to play with them.

After Taxími broke up, Christos and Beth started playing as a duo, performing concerts around Boston and exploring music from Asia Minor together. They played Turkish music with the EurAsia Ensemble (with Bob Labaree, Fred Stubbs, Feridun Ozgoren and Reinmar Seidler). At first Christos played bendir (a kind of frame drum), then he started playing oud and singing classical



A casual practice in their home in Seattle proves the old adage that “the family that plays together ...

Turkish pieces. He also began to play clarinet seriously, after having dabbled in it briefly as a child and as a teenager.

One night he and Beth were invited to play a Balkan Night in Boston.

“I couldn’t believe all these Americans dancing to Greek music,” he says. “There was a weight-lifter guy on the side selling tapes. I asked him, ‘Do you have any zourna music? That’s the music I grew up with.’ Of course, he did. It was Joe [Graziosi].”

Then in September 1989 he and Beth played at the Buffalo Gap weekend camp.

“That weekend completely changed the course of my life,” he says. “In so many ways it was a revelation to me. I felt very appreciated for the first time as a musician and I enjoyed myself a great deal. I met Bill Cope, David Bilides, Jerry Kisslinger, and many others there. And of course, I met Ruth. I mean, that changed my life.”

The next year, 1990, Christos was invited to teach at Mendocino and has taught there every year since. He also taught at balkanalia! when it was run by the EEFC, and in 2008 he and Ruth taught at the East Coast Balkan camp.

At Christos’ first Mendocino camp, he, Beth, Dan Auvil, George Chittenden and Lise Liepman realized they comprised a perfect ensemble for playing Greek regional folk music; they shared “the same fire.” Their band, Ziyiá, has made two recordings, performs occasionally, and is celebrating its 20th year as a bi-coastal band.

In a divergence from traditional music, Christos was invited in 2003 to join jazz guitarist and composer Bill Frisell for his project “The Intercontinentals.” He toured



... stays together.” Christos, Ruth and Eleni rehearse for a performance at a Greek music and dance festival in California.

with the group for about 35 concerts around the world; the CD was nominated for a Grammy.

By day, Christos works as an architect and contractor for residential and light commercial projects.

Currently he and Ruth play with two groups: Pangéo, traditional Greek, Albanian and Macedonian dance party music, with Kane Mathis and Will Dowd; and Pasatempo, rebetiko music with Steve Ramsey, Hank Bradley, Bill Lanphier and Dave Bartley.

They also accompany the dance group at Seattle’s Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, where Ruth works with their youth choir. The choir joins Ruth and Christos on their latest CD project ([see review in this issue](#)).

“CAN YOU LEAVE THE DOOR OPEN?”

On their CD player at home, the majority of the music is Greek and Balkan. Eleni and Bobby have come to Balkan camp with their parents every year and attended scores of musical events where their parents played. In Ruth’s words, “The music is a fundamental part of the wallpaper of their lives.”

With their various ensembles through the years, Ruth and Christos have usually held rehearsals at their home, in the living room. The kids’ bedrooms are upstairs.

“We would always close the door and be careful not to be too loud,” says Ruth. “They’d

fall asleep listening to the music. Finally one of them said, ‘Can you leave the door open?’”

About three or four years ago, Eleni started playing music with her parents. Now they describe her as a rock-solid drummer and a pleasure to play with.

“I like playing music because it’s not forced and I enjoy it,” Eleni says. “I know that I can always turn to playing music and there’s no way that it’s going to stop. All that music is wired in my head.”

Bobby is following suit; he is a good daouli player, is learning trumpet and is a rock/jazz-inspired drummer. “I like that playing music is sort of free,” he says. “You don’t have to pay to go on the street and play music. It’s fun and you can basically do everything you want.”

The family’s latest musical incarnation is The Flying Govetii, with Christos on voice, clarinet and bouzouki; Ruth on voice, accordion; Eleni on drums, doumbeleki, defi, acoustic bass; Bobby on drums, daouli, trumpet; and Nikos Maroussis on laouto.

“When we started going to Balkan camp, it was a once-a-year thing; we cried when we left,” Ruth adds. “Over the years, it’s become very clear it’s not a once-a-year thing. It’s an all-year thing, a lifetime thing. It informs our whole family. It is deeply meaningful for the kids and us.” - **END**

KEF TIMES

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Berkeley, CA 94712-3488

“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 phone: 510/547-1118, e-mail: office@eefc.org website: www.eefc.org

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Warm Spring Greetings from Your EEFC Board!

We've spent the winter chipping away at a number of projects and initiatives to ensure that the 2010 summer workshops at Mendocino and Iroquois Springs are as delightful and memorable as ever. The Program Committee has been hard at work putting together an exciting lineup of dance and music teachers. Really, the dust from the dancing shoes hadn't settled before we got down to work. Perhaps you've noticed the sneak previews on the listserv as well as other details here in the pages of Kef Times. If you haven't, let us tell you that this year's roster of talented and varied teachers features some fresh new faces as well as those back from a long absence and many wonderful musicians and dancers whom we have grown to love and rely on for their skill, charm and generosity.

We want to thank everyone for their input this year. Your evaluations really do help to guide us both with programming and the workshops in general and we do the best we can to meet the many needs and requests of our ever expanding community.

Those of you who attended Iroquois Springs this year had the opportunity to fill out an online evaluation—an initiative that was suggested by Nesa Levy and acted on by our in-house web magician Demetri Tashie. According to our General Manager, we had 20 more evaluations than usual so clearly this is a useful tool, and, in 2010, we'll have online evaluations for both workshops.

Still, all in all, only 20 to 25 percent of campers complete their evaluations, so we have to gauge the looks of tired but happy faces at the end of each workshop to know whether or not we are on the right track. I am happy to say your evaluations are overwhelmingly positive. We get a significant number of people taking the time to thank the Board and our General Manager, Rachel MacFarlane, for the week of dance and musical joy that one really can't get anywhere else, and we do appreciate that. We also heard that you really like the changes we made to the review/student concert day. It's now a little more relaxed with a real lunch break and people seem to be enjoying it more. Sometimes change happens slowly but when it does, it's right on time.

We also take to heart any concerns and questions that come up. A good part of the fall board meeting is taken up with addressing issues from the evaluations. We are always happy when you point us in better directions, offer us leads for new teachers and give helpful suggestions. We can't always act on them right away but sometimes wheels are set into motion for months and years to come. We are working on some changes to our EEFC website (and we will be sure to let you know when we roll that out!) and there we will address some frequently voiced comments, questions and concerns as well as provide resources and contacts for Balkan music and dance around the world.



2009-10 Board of Directors: Front row: Rachel MacFarlane, Ann Norton. Back Row: Riccardo Heald, Demetri Tashie, Brenna MacCrimmon, Denys Carrillo, Linda Mucyn and Michael Sensor.

Our 2009 fall meeting was held at the Delaware home of our President Michael Sensor who, with a parrot on his shoulder the whole weekend, steered us through the pages of our rather full agenda. In addition to the evaluations, we revisited a number of EEFC policies and we are in the process of updating them and revising them with the security, comfort and happiness of all workshop attendees in mind. We were visited for an afternoon by Jay Samios of Astoria, N.Y., a community member who assisted us in putting together the beginnings of a development program—something we hope will help us keep the EEFC going

for the next generation and generations to come.

Michael continues to be our fearless President, assisted again by Denys Carrillo as Vice-President, who also chairs the Program Committee. Incoming board members Linda Mucyn of Lake View (Buffalo area), N.Y., and Ann Norton from the East Bay in California took on the tasks of Treasurer and Membership Committee chair, respectively. Riccardo Heald (taking time between diaper changes!) is our noble Secretary—or Sec-Rick-Tary, as we like to call him. Demetri Tashie is heading the Publicity Committee and sharing Liaison duties with Brenna MacCrimmon, who chairs the Scholarship Committee.

Speaking of development, Myra Rosenhaus, a community member from Allentown, Pa., will be working with the board this year, on a work-exchange basis, to help us locate and determine EEFC's eligibility for grants. The board has not explored grant opportunities for several years, and we hope this will lead to additional funding sources.

The 2010 spring meeting will be held in Toronto, Canada. Again, our meeting agenda looks daunting but we hope to have some good news to report after all is said and done. One of the biggest challenges currently facing us as a board is how to keep workshop tuition affordable for families and people of all income levels. Creeping costs and expenses haunt us all and we don't want to deliver anything less than the wonderful workshops that have evolved through the hard work, trial and error, love and passion of so many people, whether they be board members past or long-term members of our community. This legacy of over 30 years is something we value greatly and we are working to ensure that it is something we can pass along.

As you know, your Board is composed entirely of volunteers. So are all the committees that do everything from membership to finance to programming. This organization really benefits from the time and talents of all its members. And that means you! If you have fundraising skills, web skills or just some bright idea, please let us know. We often have projects looming that you may have just the talent for.

Here's to wishing you a Balkan music and dance-filled summer season!

BRENNA MACCRIMMON for the 2009-10 EEFC Board



Last year I was in Brenna MacCrimmon's first-slot Turkish singing class at Mendocino. We huddled together in the cold morning air, clutching mugs of coffee or tea, gradually waking up and warming our voices before applying ourselves to song.

After a few days we realized that a large, shiny raven had been joining us, too. It perched on the ground nearby and spent time every day, apparently listening, making little comment and eventually flying off. It seemed to like just hanging with the music.

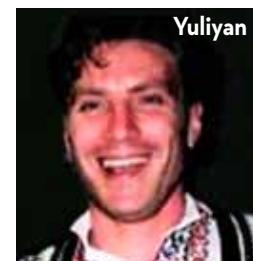
Whether you love making the music, dancing to it or-like our raven friend-hanging with it, we hope the words and photos in this issue will inspire you to come to camp, and to generously support the EEFC.

JULIE LANCASTER - Editor

From THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Sneak peek at the 2010 Workshops

We like to whet your camp appetites in the Kef Times, so here are some tidbits for everyone:



The Mendocino Workshop will welcome back Yuliyán Yordanov, teaching Bulgarian dance, for his second year with us. His joy was infectious last year, and we look forward to seeing his smiling face and dancing feet in the Woodlands again. We are also happy that the amazing Bob Beer will be with us again after much too long an absence. He will be traveling from Turkey, where he has been living for some years, and will be teaching Turkish singing and saz. Other Mendocino thrills to look forward to: the return of the dynamic Merita Halili for Albanian singing and Raif Hyseni for accordion and Albanian ensemble—along with some 20 other fabulous instructors.

Iroquois

Springs will see two teachers who are new to us: Paul Stafura will teach a tamburica class and lead the tamburica ensemble. Paul comes from a musical family and grew up learning primarily



Merita

Photo: Margaret Loomis

the Croatian tambura family of instruments and the accordion in Junior Tamburitzan ensembles in Pittsburgh. He joined the Duquesne University Tamburitzans in 1995, and continues to work with them as a musical arranger and composer. He is also a longstanding member of the Mark Spisic Tambura Orchestra. He resides in Pittsburgh.

Bilyana Stoyanova Stafura will be teaching Bulgarian dance. Born in the city of Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, she is a graduate of the Bulgarian National School of Dance Art in Sofia. She also attended the Academy of Musical and Dance Art in Plovdiv. In 2001, she became a member of the Duquesne University Tamburitzans. She has performed throughout Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Romania and North America, and is currently



Jessaiah

Photo: Margaret Loomis



Kabile

the Dance Director for the Bulgarian folkdance ensemble Otets Paisii in Pittsburgh. Another great new staff member will be Sarah Ferholt, who will be leading the Kids' Ensemble. Sarah, a trumpeter in Zlatne Uste Brass Band, is a creative force in the

Brooklyn public school music education scene. And we are happy to say that Jessaiah Zuré will be back, teaching Turkish Roman dance . . . and yes, she will have a real class slot this year!

Happily, the members of the band Kabile will be at Iroquois Springs again, coming directly from Bulgaria. We welcome Djenko Andreev, teaching Thracian gajda, Angel Krastev for tapan, Nikolay Doktorov on kaval, Ivan Handzhiev teaching Thracian singing, and Donka Koleva teaching Rhodope singing.

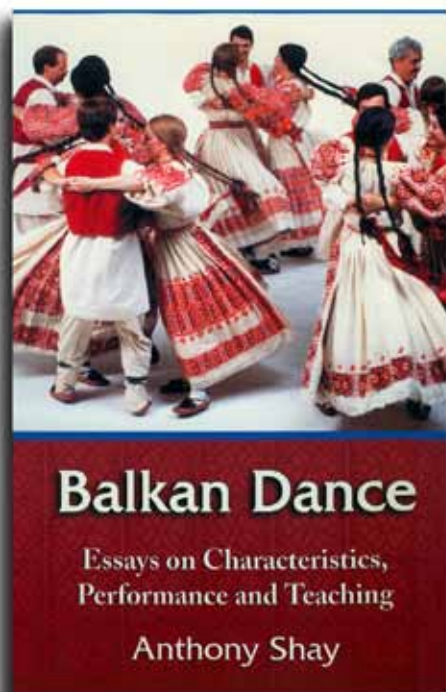
. . . and we look forward to seeing YOU at Mendocino (June 26-July 3, 2010) or Iroquois Springs (August 7-14, 2010)!

When our staff list is complete, it will be posted on the EEFC website, so don't forget to check: [East European Folklife Center](#). Yours in music and dance,

DENYS CARRILLO

For the Program Committee:
Belle Birchfield
Denys Carrillo
Lise Liepman
Brenna MacCrimmon
Rachel MacFarlane
Terri Taggart

NEW AND Notable



BALKAN DANCE: ESSAYS ON CHARACTERISTICS, PERFORMANCE AND TEACHING - ANTHONY SHAY

This collection of essays examines popular forms of dance in the Balkan nations, including detailed studies on the history and development of dance in Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, Romania, and Greece, among other nations. The essays address the ways in which ethnic and national identity constitutes an important aspect of the performance of Balkan dance, whether by state folk dance ensembles or immigrant groups in other countries. Several essays also examine the unique popularity that Balkan dances and music have found among American audiences, with special attention paid to the work of international folk dancer **Dick Crum** in promoting Balkan dance within the United States.

To order: [from amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
or [McFarland](http://www.mcfarland.com)



9TH ANNUAL EAST COAST CAMP PHOTO DVD - 2009

Have you ever seen so many happy campers? What an amazing week we had—full of incredible music, dancing, classes, parties, food, kafanas and friends . . . and with only a little rain to add some variety (and great skies!). If you never got around to taking out your camera (or didn't even bother to bring one—who has time for that, anyway?), here's your chance to revisit camp and have a great time, all over again. These photos are a lot of fun and also make a nice gift.

This DVD contains 1,002 photos, including:

- evening parties and kafanas
- fun times around the kafana grill
- music and dance classes in action
- group sings
- auction on Tuesday night
- special ?O birthday party in the kafana on Thursday night
- all classes performing at Friday's student concert
- Friday afternoon soccer game
- Friday picnic outside the dining hall
- candid and semi-candid shots throughout the week
- kids at camp
- scenic views of Iroquois Springs
- 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.

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.

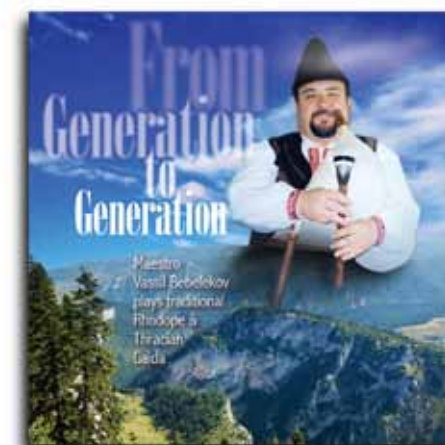


Æ - AURELIA SHRENKER AND EVA SALINA PRIMACK

Æ is Aurelia Shrenker and **Eva Salina Primack**. The duo's first album includes repertoire from Appalachian, Balkan, Caucasus Georgian, and Corsican traditions. These two young women bring together deep knowledge of diverse vocal traditions and create something new and daring with each rendition. Mostly a *cappella* with minimal accordion and panduri accompaniment (**Jesse Kotansky** makes an appearance on violin), Æ's work is visceral and provocative yet rooted in folk culture, and in their music the exuberance of youth and the reverence of ancient tradition coincide.

Visit the group at: <http://www.aesings.com>

To order: <http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/aemusic>



FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION - VASSIL BEBELEKOV

Vassil recorded this CD to present, and preserve, his favorite songs learned growing up in the magnificent Rhodope mountain region of Bulgaria.

In Bulgaria, he was one of the top professional musicians (a rare virtuoso on both the low [kaba] and high [djura] gaidas) and taught for many years at the music school in Shiroka Luka. The songs on this CD are the ones closest to Vassil's heart, passed down from generation to generation, in a family rich with musicians and singers. This project is truly a labor of love. **Vassil Bebelev** and **Petur Iliev**.

To order: <http://www.X> <<if don't have url by publication will put in email and phone>>



ΜΙΑ ΚΙΟΥΠΚΙΟΥΛΟΥΔΑ - SONGS FROM PRÓTI SERRÓN - CHRISTOS GOVETAS, RUTH HUNTER AND TA AIDHONAKIA YOUTH CHOIR

"Many years ago a friend from Proti handed Christos Govetas a CD of local songs," writes Ruth Hunter. "It turned out to be a field recording of villagers singing typical songs of the day, accompanied by two musicians and a chorus of children and other locals. We found it to be a beautiful snapshot of the people and music of Próti Serrón and the surrounding area . . . We dreamed of creating a similar recording to share the tunes and keep some of the songs alive. These are those songs. We have tried to stay as true to the original intent of the music as possible and hope that we have captured some of its sweetness. We are joined by Ta Aidhonakia youth choir from Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Seattle." **Christos Govetas, Ruth Hunter, Eleni Govetas, Stavroula Tsandilas, Connie Contoravdis, Bobby Govetas, Paul Bartell, Ali Kyrimis, Stephanie Sampson, Alexandria Contoravdis, Eleftheria Contoravdis and Stossi Tsandilas.**

To order: <http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/christosgovetas2>



TAKETRON - SLAVIC SOUL PARTY!

The Slavic Soul Party! sound of throbbing funk grooves, fiery Balkan brass, Rom accordion wizardry and virtuoso jazz chops has never been clearer than on their new CD *Takeatron*, a surprising re-imagining of brass band dance music that includes only two traditional songs (a blazing Moldovan oompah and a soulful gospel journey). John Carlson, Shane Endsley, **Ben Holmes**, Peter Hess, Oscar Noriega, Roland Barber, Brian Drye, Jacob Garchik, Tim Vaughn, Brook Martinez, Chris Stromquist, Take Toriyama, **Matt Moran**, Ron Caswell, **Peter Stan**.

To order: slavicsoulparty.com

MENDOCINO 2009



Barbara Babin stands behind Beth Cohen as **Beth** offers a warm welcome to a pre-dinner get-together in the Mendocino meadow. Among others in this bucolic bunch are Riccardo Heald, Ann Norton, Demetri Tashie, Joe Graziosi and Mike Slama. Photo by Victor Robin



Sharing distilled spirits and ribald songs are the adult traditions practiced at the designated "smoking table" . . .



... while young campers happily create their own traditions. This and previous photo by Eva Salina Primack



Vassil Bebelev, Georgi Petrov and Stoyan Kostov check out the new guy in camp, Rikki Nicolae's son Max.



But it's fun for all ages in the historic dance hall. The photos on this row and the one at the right of the row above from Rikki Nicolae



Yuliyon Yordanov gives Chris Bajmakovich a token of thanks.



Bill Cope interrupts an evening party to give his daughter Lacey a surprise send-off as she prepares to go to college in Bulgaria.



All are welcome to the "Toast to the EEFC's Future," a wine, cheese and shave-ice reception in honor of EEFC members. Featured are impassioned testimonials from sisters Lacey and Joelle Cope, Eva Salina Primack and Sommer Halligan that talk about what camp means to them. Linnea Mandell and Dan Auvil finish with a little poetic plea for EEFC membership. Photos by Josephine Decker shooting a documentary on camper Sarah Small



At the parade to the student concert, Joelle Cope and Erin Kurtz are standard bearers as Joe Mandell and Paul Beck look on. Photo by Rikki Nicolae



Polly Tapia Ferber's drum class joins forces with Brenna MacCrimmon's singing class for an entertaining and powerful recital. Photo by Rikki Nicolae

Amidst all the activity, sometimes we forget the serene beauty that surrounds us. Mendocino is a cherished National Historic Landmark nestled in redwood trees, ferns and glades along the Little North Fork of the Big River. Above two photos by Victor Robin



You can't miss the brass band when these students are in session. Photo by Arlene Imagawa



Tzvetanka Varimezova's intricate choral arrangements are a big hit with the audience. Photo by Rikki Nicolae



It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood. Campers certainly don't rough it at Iroquois Springs. Less than two hours from New York City in the Southern Catskills, the facility features a spring-fed lake, an NCAA lighted and heated pool, tennis courts and a newly resurfaced dance floor (?). Campers sleep in modern, well-appointed cabins equipped with electricity and a bathroom with showers. All Iroquois Springs 2009 photos by Margaret Loomis. For a CD with over a thousand 2009 camp photos, [click here](#).



The Raya Brass Band plays to the Max. Ben Syversen, Greg Squared, Don Godwin, Matthew Fass (the "Max" of the band Max and Minka), E. J. Fry and singer Corinna Snyder put some kick into the kafana.



Marliss Kraft-Zemel and her kid's class take a field trip to Lynette Garlan and Jim Rumbaugh's deluxe vardo.



Rockin' the casbah. The tupan class is often intense and, in this protective portable structure, they're also in tents.



Laine and Drew Harris blow until their shirts turn red.



Iroquois Springs is stroller-friendly. The next generation of campers are proudly displayed by Beatrix Magyar, Judy Kropf (?) and Marliss Kraft-Zemel.



Melinda Hunt eyes Emerson Hawley in a rare moment of repose.



Photographer Margaret Loomis, with Lynette Garlan, here at the other end of the camera.



George Bradley summons the forces of fire for his magic act. And his wife...



... Janet Bradley's magic keeps the camp happy with her consistently great meals.



Bulgarian singing teacher Donka Koleva appears to instruct her incredulous daughter Maria (also a beautiful singer) in other performing arts.



Emily Cohen and Geneviève Leloup enjoy a private joke.



Woohoo! Campers raise their plates to raise the most money ever at an auction. Thanks!



2cute4words. Csenge Magyar follows in the fiddle footpath of her dad Kalman.



Holding his own in the cute department, Raif Hyseni savors an accordion moment.



Yianni Roussos and Robin LaPasha synchronizing plectrums.



Responding to the clarion call of Zlatne Uste, Larry Weiner, Drew Harris, Terri Taggart, Carol Silverman and many more just can't help but boogie to the Balkan beat (ZU members shown are Catherine Foster, Laine Harris, Michael Ginsburg and Sarah Ferholt).



DICK CRUM/KEF SCHOLARSHIPS

4 2009 WEST COAST SCHOLARS

SONIA CONNOLLY

The first couple of days at camp were overwhelming. I was learning new songs, new dances and a new instrument, while navigating the unfamiliar Woodlands and keeping track of my schedule. Everyone else seemed equally busy greeting old friends and adjusting to camp.

After a couple of days, it got easier. I could find my way back to my tent without walking through poison oak, even at night. The weather cooled and the mosquitoes subsided. People responded warmly to friendly overtures. The new songs and dances started sinking in. Nearly everyone stopped to advise, celebrate or commiserate with my efforts to get sound out of the kaval.

In the midst of unfamiliarity, bringing my career to camp was an unexpected blessing. Giving a few massages in cabins or at an open picnic table took me to parts of camp I wouldn't have visited, connected me with people I wouldn't have gotten to know and let me contribute by easing pain. Fortunately, the constant backdrop of Balkan song and



instrument practice was relaxing for everyone.

I donated an hour-long massage to the camp auction, and had the fun of seeing many bids to give the session to Rachel MacFarlane.

The small groups were my favorite part of camp.

I loved the unofficial Persian sing-along at the fire circle, where I could share the one Persian song I had learned at a community choir, and experience

Danny's chanted Rumi poetry to the beat and swish of his frame drum in the warm firelight. I stayed up late one night to dance in camaraderie with a few others to Nada's accordion and Bill's and George's tamburas, changing line-leadership depending on who remembered the dances best, musicians and dancers attuned and attentive to each other.

At the student concert, I realized that all of us at camp are united by our willingness to take risks and learn together. From the newest student to the most experienced teacher or performer, each of us stepped away from our normal routines and put ourselves out there, not just at the concert, but every day in class. First with dancing, then with singing, and now with playing the kaval, I've noticed that I improve the most when I relax and connect with my body. As we dance, sing, and play music together, we are sharing our essential selves with one another.

I am grateful to the EEFC Kef Scholarship, NFDI (Northwest Folk Dancers, Inc.) scholarship, and generous friends for both financial support and encouragement that brought me to Mendocino Balkan camp at last. I am also grateful to the Portland community, where I can dance at least three times a week and sing twice a week, year round. I even have friends who encourage me to play the kaval, although so far I play better when no one is watching.

Sonia Connolly is a bodywork practitioner in Portland, Ore. Through her company, Sundown Healing Arts, she offers massage, reiki and other approaches for people struggling with the effects of physical or emotional trauma. She folk dances and sings regularly in Portland, and runs the Zabava Balkan dancing and singing recreational groups.

RYAN FELTHOUSE - No Report Available

STEFKA KAMBUROVA

Hi everyone. My name is Stefka Kamburova. I am 29 years old. I am married to Alyo Kamburov. I have two daughters, Erolina (9) and Salina (6) and we are from Gotse Delchev, Bulgaria. Last year I applied for a scholarship for the Balkan camp and thanks to that I had a chance to live for one week—free, happy, without worries, full of love, and to feel the same as in my little mahala (neighborhood) in Bulgaria.

Before I left Bulgaria I never



thought that I would be in a place different than my mahala where I could be happy, but here it is, Balkan camp. There I was that close to my culture, my music, my little home, Gotse Delchev. What I liked is that I had a chance to do the thing that I love, and do it from my heart—to dance. And this was my reason to go to camp—to learn how to teach, so I can show my kind of dance, which is like Turkish Roma dancing.

My schedule for the week was:

Morning—dance
Afternoon—dance
Night—dance

Just that. I love to dance.

This was a big plus for me, because I met a lot of people and made many new friends. Because of Balkan camp I met Jessaiah who is also a teacher of Turkish Roma dance. With her, we have made a performance group and auditioned at the Ethnic Dance Festival, the biggest festival of its kind in San Francisco, and there, for the first time, I had a chance to dance on a real stage, like a real professional.

ALEX LOWE

Year Two at Mendocino Balkan Camp

If not for the generosity of Balkan camp members and the Kef Scholarship program, I don't know if I would have made it this year! I would hate to miss any opportunity to attend camp, meet the wonderful people, learn from the amazing talent and bring the whole experience back to my own community. I guess it's time to start saving up for next year.

My traveling companions and I began the trip by playing a set of Bulgarian, Macedonian and Romani tunes at the Arcata send-off party (we are all part of the Eugene-based band called Kef). We were rewarded that evening with very comfortable overnight accommodations and a gourmet breakfast at a camp member's house. That evening in their kitchen, we scrambled to finish a rough draft of our CD cover so that we could provide merchandise at camp.

Once we were at camp, my bandmates were yanked into their dish shifts, and I was free to roam around and take whichever classes I wanted. That's when I realized how different this year would be from the last.

Last year I was on dish crew, and this year, I kind of missed the work. Indeed, this year I thoroughly enjoyed the freedom of wandering around, taking any and all classes I felt like, and only really worrying about when meals began, or whether I should steal a quick dip in the nearby creek. Yet I missed the sense that I was part of making the camp function; I missed giving back to this wonderful group of people. I suppose that's why I enjoy performing at Balkan camp so much, whether with my band, or in the student concerts: it's



a way of giving back to the camp community.

By the end of camp I knew a few more brass band tunes, a couple of new dance steps and even a tune to play on the gadulka, my newest instrument. Looking back on these modest achievements, I saw what I would bring home to my

music community: more and better music. My bandmates and I, after a refreshing night's sleep on the floor of yet another camp member's home, shared our various camp achievements on the ride home. Between us we came up with a half dozen new tunes, and already Kef has performed most of them here in Eugene.

But perhaps my most profound achievement (and one that owes a great deal to what I've learned at Balkan camp!) is shared by all members of my band. Soon after I finished the CD cover art, Kef performed at the Eugene Celebration, a once-a-year weekend music festival and craft fair that shuts down our downtown. It wasn't solely extraordinary that we played on the one stage that our local public radio station broadcasts live for the whole area, and which people all around the country tuned into on their high-speed internet connections. No, the exposure wasn't the greatest part: for me, the greatest part was that they asked us to play, because of our *reputation!*

Not merely the biggest names in our community play on these stages, but some well-known out-of-state rock and folk groups which draw crowds of thousands. And some of you reading this newsletter may have been among the dancers that showed up to support

After that performance I felt confidence in myself and the first thing I thought was if it wasn't for Balkan camp maybe I would never feel comfortable doing that.

But not only I was happy there. For the first time since we came to America I saw the little lights of happiness in my daughters' eyes. Erolina and Salina had an unbelievable time there. They had a chance to take singing lessons with the amazing Eva. They became very close



friends with her and love her. They were also in Frank's kids' class and Erolina also took a tupan class with her grandfather, my father, Rumen Sali Shopov.

They both were very free and happy. I didn't see them all day—only late at night to go to bed. And now Erolina wants to go to camp instead of going back to Bulgaria this summer!

And the last person who was very happy there was my lovely husband Alyo. Even though he didn't have a chance to spend the whole

us. Thank you all, you know who you are.

I know I'm bragging about my band, but our achievement is indirectly an achievement of the entire Balkan music community that attends and contributes to Balkan camp. Without the amazingly talented individuals teaching and attending the classes at Balkan camp, the members of Kef would not have all the skills, knowledge, music or inspiration to sound as good as we do and thus become so recognized by the Eugene music community. Anybody reading this letter (and particularly those of you who have heard Kef's first CD) knows that Kef is not the most astonishing band ever to emerge from Balkan camp. What that says is that even more amazing Balkan music (obviously) is reaching the ears of Americans, and that Balkan music's niche in America's world music scene is growing in size and importance. We should all be proud to be a part of this!

I for one am proud to be a part of this incredible music and to be a part of this unique music camp in the beautiful coastal redwoods of northern California. So, I look forward to dish crew in 2010, if that is my fate, because I feel like I'm truly doing myself and everyone else a favor by giving back to this camp, which has given so much to me. But keep that scholarship around, too, because everyone deserves a chance, unencumbered by financial hardship, to experience our fantastic community once.

Alex Lowe lives in Eugene, Ore., and currently works for the City of Eugene and Goodwill, teaching math, art and soccer, and doing graphic art on the side. He plays trumpet in three bands, one of which is the Balkan village dance band, Kef. If he ever gets his hands on another gadulka, he'll be sure to add that to the list of instruments he plays.

week there, he didn't mind driving up for both weekends, in order to have that amazing time.

Balkan Camp 2009 June-July was for us one of the most amazing weeks, which we will never forget. For that one I am saying a BIG thanks to the EEFC Scholarship Committee who gave me this scholarship. And I think this a wonderful thing the Board is doing—to give people like me a chance to see what is going on there.

Thanks from all my heart.

Stefka Kamburova lives with her family in Albany, Ca. She works at La Méditerranée, a Middle Eastern restaurant where the workers are all treated like family.



DICK CRUM/KEF SCHOLARSHIPS

5 2009 EAST COAST SCHOLARS

AMY BONNAFFONS

Thanks to Be With You

"You won't get any sleep here," someone told me on my first day of Balkan camp.

I misunderstood. "Oh, I'm sure I'll be fine," I said. "I'm a pretty heavy sleeper."

"No," she repeated. "I mean you won't want to sleep. You'll miss the magic."

I remained a skeptic for the first few days, unable to nap for the zurna ensemble outside my window, bleary-eyed and dubious. But on my fourth day, suddenly—and there really is no other way to say this—the magic happened.

Morning had almost broken over the kafana when Georgi [Petrov] picked up his gudulka



and started to improvise. I'm still not sure what collective instinct tipped us off—conversations stopped mid-breath, drinks paused in their arcs towards waiting mouths. Everyone hushed. Somehow, we knew.

Georgi played for 90 minutes straight, only stopping when his cigarette burned down to a nub; he'd light a new one, dangle it casually from the side of his mouth, and resume. An accordion and doumbek

joined in. The instruments spoke to each other in a wordless, recognizable language. They told long, sad stories and short, percussive jokes.

They lamented. They laughed. We all listened, rapt, only vaguely aware of the sun slowly coming up behind the soccer field. I occasionally exchanged glances with other listeners: *Happening now. Magic. Take note.*

For one long crepuscular moment, time stretched out like the curved sides of a ship, temporarily becoming more spacious. What made this strange shift possible? Probably just the decision that the dance trumped the hour, music trumped sleep, today trumped tomorrow.

Around 7 a.m., Georgi finally set down his bow. We applauded.

His response has stayed with me since: "Thanks," he said. "Thanks to be with you."

Amy Bonnaffons sang with the Yale Women's Slavic Chorus and has taught Balkan music in Southeast Asia. She currently lives in New York City, where she writes, teaches, and sings.

CYNDAL ELLIS AND IAN BIGELOW

Cyndal writes:

Balkan camp was fun, inspiring and wonderfully absurd. One of my last images of Balkan camp was a woman passed out on her luggage amidst a field of bags with thirty minutes left to leave the campsite. I sympathized with her state, having seen her late at the kafana the previous night. While one could go to Balkan camp just for the classes, it is difficult to pass up the evening dances and after-hours coffee shop. Considering the diversity of talented teachers, performers, and campers at camp, it is a highly stimulating place for people, such as Ian and myself, who do not like to miss out on all the fun. I think we are both still processing and recovering three months later.

Camp was an otherworldly experience, to say the least. Between the lack of sleep, the wine and the hours of dancing, events at camp are difficult to recall in any logical fashion. Dreamy, circus-y images swirl through my memory. I see a field of hula hoops and martinis, gaidas on parade, a dance floor turned Vegas-style auction, a belly dancer waving chef's knives and spatulas, a Turkish versus Balkan 9/8 dance-off, men in kilts dancing



in the distance during dance class. We sat by spontaneous music jams during meal times. In between classes, bands rehearsed on the porches of their cabins. One night at the kafana, we were torn between the scheduled band playing inside and a 9/8 jam happening out back. We have both vowed to sacrifice a few beloved dance classes at camp next summer for beginner doumbek. We look forward to many more summers of inspiration at Balkan camp. Who knows where it may lead us next. Accordion? Zurna?

Thanks again for a great experience!

Cyndal Ellis is a dance teacher, performer, and choreographer for the Lumiz Dance Theater Company in Brattleboro, Vt., and the Sovereign Collective in Northampton, Mass., specializing in Tribal Fusion and modern dance. She is also a student of Balkan and Turkish folk dances and dances monthly with the Balkan Dance group in Brattleboro.

Ian Bigelow is a painter, carpenter, bicycle mechanic, dishwasher, and community activist in Brattleboro, Vt. He folk dances monthly with the Balkan Dance group in Brattleboro and performs the wash bucket bass with the folk punk band Wingnut Dishwashers Union in Brattleboro and beyond.

a čoček, plate-spinning children, whole lambs cooking on an outdoor spit.

Camp was certainly more than we expected. Ian and I returned to the mundane world overflowing with information on Serbian, Greek, and Turkish folk dancing, to be expected after taking up to six dance classes per day (no, I am not exaggerating; we really like to dance). I also went home with a newfound desire to pursue Balkan music. Being surrounded by great music at every hour was inspiring. We heard students practicing

ANNE STADLMAIR

I teach mostly. For anyone who works with young people, having a general, encyclopedia-ish, jack-of-all-trades kind of knowledge, comes in handy at least once a day. A half scholarship to camp this past summer gave me an opportunity to expand on these qualifications.

I had every intention of taking just one or two classes and acclimatizing myself gradually to the new environment. That plan had pretty much evaporated by the end of the first morning. Inevitably, I could not resist the temptation of learning about something that had been sitting on my to-do list ever since I can remember. I wanted to have the time to learn basic hand drum technique, as well as getting a closer look at clarinet ornamentation that fascinated me while listening to recordings from Greece. In addition to the clarinet class—my original intended workshop—I happily signed up for beginning



doumbek, beginning frame drum and zurna. This was possible because of the generosity of my fellow campers who lent their instruments. Thank you!

Earlier this fall, thanks to a donation of used and renovated instruments, one of my inner-city school band students had the possibility to start on the oboe. As a non-double reed player, anything to do with oboes, embouchure and especially reeds, is a little daunting, but

I did not run and hide. I attribute this surprising reaction to zurna boot camp. It was so satisfying to be immersed in discussions about reeds, techniques, and the elaborations that can be made over the playing qualities of one particular zurna reed. Discussing oboe reeds with my band student makes me feel still connected with my fellow zurna players from last summer.

It was a whole lot of life crammed into a few short days and, well . . . I had a blast. Thanks to the EEFC community and the Dick Crum Scholarship, I met all kinds of great people, learned heaps and along the way renewed my friendship with ouzo—it was exhilarating and all this thanks to a half scholarship!

Anne Stadlmair lives in Toronto, Ontario, and teaches music and movement for small children as well as concert band for grades 5 to 8. She plays weekly in an Indonesian Gamelan ensemble, a samba percussion group, has a varied assortment of earplugs in almost all pockets and bags, and otherwise excels at doing things that are not lucratively forthcoming but do nourish the soul.

CORRINE SYKES

For about three years (ever since I first started into the Balkan music scene), "Balkan Camp" was this mystical, magical, fabled land of Balkan wonders, to be heard of only in the stories and memories of those who had found their way to this wooded wonderland of music. But now, thanks to the generosity of the scholarship donors, I too have found my way to Balkan Camp, and it was more than my wildest imaginings!

I first became interested in Balkan music when, on a whim, I joined the Yale Women's Slavic Chorus three years ago. At the time I had no idea what I was getting into. I was quickly drawn in to the lively Balkan music and dance community in the CT/NY area and have since met so many wonderful people who have been so helpful and generous, always willing to share their knowledge and know-how.

When I got to Balkan Camp, I was overwhelmed with all the wonderful classes and activities, and I of course set out to take a class every period.

After holding out for about two days, taking beginner gaida and tupan, Bulgarian singing,

Balkan dance, and brass band, I quickly deteriorated into a sleepless lump of Balkan

overload! This was wonderful, but I soon trimmed down my course schedule, realizing how right the old wise ones were who laughed at my 5-class naiveté! Left with a healthy offering of tupan and brass band, and partying all night at the glorious kafana, I went home grinning from ear to ear with zurna music still ringing in my brain as I slept. The memories of watching the sun rise over mind-blowing gadulka playing, dancing 'til my feet went numb, and chugging Turkish coffee in hopes of not missing a thing will stay vivid in my mind, as I wait patiently for next year's camp! My sincere thanks to all who helped me along the enchanted path to Balkan Camp!

Corinne Sykes lives in New Haven, Ct., and sings regularly with the Yale Women's Slavic Chorus, serving last year as musical director. She plays doumbek and, now, tupan with the chorus in concert, and seeks out Balkan dances in the area as often as possible.



2010 EEFC MEMBERS

Our 2009 membership drive brought in a total of **\$35,087**.
In addition, we received **\$5,241** towards the Nest Egg Fund
and **\$5,061.50** towards the Dick Crum/Kef Scholarship Fund.

Our 2010 drive is well on its way. Please check out our website
for an [updated list of members](#) and join today! Thanks for your
generous and much-needed contributions!

Bands, Choruses & Dance Groups

Ansamb Mastika
Balkan Babes
Balkan Cabaret
The Balkanics
Balkanistas
Barbelfish Balkan Band
Black Olive Babes
Black Sea Hotel
Bobba Culp
Brass Menažeri Balkan Brass Band
Chubritza International Folk Band
Cope Family Band
Édessa
Folk Dance Fridays
Grupa Dunbarov
Humboldt Folk Dancers
Kafana Klub
Kef
Kitka Women's Vocal Ensemble
Lyuti Chushki
The Mehanatones
Musiki Parea
Orkestra Keyif
Palisades Folk Dancers
Planina Songs of Eastern Europe
Rakiya
Raya Brass Band
Sladki Doumi Women's Balkan Chorus
Slavic Soul Party!
SviraDi
Trei ArcuDi
Trio Zulum
Tuesday Night Revival Balkan Dancing
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Irene Blanchard	Jerry Dalian	Lydia A. Fusetti	Lynette Garlan, James Rumbaugh, Heather & Matthew Garlan	Lazarovic Family	Mara Morris	Chris Rietz & Debora Huxtable	Catherine Springer	Loretta M. Yam
Cipora Blitz	Susan & Teymour Darkhosh	Michael Gage, Sandra Cherin & David Gage	Heather & Matthew Garlan	Michael D. Leach	Linda Mucyn	Lucy Roberts	Greg Squared	Danilo Yanich & Rosemarie Paolinelli
Jeremy Bloom	Kathryn Demos	Bob & Sharon Gardner	Betsy & Jim Garrett	Beth LeaMond	Cathy Murphy-Miles	Tom Robertson	Tzvi Steinhauer	Meg York
Barbara & Joseph Blumenthal	Joyce deSaussure	William B. Gardner	Erica George	Bob Leibman	Al Murray	Vika Robertson	Suze Stentz & Richie Leonard	Joann Young
Laura Blumenthal	Susan Cohen & Tony DeStefano	Lynette Garlan, James Rumbaugh, Heather & Matthew Garlan	Sarada, Craig & Daniel George	Geneviève Leloup	Fanche Nastev	Pauli & Aysha Robinson	C. B. Stevenson	Naomi Zamir
Marion Blumenthal	Mary Dickinson	Heather & Matthew Garlan	Ira Gessel	Sonne & Nick Lemke	Nan Nelson	William Romaine	Buddy Steves & Rowena Young	Alan & Miriam Zemel
Jessica Bondy & Thorn Roby	Judy Donaldson	Betsy & Jim Garrett	Ken, Alexandra & Gaelen Genetti	Fran Levine	Judy Newland	John & Georgia Roussos	Rowan Storm	Dan Ziagos
Abigail Bordeaux	Mary Ann Downs	Erica George	Erika Gerson	Roberta Levine	Carol Newman	Barbara & Norman Rosen	Jim Stoyloff	Erica Zissman & Morty Isaacson
Briget Boyle	Brian Dowsett	Sarada, Craig & Daniel George	Kate Gerson	Mark Levy, Carol Silverman & Nesa Levy	Len Newman & Lisa Shochat	Sanna Rosengren, Erik & Ellinor Myra Rosenhaus	Barbara J. Strey	2 anonymous donors
Tom Bozigian	Szilvia Drimusz	Ira Gessel	John Gibson	Paula Lieberman	Chris Nicholas	Johanna Rubba	Jim Stringfellow, Lisa & Erik Poppleton	
Radica & Davor Braletić	Elyse Dubin	Ken, Alexandra & Gaelen Genetti	Joan Gildemeister	Sue Lindner & David Porter	Jim A. Nicolet	Peter Rushefsky	Helen Stuart & Family	
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Hudi Brenman	Jerry & Jill Duke	Kate Gerson	Dennis Godfrey, Alethea Devi & Andresa Wells	James G. Little & Linda K. Persson	Maria Noël	Elizabeth Ryan	Robert Sullivan	
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Paul Brown	Karen Eckhart	Dennis Godfrey, Alethea Devi & Andresa Wells		Shulamit Locker	Liz Nunan	RosieLee C. Salinas	Demetri Tashie	
Patricia A. Buhl	Laurie Edelman	Robert Godfried		George Long	Melissa Pintar Obenauf	Deborah Sallee	Madelyn "Mady" Taylor	
Jeanne Busch		Laurie Edelman					Dina Trageser	

Thank you!

ATHAN KARRAS



Athan Karras, legendary Greek dance teacher, stage and screen actor, and co-founder of The Intersection Folk Dance Center, died February 12, 2010, in Tarzana, Ca., at age 82. He is survived by his wife, Jeanne, three children and a brother.

Athan was born in Thessaloniki, Greece, in 1927. He became a lead dancer with Panegyris Queen Frederika, the National Dance of Greece Ensemble, under the direction of Dora Stratou. He was a sought-after dance performer, teacher and choreographer, produced folklore programs and events throughout North America, and inspired a generation of folk dancers.

The Intersection, co-founded in Los Angeles in 1964 with Rudy Dannes, became a major venue for folk dancing in Southern California. (Athan later founded the Athens Intersection in Athens below the Acropolis.) Athan directed the

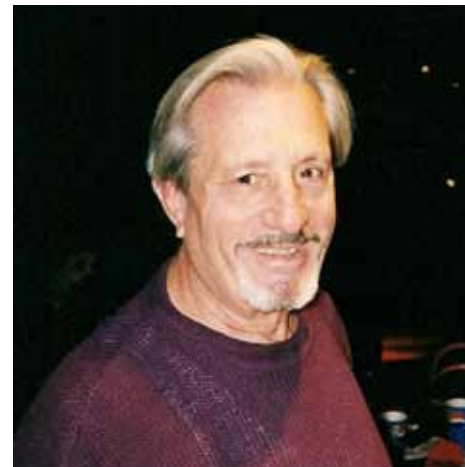
Intersection's Greek dance performing group. He was a board member for AMAN Folk Ensemble, taught Greek Dance and Culture at Loyola Marymount University, and founded the Laografia International Greek Folklore Society. He wrote numerous articles on Greek dance and music.

He taught regularly at such venues as the Basil P. Caloyeras Center, St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, and the California Traditional Musical Society, which honored him with a lifetime achievement award. In 2001 he received the highest award given by the Greek Orthodox Folk Dance Festival of the Western Diocese.

Athan produced the instructional videos, "Learn

Dances with Athan Karras," "Basic Greek Dances for Beginners," and others. He helped bring the Parthenon Dancers of Greece to the U.S. and Canada and took groups on dance festival tours in Greece. He was the U.S. coordinator for Mazoxi, an annual Greek dance conference held in Crete, and produced many Greek festivals and folklore programs in California. Thousands of folk dancers across North America first became exposed to Greek folk dance music through "Soul Dances of the Greeks," an album he produced and popularized.

Athan attended New York University School of Education's Department of Theatre Arts and studied with Lee Strasberg, Uta Hagen and others. He studied dance at the American School of Dance and worked with some of the greats in the dance world, including Michael Fokine, Hanya Holm and Pearl Lang. A



member of Actors' Equity, AFTRA and SAG, he worked as an actor on Broadway, in television, and in motion pictures.

He starred in the 1961 Greek-American film noir, "Dark Odyssey." The film is available on DVD, and on YouTube you can see a [clip from the film](#), in which the young Athan performs a beautiful Levendiko Tsamiko with a sword.

Thanks to the Karras family and Dick Oakes for their contributions to this article.

GEORGE CABA



George Caba, 88, longtime teacher of Romanian violin and Trans-Carpathian Ensemble at the East Coast Balkan Music & Dance Workshops as well as klezmer summer music camps, died on February 17, 2010, in Mechanicsburg, Pa. He is survived by two sons and a sister.

He had worked as a school teacher and retired from the Harrisburg school district. He played violin in several local groups, including The Balkan Brothers, East European Folk Music Ensemble, Jorgovan and Sviraj, and played music for the Serbian, Romanian, and Macedonian communities of Steelton, Lebanon and Philadelphia from the 1950s to 2000.

In a Facebook tribute to George, klezmer musician and occasional EEFC workshop teacher Michael Alpert wrote, "Your sweet, soaring, heartrending

music, the song of the mill and coal towns of Pennsylvania and the industrial Midwest, transported us to a place where hard times and hard work flowed into celebration to the heavens, at weddings, church picnics and in the West Virginia hills, on sunny afternoons and late into the night.

"You were the ultimate good egg, George. You embodied both the heartland of Romania and the heartland of America. In the course of your long life, you brought joy and good times to Romanians, Serbs, Croatians, Hungarians, Jews, CakeEaters and all alike. Playing music with you, just being with you, was a tremendous pleasure for all of us lucky enough to know you. We will miss you always, but you left us a legacy with which we will celebrate and celebrate you forever."

Remembering George Caba

Written by Leslie Barr
Photos by Margaret Loomis



Ramblewood Balkan Camp 1998: George, Alan Zemel, Charlie Pilzer.

The band switched tunes, one Romanian *invirtita* rolling into another, and George started hollering over his fiddle, "What key are we in?! What key are we in?!" He paused for a moment and looked around questioningly at the musicians who were playing in a tight circle around him. No one answered, so after a moment he just shrugged and said with a grin, "Oh, what the hell, I can't hear it anyway." He gave his hearing aid a little twist and dove back into the tune, bowing with an energy that seemed to make a direct connection to the feet of

the dancers whirling around him.

George Caba was a Romanian-American fiddler from Harrisburg, Pa., who played the music of his parents' village in western Romania and nearby corners of Serbia and Hungary. For decades, he played throughout

central Pennsylvania—at weddings, church picnics and Saturday night parties, anywhere people wanted to dance the *ardeleanas* and *sirbas* of the old country. More recently, he played for Balkan music aficionados throughout the Mid-Atlantic. As he got older, his hands became a little shaky, but when he played you could still hear the echoes of his more than 70 years of fiddling.

George recently lived in a Harrisburg suburb, but he grew up in the heart of the city. His parents came to the United States just after World War I, settling, as George

put it, "in the colony where the foreigners were." George's father was a stenciler at what became Harrisburg Steel, swinging an eight-pound hammer all day to engrave serial numbers onto the sides of helium gas tanks. Almost everyone the family knew was Romanian, and George grew up surrounded by traditional culture and music. His father was a cantor at the Romanian Orthodox Church and sang folk songs as well. Women in the neighborhood also sang together, though George said, "They didn't believe in harmony, you know what I mean?"

In those years, the Harrisburg Romanian community had festivals that followed the seasons, traditions from a time when everyone lived out in the country instead of in sooty row houses next to a steel mill. At the dances, George would watch the band. "Mom wanted me to dance," he said, "but I liked to listen to the music." At that time, in the 1920s, the band had just three musicians: Steve Barbu, the fiddler who later taught George how to play; a man who played the contra, a sideways-held violin with a flattened bridge that provides chordal accompaniment; and a bassist.



Buffalo Gap Balkan Camp 1993: George & kids (led by Nesa Levy) at Student Concert.

George started playing violin during high school. His father bought his fiddle for him from the Montgomery Ward catalog—violin, case, bow and an extra set of strings, all for ten dollars. George also played varsity football, and the boys would tease him when they saw him going to his music class with his fiddle under his arm. “I was embarrassed, a big football player playing violin. So going to music school I always went by every alley I knew.”

But he didn't enjoy learning theory and scales, and finally he said to his father, “I'd just like to learn Romanian music.” His father said he would have to ask Steve Barbu, who had grown up in Romania just down the road from George's parents' village. Barbu was happy to pass along his music and gave him lessons for free.

So once a week, George would go to the home of the “old man” for a lesson. Steve Barbu had his own system of music notation. Each note on the violin fingerboard had a number—the “E” string, the highest, was 1, so the open string was written as 10. The next note higher was notated as 11, and the next as 12. The next string down was called 20, and so on. Flats and sharps were notated as a half—F#, for example, was written as 11½. If George played a wrong note, Barbu would yell, “Hey, play 21½, not 21!” One time, George looked at the notebook where he wrote down his tunes and said to me, “I look through this and I think, how the hell did I learn all this?” The pages are filled with long columns of numbers: 30, 33, 21, 23. You read down one column, and then down the next. “I read music like it's Japanese!” he said with a smile.

George kept boxes of old photo albums, all neatly labeled. There were snapshots of him playing music—with Barbu and George's

brother John, who learned to play accordion as a teenager when he was home recovering from appendicitis. George described one night in the early 1950s playing with Steve Barbu: “We played for two hours without stopping. The old man was blind, he couldn't see, and the dancers would dance and then they'd go sit down, and then other ones would come in, and everyone kept stomping and talking and hell, Barbu

heard somebody stomping and talking so he thought he should just keep playing!” There's a shot of dancers at a party in Waynesboro, Pa., doing a line dance in someone's yard, and another of people gathered around the band. George said, “People just came up to the band; we were playing one of the folksongs, and then somebody started singing. Then we played together. It was just a good time for everybody.”

When George played for dances, he called the tunes by number, like take-out Chinese: ones, twos and threes . . . three different dances from Seitin, where his parents had grown up. There are other types of dances throughout Romania, but these were the village dances that George learned as a child. Number ones were *ardeleanās*, long lines of dancers facing each other, their feet doing different steps. George said, “In Romanian *ardeleanās*, the dancers are all going the same way. The first time I went to an American dance, it seemed like everyone was all over the place!” Number twos were the couple-spinning *învîrtiās*. George said, “I know some dance steps that are different but the guys that were really the good dancers, they did all kinds of fancy stuff on this, like spinning the girl around. She goes around the guy and the secret there is she never takes her hands off of him.” Number threes were *pe picioris*, which means “on the foot.” They are danced in a line like number ones.

The tunes are not complex, but still it wasn't easy to follow George as he played. He said, “The gypsies told me, don't ever play it

the same way twice. If you play it differently each time, they don't know whose song you are copying.” His fingers danced around the fingerboard, adding layers of ornaments to the bones of the tune—though to him the tune didn't really exist apart from the ornaments. People had written out transcriptions of many of his tunes, but the written rhythms didn't seem to have much to do with the way the tunes are actually played. Some of the tunes are extremely syncopated, with accents in places you might not expect. Like most folk music, you need to hear the tunes to understand them, or even better, you need to dance to them. When George wasn't sure of a tempo, he always got up to dance a few steps to see if the music would fit the dance.

George spoke sometimes about how things had changed. The Romanian community is pretty much gone from Harrisburg. “Early on,” George said, “you had to marry a Romanian girl, but later it wasn't so important.” As economic situations improved, the children of immigrants moved away from the inner city. Other Orthodox churches in the area started having services in English—the Serbians, the Macedonians, the Greeks—and many Romanians just started going to those. The Romanian Orthodox Church in Harrisburg was sold around 1980. Socially, things changed as well, and immigrant groups became absorbed into mainstream society.

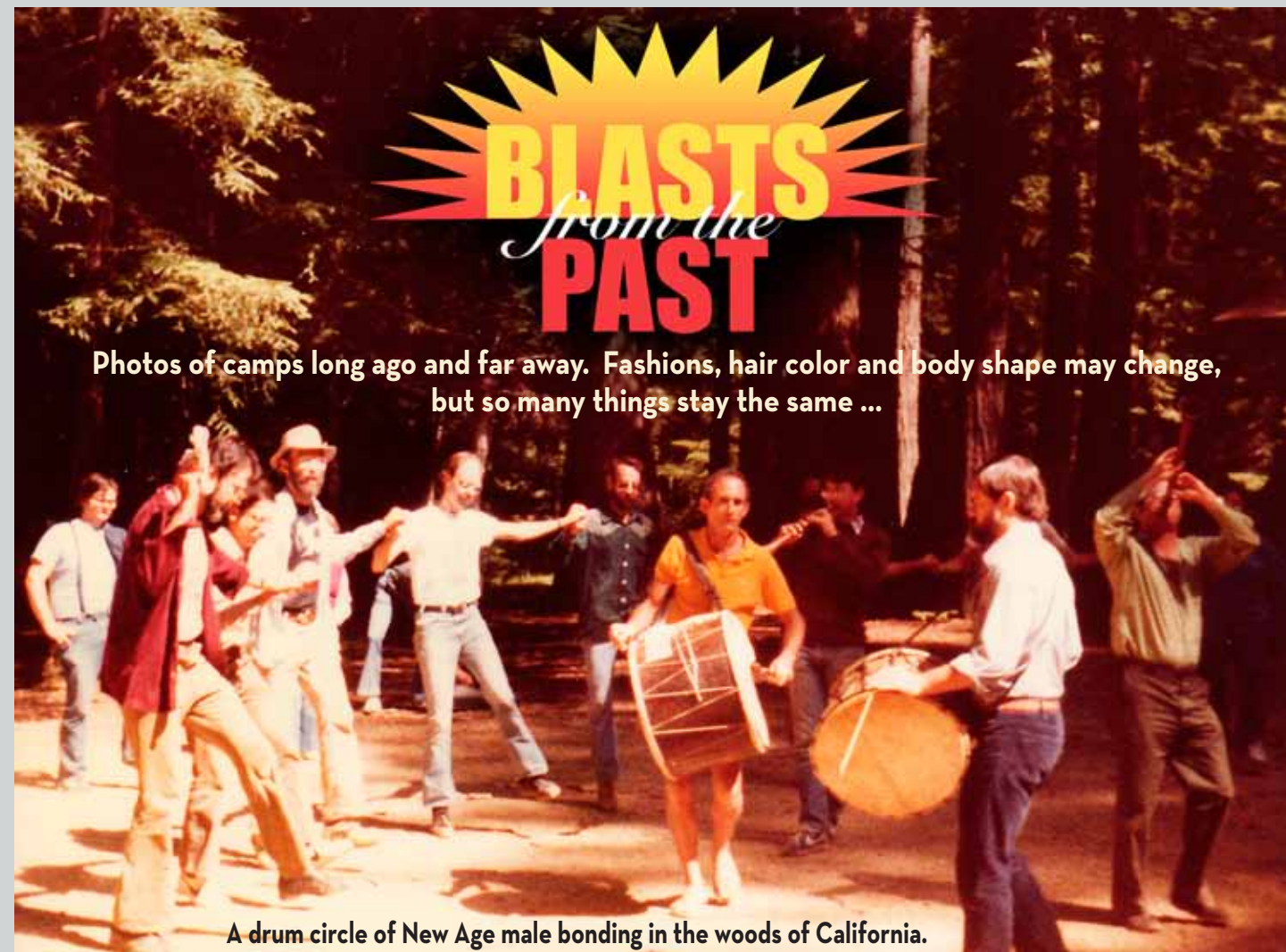
In the last two decades, George was involved in a new kind of community—that of musicians and dancers who enjoy traditional Balkan music, no matter what their background. He played for dances and parties and taught, especially at the EEFC's annual East Coast Balkan camp. Just like his own teacher, George generously shared his music with anyone who wanted to learn. He said, “If someone's interested in learning we never talk about money. I'm glad to do it just to get someone to carry on the thing. That's the way Barbu was.”

At a gathering in Maryland a few years ago, George looked over at a group of teenage girls trying his tunes for the first time, and suggested a different way to handle the rhythm. Then he grinned and said, “It always sounds better when it's right.”

Leslie Barr lives, fiddles and teaches elementary school music in Maryland. She had the pleasure of playing with George many times.



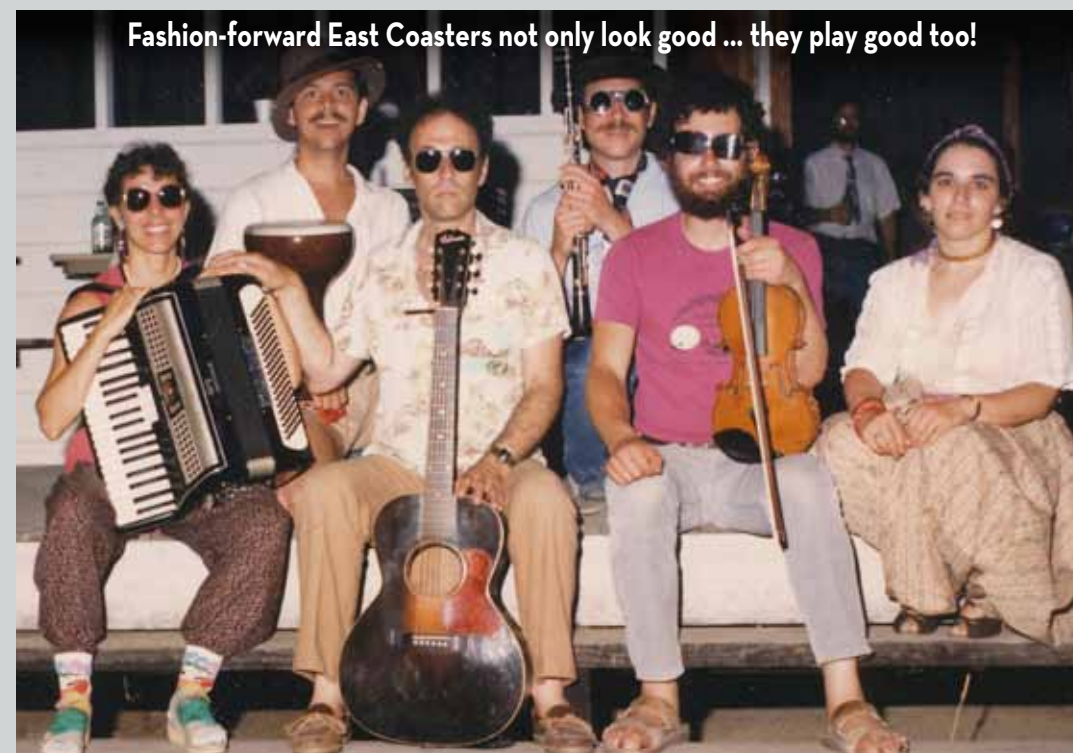
Recent photo with Jeanne Busch



Photos of camps long ago and far away. Fashions, hair color and body shape may change, but so many things stay the same ...

A drum circle of New Age male bonding in the woods of California.

Mendocino 1981: Bob Leibman leads Mark Levy, Jim Little, Dan Prendergast and Rich Thomas in a dance to the music of Mark Forry and Dave Golber on zurlu, and Ed Leddel and Dan Auvil on tapan. Bill Cope observes from behind. Photo by Sandy Ward



Fashion-forward East Coasters not only look good ... they play good too!

Buffalo Gap, 1987:

Front to back, L to R:
first row: Lauren Brody, Stuart Brotman, Bruce Sagan, Carol Silverman

second row: Seido Salifoski, Mark Levy

Stewart Mennin lurks in the background.

Photo provided by Lauren Brody