

## Stockton Winter Weekend 2022 in tail lights

Suspense building, anticipation high!! Previews had hinted that the Stockton Team would astound us during Winter Weekend 2022, but how? January 28 arrived. 300 folks zoomed in for warm ups led by Andy Taylor-Blenis. More joined the fun—1,700+ registrations by Monday afternoon-- and what a stunning menu of magic unfolded!

**Consummate musicians!** Orkestar Unbound invited improvisation with a Bulgarian Rom Kjuček as their opening tune. The incomparable Rosen sisters played & danced the classic, Dospatsko. Feedback in chat was a collective “Bravo!” as Orkestar closed their 1<sup>st</sup> of many sets and Zeljko zoomed into view.

**Surprise teaching assistants!** 1<sup>st</sup> teacher, Željko, featured the Tamburitza ensemble flawlessly demonstrating dance steps as he cued zoom participants. “Z” cleaned up some dances he had previously taught at Stockton Camps—Al Je Ljepo from Baranja and Drmeš iz Marijanaca from Slavonia—plus debuted for North America the charming dance, Štiri Snehe, from Međimurje. He also taught Otezavac and Šokačko kolo 2. Instruction concluded with video recordings of the Tammies performing suites choreographed by Željko. Scenes from Dances of Turopolje and A Wedding Feast in Podravina dazzled viewers. Zeljko noted that both males and females in Croatia dance with equal energy, and precision. Men sport flashy swords & capes but women upstage them with their sweet faces. Z delights in representing Croatian culture. He reflects, “I recollect the traditional arts of our ancestors; I commemorate their efforts to enrich traditional treasure. For me a folk art is characterized by calmness and dignity, thoughtfulness and perseverance, deep emotion, a pride-experienced-existence. I dedicated my life to preserve and perpetuate that!” We participants felt grateful for Zeljko’s concise instruction & attention to historical/ cultural details. We were inspired by the Tammies’ precision and energy! One viewer wrote: “The video of the performance group was so well done, with such cohesiveness, flair, but not overly ostentatious or flamboyant. Their singing and especially the harmonies were gorgeous and the joy they all exuded was contagious. The show actually brought tears to my eyes, thinking about the pride they must have felt showcasing their culture, traditions and such delight as they danced their hearts out to share their culture with us.”

**Can Do Cooperation!** The Stockton team again collaborated with FACONE (Folk Arts Center of New England) to sponsor a master teacher. The “Zoomskata Trojka” included Jaap Leegwater, accompanied by Jan Wollring on accordion, with tech support by Tijn Boissevain. Jaap provided dance “archaeology,” (background) re-taught and introduced new dances from his Bulgarian repertoire. Sitno Severnjasko Horo required agile feet, Minka, graceful hands, Lamba Lamba Kopanica, a wide-awake brain. Kukuneško

demanded attention to its syncopated rhythm, as did Povlekana. Jaap invited us to compare our execution of Erkečko Kolo with that of students at the Choreographic School in Bulgaria. Folks appreciated Jan playing a slow tempo when steps were introduced and picking up the pace as we became familiar with the pattern. “The live music makes Jaap’s dances easier to learn!” commented one viewer. Contact Jaap for musical recordings, including a new medley of Svornato melodies. [jaapleegwater13@gmail.com](mailto:jaapleegwater13@gmail.com). Several recordings feature Jan (the man with the golden fingers) and his band.

**Misconceptions corrected!** The dance figures we learned at Stockton Camp 2006 for Gorarçe were not the original ones notated by Lisette Langeveld & Martin Ihns. Roberto set the record straight and re-visited his energetic Rom dance Te Joci Cu Focul plus 2 vigorous Bulgarian dances, Vlaško Čucano and Kloca. We vowed to practice and to dance them competently during afterparties at next summer’s 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary camp.

**Lucky coincidence!** Lunar New Year festivities coincided with Winter Weekend and >400 participants logged on to celebrate at the Asia Party. 12 groups from Japan, Taiwan, Korea and China (yes, China!) led dances, and explained holiday traditions. The party opened to the haunting melody of a Japanese flute played by a member of the Sonce (Rising Sun) dance club in Tokyo. Video snippets illustrated: “Hane tsuke,” the Japanese paddle game in which the loser gets a black ring around his/her eye to ward off bad spirits; dragon dancers parading along sparkler lit streets; the dangerous Beehive Fireworks in which folks participate to pray for blessings and courage in the coming year; agile lion dancers performing acrobatics above a pool in Kaoshung. Live in their dance hall kimono clad musicians of Team Nagoya played Bulgarian instruments for dancing. Vincent, leader of the I-Lan University Club (in existence 30 years), invited us to try rice bars coated with sesame seeds & peanuts, before they performed dances from Tibet, West India and Taiwan. The White Day FD Club in China came about when spokesman, Hunt Lin, and other dancers relocated from Taiwan and Hong Kong for work. 7+ dance groups now exist in China, all sprouting from one teacher at a university in Taiwan. (“Never underestimate the power of one individual...” adapted from Margaret Mead.) Young Oro dancers expertly performed a Turkish spoon dance. ASAMO club dancers in Seoul dressed in vintage ball gowns for Bohemian National Polka. The Happy Dancers of Kaoshung closed the party by leading a peppy Bavno Oro. Club spokesperson Nisan Pen explained the purpose of firecrackers and red papers on the wall for New Year’s --scare off monsters-- and wished for everyone to become rich during the year of the Tiger. We do feel rich in culture and international friendship. Fusae Carroll and Rebecca Tsai recruited clubs and organized the Asian party.

**Surprise addition Euro Party 2022!** Dance leaders in Greece, Germany, Bulgaria, the Netherlands and Spain accepted Ahmet's invitation to participate. Yannis Konstantinou advised us to drink warm rakia with honey during cold weather to ward off chill. Dancing Tsotso and Karsilama with him also generated heat. Kyriakos Moisidis exclaimed that retsina fueled his group of 4 friends, which included Rena Karyofyllidou. They joyfully danced selections from Macedonia, Thrace, Pontos and Kars. Iliana and Todor set out party platters for members of Voivodinsi in the Folk Arts center near Plovdiv. Dancers wore traditional costumes to perform selections from various regions of Bulgaria with Iliana and Todor singing and Todor accompanying on accordion. We viewers wished we could have also enjoyed their post-performance feast. Tineke and Maurits led Yarn Anoush, Gajda and other dances they had introduced at Stockton Camp. They noted that they choose the music first when planning which dances to teach. Ahmet echoed, "If you grab peoples' hearts with the music, the steps will follow." Petra Bergmann brought her "big sound machine" to a snowy park in Munich. Wearing a fluffy blue scarf and giant smile she led her group and those of us simultaneously dancing in little squares on screen. Ibrahim and Heidemarie, also of Munich, led a set from their home, followed by Gergana Panova-Tekath and students at the Folkwang University of Arts. Their youth & pep inspired us to join them in a lively Sborinka and Kazundzha. The Euro party concluded with a charming dance leader making his Stockton debut, Gabriel Frontera, of Mallorca. Paintings & posters crowded the walls in the studio where Gabriel showed the basic Jota step. His troupe demonstrated complex variations with high kicks, graceful leaps, dizzying turns, castanets and clapping. Gabriel stressed that the Jota is always improvised; usually the female dancer leads the male in initiating variations. The group desires to visit Chicago and San Francisco. Could they be persuaded to make a side trip to Stockton?

**Open House invitation!** Richard Powers welcomed Zoomers for a tour of his "House of curiosities." Richard's distinctive collections include books, posters, paintings, prints, scores, sculptures, historic documents, oddities and intriguing objects. Most treasures relate to dance. Especially noteworthy: an original document from colonial days in which King George charged 3 men with the crime of "dancing and reveling" without paying taxes for the privilege. The sole furnishings in one handsome room is the oldest surviving Baldwin concert grand piano. Richard designed, illustrated and hand lettered posters for balls he produced. Fun fact: Images on those posters are of Richard and friends. His libraries include 19<sup>th</sup> century dance manuals, satire, fiction and more. The oldest book was printed in Venice in 1590. He narrated the history and significance of his acquisitions as he shared titles such as "From the Dance Hall to Hell" and "Why Sinners Dance & Saints Should Not." Richard demonstrated how to use a "patter planner" which preceded computers as a tool for square dance callers to plan dance progressions. We

could have wandered through his collections all day but it was time to dance the Palais Glide.

**Global expansion!** Andy Taylor-Blenis gracefully danced and carefully taught 2 dances from the Pacific Islands: Himig Sa Nayon, a partner dance in waltz time from the Philippines and E Pele E Pele, a hula about the goddess of the volcano. One participant commented, “It was nice to have something a little different from our wonderful, expanding repertoire of Balkan, Greek, Israeli, Turkish dances.” Alicia La Fetra, official photographer for WW ’22, added that Andy teaching a dance from the Philippines brought back childhood memories since she was born there.

**Innovation!** The Stockton planning team responded to feedback from previous camps by creating an eclectic category, “Bits & Bites.” They compiled interviews, puzzles, poetry, amusing video clips, announcements, upcoming events & reminders to support artists with donations into Bits & Bites. (100% of participants’ donations are contributed to artists; the planning and production team members all **volunteer!**) During Bits & Bites Zoomers could elevate their feet and exercise their brains between dance sessions. We squealed in astonishment as tractors square danced with precision at the 2018 PA Farm Show. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZYeAv8ekmE>. Marcie Van Cleave presented a poem prompted by a sign in Scotland, “Changing Priorities Ahead” She authored the poem as a reflection on the pandemic. Emcee, Shelley Allison, interviewed Andy Taylor-Blenis who related stories about her legendary parents, Marianne & Cornell Taylor. Andy reminded us that continual strengthening is required throughout life as we “acquire” hip & shoulder issues. She insists that her own body is a testament to the benefits & demands of dance. Andy suggested that we read Howard Gardner’s book, *Frames of Mind*, to understand dance as a means to organize knowledge. “Folk dancing is brain strengthening!” asserts Andy. Shirley Johnson, musician, played and sang. Lee Otterholt interviewed Betty Solloway, a 102-year-old dancer in his group at Laguna Woods. Betty began folk dancing in the 1930’s while a student at UCLA. She resumed dancing with the Griffith Park group in the 1940’s to lose a few pounds and gained a partner, husband Carl. They danced through life for 55 years until his passing. Betty attributes her long and graceful life to chocolate! Attending folk dance sessions and public lectures at UCI also contributes to Betty’s well-being. Gordon Deeg & Kamrin McKnight explained the origin of their famous wine & cheese party at Stockton Camp. Melanie Lawson Kareem strummed her ukulele and sang. Campers who fell in love with ukuleles and Melanie’s positive demeanor during Camp workshops eagerly enrolled in virtual classes in 2020. Linda Milhoan exclaimed “It’s the happy spot in my day!” Jolie Mayer-Smith from Vancouver said that “It is the most significant activity in which I participated during the pandemic.” Both she and Suzanne Frank feel that they have learned to sing as well as play. Adony asserts “Melanie transformed the world of ukulele.” Melanie replies, “I’m

changing the world 4 strings at a time!” Find Melanie on the web to put positivity into your day. Kudos to the Stockton team for inventing Bits & Bites!

**Special, not sorrowful!** Scheduling 2 sessions at WW '22 to honor Bruce Mitchell allowed viewers to become acquainted with Bruce in multiple capacities. Family, fishing, folk dancing, leadership, playing pranks and attention to his appearance were all significant elements of Bruce's life. His younger sister Cookie observed that the saying “We're working on Mitchell time,” came about because he would not leave the house until his hair was perfect and everything in order for an appointment, class or gig. He was at Stockton Camp for 68 years, many as director. He carried camp notes around in a leather-bound book and earned the nickname, “Big Kahauna” while initiating or abetting many Camp traditions. Gordon observed that in the early years European teachers were not accustomed to the Stockton College rule banning alcohol on campus. Bruce could be persuaded to smuggle contraband as laundry in oversize pillowcases for after party enjoyment. Bruce loved to dance, teach dance and perform on stage. He was a member of the exhibition group, Cantia, for its 50 years of existence. The ensemble performed dances from 9 countries, with German dances for Octoberfest parties a signature suite. Summer vacations included fishing expeditions; Bruce actually did catch a 25 lb. salmon. Both as school principal and camp director he welcomed new faculty and staff with warmth. He did not welcome red peppers in his cuisine. So vehemently did he reject peppers that it's surprising he allowed Jaap to teach “Kak Se Čuka Čern Piper” at camp in 2011. The most memorable of the numerous prank stories was told by son Sean who arranged for Bruce to get a traffic citation for “driving over 55” shortly after his 56<sup>th</sup> birthday. Bruce got even!

**Listened & learned!** The committee responded to requests for programs to be scheduled 'round the clock, 23 ½ hours per day! Rebecca Tsai and Evan Chu interviewed, emceed and danced on the night shift. Paul Collins and others provided tech support to replay videos of WW '22 sessions. Folks appreciated the opportunity to catch classes they had missed, or to get extra practice for dances they want to add to their club programs.

**Mind boggling!** “What's My Line (Dance)?” game(s) premiered at WW '22. Engineered by Murray Spiegel, with assistance from the team, the game asked players to view short clips of folks dancing with audio muted and identify the dance. Meanwhile the clock counted down 15 seconds. Paul Collins scored 24. In the advanced, extreme, SUPER edition of the game the dance videos were not only muted, some cut off the dancers' legs. Others depicted dancers moving in wrong LOD, or flipped so they appeared to dance on the ceiling, or reversed so they appeared to dance backwards. Jacques Dallaire of Québec City scored 21. Congratulations, Paul & Jacques! Thanks, Puzzlemaster

Murray, for the fun. The comment, "Creativity Unbound!" which was directed to Murray, applies to the entire planning team.

**About time!** Steve Kotansky was allocated 1 ½ hours to talk! Topic: historical background and evolution of 3 iconic Macedonian dances, Berance, Postupano and Kopačka. Due to the sudden passing of his mother, Polyxene Konstantinou, Yannis was unable to co-present. Yannis' father, Simos Konstantinou, escaped to Yugoslavia during the Greek Civil War. Living in Northern Macedonia he performed with the Tanec ensemble during the politically chaotic period after World War II. When he returned to Greece Simos was imprisoned until Dora Stratou intervened and employed him in her company in Athens. Simos' talent was especially on display when improvising Berance. Steve explained that village dances were already becoming codified for stage and film early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Film clips from 1940's & '50's depicted Pece Atanasovski, Atanas Kolarovski and Simos in performances as agile young dancers. Fun Fact: Pece was at first denied acceptance into Tanec Ensemble due to short stature.

**Welcome reprisals!** Drumming with Polly Tapia Ferber, singing with Michele Simon, sensational cinema hours with Ahmet, and opening and closing dance parties were thoroughly enjoyable elements of previous virtual festivals that returned in 2022. Winter Wonderland Party, emceed by Stacy Rose & Gigi Jensen featured veteran and newbie-to-Stockton dance leaders. Roo Lester offered a winterized version of Ersko Kolo. Jordan Uggla ended the Charleston Madison by somersaulting into our homes. The closing party was hosted by Dale Adamson and Wendy Brown. Dance sets were led by planning team members who had labored voluntarily for hours unseen to produce WW '22. Now on center stage to lead their favorite dances, the hard-working volunteers were showered with praise and gratitude.

**Encore!** Orkestar Unbound played throughout the weekend with exquisite beauty and a varied repertoire to much acclaim! Bill Cope directed the band comprised of himself, Ariana and Amberly Rosen, Jamie Cowan, and Balder ten Cate. Spotlights often featured Lew Smith and Melissa Miller leading dances in the sunlight of the adjoining Cope-a-cabana terrace. When the Rosen sisters played the Dutch "Ijswals" proud mom Joyce Holcomb waltzed with husband Gordon in the spotlight. Eileen Hug, tech and dancing participant enthused, "The live band was fabulous! Their arrangements were interesting. A lot of people were dancing and enjoying the music. I think they should release multiple CDs!" Bill, name your price. 1,700 folks will pay to download WW '22 music. Folks loved the gentle banter between band members during Orkestar's sets-- Made us feel like we were in the same dance hall!

**Thanks for everything!** Stockton's 4<sup>th</sup> online camp excelled on all counts! Technology was perfect. Timing was on the minute. Videos instantly popped onto the screen. The schedule was easy to read, and download. Programs were intriguing. Attendees set aside their regular activities, pre-emptively prepared meals, swept the floor, upgraded their connections and zoomed in for 3 days. Positive comments resulted:

"Thank you to the incredible volunteers that made this camp happen. So grateful to them for their generosity and selflessness with their time and efforts. So impressed with their joy in their efforts, and their dedication to keep International dance going!"

"Zoom Stockton camps since two years contribute to build a large worldwide community of people interested by folk dancing. We begin to see more young people interested by folk dancing but they seem to like more actual folk music and maybe that is a way to attract them."

"By these zoom sessions, I realize how folk dancing is everywhere."

"I can't imagine how much work is necessary to have a such great week-end, and how empathic, friendly and helping people are in this team."

"The camp was fantastic and run very smoothly. Thanks to the hard work of the organizer, the staffs, the volunteers, the dance teachers and leaders, the MCs, the tech people, and the list goes on. Thank you all. The programs were also wonderful. "

The Core planning team, Adony Beniares, Cricket Raybern, Dale Adamson, Murray & Randi Spiegel, Ellie Wiener, Holly Plotner, Ahmet Luleci, Evan Chu & Steve Himel, who all gave their time and talent voluntarily, can glow with pride of accomplishment, catch up on sleep, and let their imaginations wander to improbable ideas for the next festival.

Thanks to the participating artists! This festival, and all donations to the festival, were dedicated to your well-being and continued contribution to folk dance. May you prosper during the year of the Tiger!