



ATANAS KOLAROVSKI

Atanas is a dancer, a teacher, and a friend of many folk dancers. Many of us became acquainted with Atanas for the first time at Folk Dance Camp, University of the Pacific, Stockton, California, in 1966. Since that time he has returned to Folk Dance Camp eight times. Last summer, at camp, Atanas and I sat down and talked about his early life, his dancing with Taneč, and his life here in the United States.

Atanas was born into a family of dancers and musicians. He learned to dance with his family in the village Dračevo. The dance "Pravo Dacevsko" in 7/8 meter and was taught by Atanas in the 1987 Stockton camp. The dance is from the village of Dračevo. There were thirty-nine people in Atanas' family. His father had six brothers. Atanas had four brothers and two sisters. His family still lives in Macedonia. The group danced on all Holy days, birthdays and at picnics. In the early days they had no radio, and no TV, so music for the dance was often supplied by friends. Mile Kolarov, an uncle who played the kavel and sapka, was often the musician for the dance. At an early age Atanas remembers "Baba Dzurdza" and a story told by his uncle. This dance is still danced in nearby villages. "Baba" is translated "Grandmother". "Baba Dzurdza", written in 7/16 meter, was taught by Atanas at Stockton camp in 1980. In his class, he said "when visiting in Skopje area and attending a dance, don't, under any circumstances lead the dance. Also do not start a new line since the man leading the original line has paid the orchestra leader for the privilege of leading the dance."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> pg 89. 1980, Stockton folk dance notes for complete story.

As a youth Atanas became more and more interested in dance. He went whenever there was an opportunity to dance - to other villages, towns, and festivals. In 1944 Atanas went into the army. He concluded he was lucky. He was located in Skopje for fifteen days. A musician from Skopje worked with everyone who wished to sing and dance. There were many auditions for dancing and singing. A small group was chosen. Only Atanas stayed with the ensemble, which at that time was the only group in Macedonia. They were to perform for army troops. For over three months Atanas developed programs which were performed for wounded soldiers and army troops behind the lines.

After two years Atanas went to the regular army in Belgrade. This group brought people from every area in Yugoslavia. They all had experience in music, dancing and singing. Atanas learned the culture of all areas and was able to learn the dances from every region. The group travelled all over Yugoslavia, and to areas where the dances originated. Although Atanas had primarily taught dances from Macedonia, he in 1982 taught two dances from Serbia.

"Draganova Kolo" in 7/8 meter is from East Serbia, near the Bulgarian border. The music was arranged by Dragan. This is an example of a dance named after a musician. Also "Lepove Kolo" in 6/8 meter, taught in 1980, was also from Serbia. "Vlasko" means "of the Vlach", a nomadic people whose language is similar to Rumanian. These people were traditionally shepherders.<sup>2</sup>

Ljubka, Atanas' wife, a member of Kočo, came to Belgrade in 1949. And in 1949 Atanas returned to Macedonia, to Skopje, for the purpose of joining Taneč. Kočo and Taneč in 1949 merged ensembles to become a professional group, "The Macedonian State Folk Ensemble". Atanas remained with Taneč from 1949 to 1964, a period of fifteen years. Taneč was the first ensemble after World War II to

---

<sup>2</sup> pg 46, 1982, Stockton folk dance notes.

travel in the United States. In 1956, Atanas, touring with Taneč, was able to teach.

"He taught "Kopacka", written in 2/4 meter, was a most popular dance from eastern Macedonia. This dance was taught again by Atanas in 1980, at Stockton folk dance camp. It originally was a man's dance, symbolizing how man worked on the farm. "Kopacka" means "hoe".<sup>3</sup>

In 1964 Taneč went to Russia. Fortunately Atanas had learned Russian while working with officers when the Russian army was stationed in Yugoslavia. He sometimes still speaks Russian with Russians who live in Seattle.

In 1964 Atanas met Dennis Boxell and Rickey Holden in Belgrade. Atanas at that time was the artistic director for Taneč as well as solo dancer and singer. Dennis Boxell was preparing records for Folkraft, with the purpose of bringing Taneč to the United States in 1965. Dennis toured with Atanas and stayed in Atanas' home for several months in 1964 and 1966. Taneč again came to the United States in 1964 and when Taneč returned to Macedonia Atanas stayed on in the United States. Atanas had a six months contract with Folkraft. However, Atanas still had four months on his contract with Taneč. Because of his Folkraft contract Atanas did not return to Macedonia, and was released from Taneč.

Atanas decided to do research and concentrate on traditional dance and music. Walter Koegler, in 1964, began arranging tours for Atanas. Atanas particularly enjoys teaching in the United States, and then Holland.

In 1970 Lilijana, Atanas' daughter went to London to study English. A doctor who had attended Stockton folk dance camp several times visited Atanas in his home in Macedonia and met his family. The doctor offered to sponsor Lilijana to

---

<sup>3</sup> pg 49, 1982 Stockton folk dance notes.

the United States. She wished to study and go to college. One day a friend came to Atanas' home and said, "your daughter is to be married". In 1972 Ljubka, Atanas' wife, travelled to Seattle for the wedding. Atanas also attended the wedding, but returned to Skopje to be with his youngest daughter, Juliana. Juliana married in Macedonia. After a period of time, as the marriage did not work out, Atanas brought Juliana and her son to Canada. After two years Juliana came to the United States. In April 1990 Juliana married a building engineer, Her son is now 18.

After Lilijana's wedding Ljubka wanted to stay in the United States. She has fallen love with the way of life in the States. She became a member of the International Folklore club of Seattle. The International Folklore center asked Ljubka to stay in the United States and teach. She said that she would like to stay. She applied for her green card, and upon receiving it called the club who really needed someone to teach. She used her knowledge of Macedonian dance to teach. Ljubka had been a member of the Macedonia ensemble Kočo and Taneč. Ljubka also taught in Vancouver, B.C.

Atanas, in his research in dance and music has encouraged dancers to be more aware of meter and to know more about the dances they dance. Atanas was a pioneer in teaching Folk Dance in Europe. Folk Dance has grown throughout the world. Atanas is now more active than ever. He has travelled to Holland 6-7 times. The Netherlands have a Folk Dance Federation. He has taught at seven camps in the United States, as well as teaching 4-5 times in Hong Kong, Bangkok, and Singapore. He has also taught in Japan on nine occasions. He returned to Japan in April 1991. Atanas would like to slow down, but teaching the dances he loves and being able to play his accordion is more exciting. He has encouraged young people to bring their instruments to camp, and an orchestra for dancing has been developed at many camps.

by Miriam B. Lidster