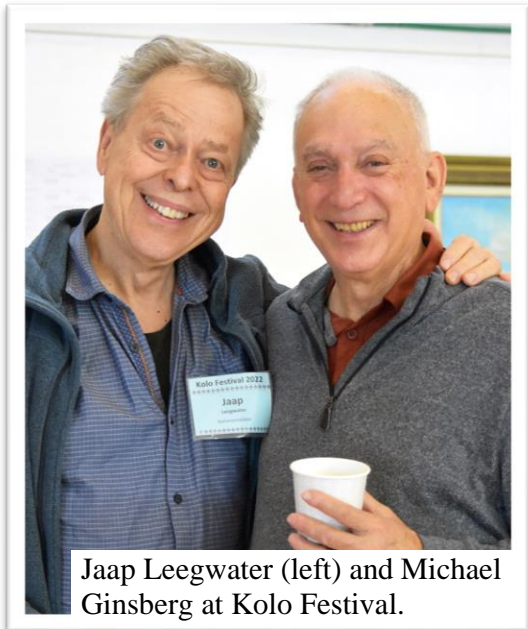


# THE FAMILY PHOTO ALBUM

All the photos below (by L. Tucker) are from the Kolo Festival held in San Francisco November 25-27, 2022.



Jaap Leegwater (left) and Michael Ginsberg at Kolo Festival.



Sonia Dion led a line of dancers for Iedera.



Sonia Dion and Cristian Florescu enjoyed dancing together when the Spagâ Romanian Trio played on Friday night.



Bill Cope and Craig Kurumada played the gaida during the Balkan Jam on Friday night.



Marina Troost and Aaron Alpert (front) and Rebecca Tsai and Evan Chu danced Livavtini, played by Orkestar Unbound on Saturday night.

# KOLO FESTIVAL BROUGHT US TOGETHER AGAIN

by Betsy Moore

The Kolo Festival is held on the Friday and Saturday of Thanksgiving weekend, and this was its 71st year! This year, I attended almost the entire festival (I couldn't quite make it in time for the first workshop at 9 am, but stayed until midnight both days) and it was definitely time well spent. In recent years, the Kolo Festival has found a good home at the Croatian American Cultural Center in San Francisco, which has a large main room with a stage, and a smaller side room that is used for a singing class during the day and the Kafana at night. During the day there are dancing and singing workshops by master teachers, and each evening there's dancing to live music in both rooms. Since there's always something going on in both rooms, it's not possible to participate in everything.

Each of the dance teachers led a morning and an afternoon workshop each day. I attended three of Michael Ginsburg's sessions and two of Sonia Dion and Cristian Florescu's.

Michael teaches Balkan dances, mainly from Macedonia and Bulgaria. He has a very effective teaching style where he helps dancers to make a mental map of a dance, and I love the rhythms, the music, and the energy of the dances he teaches. For a warm-up at one session, we did the full 6½ minute cut of his Trakijska Râčenica – woohoo!

As everyone probably knows, Sonia and Cristian teach Romanian dances. They are really fun (and funny) and very talented teachers, and they taught a wide variety of dances. There was one, Iedera, which they described as a ritual, that was really beautiful and was played at that evening's party by Orkestar Unbound (photo on the previous page).

I attended only one of the singing workshops led by Michele Simon. There were 6-8 of us, from beginners (me) to more advanced singers, and Michele did a nice job teaching us all both the melody and the drone parts to two songs – one Bulgarian and one Macedonian. It was thrilling to be able to make music together.

Lunch and dinner each day were catered by Hristo Kolev. His Portobello Wellington is fantastic! I heard that the polenta on Friday night was maybe even better, but I went around the corner for sushi that day so didn't have it.

The dance teachers gave a Culture Corner presentation after lunch each day. On Friday, Michael gave a very interesting, informal talk about many subjects: how he got into dance teaching, his band, the flugelhorn (not a trumpet), and dancing at festivals and villages in Bulgaria and Macedonia. On Saturday, Sonia and Cristian's presentation was a fun and engaging introduction to some basics of the Romanian language, with an eye to giving us a better understanding of the dance names.

After dinner each day was a live music jam, where the charts were provided and attendees were invited to play or sing with some of the musicians from the various bands. I attempted to sing at the Tam Jam on Saturday.

There was no way I could keep up with all the unfamiliar words, but it was enjoyable, nonetheless. After the jam, Maria Bebelekova, with several gajda players, led us in singing and dancing to Rhodope songs – beautiful!

The bands at both evening parties were excellent, from Spagâ Romanian Trio, to Orkestar Unbound, to "Michael's Band," to Chubritza. We were lucky to have such talented musicians, and I love the synergy of musicians and dancers creating a joyful experience together.



"Michael's Band" played at the evening parties. *Photo by L. Tucker.*

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## KOLO FESTIVAL – *continued*

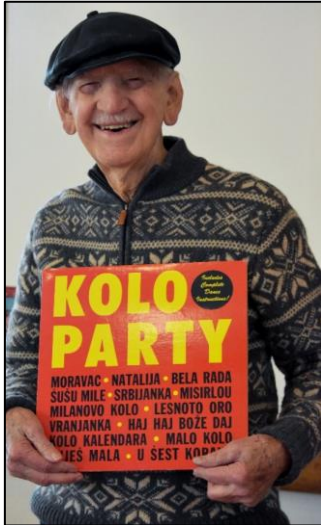
I always enjoy spending time in the Kafana, where you can buy a drink from Paul, the friendly bartender, and listen or dance to the musicians playing in a more informal and intimate setting. Jaap Leegwater did a very nice job as the Kafanameister. He led lots of dances and showed us some cool variations. If you've seen me dance, you might guess correctly that my favorite was the "teenager" čoček variation.

Thanks to all of the folks who stepped up and led dances! I also liked it when Craig Kurumada or Melissa Miller hopped out of the jam band to show us a dance we could do to the tune they were playing.

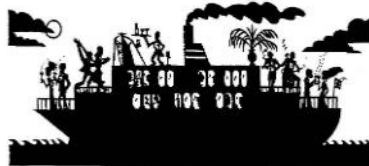
Another of my favorite moments was near the end of Saturday's party, when Chubritza played Kostursko Oro, which was introduced in the 1950s by Kolo Festival founder John Filcich, who is now 97 years old. John was there and led the dance!

Congratulations and thanks to Kolo Festival Director Bill Cope and the entire team for such a successful festival!

John Filcich, Kolo Festival's Founder, at 97; he has attended the Kolo Festival every year. *Photo by L. Tucker.*



Dancing at the Kolo Festival's Kafana. *Photo by L. Tucker.*



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