

# SLOVENIAN DANCES AND THEIR SOURCES IN CALIFORNIA

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*Slovenian dance repertoire in California is traced in two social contexts: international recreational folk dancing events and Slovene/American community events. Dancers in California Folk Dance Federation clubs dance to recorded music, while Slovene/American events feature local accordion-based bands. Recorded music in the clubs offers a non-changing soundscape for the dancers, who conform uniformly to a taught sequence of a dance that fits the recording in contrast to greater dancing variance at Slovene/American dance events.*

Keywords: *California; Folk Dance Federation; Slovene/Americans; accordion bands; polka*

*Slovenski plesni repertoar v Kaliforniji živi v dveh družbenih kontekstih: ob mednarodnih rekreacijskih ljudskih plesnih dogodkih in ob dogodkih slovensko-ameriške skupnosti. V klubih kalifornijskega Združenja za ljudske plesne plesalci plešejo ob posnetkih glasbe, medtem ko ob slovensko-ameriških dogodkih gostijo lokalne harmonikarske zasedbe. Posneta glasba v klubih ponuja plesalcem nespremenljivo zvočno podobo: plesalci se poenotijo in uskladijo z naučeno plesno sekvenco, ustrezno glasbenemu posnetku, kar je v nasprotju z veliko plesno variantnostjo v slovensko-ameriških plesnih dogodkih.*

Ključne besede: *Kalifornija, Združenje za ljudske plesne, Slovenci/Američani, harmonikarski orkestri, polka*

## PRELUDE

My earliest introduction to dances of Slovenia was by Mirko Ramovš during the Folklore Summer School (*Ljetna škola folklorā*), held at the sport's center on Badija island (near the island of Korčula), August 1969, and then again on Badija in 1971. I remember his careful and well-organized instructions with background information on the dances. I recall thinking that his fine teaching had to do with his knowledge of Kinetography Laban, which is an excellent tool to perceive and to analyze dancing movements, but also to describe movements to those of us who were not familiar with the dance forms. Although Kinetography Laban was part of the summer school curriculum taught by Bruno Ravnikar (also from Ljubljana), I was already familiar with the notation system, having learned it as an undergraduate student at the University of California in Los Angeles. Even though the descriptions for the dances that Ramovš taught were not yet published in 1969, I used the Labanotation script for myself. But by 1971, his book *Slovenski narodni plesovi*, published in Zagreb became available for those of us enrolled in the *Ljetna škola folklorā*, and learning about the Alpine Dance Zone (*Alpska plesna zona*).

There were two outcomes of my personal exposure to learning dances taught by Ramovš. An amateur folk dance teacher<sup>1</sup> in Los Angeles and I had attended the Alpska Plesna Zona in the Ljetna Škola Folklor in the summer of 1971. Giving Mirko Ramovš credit for the material we learned, the two of us collaborated in teaching selected dances in what was called a Slovenian “dance institute” sponsored by the Folk Dance Federation in southern California. We used two forms of music accompaniment to our teaching; one was live music, played by an amateur Los Angeles-based music group, and the other was by 45-rpm phonograph recordings, which were already produced by the Folkraft Record Company and commercially sold by record dealers in California. Our teaching was directed toward folk dancers (non-Slovenes) in southern California, that is, to those who were active in recreational folk dancing and to school teachers who needed to expand their dance knowledge for their own teaching. The second outcome of my experience with Ramovš was later in 1974. As an Assistant Professor in the Department of Dance at the University of California at Los Angeles, I had initiated a research project about the continuity and changes of dancing events within immigrant South Slavic populations in California. This project put me in touch with Slovene-based contexts and interviewing dancers and musicians in their communities.

## INTRODUCTION

This article is a result of both outcomes in two differing contexts within the state of California. Dealing with transmission and diffusion of dances and their music accompaniment, the study traces: 1) sources of Slovene dances that were introduced and danced recreationally by non-Slovenes in California, and 2) sources of dances among Slovene/Americans in their social dance events in San Francisco and nearby areas (in northern California) and in Fontana and other nearby Los Angeles area communities (in southern California). The two contexts of dancing (recreational folk dance clubs and Slovene/American community dance events) are not directly interrelated, but the study of these two contexts extends our knowledge about the transmission of dances identified as being Slovenian in a far away place where emigrants “from Austria” settled during the second half of the nineteenth century. A century later, through a unique resource of dance descriptions for a federation of folk dance clubs in the state of California, it became possible to trace the introduction of “Slovenian” dances into recreational dancing contexts, and to compare that repertoire and manner of dancing within some Slovene/American dancing contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> A young dancer, W. Burke, in the Los Angeles area in 1971, had an Aman Folk Ensemble scholarship to attend the Ljetna Škola Folklor and was in 1972 sharing some of his learned material through a California Folk Dance Federation–South workshop. He later became a full-time teacher in the Los Angeles Unifed School District successfully teaching a wide variety of dances in a multi-cultural Performing Arts school.

## POPULARITY OF DANCES FROM “FORMER” YUGOSLAVIA DURING THE 1950S–1970S IN CALIFORNIA

California, the third largest state of the United States and if its outline is placed on the map of Europe, would stretch from the Netherlands, down along the Adriatic to Albania. Spurred by the gold rush in the second half of the nineteenth century, first-generation immigrants came by ship sailing from Europe (Rijeka was a major port of departure), while Anglo/American citizens from the eastern and mid-western states of the United States came overland to California. By the 1920s the state had an interesting and unique history of first-generation immigrant groups with their social and recreational activities, alongside recreational dancing activity of groups with models of dancing in the eastern and mid-western United States.

The nineteenth century South Slavs traveled with Austrian or Austro-Hungarian passports, but in general identified themselves to other Americans as “Slavonians,” even though most were from the Adriatic coast and islands, and from Slovenia. Markers of their numbers and assembling are evidenced by establishments of benevolent societies in San Francisco, the earliest being the Slavonic Illyric Mutual and Benevolent Society in 1857, and more exclusively for the Slovenes, the Slovensko Podporno Društvo Kalifornije in 1891. Many more “Slavonic” organizations with identities of their emigrations from the Adriatic areas (then under Austrian administration) were established into the early twentieth century. As an aside, the Slavic-speaking populations emigrating from the Dinaric mountain and Slavonian plains areas, and who had established communities in mid-western and eastern states of the United States, migrated to California after World War Two. One of these groups was of the first and second-generation Slovenes, some joining into the San Francisco area, but many settling into southern California in the Fontana area (southeast of greater Los Angeles).

In addition, many young urban Americans (especially in the combined San Francisco/Oakland bay areas) with less distinct ethnic community ties were active in participatory recreational dancing, such as those with the Changs Folk Dancers and other “international” folk dance clubs. The 1920s–1930s dance club members danced mostly English dances, American square dances, early California “Spanish-based” dances with set patterns in a sequence, rather than dancing free-form ballroom dancing such as *fox-trot*, or by the late 1930s, the *lindy hop* and *jitterbug*.

It was the 1939–1940 Golden Gate International Exposition, the west coast world’s fair in San Francisco, held in parallel with the world’s fair in New York City that brought an awareness of the dance and music performances of the immigrant communities, alongside the growing interest in recreational participatory folk dancing. The various “Slavonic” and Slovene organizations throughout California were organized into a “Jugoslav Day” held July 2, 1939. Prior to the 1939 fair, most first-generation emigrants and their descendants referred to themselves in English as Slavonians, but the Jugoslav Day became a strong

marker of identity change with an organizational program committee in 1939 that was composed of Croatians, Montenegrins, Serbians, and Slovenians.

The leaders of all the South Slavic communities and organizations throughout California were brought together and formed a program that represented themselves to each other and to the greater California non-Slav population. A mass performance of Seljančica Kolo was practiced and performed by dancers from San Francisco, Sacramento, Fresno, and Los Angeles, accompanied by young tamburica musicians from San Pedro,<sup>2</sup> and probably from San Francisco where there were already tamburica musicians since the beginning of the century.<sup>3</sup>

After this international fair, with participatory dancing well-represented, leaders of several folk dance clubs organized a federation of clubs in 1942. An intent of the statewide organization was to standardize dances among the clubs, so that dancing of set patterns could be shared among club members at larger festival events organized in widespread and different cities of California. The chair of the research committee for the first volume of dance descriptions published by the Folk Dance Federation of California states,

... to provide descriptions of dances popular with the membership so that some uniformity in the performance of the dances might be attained at festivals. (Czarnowski 1945: i)

A means to such standardization was through teachers introducing dances in Federation-sponsored workshops (also called institutes) and weeklong summer camps. One of these major folk dance camps was held in the northern California town of Stockton at the University of the Pacific, with its first camp year in 1948. Every dance that was introduced into the Federation's folk dance repertoire had to be described into a Federation approved dance description, overseen by a "research committee." Another prerequisite for dances was the necessary availability of music on 78-rpm phonograph recordings, so that a dancer in a club could dance the very same dance with its recorded music in another club elsewhere in California. Earlier dance clubs used piano accompaniment, but by the late 1930s, phonograph recordings were almost exclusively used by the folk dance clubs at their meetings and at regional and statewide folk dance festivals of the 1940s.

Through the well-organized Folk Dance Federation of California (FDFC) and its requirement of dance descriptions, it becomes possible to trace tangible sources of the

<sup>2</sup> The souvenir program lists the participating organizations, members of the program committee, the directors and performers in the formal program, and lists the participants in the Sokol athletic exhibition; about 200 "kolo" dancers; the tamburica instrumental group from San Pedro; and lists over 170 names of a mixed choral singing group.

<sup>3</sup> Ilar Spiletak, an emigrant from Čibača village, near Dubrovnik had formed the first tamburica group in San Francisco in 1901.

“international” dances into California’s folk dance repertoire.<sup>4</sup> Although structured pairs dances were common to other European pairs dances already being danced in the California Federation clubs, Slovenian dances in pairs did not become known until they were introduced as dances from a part of Yugoslavia.

In the early years (1947 through the 1950s) the Federation’s summer time Stockton Folk Dance Camp was the principle supporter and introducer of new folk dance repertoire. The “new” dances of Yugoslavia were introduced mainly by John Filcich, beginning in 1949, and each year later. These dances from different parts of Yugoslavia became standardly known as “kolo” (as non-partner dances), in contrast to the 1930s-1940s folk dance club repertoire of dances in pairs. These non-partner dances became so popular, that the Federation Statewide Festival in 1954 for the first time included an exclusive “kolo” hour in the program of dances.

Dances from Slovenia were introduced as dances of a South Slavic population. The two earliest Slovenian identity dances were introduced into California Federation repertoire at the summer Stockton Folk Dance Camp in 1953, “Clap and Turn Polka” (Pok-šotiš) and Triglav Waltz, both taught by John Filcich. He had introduced other dances from Yugoslavia into the FDFC repertoire, beginning in 1949. Although as a child growing up in Gary, Indiana, he observed musicians and dancers with *polka* dancing and *kolos*, it was not until his move to California in 1947 that he began to participate actively in dancing.<sup>5</sup> By 1949, in partnership with Ed Kremers, another avid folk dancer, they managed a record shop in the Oakland Bay area with music that catered not only to the folk dancers, school teachers of folk dancing, but also to the “Slavonian” (Slovenian, Croatian, and Serbian) immigrant populations in California. They wrote a monthly article “The Record Finder” about folk dance recordings in the FDFC sponsored *Let’s Dance* magazine during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>6</sup> Filcich moved to Los Angeles in 1964, establishing his own record supply

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<sup>4</sup> See Dunin’s *South Slavic dance in California: a compendium for the years 1924–1977*. The published dance descriptions of South Slavic dances were compiled into tables by when, where, and by whom the dances were introduced into California. Also see Laušević (2007) for her comprehensive overview of Balkan dance fascination throughout the United States.

<sup>5</sup> Filcich was born in Rijeka (Fiume) 1924 and joined his father in Gary, Indiana (near the city of Chicago) 1931 at the age of 7. His earliest dancing observations were with the Croatian, Serbian, and Slovenian communities in Indiana; later in California by 1947, he discovered the Federation Folk Dance clubs. He became an avid participant, a teacher of dances from “former” Yugoslavia, and a supplier of recorded music for these dances. Although in 2015 he is retired, he continues to teach and to attend recreational folk dance activities into his nineties. Source: Personal communication with John Filcich through internet mail (February–June 2015). Documents are in private collection of Elsie Dunin.

<sup>6</sup> See examples of the monthly “Record Finder,” published in the Federation’s *Let’s Dance!* magazine available online <<http://www.folkdance.com/html/LDMagazines.htm>>, as well as in *Viltis* magazine, edited and published by Vyts Beliajus, who was also an early introducer of South Slavic dances (learned in Chicago) to folk dance clubs throughout the United States (1930s–1980s).

shop. His knowledge about folk dance recordings among immigrants and suppliers for folk dancing activities became unequaled by any other dance teacher or vendor in California.

The following Slovenian identified dances were introduced into California at the Federation's Stockton Folk Dance Camp by six teachers: Filcich (1953); Crum (1955, 1959, 1960, 1974); Beliajus (1968); Kotansky (1984); Glass (1991), and Jergan (1998). See Figure 1.<sup>7</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Dance name</b>
1953	John Filcich	Pok-Sotis (Clap & Turn Polka)
1953	John Filcich	Triglav Waltz
1955	Richard Crum	Potrkan ples
1959	Richard Crum	Bohinjska Sustarska
1959	Richard Crum	Polster Tanc
1959	Richard Crum	Svatbeni Rejc & Svatbena Polka
1960	Richard Crum	Obicni Rej
1960	Richard Crum	Po Zelenoj Trati
1968	Vyts Beliajus	Koutri
1968	Vyts Beliajus	Zakli
1974	Richard Crum	Mazulinka
1974	Richard Crum	Stari Šotiš
1975	Richard Crum	Zibnšrit
1984	Stephen Kotansky	Čérni Potök
1984	Stephen Kotansky	Poti me dö po lipje
1984	Stephen Kotansky	Lipa ma maryca
1984	Stephen Kotansky	Ta Midvédaau
1984	Stephen Kotansky	Ta Pustaua
1984	Stephen Kotansky	Ta Zagatina
1991	Barry Glass	Svatovska Polka
1998	Željko Jergan	Kopriva-Carska kasa

Figure 1: Slovenian dances taught in Stockton Folk Dance Camp by years and teachers.

<sup>7</sup> The data for the tables showing years, teachers, and names of dances, as well as music information are shown on each dance description from the Stockton Folk Dance Camp syllabi, available online <<http://www.folkdancecamp.org/oldsyllabi.html>>.

The earliest “Slovene polka” (Clap and Turn) was taught to a 78-rpm recording<sup>8</sup> with music arranged by Frankie Yankovic, a Slovene/American accordionist from Cleveland, Ohio.<sup>9</sup> Introduced to the Stockton Folk Dance Camp in 1953 by John Filcich, the dance had been observed and learned between 1947 and 1950<sup>10</sup> at Slovene/American events in San Francisco, with music played by local bands. Filcich states that Frankie Yankovic on his music-playing tours to northern California always played this polka, and jokingly referred to it as “Pork-chops” (clearly a derivative from Pok-šotiš).<sup>11</sup>

The earliest “Slovene waltz” (Triglav Waltz) was taught to music played by Duquesne University Tamburitzans, directed by Matt L. Gouze, a Slovene/American from Ely, Minnesota.<sup>12</sup> Triglav Waltz was a dance arranged into a set pattern based on the waltzing style and patterns Filcich observed in the Slovene/American dance events. A third dance also in 3/4 waltz meter, Polster Tanc (Pillow Dance) was observed by Richard Crum in Slovene/American communities in Cleveland, Ohio and in Chrisholm, Minnesota during the 1950s. Three other dances taught by Richard Crum (Mazulinka, Stari Šotiš, and Zibnšrit) were learned in 1958 in San Francisco from Peter Kurnick (born in 1879<sup>13</sup>). Kurnick learned to dance as a young man in the Kranj area and his immigration into California was in the early 1900s. His body memory of the dancing would have likely reflected the pre-World War One time period. The recorded music used for these three dances is by the Hoyer Trio, who recorded their button-accordion dance music in the 1920s.<sup>14</sup> Mathew Hoyer was from Slovenia, settling in Cleveland, Ohio, also before World War One. So five dances (Clap and Turn Polka, Triglav Waltz, Mazulinka, Stari Šotiš, and Zibnšrit) were taught by two teachers who were not Slovenes, but they learned the dance material from within the Slovene/American communities in San Francisco.

Other dances taught by Richard Crum (Potrkan Ples, Bohinska Štarska, Svatbeni Rejc and Svatbena Polka, Obični Rej, and Po Zelenoj Trati) are credited by him to the France Marolt Folk Dance Group in Ljubljana in 1954. These dances were then learned by Crum from a structured performance context, rather than from a socially danced context. The music for these dances was learned by the Duquesne University Tamburitzans, directed by Walter B. Kolar, and recorded to the Folk Dancer MH label in the United States.

Dances from the Val Resia, Italy were “collected and presented” by Stephan Kotansky. No other direct source information is given for these six dances taught to the Federation

<sup>8</sup> Recorded by Continental, with number 420-A.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of Frank Yankovic and his contribution to Slovenian recording in America, see Debevec 2014.

<sup>10</sup> This information is according to John Filcich, who experienced these events beginning in 1947.

<sup>11</sup> Information is from personal communication with John Filcich during months February–June 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Recorded on a 78-rpm disc by Corona Music Company, which is located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Kurnick’s year of birth (1879) is shown in the Social Security Death Index (1971).

<sup>14</sup> See an online listing of Hoyer’s dance music on 78-rpm recordings <<http://polkas.nl/hoyer-78.html>> (accessed 2015 May 27). Also see biographical information on the Hoyer Trio by Debevec (2014).

in 1984.<sup>15</sup> However, extensive general information about the “music and dance of Resia” authored by Pavle Merku, is included with the six dance descriptions in the 1984 Stockton Camp syllabus.

Two more dances were learned in “former Yugoslavia” but recorded in the United States. Svatovska Polka was learned by Barry Glass at a “seminar on Badija” and that the dance is from Gorenjska (no other source is given). The recorded music for this dance was played by the Aman Music Ensemble, directed by David Owen, who is an accordionist. “Kopriva-Carska kasa” was learned by Željko Jergan, who had “attended several celebrations in the cities of Črnomelj and Metlika from 1976–1984” and the recorded music is credited to Jerry Grevich who leads a tamburitza band in the United States.

### SLOVENE/AMERICAN DANCING IN CALIFORNIA DURING THE MID-1970S

The Slovene immigrants were smaller in number in California (in contrast with those in the mid-western states of Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Minnesota, but the Slovenes in California are among the oldest emigrant waves, forming the Slovenian Beneficial Society of California in 1892; another Society, the Slovenian-American Fraternal and Beneficial Society was organized in 1902 and another two groups before 1918, when Slovenia became part of a South Slavic monarchy.

The center of Slovene social events in the San Francisco area was in the Slovenian Hall on Potrero hill called by the Slovenes as Kranjski Hrib, which had become a residence area of Slovene/American families, after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. The benefit societies were and continue to be sponsors of social gatherings with dance and music.

The SNPJ [Slovenska Narodna Podporna Jednota] (in English: Slovene National Benefits Society) Lodge 723 was established in Fontana in 1931 and began operating the Slovene Hall in 1937. During and after World War Two, a wave of Slovene/Americans from mid-Western states came to the Fontana area to work in the new steel mill, bolstering the Slovene/American community of the 1930s. The mid-westerners brought with them their own features of the Slovene/American communities, their dancing and button-box accordion music models along with food-ways, and tavern-style drinking with socializing. The lodges of the Benefit Societies sponsored and continue to sponsor gatherings that almost always include accordion music, dancing of *polkas* and *waltzes*, and feasting on Slovenian style foods, such as a variety of sausages, and apple strudel. See “klobase and strudel” noted on posters advertising the events on Figures 4 and 5.

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<sup>15</sup> The music is by the Val Resia Folk Group on the Helidon FLP label, which is a recording company in Slovenia.



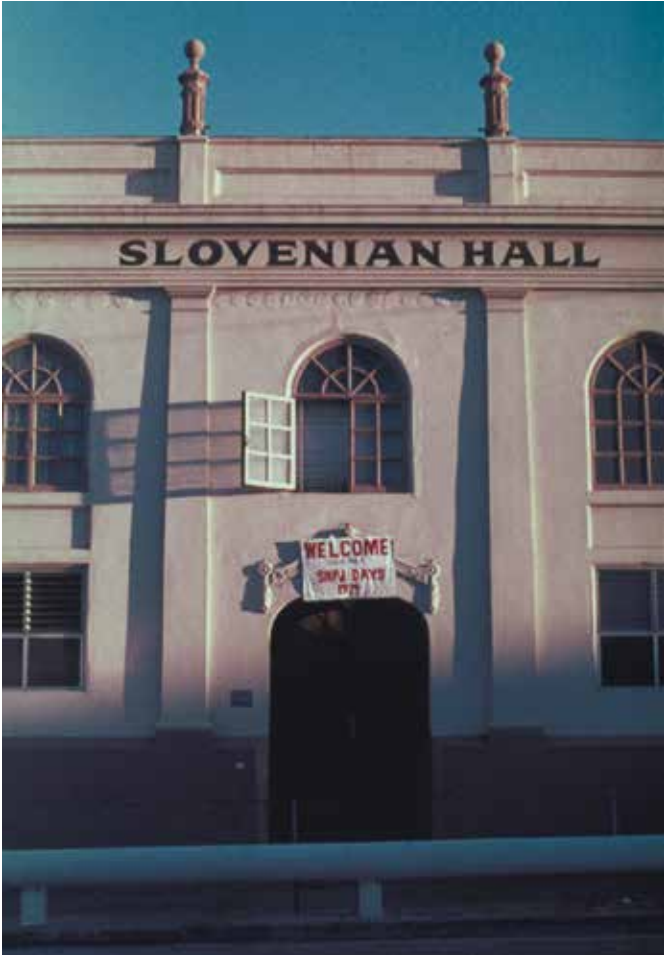


Figure 2: Hall in San Francisco. Photo: E. I. Dunin, 1974.



Figure 3: Hall in Fontana. Photo: E. I. Dunin, 1974.



Figure 4: Compton poster 1974. Author's archives.

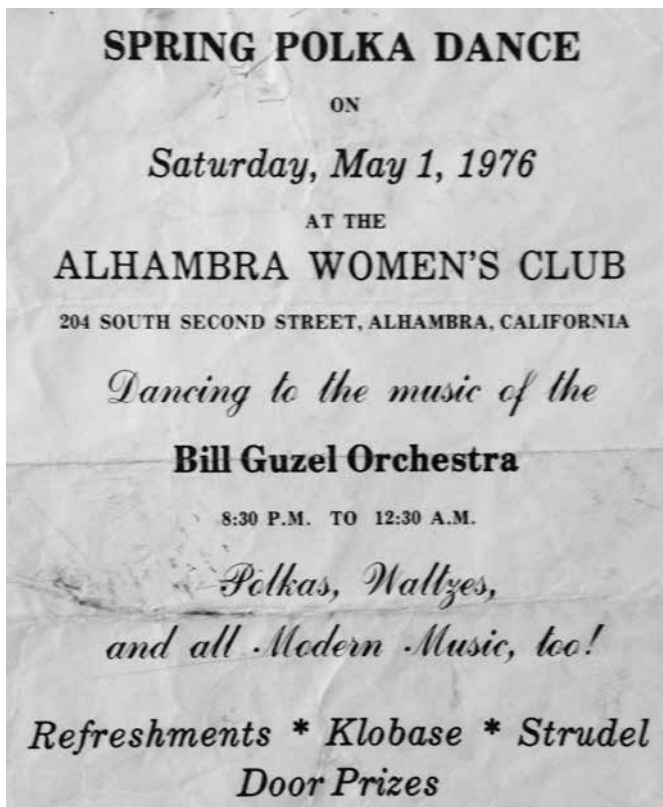


Figure 5: Alhambra poster 1976. Author's archives.



Figure 6: Jamming button-boxers in Fontana 1979. Photo: E. I. Dunin, 1979.

“Polka” dances in the mid-1970s were frequent events throughout the year with different local orchestras.<sup>16</sup> An expansion of dance music repertoire and style of playing was established through “national” events. In 1979, the second far-west “SNPJ button-box contest” was sponsored by the Fontana Button Box Club, bringing together button-boxer accordionists from San Francisco, Chicago, and Cleveland, along with their differing polka dancing styles, not commonly seen earlier in Fontana. Jamming by musicians between all ages was everywhere and frequent in the weekend event. See Figure 6.

The button-box accordion playing grew in popularity along with dancing and continues into the present in southern and northern California. The main difference between the 1970s and the current years in the 21st century is the method of advertising the events. In the 1970s, flyers were sent to memberships via postal mail, such as Figures 4 and 5. In 2015, all is advertised through online postings, such as <[www.facebook.com/fontanaslovene.hall](http://www.facebook.com/fontanaslovene.hall)>; The California Polka Scene as part of Polka Bob’s Polka Page <<http://www.polkabob.com/>>; or with various bands and dancing of the Fontana site, shown on YouTube.

<sup>16</sup> Some of these local orchestras in California were named after their accordion-playing leaders, such as: Bill Guzel, Mlakar Brothers, Billy Swetkar, Eddy Tomazin, Jimmy Horson. The bands usually consist of three to six musicians playing in a combination of one or two accordions (piano and/or chromatic), a bass fiddle or bandjo, clarinet or saxophone, drum traps, guitar.

SLOVENE DANCE REPERTOIRE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA DURING  
THE MID-1970S

In the mid-1970s the dance music repertoire was dominated by the “polka.” There was a ratio of two *polkas* (2/4 meter) to one *waltz* (3/4 meter) piece during a Slovene/American event. However, among the elder dancers (in male/female partners, or two females as partners), except for the meter difference, the *polka* in 2/4 and *waltz* in 3/4 meter did not differ in its smooth turning dancing style and partner position. Rather than the male moving his partner backwards as a couple in a counter-clockwise path, the two spin continuously in a clockwise or change to a counter-clockwise spin, while progressing in a counter-clockwise path on the dance floor, usually in an outer perimeter of the dancing space. Each couple is a single unit and does not interact with another couple.

The “polka” danced by international folk dancers in California, connotes a “polka” step pattern initiated with a hop [hop ♪, step ♪, step ♪, step ♪]. Without a hop, the same step pattern is named the “two-step”.<sup>17</sup> The Slovene style is not initiated with a hop, but is called a “polka.” The alternating three-step pattern [quick step ♪, quick step ♪, slow step ♪] in the 2/4 polka and three-even timed steps [♪ ♪ ♪] for the 3/4 waltz time is danced smoothly with very little vertical bounce, and with continuous turning by the couple in either direction, but in a counter-clockwise path on the dance floor. During the later-1970s decade, I observed many styles of dancing on the dance floor at one time at a Slovene/American event. There were dancers with a vertical hopping style step pattern in a ballroom pairs position, dancing side by side with the male’s right arm behind his partner’s waist, or facing one another in a shoulder-waist position—he holding his partner at the waist, while she places her hands on his shoulders; dancing couples may have come from the mid-western states, or from folk dance clubs in California, who learned to dance a *polka* with a hop, and dominated more space as they danced. I identified the elder couples with continuous smooth turning on the periphery of the dance space as pairs dancing in a Slovene style (like dancing I had learned from Ramovš in 1969 and 1971, and reflecting the waltz style that Filcich had introduced to the Federation in 1953). The elders that I observed in the later 1970s were likely dancing the style of their youth that was prevalent in the earlier Slovene/American events in California.

Both the Clap and Turn Polka and the Triglav Waltz dances are for single unit pairs, anywhere on the dance space, but these two dances have two-part patterns that fit the music phrasing in contrast to the free-form *polka* or *waltz* with no set patterns. The Clap and Turn Polka (see the FDFC description in Figure 7), as a two-part dance in 4/4 and 2/4 meters, is actually a turn and clap sequence in part one (4/4 meter) rather than a clap and turn. According to John Filcich, who introduced this dance in 1953, this dance was

<sup>17</sup> See glossary of “polka” and “two-step” in the Folk Dance Federation’s “Steps and Styling Guide”, published in 1977, and available online: <[www.folkdance.com/LDNnotations/StepsStyling1977.pdf](http://www.folkdance.com/LDNnotations/StepsStyling1977.pdf)>.

popularized by Frankie Yankovic during his touring music performances in California in the late 1940s and 1950s (Filcich 2015: personal communication). Tillie Kurnick<sup>18</sup> independently stated that Pork-chops (a dance name used in the community) was a dance from “Yankie” (Kurnick 1974: interview). This is the only dance that is done in both the folk dance club repertoire (to recorded music by Yankovic), and in the Slovene/American dance events of the mid-1970s, but to the music played by different accordion bands.

Another 1970s Slovene/American dance in two-parts, was a “mixer” called the Firemen’s Polka. The bandleader blows into a metal (fireman’s) whistle. The women form a closed circle by holding hands low at their sides, and with their backs to the center of the circle, while the men form a closed circle by holding hands low at their sides and facing inward toward the women. Both circles walk (march or triple step [that is, as a “two-step” identified in a FDFC glossary of step patterns]) in their own circular path, the women clockwise, while the men move counterclockwise (the two circles move in opposite directions; the whistle is blown and whoever one is facing at that moment, becomes a partner to quicker 2/4 “polka” music. When the whistle is blown again, the women and men reform their own circles to repeat the circle marching/dancing until the whistle cues a new partner with a free-form *polka*.

Another two-part dance in the 1970s at Slovene/American events was the “Flying Dutchman” which was danced by any gender combination of three persons, but commonly one male in the center, flanked by two females. The three, all facing in the same direction, hold each other with hands crossed behind their backs; they balance (rock) from side to side in 3/4 meter time, one measure for each side-to-side motion. The music changes to a quick 2/4 meter, and the center person with running steps turns the person to his left in a clockwise turn by linking right elbows, and then switches to the outer person on his right, linking left elbows in a counterclockwise turn. The turning is continued by the center person with partners on either side until the music changes back to a 3/4 meter for the rocking side-to-side movement.

Of the music and dance repertoire at Slovene/American events during the 1970s, I observed the Clap and Turn Polka (alias Pok-šotiš or Pork-chops) as an alternating two-part dance (4/4 and 2/4), and the Fireman’s Polka as a two-part mixer (with a 3/4 waltz and 2/4 polka), and the Flying Dutchman with three persons in a 3/4 and 2/4 meter parts. Only the Pork-chops, which was an active dance in the Slovene/American communities in northern and southern California, was a dance played by Frankie Yankovic on his music-dance tours

<sup>18</sup> Otilia “Tillie” Kurnick, widow of Peter Kurnick, was born in Chicago area of Slovene parents (from Bela Krajina towns), and married in the mid-1930s, in San Francisco to Peter Kurnick (emigrant from Kranj in the Gorenjsko area of Slovenia). Her husband was active with the 1939 San Francisco world’s fair Yugoslav Day, when the Seljančica kolo was mass danced. She claimed that “pork chops” was a Yankie (Frankie Yankovic) dance and became popular in the late 1940s-early 1950s, which is the time period that John Filcich had learned the dance at Slovenian events in San Francisco. Source: Audio-taped interviews with Tillie Kurnick in San Francisco, October 1974, and continuing correspondence in 1975. Transcriptions are in private collection of Elsie Dunin.

in California in the late 1940s. This dance was introduced into the Federation repertoire by John Filcich in 1953. Was Yankovic the original source of this dance in California? However, the dance was also known by Peter Kurnick, who was the source of three other dances (Mazulnka, Stari Šotiš, and Zibnšrit) learned by Richard Crum in 1958 and introduced into the Federation in 1974. These latter three dances were apparently not popularly danced in the Slovene/American community events, but were still in Kurnick's body memory from the Kranj area of Slovenia. The only two dances that can be identified as participatory social dances from Slovene/American events and were introduced into the FDFC were Clap and Turn Polka (Pok-šotiš) learned in the San Francisco area by John Filcich, and Polster Tanc (Pillow Dance) learned by Richard Crum in Cleveland, Ohio and Chrisholm, Minnesota.

In the 1970s, I observed two non-partner dances within the repertoire of the Slovene/American events and accompanied by the accordion bands: one is known as the "kolo" (alias Cigančica, or Seljančica) with a three-part step pattern, and lyrics sung by a band musician; the other non-partner dance is known as "Never on Sunday" (alias Miserlou).<sup>19</sup> The style of this dancing with dancers holding hands in an open circle, was of great variety, with some dancers taking small-sized steps, to those who danced with gross leg swings. There was very little attempt at synchronizing one's movements with dancers next to you as in other South Slavic non-partner dances or in dancing by the recreational folk dancers. Both this "kolo" (Seljančica) and the "Never on Sunday" (Miserlou) non-partner, open-circle, hand-held dances that progress in a counter-clockwise path, are also done in the Federation folk dance clubs, but to recorded music. Throughout California, within all South Slavic (Croatian, Serbian, Slovenian, Macedonian, and "Yugoslav") community dance events that I observed during the 1970s and 1980s, the Seljančica Kolo was played by the accordion bands as well as by the tamburica bands, and danced at each of the South Slavic dance events. Is this a continuity stemming from the Yugoslav Day of the 1939 world's fair in San Francisco when Seljančica was mass-danced with dancers from both northern and southern California? This non-partner dance was the only common denominator within the South Slavic community dance events. *Polkas* and *waltzes* were also danced in pairs at South Slavic events, but not necessarily identified as being Slovenian.

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<sup>19</sup> "Miserlou" based on a Greek Kritikos dance has its origins among folk dancers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1945 and was introduced into the California folk dance clubs by the late 1940s, but in 1960, the music of a Hollywood Greek-theme film "Never on Sunday" won an Academy award, and quickly became popular throughout the United States. At the Slovene/American affairs, the dance known as "Miserlou" became danced to the "Never on Sunday" music that was learned by the local accordion bands.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The principle difference between the Slovene/American dancing events and the California Folk Dance Federation clubs and their festival programs, is that the Slovene events featured accordion “polka band” musicians. In contrast, the recreational folk dancing from the 1940s into the 1980s was supplied by recorded music on 78-, 45-, and then 33-rpm discs.<sup>20</sup> The Slovene/American events into the 21st century continue with several “polka bands” that consist mostly of button-box accordions, while the folk dance clubs continue to use recorded music. The contrasting result is that the recorded music for dancing provides an unchanging sound and phrasing for dance patterns taught to Federation folk dancers who dance alike to one another -- there is a sense of dancing incorrectly, if you do not dance the pattern as provided by the teacher. The polka bands play many “polka” and “waltz” melodies during a dance event, and since the dancers are in pairs, not related to other dancers, and have not been taught formally how to dance step patterns, there is observed a greater variety of movements and personal mannerisms in the dancing. The dances taught to the folk dancers are taught with distinct patterns to music phrasing to unchanging recorded sounds, causing similarity in movement and dancing style, in contrast to dancing free-form *polka* or *waltz* at the Slovene/American dance events.

Two teachers learned five dances from within the San Francisco Slovenian/American community<sup>21</sup> and introduced them into the California Federation Folk Dance repertoire at the Stockton Folk Dance Camp. By 1954 “American folk dance teachers” had traveled to “former Yugoslavia” and learned dances in Slovenia, but these dances had already been set and arranged for presentational purposes in Slovenia.

The music accompaniment for the Slovene/American dances learned and taught to the recreational folk dance federation in the 1950s were to recordings produced by Slovene/American musicians (Frankie Yankovic, Mat Gouze, and Hoyer Trio), while the source dances learned in Slovenia, were taught to recordings produced in Slovenia, or to recordings by musicians in the United States learned from music sources in Slovenia. These later recordings are not by Slovene/American musicians.

In closing, I acknowledge that Mirko Ramovš had provided me with an introduction to the Alpine Dance Zone in 1969, with both dancing knowledge and background

<sup>20</sup> The music recordings listed for these dances were from the 1940s until 1960 on 78-rpm discs, during the 1960s on 45-rpm discs, and into the 1970s on long-play 33-rpm discs, and by the late 1990s we see CDs (compact discs) replacing all other disc formats. See Rebeka Kunej (2013, 2014) for her discussion of the use of gramophone recordings as sources for dance knowledge. In addition, the 2014 issue of *Traditiones* 43 (2) is dedicated to the “Sound material from gramophone records as a source for ethnomusicology and folklore research”.

<sup>21</sup> John Filcich observed and participated in Slovene/American dance events from 1947–1950s. Richard Crum joined Filcich to observe dancing in San Francisco’s Slovene/American events and learned dances from Peter Kurnik in 1958. Both Filcich and Crum introduced dances to 78-rpm recordings produced in the United States.

information of dances in Slovenia. This essay many years later has become an extension of knowledge about Slovenian dances in a far away place where some Slovenian immigrants had settled in the late nineteenth century organizing themselves into benevolent societies that sponsored and continue to sponsor social gatherings with dance and music. The state of California also happens to be unique for its federation of recreational folk dance clubs with standardized dance repertoire danced to specific recorded music. This recreational context with required dance descriptions for every teacher introducing a dance into the federation, allowed a means to trace the transmission of Slovenian dances in California during the second half of the twentieth century.

**FOLK DANCE FEDERATION OF CALIFORNIA RESEARCH COMMITTEE:**  
Larry Miller and Dorothy Tamburini

## CLAP AND TURN

(Slovenian "Pok-Sotis")

Though Slovenia is part of Yugoslavia, most of its culture and folklore are almost identical to that of Austria because it has an Alpine terrain and because it was a part of Austria until 1918. This dance was presented at the 1953 Folk Dance Camp in Stockton by John Filcich.

**MUSIC:** Record: Continental 420A, Clap and Turn.  
National 452  
Piano: Slovenian Dance Album – W. Gaus; Chart Music Pub., Chicago, Ill.

**FORMATION:** Partners facing with hands relaxed at sides – any place on the floor.

**STEPS:** Walk\*, Slovenian polka: step (ct 1), close (ct 3), step with a slight dip (ct 2), hold (ct 3).  
Throughout the dance, M starts L, WR.

MUSIC 4/4, 2/4	PATTERN
Measures 4/4	
	I. <u>TURN AND CLAP</u>
A 1	Individually turn away from ptr (M CCW, W CW) making one complete circle with 2 steps (cts 1 and 3). The ball of the free ft may brush the floor (cts 2 and 4).
2	Facing ptr with hands on hips, stamp three times; M LRL, W RLR. (cts 1,2,3) hold (ct 4).
3	Clap own hands in back (ct 1) and clap own hands in front (ct 3). This clapping may be doubled and done twice as fast (cts 1, 2, 3, 4).
4	Clap both hands with ptr 3 times (cts 1, 2, 3) hold (ct 4).
5 - 8	Repeat action of meas 1-4.
2/4	II. <u>POLKA</u>
B 9 - 24	In closed pos dance 16 Slovenian Polka steps turning CW and progressing CCW. Note: The Continental record does not follow the customary A-B-A-B pattern but plays tricks on the dancers, and much of the fun comes from following the pattern as set by the record. Also sometimes an extra measure is included at the end of the polka figure during which no action is taken.

Figure 7: Clap and Turn Polka description, published 1957 in the California Folk Dance Federation's *Let's Dance* magazine.



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## SLOVENSKI PLESI IN NJIHOVI VIRI V KALIFORNIJI

*V Kaliforniji živi slovenski plesni repertoar v dveh družbenih kontekstih: ob mednarodnih rekreacijskih ljudskih plesnih dogodkih in ob dogodkih slovensko-ameriške skupnosti. Opazovanje slovenskega plesnega repertoarja v mednarodnih klubih ljudskega plesa kaže, da so številni plesi naučeni v Sloveniji, vendar se plešejo na glasbo, ki je bila posneta v ZDA; pri repertoarju plesnih dogodkov slovensko-ameriške skupnosti pa ples večkrat kakor posneta spremlja živa glasba v izvedbi lokalnih harmonikarskih skupin. Primerjava plesa v obeh kontekstih kaže, da posneta glasba ponuja nesprenmenljivo zvočno podobo in plesalci nato izvajajo enako zaporedje plesnih vzorcev, kakor so se jih naučili od učitelja, pri plesu izražajo občutek za »pravilno« in »nepravilno« v plesnih vzorcih. Rezultat je, da vsi plešejo podobno. Glasbene zasedbe, ki igrajo v živo, lahko igrajo isto melodijo, vendar je v položaju plesnega partnerja, v korakih in telesni artikulaciji med plesalci večja variabilnost, saj je njihov ples neformalno utelešen in ne strukturno naučen. V klubih kalifornijskega Združenja za ljudske plesne so se plesalci od leta 1940 do leta 1990 učili plesne ob glasbi, ki je bila sprva posneta na plošče z 78 o/min, pozneje s 45 in 33,33 o/min in nato na zgoščenke. Slovensko-ameriški plesni dogodki so se v 21. stoletju nadaljevali ob spremljavi*

številnih polka glasbenih zasedb, med katerimi so bile mnoge tudi brez diatonične harmonike. Kontrastni rezultat je, da za ples posneta glasba ponuja nespremenljiv zvok in fraziranje, ki se povežeta z vzorci gibanja. Tudi ti se ne spreminjajo, medtem ko slovensko-ameriške polka glasbene zasedbe med plesnimi dogodki igrajo mnoge polke in valčke, ki niso bili formalno naučeni.

Učitelja ljudskih plesov, ki nista slovenskega rodu, sta se pet plesov naučila v slovensko-ameriški skupnosti v San Franciscu (med letoma 1947 in 1958) in jih predstavila kalifornijskemu Združenju za ljudske plesne na Plesnem taboru Stockton. Leta 1954 so »ameriški učitelji ljudskih plesov« potovali v Slovenijo (in bivšo Jugoslavijo) ter se učili plesov, ki so bili že v Sloveniji aranžirani za predstavitvene namene. Slovensko-ameriške plesne, ki so jih poučevali v rekreacijskih ljudskih plesnih združenjih v 50. letih 20. stoletja, so izvajali na podlagi posnetkov slovensko-ameriških glasbenikov (Frankie Yankovic, Mat Gouze in Hoyer Trio). Plesne, ki so se jih v Sloveniji naučili ameriški učitelji neslovenskega rodu, pa so plesali na podlagi posnetkov, ki so bili posnети v Sloveniji, ali posnetkov glasbenikov iz ZDA; teh so se učili na podlagi glasbenih virov iz Slovenije.

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