

YVES MOREAU



WHAT IS THE CURRENT TREND OF FOLK DANCE IN NORTH AMERICA?

I feel that generally it's growing in popularity. Most camps, as you know, are fully booked up; they have waiting lists like they've never had. Workshops are being held in states where they could never imagine that folk dancing could exist; Louisiana, Florida, Tennessee, Wyoming. I don't think that was the case 5 or 10 years ago. Also, I feel the people have interests other than just recreation; many of them are more serious and want to know about the countries, where the dances come from, and about the people. Many have gotten into parallel aspects of folk art; they've been singing, making costumes, embroidering. The music scene especially has really grown; a lot of people who start out as folk dancers (and they still are) have picked up folk instruments, not only playing them, but making them. It's really amazing---people in San Diego & other places MAKE Bulgarian bagpipes as well, if not better, than some of the best in Bulgaria.

And people have learned to appreciate simpler things. They used to be very demanding; they wanted very complex dances with many, many variations, and that's usually what would 'make' the dance. More and more people now travel in the Balkans. In the summer there are hundreds of Americans traveling; they get to see festivals, they get to see villagers dancing, to see how simple, how non-complicated these people are. So that when they come back, their whole mind is very different; they sort of hesitate before throwing themselves in a circle of people, fighting over a ten-figure dance. They remember the good time they had dancing for two hours a simple Pravo.

Many people have recently discovered what it is to dance with a live band. They're not as "good" as a record. There's something nice in having the music very close to you; the musicians are in the center of the dancers, so you really feel them. Musicians in the Balkans follow the dancers and watch what they're doing, and the dancers relate very much to the musicians. There's eye-to-eye contact; it's just very exciting. It's very hard to improvise when it's always the same (recorded) music.

People are still in the stage of collecting dances. The first thing in their mind is to come and ask me, "What are you going to teach?" And they only go to camp to bring back a hundred new dances. It's unfortunate. A lot of people are into this; everyone has their own little ego trips, because when people go home, they're the ones. People there don't know Yves Moreau; to them it's John Doe who's the expert.

So many dances have been taught. Somebody doesn't even have time to digest the dances he's learned, and he finds himself at an institute with ANOTHER syllabus under his arm, trying to figure out twenty more. And I feel partly guilty, because when teaching a workshop, I'm adding more to the list. I think there's something like 6000 dances that have been taught in North America. 6000! including all the camps and workshops everywhere. How many do we know? and how many can we possibly keep? Unfortunately, a lot of dances have been taught strictly so teachers could make a living; they have to keep introducing new material. Same with record companies; to them it was important to have another record out before the end of the year.

But a workshop and a camp are always a nice experience. I feel it's good for people to be exposed to a teacher, not strictly for new dances, but just to get a feel of the person. Camps should strive to develop a more human aspect, rather than quantity of dance.

It's about time that things would go back maybe to what it used to be apparently 40 years ago, when folk dancing was mostly done together with the ethnic communities. It's amazing how many people have been doing Bulgarian dance for ten years and have never met a Bulgarian, have never tasted Bulgarian food, or bothered to look at a map to see where Bulgaria is. People should try to get a little more involved with the people from a country, and if they can, of course, go there and see for themselves.