

VDC Interview Transcript  
 Živili/Pam Lacko Kelley  
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OhioDance  
 Verne-Riffe Building  
 77 S. High St.  
 Studio 3 (Galbreath Pavillion)  
 Columbus, OH, 43215

**Key:**

CF: Candace Feck  
 PK: Pam Kelley  
 JC: Jessica Cavender  
 JD: Jane D'Angelo

CF: I wonder if we could begin by talking a little bit about the Gary, Indiana, Croatian community where you grew up.

PK: That's a good place to start, because that's where it all began; actually it began in Indiana Harbor, Indiana — they call it East Chicago — not that it has anything to do with Chicago, but it was the community to which my grandparents immigrated. So that's where it started. That's where my mother was born. Just my grandmother, my grandfather and my aunt, all on my mother's side, lived in Croatia, and they came over. So my mother is the first generation, but born here in America. My father was growing up in Whiting, Indiana. He was Slovak; they emmigrated from Slovakia. But somehow the Croatian just took over for them. Even my father would say, "Gosh, I wish I was born Croatian!" That's where we first lived, and that's where the Croatian community *really* settled — not so much in Gary; we *moved* to Gary. Although there are Croatians that do live there, and there are Croatian lodges that formed there, we always were with the Croatians that settled in the Indiana Harbor/East Chicago area, and that's where a lot of my relatives settled. And our lodges — I say "lodge" — it was called the Croatian-English speaking lodge, and it was a safe place for the people who immigrated to go and learn English, speak in English, not be afraid — you know, because it was a stigma for them. But they were so like "Oh, we *want* to do this." So that sort of changed — it didn't *change*, but the Croatian Fraternal Union would provide insurance for these people — because they didn't *have* anything! They came over, they weren't citizens yet, so they had [only] what that they could buy, but were always working with the people who came over before them, working on their citizenship. So that's kind of the way it was, but what was so cool about it was — it was like you took the village from Croatia and popped it *right* down there! So my aunt lived there, my mother's oldest sister; all of my mother's brothers and sisters lived there; it would be like going from here to Worthington — that was the drive<sup>1</sup> — spent a lot of week-ends and time there. So they were always having dances and dinners and so forth, so that was my first introduction to "Wow! I'm Croatian!" In fact, at that time, back in 1948, a lot of people said that they were Yugoslavian — and of course those who came before them — because Yugoslavia was Yugoslavia, and Croatia was a state.

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<sup>1</sup> Worthington is a northern suburb of Columbus, Ohio, while the Ohio Theater where we are conducting our interview is in the downtown area. The drive time is approximately fifteen – twenty minutes.

So life goes on, and mother decides, “We’re going to go to live in Indiana,” and they chose Gary. What a great community! Because it was a melting pot also, and there *were* Croatian people, but not quite as active — they did *eventually* become as active — but not quite as active as *our* community, or our village. Our people to this day — our music, our dancing, our sounds, are still alive. There is even *new* music, new dancing. Our instruments that we play, they are still alive. Which is great! The culture really has survived. As we age, we can see it changing, but still, to this day, you can see it. We would go to picnics; everybody would have a picnic for their lodge. Now, different lodges would be showing up, we would dance, we would sing — and that was my first introduction; there was no formal training, because we would just go to the dance and get in between whomever, and we would just dance along. So that was my first introduction and of course, I just loved it! And the singing! My mother could sing the songs; most of the adults sang the songs. Unfortunately, my Croatian grandmother died when I was a year and a half, so I was not taught the language, so it’s not a second language. “Oh!” I told my mother, “How could you not *teach* me?” You know. But, that’s just ...everybody wanted to be able to speak English! It was not that they weren’t *proud* of being Croatian and speaking it, it was just more or less, we didn’t learn. We had to [learn the language] for the songs and that, but not to speak it. Somebody would translate it. My grandfather had already passed, when my mother was five. The only person we had left then was my aunt; we called her Teta Mary. She lived in the village and came over with my grandmother when she was twelve. So she held the family together, and she had ten children, and it really was great because all of us stayed involved with the Croatian community. Okay, then when I was around eight years old, we brought in someone who ...our parents wanted us to learn the dancing, wanted us to be able to dance at the picnics and this and that, so that’s kind of how it started. We would go every Monday night and we’d learn about the dance and what’s behind the dance — not *just* to dance, because in — we call it ethnic — dancing, there *is* a story, so it’s nice to know the story, and that helped explain a little more later. So then in Pittsburgh and Youngstown and Cleveland and Akron, and different places throughout the United States, more and more of these lodges were popping up, and more and more children were learning to dance, and then they were taking it to another level to perform. Still, no one was going to New York! No one was going to, you know, start a dance company and travel. It wasn’t the time! Because everything *still* was that village experience.

Then they decided we were going to learn how to play the Tambura. And as you know, the Duquesne University Tamburitians still exist — well, actually they don’t; they exist under a different name now — they’re not associated with the university.<sup>2</sup> But it’s a family of instruments — and there were all these small combos and bands. I mean, even my uncles and my cousins had groups, and they played this instrument called the Tamburitza, which is *five* instruments; they really don’t *know* for sure where all of this originated, but the theory is that in Persia, there were stringed instruments and as people left Persia and migrated, they became the mandolin to Italy, they became the balalaika, they became the Spanish guitar, and they became the Tamburitza, or the Tambura, which is Yugoslavian, because for the Croats and the Serbs both, that instrument is indigenous to their music. Now we have other instruments that we use, but that’s the instrument that changed, and it has changed over the years, but it’s just a *beautiful*-sounding instrument. And so we started learning that. We sent to Europe — it took a year for them to ship the instruments to us. Imagine that! A year! I mean, nothing came by plane — well, it *could*, but nobody could afford it. So our instruments came, and we had two very *wonderful* people who were directing us and showing us how to play the instruments. Five instruments: smallest one, then the next one and the next one: these

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<sup>2</sup> The Duquesne University Tamburitians were formed in 1937. They were separated from the university as of July 1, 2016, and became, simply, The Tamburitians, and are still based in Pittsburgh, PA.

three made the melody and the harmonies. And then the *bugarija* — which is like a guitar but it only has three strings — I mean, it could take an hour just to talk about that. And then the *berda*, or the bass. The only difference about the bass that we don't use that much anymore, is the bass has fretting. So, like the guitar has the frets; a violin does not. A double bass does not. But all the instruments had frets — it was so different, and again, over the years — I mean, we just got back from Croatia, and had groups playing for us the Tamburitza, and singing and dancing.

So that was the next step. So now, we have the dancing, the Tamburitza, and you can just see the group growing and *growing*. There was another group that started in Gary, but not that close to us. However, during the summer, they had a summer school of dance and music, and so at the age of nine years old, I'd get on the bus, go *clear* downtown, pick up a transfer and go *way* out to the Gary summer camp. It was great! Then we started this — we never merged until way, later after my childhood and all — but it was nice because I met some other people, other customs and [had] another place to go to sing and dance. I'll try to get this a little more 'packaged up'... then our group began starting to *perform* for things, and we'd have little mini shows, and we had costumes that we wore, and all of that started packaging together. Nothing *huge*, but it still gave you a chance to let everyone know, "Croatia exists!" Of course, now everybody *knows* Croatia exists because it's its own country and it's a *destination* that people are craving to go to. Then, when you graduated from high school, you were not allowed to play in the junior ensemble — they were called the Junior Tamburitza Ensembles. The CFU got involved, the Croatian Fraternal Union, and they started something where groups from all over the United States, once a year, would go somewhere and they would have a three-day event, and everyone would perform for ten minutes and you would meet all these other people *your* age, playing and dancing and singing, and so, you could just *see* how this was really, *really* building the culture and awareness — *and* finding out more and more what it is all *about*, not just as an American-Croatian. That was kind of the missing link. We still had friends that traveled there, teaching; we had friends that went to Duquesne and when I *left* the group, I decided "I don't *want* to leave the group," and they were like, "But you *have* to leave the group," and I said, "So, what can I do to stay?" and they said, "Well, would you mind staying on, and teaching the dancing? Then you can still play with us and be part of it," and I was like, "Oh, this is great!" So that's when I transitioned from knowing the dances and we had fun with it and you know, folk-dancing and eating at the picnics and knowing Teta-this and Kuma this and Deda that — these are all titles for, you know, grandma, grandpa, Teta being an aunt, Kuma being someone you couldn't call Mrs. So-and-so — well, you could, but it was more proper to call them, you know, "Kuma Jurasavic," and so...but *never* by first name. So through my college years, I stayed in Indiana. Now we were living, still, in Gary and I'm going to school in East Chicago, but living in Gary, and the school was St. Joseph's College — it was fully accredited for teaching — and that's what I wanted to go into — and other majors — but I was lucky. I was able to go to school there and then work within my group, and now I started teaching other groups that had formed. Some in South Chicago, some in the Gary group and in Whiting — and they were all — it just kept me busy, plus the adults, now, our parents, were saying, "Well, there are all these new dances you're dancing at these picnics and stuff — *we* want to learn!" So there was a night of fun dancing for *them* to learn. It just, you know, the whole thing just kept growing. If somebody would have said "Eventually, you're going to have your own dance company with Melissa [Obenauf], I would have said, "Yeah, right." But always, you know, going (she drops her voice to a whisper) "Wouldn't that be great?" But not realizing that all of this is happening to me, and all of these transitions. So now, okay, we're in Columbus, Ohio.

We got here because my husband was working for Sears, and we were transferred from Indiana to Livonia, Michigan. We got to Livonia and I couldn't find any Croatians. I was just... !! Finally, finally,

finally, I found the Detroit group, and was so excited. So excited! Next day, my husband says, “I’ve been transferred to Columbus, Ohio.” I’m like, “I just found the Croatians! I’ve been without them for a year unless we drive home!” Now we were a three-hour trip, but still... All of a sudden, word gets out that I’m going to Columbus, Ohio — only to find out that in Columbus, Ohio, they had a living, breathing, working, dancing lodge! And they still brought in the Tamburitza to play, and the singing, and they had a lot of different events and the *sarma*, which is stuffed cabbage dinners and the kielbasa and all of this — it was just like a dream come true! So, I’m thinking “This is good. This is going to work out.” So, when I got married — I mean, I’m telling everything: when I was born, when I got married, and so on — but it all fits in because of being involved in so many of the groups, the parish where I was getting married, gave me permission — because it was a Slovak parish — but he didn’t care because, I mean, we were all one, we were all the Slavic people, to have the kids that we were teaching the Tambura, the Tamburitza to play the mass! And to play some of the songs that I loved. So, word gets out, and we can’t *invite* that many people, so Father said, “Don’t invite them. Just say “If you want to come here, come to the mass.” Oh my goodness! So one of the people who came — we had three people who started Živili — [and one of them was] Drucilla, who chose to move on to a different career. Her sister worked — this is bizarre — worked in the library where I would go study, *and* there were two albums that were from Croatia of the *LADO*, which is the primo, primo — which still exists — folk ensemble. So she said, “You might as well just keep them and then I’ll find you and then you just have them, because, she said, “Every two weeks you come and check them out.” And then I said, “Well, I also get to come and talk to you about how your life was” — because she grew up in the Croatian community here in Columbus.

CF: May I ask the year of your wedding? And the year for your move to Columbus?

PK: The year for the wedding was 1972, and that was also the year of his transfer, 1972. So we were here in Columbus, somewhere around September or so, I think it was.

*Some intermittent discussion and adjustment for camera.*

I met Drucilla and Melissa that November. We went to the Duquesne concert, I think in Lancaster, and we started talking, starting in January about — but we were thinking more of a kids’ group.

CF: Are you still playing the Tamburitza instruments?

PK: No. And yes — every so often, I’ll pick it up. Unfortunately the Tamburitza... there’s something about playing with other people. And then, your backbone of the orchestra being the bass or the bugarija, the guitar, so you’ve got your rhythm going and so there’s something about playing or just sitting there and playing, and I know a mandolin sounds beautiful by itself, but usually you’ll find a guitar joining. So I don’t play as much — every so often. Yeah, it’s been a while but I’m not giving them away!

CF: When you came and found Drucilla and Melissa...

PK: Drucilla’s sister, the librarian, finds out that I’m getting married, finds out it’s a tamburitza mass, and says to me, “I’m coming.” (She laughs.) And I said “Of *course* you’re coming.” And that’s how word got out. Of course, at this point, we’re going to Detroit, and then we were there in Detroit, found the Croatians, next day he gets transferred to Columbus and that’s when the news that I’m

transferred to Columbus gets out, her sister, the librarian, tells everybody in Columbus because her whole family's there, that Pam Lacko Kelley is going to be coming to live in Columbus. Her husband's just been transferred. So that's how they found out, and that's when Drucilla and Melissa contacted me. And then it grew from there. An so I met them to go to a Duquesne University concert; I think it was in Lancaster, but I could be wrong, but anyway we met for the first time, and it was just immediate, you know, it was like "This is great! We have this Croatian connection." Melissa and Drucilla were doing some folk dancing here in Columbus, so they knew people that enjoyed dancing. But what we started with was a junior group, like what I had led back in Indiana. And we really thought that we could have that build and grow. Well, Columbus was a smaller community than what I was used to, and it had been many years later. So we started with the young children, we had about eight or twelve. We had a designated rehearsal and we did say "If you're going to be part of this, you must buy into it. In other words, if you're going to be on a soccer team, you're going to be on a soccer time and you're going to make all the rehearsals." At that time, I had no idea that they wouldn't...you know, this was just infancy. They were going to learn how to dance; we did have some costumes, and they performed at the International Festival here — you know, just a little something. And then the three of us looked at each other and went "Why can't we form a group? Why can't we dance? Why can't we learn the instruments?" Why not? In September in 1973, Živili was born. And they selected, Melissa and Drucilla, selected people from the ethnic folk dance community to join us — but with the same commitment — and "Just come for awhile. I mean, if you don't want to do this more structured, because we were only going to do things from, at that time, Yugoslavia. So if you don't want to do that, that's fine. But this is how we'll start. Because they knew the people that probably would commit and also had enough dance and music background that things would come easy: (she laughs) They knew their left from their right! No, that's just an aside, because that's an inside joke with Živili and me. I'm terrible! I'd always say "Go to your left!" And then they would say, "Oh, don't worry — just go to her other left." (More laughter.) Then, we did start, and we did some performing, but just something little; I think that we did something, again, at the international festival, but nothing on the big stage or whatever, you know. Had a booth where we sold some baked goods and things. But then, more people started to ask if they could become part of it. So then, that's when we thought "Wow!" And the company was really looking really strong, and so we started doing some choreography and this and that — now we were up to around eighteen, twenty — and *that's* when we decided we really have to audition because now we were getting tons of people saying, "Oh, we'd really like to come to your dance class," and this and that, and so we decided "Oh, we're going to take this into a little different direction," and just try it. And that's where I was like, "Pinch me!" And Melissa, too, said, "This is like — we're seeing this come *together!*" And more and more people were hearing about Živili. So it went on. We auditioned, we now got into costumes, we now bought instruments from Croatia — but we had many, many makers here in the United States that were *masters* in making Tamburitzas. So we started with the people who wanted, in Živili, to play the Tamburitza, and we learned and we had a separate rehearsal for awhile to get us up to par. And so we started doing little shows, but still on the music was on tape, because the people playing the instruments also wanted to dance. Now, it's just...I can't even give you dates, because it kept growing. And growing. And we were getting people from other junior groups that were going to be going to OSU. And so they would audition. They came *knowing* how to play the tambura, *knowing* how to sing some of the songs, already had some of the basic idea of dance — of Croatian dancing or Serbian — or *Yugoslavian* — let's say it that way — that they were able to fit into the group. Now, we could get rid of taped music. And some of the people just wanted to be musicians, some wanted to be dancers, and some wanted to be both. So we started designing the program in that respect. And we had sources to learn dances from, but they were

mostly people who had trained under some people who came from Croatia and taught them — OR they were former Duquesne University [dancers] and they were well-versed in the Croatian characteristics and stylistic singing and everything — so we did some work with them, but still it didn't feel right but at least we were moving in the right direction. And Melissa says “No, we're going to go right to the source.” I said, Okay!” And I do trust her because when she says she's going to do something, it's like by God, she *does* it! So, she contacts *Matica*. Okay, *Matica Isejenska Hrvatska*. Nobody has to memorize that. But this was the group in Croatia, in the capital, Zagreb, that was the liaison between the Croatians that lived in the Diaspora. So for all of us American/Croatians, *that* was our link. All the ones in Australia, the ones in Chile, the ones in...you know, all over there were Croatians. But America, boy do we have a big chunk — and a lot of it due to the fact that we have all these groups that were all over, forming. But no one was doing anything as an adult ensemble; everything was still children and young adults. And, because of Mr. Bernard Luketich<sup>3</sup> who has since passed, but he was the mover and shaker of the Croatian Fraternal Union, but he, *too*, wanted to play Tambura, and his daughters<sup>4</sup> who were part of the junior group, wanted to continue. So they formed the *adult* Tamburitzan Festival. So now all these people eighteen and over are forming, just like the junior group, but the adult groups. Some of them dance, some of them only play, but to this day — matter of fact, *this* November, we will be going with our store to set up — but the place, the Hilton, I think we're staying there — will be just overrun by *crazy Croatians* who love the music, and anywhere you go there's just going to be all these people playing! And little groups and singing in the hallways, on the elevators, it is magnificent! And it's keeping our culture *alive*, and once a year we are all able to come together and see each other that we've known since we were in the junior groups.

CF: And this is under the auspices of *Matica* or...

PK: Oh, right, I didn't finish that. Croatian Fraternal Union works with *Matica*, and they also offer opportunities for these groups to be able to perform in Croatia, and they'll set up a tour for you. I mean, it's not as active as, I mean it doesn't happen as much as it did in the past, but right now *Matica* is hosting all of the junior groups that could afford to go to Croatia. Some of them are already there, but over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July week-end, those children will perform in Zagreb, on the stage there. They will be part of a big parade. They will see groups from all over Croatia — we're now just Croatia; we can't say it is Yugoslavia, because that's where it is now. And *Matica* provides the venue and everything so that they can all gather together. So they are all there now, doing that. The adult ensembles have not gone to Croatia yet, but that's a little harder because of work and everything. So, like I say, in November that will be in Pittsburgh, and then it will travel somewhere else next year. Last year, it was in Orlando, Florida. The year before that, it was in...Chicago maybe, I forget. But anyway, so *Matica*, anyway, we're back to *Matica*. Melissa contacts *Matica*, and all of this other stuff is going on and *Matica* is choosing two groups to travel, and this is on the recreational lodge level, so Melissa contacts *Matica* and say “There has to be *somewhere* where we could come and really learn from the source...” because in the meantime, we did have one source come to work with us, and she was from the Ensemble LADO, the big folk company, and she came to the United States and you could pay for classes with her. So she was working with Melissa and myself during that time, and we were learning the *real* way. And I don't want to say it was academic, but you almost have to

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<sup>3</sup>1931 – 2015: Of Cokeburg, PA, Lukevich was the longest serving National President (36 years), longest serving executive officer (50 years) and longest tenured national officer (55 years) in the history of the Croatian Fraternal Union, a national society based in Pittsburgh, PA.

<sup>4</sup> Marlene Luketich-Kochis, of Scenery Hill, PA, and Bernadette Luketich-Sikaras of Eighty-Four, PA.

look at it that way, because everything we were doing was for fun and that's fine. But if we were going to take this to the next level and say "Hmm, maybe we'll form it, and maybe we'll *take* this out..." We used to say, you know, "We're changing it to ethnic dance," but it's still in someone's culture. You have to know *why* the dance was danced, who danced it — was it a men's dance or a woman's dance, or did they dance it together? How did they hold hands? Was it partnered? Were the hands like this on your waist for a woman, like this? Was it behind you like this if you were a man? I mean, there was so much that we couldn't...it was *wonderful*. And that's when Melissa said, "We're going to take it to the next step and we're actually going to go there because "I found out that they have a summer dance program for three weeks and anyone in Croatia that wants to be a director of... they call them *kud* groups — I'm not sure if I can translate that — but non-professional, just like we have, dancing for fun but yeah, performing, but still, you know, just the villagers *had* to go attend this summer school. And *anyone* who auditioned and was accepted to LADO, they, too, had to attend. At the time we were talking Yugoslavia, so it took three summers to complete the study! There are six zones that they separated out the dances in when it was Yugoslavia, so two zones a summer: a week and a half, and a week and a half, and then the next summer was two more zones and then the last two zones. Oh my goodness! And we were foreigners. And there was a little bit of "Hmmm... American's wanting to study." And there were issues about it because I don't think they realized how *passionate* we were. And (laughing now), pretty soon they realized how passionate we were! Because they could see it. They could just *see* it. We weren't learning a new dance just because we could say "Hey, I have this new dance to teach you – it really was for a purpose. We couldn't have asked enough questions: "What instruments play it?" All this and that. Melissa says, "We are *not* going if we do not have a way of transcribing this. We are *not* going to put "Step on the left foot..." because we had been to some workshops..."Step on the left foot, step on the right foot, put your foot behind, blah-blah-blah, and then stamp! All three of us wrote it down and all three of us had something different, okay? So Melissa took the intense course with Lucy Venable, and she did this *intense* study of learning Labanotation. That was a gift, because then there would be *no* question. I mean, she showed me some of the things, you know, moving forward and side –I mean, I could follow that, but she even — the flat-footedness, the ball of the foot, the heels, a stamp...so, we went and we were guests of *Matica*, we were on scholarship, everything paid for: our tuition, room and board — it was the most magnificent three weeks! And *that's* when everything exploded! We met all the directors of the state companies, because there was a Croatian one, there was a Slovenian one, there was a Serbian one, a Bosnian one, what made up Yugoslavia at that time — and we were learning from the source! We were there at the root. And that's where we found it it's not only Tambura. We did know that, but we didn't *realize* the bagpipe — *and* the kind of bagpipe. You know, when we think bagpipe, we think Scottish bagpipe. The bagpipe, the violin, the accordion, the use of these instruments — there was an instrument called the ljerica, the only instrument for that particular dance. So all of this — we just have books and things that we collected and we put them into binders, and that's our "Go-to" in case somebody has a question.

Costuming: every village has its own costume! Our board used to look at us and say "You need another costume?" And you know me, I'm going "Well, yes! Because we're going to be doing Lindo this year and Lindo needs *not* the costumes we used last year. I mean, it's from Dubrovnik, and it has its own costume and they're like "Oh, joj meni." So that was another thing, you know, we'd have to educate everyone who knew Živili and all...and this and that, all the way down to the singing. And you could hear — we always knew there was a different style of singing, but we never knew how to teach it. And so, when we were at that summer school, we learned and we were trained in the different ways to sing, how to hold your mouth, pronouncing it. Do you want me to demonstrate it?

My voice is terrible today; I haven't sung in awhile — well, I sang on the trip. We have two ways that the voice sings: the pretty head-voice way: she demonstrates a light, melodic musical phrase. So Dr. Ivan Ivančan, who was the Artistic Director of LADO, is teaching us and he looks at us — and there were some other foreigners there with us, and he would kind of just directly talk to us about questions we had, said “Well, I'm going to tell you one thing: you don't know how to sing.” And we were devastated, because we all really had nice voices! He said, “Just you listen and then you come back and show me when you can sing.” So we started asking the people, and they were teaching us, so (she demonstrates) like the villagers sing. Now we as Americans, to sing the village voice have to sing lower than they do, because (raising her voice to an almost squeaky level) they're way up there — that's their speaking voice. And so they're singing at this high, high pitch, but the tone — you have to bring everything from here, and you have to worry and my veins probably will stick out because my breathing's really been off, but to be able to produce this sound. Same song: (she sings the same phrase as before, but in a very harsh-sounding, much louder tone with a vibrato. Imagine a whole village singing like that, and then they're singing in parts. And he goes, “Okay.” Now we're talking. And still... Americans. Still, not quite trusting. And then we had the costuming, and we had to learn how to embroider, but we would go to the ethnographic museum, we were working with the curator there, and she would correct everything, so we couldn't buy — yes, we could have bought the costumes — but my gosh, their size, and this and that, and we had to be able to launder them, so that's not going to happen. So all of that — there was no internet, there was no youtube; there was only snail mail and going to Croatia to study. And more people in the United States were doing more costuming for their junior groups: Cokeburg — Mr. Luketich and his wife had us come there and be able to actually take their costumes, because they had some originals and some they reproduced from that. Duquesne was wonderful! Their costume curator, same thing. And we were able, then, to, little by little, build our base and *know* that what you saw on stage— maybe if I showed it to you right now, you would see how what we did — but it was mainly that it looked authentic from the stage. For example, there was this one area that really needed to look like it was heavily embroidered, and our costume designer used corduroy — wailed corduroy — and SO from a distance it looked [authentic]— and we did our Macedonian aprons — one of our artists, she did silk-screening on them. Again, from far away, you didn't know! And that was what the curator from the museum was so excited about, because here we are, we're reproducing them there. There were a couple of costumes that were so tricky, we didn't know *what* we were going to do. She said, “Do the summer costume.” So we didn't have to have all that leather and fur. And then also, all the way down to the hair! *Posavina* had two braids; *Zagorje* had one braid, *Prigorje* had two braids and the way you tied your braids. The way you wore your headpiece — you know, if you were a widow or divorced (she corrects herself) — No, no, no, no, not divorced! *Never* divorced! — Different now. But the widow would always be in black, so if we were doing a story scene, we might have Baba<sup>5</sup> in her all black.

CF: We are already nearing an hour, unbelievably. It may be that we can continue a bit and perhaps even schedule a follow-up.

PK: What would be really great in a Part 2, if we do that, is that — this has been all early, me, and I didn't mention anything about Melissa and her...the reason we came together is that I was so ethnic, and that's all I knew, and of course I knew about Ballet and I knew about going to the theatre and seeing dance — but not like her. Nothing like her! She was *immersed* in it! So the two coming

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<sup>5</sup> “grandmother” in Croatian



together is what made it *work*! Because then, of course, I was in theatre so I didn't have any problem getting on stage and singing —and if you said, you know, "Walk across that stage like you own it!" But then I realized that some folk dancers, they didn't have that background. So then we brought in the Ballet before — as a warm-up, if people wanted, and boy! Did you see a change in the dancers! And that's how it grew, little by little. We always stood here and then the company would come in and then we'd go here, and then we weren't afraid to try a lot of things, and that's where Christmas in Croatia came in and Treasured Past, and we were doing a different way of performing song and dance. Not a song, a dance, change of costume, song, dance, change of costume — which was fine! Entertaining. But it grew that way.

CF: I'd love to know all of it. And of course, we have some of it from Melissa. But if I could go back and ask a couple of questions...

PK: Oh, sure.

CF: What is Drucilla's last name?

PK: Badurina-Rousselle. She was only with us a couple of years, and she was wonderful, but she didn't want to go in that direction. We'd see her at dances, and stuff.

CF: Where was the Croatian Lodge, and does it still exist?

PK: You know what? Does it still exist... No. Where the Schottenstein Center was — the clothing business — on the South end, just off Parsons, on Reeb Avenue. Oh my gosh, that was the place, and right in the parking lot was the Croatian Lodge. It was a building, it had a stage — not that they could perform anything, but maybe a group to play for the dancing, wooden floors — actually, that's where we first rehearsed — and a full kitchen downstairs — people would have weddings there. It was like a church basement. But it had two floors. And down the street from it was St. Ladislav, I think. It doesn't exist anymore because that whole South End is being revitalized. But the Croatian Lodge *as people* still exists. They still have meetings and they still have things for the children. I mean, they're not *real* active, but they still do exist.

CF: Where do they dance?

PK: I don't think they've had any dances, but if there is some dancing, maybe the Serbian picnic always has a dance, maybe they'll go there. You know, we'll see a lot of people there. Selo had a fundraiser, and they went to that dance — you know, few and far between anymore. Or we go to Cleveland, or people will do that. But it's still active.

CF: Why do you think, having invested yourself in the Croatian community here and in Croatia, why is dance and music so central to that culture?

PK: It is to all the Slavic cultures: Polish, Romanian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Slovenian — I mean, even Germany has their own dances, but the Slavic nation — and the Hungarians are not part of the Slavic, but they have that same thing — and it's like walking, breathing — it's like, oh! you're born, now you'll dance. Now you'll listen to me sing our songs. It's just part of it, and when we go into the schools, we always say to the children, "Name one song that you can sing, your mom and dad can sing, the whole school can sing, and it must be something that when you sing it, you love it. Nobody

will say “I don’t know the words.” Or “I don’t like that song.” They would say, you know, “Star Spangled Banner,” “God Bless America,” — but there would always be some kindergartner who says “I don’t know that.” But I would say, “Name a song that everyone can sing,” and they’d say “Happy Birthday.” Then I’d say “Do you go around humming happy birthday? Or Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” and we could all sing that. And you’d get a kindergartner who’d say “I like that song!” And I would say, “I know, sweetie, but think of it as *everyone* singing! You go to a baseball game and everyone is singing that happy birthday, and it’s just there! And either when you became a dancer or a singer or a musician in Živili, either you had it and you bought into it and you let it take you over, or you’re going to be a dead ringer for an American on stage!

CF: Thank you!

PK: I’m so glad to get to talk about it!