

## Introducing Miroslav "Bata" Marčetić

With the combined energy of Joan Hantman and Bata Marčetić, Wigwam Hall will be reverberating at Statewide in May 19–21, 2023. Both Bata and Joanie fell in love with dance as youngsters. She was performing on pointe at the age of 8. Bata sat with his mom in the audience at "kolo" type performances and imagined he was on stage. As a youth he joined the ensemble KUD Abrašević. After graduating high school he was accepted into the premier Ensemble of National Dance and Song, "Kolo." Read about both teachers in Scene and discover other experiences and traits they share.

Bata danced professionally for 17 years as a permanent member of Kolo. While a soloist with the Kolo Ensemble Bata began teaching and choreographing. As a performer, choreographer and instructor he traveled throughout the former Yugoslavia, and abroad. During time off Bata would go into villages to record folklore and collect dances known to the elders. Bata also traveled to judge folklore competitions taking place in Serbia and Montenegro under the auspices of the Folk Dance Association of Serbia. His earliest memory of traveling involves a traditional means of transport. Bata recounts the story:

"I was about 5 years old and we lived in Pančevo, near Belgrade. Since my grandmother Maya lived far away, in the village of Marčetići, in the region of Vrlika, near the city of Knin in Croatia, we had to travel over 22 hours to get there. In this village used to live only Serbian people at that time, when Croatia was part of ex-Yugoslavia. So, that summer of 1959, we went to visit my grandmother. First, we went from Pančevo to Belgrade by bus; then from Belgrade to Split by train; from Split to Knin we rode in a small train called "Ćira." To get to Marčetići village from Knin my parents walked, and my sister and I rode a donkey. Yes, a donkey! That area is rugged and no other transportation could be used on those narrow paths. The journey from my grandmother's village back home to Pančevo took us again more than 22 hours. At the end, when we arrived from Belgrade to Pančevo, I didn't want to get off the bus. I cried, threw myself on the bus seat and raged, telling my parents that 'I didn't have enough travel!' I wanted to travel more. Well, when I think about it, I am happy that I have chosen the right occupation, because even now I like to travel a lot!"

We are thrilled that Bata will travel to San Pedro from Toronto, where he relocated more than 25 years ago. In 2004 Bata founded the Academy of Serbian Folk Dancing (350 dancers, 20 musicians) in Toronto. He still finds the time to teach at workshops and seminars worldwide. Bata continues to win acclaim (and collect prizes in folklore competitions) for his choreographies. Ensembles that he directs have won numerous awards and prizes in both junior and senior divisions in Canada as well as Europe.

Bata was first featured as a teacher for recreational folk dancers when he headlined the 2011 Laguna Fest. We were captivated by his feet which seemed perpetually airborne. As he jumped, leaped and pranced Bata's shoes barely touched the floor. We were not the only folks to gaze in amazement. Bata tells of an incident that occurred in the dance studio in Toronto:

"At one of my regular rehearsals with children aged 5 to 7, a new boy came. Usually, children of that age are shy, especially boys are not really free to dance right away. But this boy was very open, quite confident, and immediately got into the circle. During the break he made friends with the other children and joked and laughed. When he asked me at the beginning of the second half of the rehearsal how I know how to dance, I told him that my jazz shoes dance by themselves. I thought he understood the prank, because he immediately started laughing.

At the next rehearsal, his mom approached me. She told me that her son asked her to take him to a store to buy him black shoes for folk dance. At the shoe store he tried one pair, then jumped around. He tried another pair and again jumped around. Then he tried a few more shoes and remained dissatisfied. She didn't understand at all what he was doing and what was wrong – she asked him whether the shoes were too small or too big. He couldn't explain. In the end, he admitted what he was looking for – "the same jazz shoes that Bata has, shoes that dance on their own!"

We want a pair of those shoes, too, Bata, so we can dance Pre Pičor and Čičino Kolo like you! At Statewide Bata will teach highly approachable dances like Bre Djvoche and Kaži Suto, as well as some with faster steps. Extremely proud of his heritage, Bata takes care to include dances from the various regions of Serbia on each of his programs. During the Covid shut down Bata appeared on screen teaching and leading dances. He was featured in sessions sponsored by FACONE,

Stockton Virtual 2021 (live from Serbia), Laguna/San Antonio Spring Fest 2021 and Mainewoods. I hope he will include one or more of those dances at Harbor View since dances introduced virtually are difficult to remember. I'm eager to meet Bata's wife, Rodika, and dancers in his ensemble. During an interview published in *SAN*, the Serbian Canadian Magazine, October 2016, Bata stated, "...folk dancing became a part of me, and, as a result, a part of my career." We know he was enchanted with dance from early childhood, and made traditional dance his career, but how did he get nicknamed "Bata?" What questions will you ask Bata during lunch at Statewide?