

Planina - Songs of Eastern Europe

Boulder Balkan Bash 2019

November 2, 2020 at the Avalon Ballroom in Boulder, Colorado

\$1,250 Grant from the Alex "Tink" Wilson Legacy Fund - March 2019

2019 Boulder Balkan Bash Rocked!

Report by Mary Ann Saussotte

On November 2, 2019, nearly four hundred people gathered at the Avalon Ballroom in Boulder to celebrate the eighth Boulder Balkan Bash. Bashes are giant extravaganzas powered by local ensembles playing Eastern European and Balkan folk music for dancing.

This year's Bash showcased the combined strengths of six local music ensembles: Klezmerize, Sherefe, the Bitövniks, Planina—Songs of Eastern Europe, Barbelfish, and Gora Gora Orkestar. Each group gave a unique performance that made it hard to stay in your seat! In attendance were dancing guests from at least a dozen Colorado recreational and performance dance groups, including some who have been around for the past 45+ years as well as numerous children and young adults new to the scene.



Klezmerize, in its first Bash appearance, gets the party started.



Dancers move to the music of the Bitövniks, a band featuring Bulgarian traditional instruments.

Young and old, beginners and seasoned dancers, took hands and circled the hall as the captivating melodies soared out over the crowd. There was plenty of sitting room for the non-dancers and those who wanted to sit out a few tunes and snack. The potluck tables were loaded with food. It was a wonderful, old-world-style party in a time that can use this kind of community celebration.

The Boulder Balkan Bashes began in the late nineties, with visiting musicians giving workshops for local performers and playing at a splashy Saturday evening party. After a 15-year hiatus, Bashes were reborn at the

Avalon when Planina celebrated its 25-year anniversary in 2013. From the first Bashes, held in 1996, 1997, and 1998, this event has steadily grown into one of the largest, if not the largest, Eastern European folk dance event in the region.

The Bash is the product of a significant organizational effort, including dozens of volunteers, performers and paid staff. Planina's membership in the Boulder Dance Coalition (the organization that runs the Avalon) has made it practical to host the event at the beautiful Avalon Ballroom. And in recent years support from the Alex Wilson Legacy Fund (AWLF) has helped organizers refine their business model so



The crowd dances the Romanian dance "Joc de leagane" around a group of women from Planina, singing the song a cappella.

hat a financially self-sustaining Bash is now within reach. Many thanks to the AWLF!

Praises of the 2019 Bash:

“Playing at the Bash reminds us why we picked up our horns in the first place.” —Tung Pham, Director of Gora Gora Orkestar

“The music was wonderful. We were impressed by the large turnout . . . and that so many stayed to the end. We heard many comments by fellow dancers who are not folk dancers of how impressed they were by the music and *the dancing*. It was so wonderful to see so many ‘spectators’ who ventured to join in some dances.” —Arnie and Anne Guminski

“This is the best bash ever!” Ilona Bar-Or, BIFD folk dancer



Gora Gora Orkestar brings driving brass energy to the event.



Still energized at the end of the evening, dancers and members from all the bands join together for the finale.