

## Bulgarian Dance Group “Gaitani” – Suite “Bulgarian Wedding from Thracian Region”

*\$1,000 Grant from the Alex Wilson Legacy Fund – September 2023*



*Report by Lucy Slavcheva*

With the support of the Alex Wilson Legacy Fund, Bulgarian Dance Group “Gaitani” was able to bring the suite “Bulgarian Wedding” to life. AWLF’s contribution went directly to the guest participants and toward music copyrights and costumes.

Bulgarian Dance Group “Gaitani” was founded in 2015 to promote Bulgarian folklore in Colorado and North America. The group was founded by the professional choreographers Stoyan Getsov, Vanko Yordanov and Maria Mincheva. We have been successful in attracting dancers of all ages and experience.

The group performs authentic Bulgarian dances, but also has projects that present the folklore in a modernist way. We have recreated more than 20 authentic dances (horo) and have five original dances staged by Stoyan Getsov and Maria Mincheva. The group has performed at various festivals and concerts, including People’s Fair in Denver, CO; International Festival in Boulder, CO; and Vereia Festival in Chicago, IL.



“Bulgarian Wedding” is the biggest project for Gaitani to date. It features authentic Bulgarian customs and traditions performed during weddings. The premiere of the suite was on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024, during a concert, organized by Gaitani, in honor of Bulgarian Independence Day. Twenty dancers from Gaitani and Balkanika Folk performed together for the first time. Other groups and musicians also performed during the concert, such as Gaitani – kids’ group, Balkanika Folk, Planina, Varol Saatcioglu, Milyo Kepchelev, James Hoskins, and Jesse Manno. Attendance was 200 people.



Choreography for the suite “Bulgarian Wedding from Thracian Region” was staged by Stoyan Getsov, Vanko Yordanov and Maria Mincheva, music by BalkanFolk and Academic Folklore Ensemble at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts, Professor Asen Diamandiev, Plovdiv, with leaders Prof. Milcho Vassilev and Assoc. Prof. Dr Stefan Yordanov. The choreography started with a traditional “megdan” dance scene showing authentic festive dances that were happening in the Bulgarian villages, and hints at the falling in love between the soon-to-be newlyweds, followed by their duet. The suite continues with different scenes of the traditional Bulgarian wedding, such as the groom’s shaving, the bride’s veiling and the wedding itself.



As we move forward, we are aiming to expand the project with more details and additional participants. We view this project and our community concerts as huge successes as we are able to unite different groups and individuals that share the love for the folklore and music of the Balkans.

Videos of the suites and other dances can be found on Gaitani’s Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100089270030800>

Photos by Rossi Dimitrova: <https://rdimitrova.myportfolio.com/>