



# NOVOSTI



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## Tarara Folklore Ensemble Trip Home 2018 “FOLKLORE BRINGS US TOGETHER”



In July 2018, our Society's Tarara Folklore Ensemble went on the long awaited "trip of a lifetime", the performing tour of Croatia and Serbia that we called the "Trip Home 2018."

It had been nearly three decades since our Society last toured this part of the world, and so much has obviously changed since 1989.

Our group not only faced the challenge of dancing on stage as part of concerts and festivals, large and small, but of being the first folklore group from our Society to travel "back home" in the post-Yugoslavia era.

Responsibility for representing the unique blend of cultures

that exists at our Society sat squarely on their young shoulders. And they represented us brilliantly.

Throughout the tour, the Tarara Folklore Ensemble was noticed for all the right reasons. Onstage, the footwork, poise and stage-presence were superb, a credit to years of intensive training and dedication.

The smiles were brilliant, hiding – in a way dance professionals would be proud of – the tiredness, sore feet, ankle strains and other signs of what was a hectic and physically demanding tour.

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# TARARA FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE TRIP HOME 2018



## **The Tour Leader**

### **A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT FOR OUR SOCIETY**

The success of our Trip Home 2018 is something we can all be proud of. It is a significant event in our club history, being only the second trip to the homeland (and 29 years after the first one). It was also the first time that our

unique New Zealand Dalmatian Kolo was performed in the land that inspired it.

The trip was made possible with the combined efforts of a dedicated group of dancers, an excellent organising committee and the generous support of all club members.

Congratulations to our Tarara Folklore Ensemble on your hard work over the last three years to raise funds, on your many hours of practice, and the excellent standard of performance in your range of choreographies throughout the tour.

As a group you carried 'home' the emotions of generations of New Zealand Dallies who have a strong connection to the "Old Kolo", which they performed in their youth. It was very special for those of us lucky enough to be there.

Congratulations to our tutor Nenad Rajić for the excellent standard of performance achieved by your dancers and the professional way in which all of the performances were conducted. A special thank you to Mara Blucher and Marin Tokmadžić for your excellent leadership of the kolo throughout this period both on the dancefloor and with the fundraising efforts.

A big thank you to our organising committee. Several people I spoke to while on tour could not believe that we organised all of this ourselves from the other side of the world! Members of the committee used their personal contacts to organise accommodation, performances and our programme in each area, and made sure we experienced the best things on offer. They also organised live music for us in the Kragujevac and Zagreb sections.

It was a privilege to chair such a hardworking and collaborative committee with everybody pulling their weight. My thanks to Nenad Rajić, Mladen Tokmadžić, Vanya Piacun, Steve and Karolina Šulenta, Joe and Tamara Ujdur, Mara Blucher and Marin Tokmadžić.

Thank you to club Costume Manager Radmila Lupis for the preparation of costumes, to Treasurer Tanja Nola-Schipper for her support, and to Steven Barbarich from Travel Managers and Vicki Garelja from Orbit International for assistance with travel arrangements.

The generous support of our sponsors, Management Committee, club members, friends and families made this trip possible.

Puno hvala svima!

**Robert Blucher**

**Society Vice President & Tour Leader**

## **The President**

I was privileged to be part of the Trip Home 2018, and to tour with a marvellous group of dancers and supporters. In all the places where the Tarara Folklore Ensemble performed the dancers were greeted warmly, performed beautifully and were loudly applauded and appreciated by the audiences. We can all be very proud of them.

It is appropriate to acknowledge the many people who have contributed years of service to our society over the years, including past presidents and committees, and past costume managers and folklore tutors. Without their tireless efforts in previous years, this trip would not have been possible.

We are very grateful to the Trip Committee members who organised the different areas and our local tour guides, musicians, folklore ensembles and organisers. A very special thank you to Tour Leader and Society Vice President Robert Blucher, for his enormous contribution in leading the Trip Committee, preparing for the trip, and while on it, ensuring that everything ran smoothly each day.

Thanks must go to those who put in a huge amount of preparation beforehand, including all who worked so hard contributing to events and fundraising over the last few years.

The Trip Home followed the success of the Tarara group's Los Angeles tour in 2016, and won't be the last that our Society undertakes. Your young folk can be part of our exciting future plans - encourage them to be part of our folklore classes. The friendships made are lasting, and they could be part of our next tour overseas.

**Karen Dobrić**

**Society President**

## **The Communicators**

Technology meant that we were able to stay in touch with everyone back home, more or less instantaneously, via social media. We know that many of you followed our travels on Facebook, on the Tarara Folklore Ensemble's page and the Society's own page, as well as on Instagram, and the Club's blog. The social media posts were created by kolo leader and tour organising committee member Mara Blucher, and the blog was written by Club President Karen Dobrić.

Photography was chiefly supplied by Tarara Folklore Ensemble member Ella Matulović, who unfortunately had to pull out of the performing group, on doctor's advice, due to illness. Ella travelled to Europe as a non-performing member of the group, and she showed her considerable photography skills during the tour.

This newsletter was written by the Ensemble's manager and member of the tour organising committee, Vanya Piacun, who crafted the Club's newsletters for three years while a member of the Management Committee. It was planned and put together in conjunction with Mara Blucher, and is largely based on Mara's social media posts.



# TARARA FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE TRIP HOME 2018

## CONTINUED FROM FRONT COVER

Offstage, it was our unity and uniqueness that were noticed. While in Zagreb, performing at the international festival Međunarodna Smotra Folklor, we were sought out by a pre-eminent ethnologist, choreographer, professor and author, specialising in folk dance from the Balkan region.

Elsie Ivancich-Dunin is a Professor Emerita at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), and advisor with the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb. She knew how far we had traveled, and found it interesting that we are still dancing and preserving choreographies from our homelands.

But what really fascinated the Professor was not only our itinerary – which included ten scheduled performances in Croatia and Serbia – but our history, and the very inclusive nature of our club, and the Tarara Folklore Ensemble.



*Performing Međimurje in Zagreb*

The Professor was amazed that a group of dancers with varied backgrounds, some NZ-born “Dallies”, some born in Croatia, and some in Serbia – should, in the post-Yugoslav era, be dancing together, as brothers and sisters, performing the choreographies of each other’s nations, at their club on the other side of the world.

She found us inspirational – so much so, that her next academic paper will be focused on our club, and how we demonstrate every day how folklore can bring people together, in peace and harmony. And that togetherness formed the constant subtitle of our trip – a tour that strengthened understanding of each other, and our varied backgrounds.

Professor Ivancich-Dunin reminded us that the Dalmatian Cultural Society’s brand of inclusivity and co-operation is a beautiful thing. We may not realise it, but as a society, we are rare, if not unique, on the world stage, in our approach.

Those of us lucky enough to accompany the Tarara Folklore Ensemble on the trip know just how much goodwill surrounded our group, and our dancers. We were welcomed everywhere, applauded everywhere. And we shed tears of joy and pride, not only to watch the skillful performances of our beautiful Ensemble, but to be part of a slice of history.

We can all be very proud indeed of what the group achieved.

Here is the story of an incredible – and incredibly significant – three-week tour, the Tarara Folklore Ensemble’s “Trip Home 2018.”

*Vanya Piacun & Mara Blucher*

## DEPARTURE AND DAY 1

The excited group of 40 travelers gathered at Auckland Airport, in our matching t-shirts and hoodies, on the morning of 7 July. We boarded our Qatar Airways flight and seventeen long hours later, we landed in Doha, stretched our legs, unfolded ourselves, and made our way through the arrivals hall.

While we’d been in the air, Croatia’s Vatreni had played Russia in their football World Cup quarterfinal, and we had resigned ourselves to seeing just the result, not the action. But arriving half an hour earlier than scheduled meant that we managed to catch the dying moments of regular time. Glad to be off the plane, but full of nerves for the team, we watched Croatia go through the agony of a penalty shoot-out – and win their way through to the semifinal against England!

After the long flight to Doha and an eight-hour layover, the second leg to Belgrade felt like a short hop, and although exhausted, the excitement started to bubble – it was real: we were on the ground, at the start of the trip of a lifetime!

At the airport, we were met by the man the group came to know as “Uncle Bojan” Mladenović, our tour guide for the Serbian section of the trip, and immediately he felt like an old friend. Bojan is a former member of the Folklor Ansambl Svetozar Marković, and danced professionally with our tutor Nenad Rajić. Between them, Bojan and Nenad had put together a jam packed five days of performances and sightseeing, which introduced us to the amazing region that is Šumadija, central Serbia.

From Belgrade Airport, we travelled two hours by bus to Kragujevac, Nenad and Bojan’s hometown. After checking in to our hotel, the group had a couple of hours to relax and recover from the trip, before being taken by taxi to the Studentski Kulturni Centar (SKC), for a practice session before their first concert.



*Nenad & former tutor Čiča, in the Svetozar Marković practice room*

Svetozar Marković is based at SKC, and the group practised in the same hall, on the same dancefloor where Nenad and Bojan had spent so much of their youth. In celebration of the visit, the group had decorated the walls with photographs of Nenad in his dancing days – a touching tribute to a performer they’ve clearly not forgotten.

# TARARA FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE TRIP HOME 2018

## DAY 2 - KRAGUJEVAC

The next day gave us our first real taste of Šumadija, and some of the sobering events that have shaped it, and its people. Among other sites, we went to the Šumarice Memorial Park & Museum, dedicated to the victims of the 21. Oktobar 1941 massacre by the Nazis, as well as the local high school, where that massacre took the lives of two classrooms of innocent students. In the park we saw the memorials to victims of the massacre, erected in the name of peace by numerous nations and groups, including one from the people of Croatia.

By the evening, we were ready for the first concert, at the SKC Concert Hall, where the Tarara Folklore Ensemble appeared alongside local groups, including several generations of Svetozar Marković dancers. The group proudly performed some of the choreographies that Nenad brought with him to New Zealand, and Svetozar Marković very kindly loaned us beautiful costumes for our Glamoč choreography, which were worn for the duration of the Serbian leg of the tour.



*Performing the NZ Dalmatian Kolo in Kragujevac*

The group was also blessed to have the services of an incredibly talented band of Svetozar Marković musicians, who performed with us for all three Serbian concerts. Their leader was the son of the band leader from Nenad's performing days.

The concert included an amazing first – the NZ Dalmatian kolo was performed for the very first time in former Yugoslavia. And there was a surprise for the audience. We met Nenad's own former tutor, known as Čiča, who told Nenad in no uncertain terms that he would be performing with his old dance group, in the lead role in the choreography Banat that night. And he did!

After the concert, Svetozar Marković invited the group to join them at a local restaurant, and were treated to the first of the group's spine-tingling haka performances.

## DAY 3- MEČAVNIK, ZLATIBOR

Day three of the trip was dedicated to sightseeing, and we covered a lot of ground! We left Kragujevac for the day, and took a trip to Mečavnik, around 150km west of Kragujevac, up in the mountains. Mečavnik is the start of a steam train route through spectacular mountain scenery.

On the way back to Kragujevac, we stopped at Drvengrad Ethno Village, built and owned by famous actor Emir Kusturica, then called into Zlatibor Market, a wonderful market selling everything traditional, from opanke to honey, rakija, and the most delicious naturally-cured pršut and salamis.

## DAY 4 – ČAČAK

We started the fourth day of our tour with some sightseeing around historical sites, including the Blagoveštenje and St Lazar Monasteries, and we found a very famous bus, from the classic movie "Ko To Tamo Peva". Of course, we had to stop for a photo!

That afternoon, we arrived in the city of Čačak, for the group's second concert of the tour, held at the indoor/outdoor theatre which is the home of Folklor Ansambl Abrašević. The group had the pleasure of performing alongside members of the Ansambl, as well as other local groups, who all made our group feel incredibly welcome. The highlight of the evening was that the concert was broadcast on Serbian national television. After four days, the group had become TV stars!



*The stage and theatre in Čačak*

After the show, the group had a wonderful evening socialising with their new kolo friends in Čačak. To cap off an amazing day, those Vatrenci gave us another thriller, winning a semi-final shoot-out with England, to make our dream come true: to watch Croatia play in the World Cup final, while we were in Croatia!

## DAY 5 - TOPOLA

The action continued into day 5, our last full day in Serbia. We set off in the early morning for Topola, to the north of Kragujevac, on the day of their town's slava. The rolling hills and fertile ground around Topola lend themselves to viticulture and wine production, so it was natural that we'd start by visiting the Kings Winery (and shop!).

Then into Topola itself, where we were hosted at a reception by the Deputy Mayor, before hiking through the town markets up the hill to Oplenac, and the spectacular church that houses the mausoleum of the Karađorđević family, the Serbian and former Yugoslav royal dynasty. Incredibly opulent and breathtakingly beautiful, the walls of the mausoleum are made from over 60 million individual 18 carat gold mosaic tiles.



*Walking down to the stage, to perform Šumadija in Topola*

Back in town, we were treated to a delicious traditional lunch, before the Tarara group went to get ready for the evening concert. Once again, the group performed alongside other local kolo groups, this time on an outdoor stage, in a lush green park, against an astonishingly beautiful setting of rolling hills, distant villages, and the setting sun. It was certainly a great final performance to leave our mark in Serbia.



# TARARA FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE TRIP HOME 2018

**DAY 6 – TRAVEL TO PULA VIA BELGRADE** This was our big, big travel day. We left the hotel at 6am, said a sad goodbye to “Uncle Bojan” and got on the road, bound for Istria. First stop was Belgrade, where we had a couple of hours to explore. Many of us made our way up to Kalemegdan, the spectacular fortress set high on the hill above the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers.

Others strolled Knez Mihailova Street, the main strip in Belgrade. And some went in search of a work by Frano Kršinić, the famous sculptor, and great uncle of our own Marilyn Pritchard (nee Mušin), who was a very keen supporter on the trip.

We finally arrived in Pula, tired but excited to begin the next leg of the trip, expertly organized by Pula natives, Mladen and Suzana Tokmadžić.

**DAY 7 – PULA/VODNJAN** We really noticed the increase in temperature in Istria and beautiful Pula sparkled in the sunshine. The day naturally included a visit to the Pula Arena, one of the last Roman amphitheatres in existence. Though smaller than the one in Rome, the Pula Arena is much better preserved, and plays a big part in city life, hosting numerous events. By the afternoon, the heat was telling and the group gladly had their first swim in the crystal waters of the Adriatic Sea.

The evening saw our first performance of the tour in Croatia. Mladen had worked with his contacts in Istria to arrange a concert in the town square of Vodnjan, an historic town not far from Pula. Istria has a distinctly Italian influence – in language, architecture and attitude. All of the evening’s performances were introduced in three languages: Croatian and Italian, for the locals, and English for the tourists. The Tarara group’s manager Vanya Piacun lent a familiar voice, as co-MC delivering the English introductions.

The group performed alongside a local kolo group, which was as amazing as it was hectic – it meant the Tarara team had only one act between performances in which to change costumes for each of their six choreographies. But the reaction of the very welcoming crowd made it totally worthwhile – they clapped and cheered the whole way through.



*Onstage in Vodnjan, ready to perform the NZ Dalmatian Kolo*

Even more special was the fact that Vodnjan saw the very first performance of our New Zealand Dalmatian kolo in Croatia. It was an historic moment, and there was no denying the lumps in the throats (and tears in the eyes) of the support crew, fully aware of the significance of what was taking place on stage.

The music struck a familiar chord with the crowd too, who sang and clapped along to the old but obviously well-known music. After the show, the group was treated to typical Istrian hospitality, with a wonderful meal at a local restaurant, before heading back to Pula to prepare for another big day.

**DAY 8 – BRIJUNI/VODNJAN** We had another early start, with a boat ride to nearby Brijuni, the island where Josip Broz Tito built his personal summer residence, and where he lived for six months of the year. We were treated to a guided miniature-train tour of the island, which also features an animal safari park. The park is home to the descendants of the numerous exotic animals which were gifted to Tito by other world leaders, dozens of whom came to the island as his guests, and who feature in historic photographs lining the walls of the island’s museum dedicated to Tito. Brijuni also has a golf course, Roman ruins and a very upmarket and expensive hotel – as well as another Frano Kršinić work, as Marilyn discovered.



*The whole group ready to watch the World Cup Final*

After returning from Brijuni, it was World Cup final time, and the whole group, decked out in their red and white checks, headed to a restaurant just out of Pula. There, we watched Luka Modrić and his team of heroes realising a dream – contesting the World Cup final against France. We may not have got the result we wanted, and Croatia may not have won the World Cup, but no-one could deny the incredible feat achieved by the Vatreni to be on the pitch for the final.

**DAY 9 – BALE/ROVINJ** Day 9 saw us just outside of Vodnjan at the Kažun Park. Kažun are small huts made from Istrian stone, and are a marvel of construction. No cement is used, and the stones are balanced, Jenga-like on top of each other, in perfect formation. After exploring the park, we sampled premium local wine and olive oil – and our luggage suddenly became a little heavier with bottles that we just had to bring home.

We had been scheduled to perform with Mladen Tokmadžić’s own former folklore group in Bale, 23km to the north of Pula, but unfortunately the weather had other plans. An approaching storm meant that the concert had to be cancelled – much to the disappointment of all.

But the silver lining to the oncoming cloud was that we were able to enjoy some down-time at the beach, and then visit stunningly beautiful Rovinj. The seaside village is breathtaking, and was made all the more special by our guide (and Mladen’s former flatmate), who took us into the nooks and crannies that only a local can know.

As the heavens opened, we sheltered in shops, restaurants and bars – and watched the incredible footage from Zagreb, as the Vatreni were welcomed home, to scenes that couldn’t have been more spectacular had they actually won the Cup. Watching the scenes as 600,000 people packed into and around Trg Bana Josipa Jelačića, it was incredible to think that we would be performing in that very square in just two days. We sure hoped they cleaned it up in time!

# TARARA FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE TRIP HOME 2018

**DAY 10 – MOTOVUN/ZAGREB** We said a sad goodbye to beautiful Istria, and “so long” to Mladen and Suzana, as well as their close friend Snežana who’d travelled with us (though we’d catch up with them again in Makarska). But before leaving the peninsula, we had one last stop at the extraordinarily picturesque village of Motovun, built high up on a mountain. We had to get off our bus at the bottom of the mountain and take a smaller bus up to the town itself, as the roads are a steep zigzag with hairpin bends – very appropriate, as it is the birthplace of famous racing driver Mario Andretti; it must be where he learned his cornering skills!



Motovun is famous for its truffles, and the restaurants and cafes dotted all over the town all serve the local delicacy, in soups, on pizzas, in pasta – you name it. Our luggage got a little heavier again, as we made some purchases of the local product. Then it was back on the road, and off to Zagreb, to perform at one of the key events of the tour – the festival known as “Smotra”.

On arrival, we split into two groups, with dancers and staff staying at the Studentski Dom Stjepan Radić, close to the Sava river, while supporters stayed in a hotel right on “the Trg”.

We were met at the Dom by our band, including old friend Mile Ivičević (who performed at our club’s Vrgorac Večer back in October 2017), who had travelled from the coast specially to perform with us at Zagreb. The rules of Smotra do not allow recorded music for performances - it must be played live, so we were very glad that Mile and friends could join us.

Smotra’s regulations also meant that, sadly, our unique and beloved New Zealand Dalmatian kolo was deemed not suitable for performance onstage at the Festival – so although we had been very eager to dance, the beautiful costumes so generously donated by the Whangarei club had to stay in their bags until we were back on the coast.

After practising with the band, we settled into student life in the Dom, surrounded by other international groups – Colombia, Spain, Mexico – all very colourful, very effervescent, and very noisy! Walking down the corridors to our rooms felt a bit like being in Bogota, Madrid or Mexico City. Our other neighbours, the Belgians, were a little quieter!

**DAY 11 - ZAGREB** The Tarara group and band boarded the Smotra bus at the Studentski Dom, for the 6km trip back to the Trg to perform at the Festival. A good crowd had gathered, including some familiar NZ Dally faces who we hadn’t expected to see – that’s the great thing about performing in Croatia, someone from home always unexpectedly turns up! After a beautiful performance of Međimurje, several of the

group were interviewed by Croatian TV and radio stations, as part of Smotra media coverage.

Then it was back to the Studentski Dom to rest, or to swim, and stretch those aching muscles and limbs. The tour itinerary was punishing, with performances or practices on most days, and travel on the days in between, in increasingly high temperatures – and the group had quickly realised how vital it was to take any opportunity to rest.

**DAY 12 - ZAGREB** After breakfast in the student cafeteria, it was back on the bus and back to the Trg, for another faultless performance. The rest of the day was spent exploring the beautiful city that is Zagreb. Most wandered up into the old town, to the twin areas of Gradec and Kaptol, to explore the promenades, museums (including the very unusual Museum of Broken Relationships, with its mementoes and stories of heartbreak and infidelity) and churches, including the iconic St Mark’s Church, and the very impressive Zagreb Cathedral.

Gradec is also home to the Croatian Parliament, and it seemed amazing to be able to walk up to the door of the Parliament building with seemingly little fanfare or security. Unfortunately, the amazing Kamenita Vrata (stone gate to the old city) was being renovated, so we couldn’t wander through.

**DAY 13 – ZAGREB TO KRK** Having crossed Croatia from Istria to Zagreb specifically to perform at Smotra, it was time to head back to the more relaxed coast, to our next performance at Novi Vinodolski. Steven and Karolina Sulenta headed up the Novi Vinodolski section of the trip, and had booked us into a hotel on Krk, as accommodation for a large group at Novi was hard to come by.

On the way to Krk, we had planned to visit Plitvice Lakes, but the hours ran out, and travel time unfortunately just didn’t allow it – we’ll need to save that for next time.

After a long day of travel, we arrived at our hotel at Omišalj, on Krk. Although the skies were a little cloudy, it was certainly warm, and most of the group could barely wait to get back into those Adriatic waters for an early evening swim.



**DAY 14 – KRK/NOVI VINODOLSKI** Morning brought more swimming and time to enjoy our little area of Krk, before heading to Novi Vinodolski in the afternoon, to get ready for our first concert on the coast. Before the show, the group was treated to a delicious meal (čevapi of course!), and was able to spend time exploring the beautiful and historic town.



# TARARA FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE TRIP HOME 2018

Steven and Karolina had worked with locals to organise a performance in the centre of Novi, with the Tarara Folklore Ensemble as the star performers. Once again, we were blessed with the most incredible setting for our concert, with the stage set up in the middle of the picturesque town square.



As dusk fell and daylight faded, the summer evening light combined with the supplied lighting, music, dance, and the backdrop of beautiful historic buildings to create a stunning concert experience.

Four choreographies were interspersed with musical interludes, all lapped up by the thoroughly appreciative crowd, including some familiar figures from home. Then it was back to the bus, back to Omišalj, to prepare for our next leg – and the road to Dalmatia.

**DAY 15 – NOVI TO SPLIT/MAKARSKA** The journey from Novi was another long one. We stopped at Kaštela for a delicious group lunch before travelling on to Split, where we had time to explore this incredible city. In the heat, that meant (for many of us) finding a cold drink and a shaded table, to watch the crowds thronging through the extraordinary city which is built in the walls of the Emperor Diocletian's palace, built in the 4th century AD.

Split done, we made our way to our accommodation in the town that is the very heart of the area so many of our families hail from - Makarska.

**DAY 16, 17 – MAKARSKA** The trip was hectic, and covered a lot of ground, with little downtime, so it was wonderful to spend a few days relaxing in Makarska. There was time for a number of us to make short journeys to visit family in various villages along the coast and neighbouring islands, which are easily accessible from Makarska.

Tamara and Joe Ujdur had worked with local contacts to arrange a performance for the Tarara group in the main square. Again, we performed alongside local dancers and singers, and although the wind whipped up right on concert time, the rain held off, and our performance here was nothing short of magical.

The highlight had to be performing the NZ Dalmatian kolo, and it gave many of our support crew goosebumps to see our very own kolo performed in the heart of the region that inspired it.

The setting could not have been more beautiful, dancing in the town square in front of the historic church and imposing mountains. It was also absolutely wonderful for the group to perform in front of a crowd that included so many familiar faces of friends and family, from New Zealand and even from the USA! And we made it to the local news post performance, on the Makarsko-Primorje website!

**DAY 18 – MAKARSKA/VRGORAC** For some, the morning was spent exploring Makarska, and catching up with friends from home (Caffe Koštela is a real Kiwi/Dally hub!). Others had group business to attend to, before an afternoon spent cooling off – in the shade, or crowded Makarska beach. Late in the afternoon, we boarded our trusty bus, and headed over the impossibly high Biokovo, to Vrgorac, home for the last five nights of the tour.

**DAY 19 – MEĐUGORJE/MOSTAR** By day 19, the temperature was soaring, as we played tourists from our base in Vrgorac. Travelling over the border, into Bosnia and Herzegovina, the mercury approached 40°C as we visited Međugorje and then Mostar.

Međugorje is, of course, a very popular Catholic pilgrimage site due to the apparition of the Virgin Mary to a group of children in 1981. Mostar is famous for its Ottoman-era bridge, built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and destroyed in the war in 1993. It's been reconstructed, and is again the defining feature of the town – as well as a source of income for local divers, who only jump into the waters 24m below when enough money has been gathered.

The evening saw us enjoying the hospitality of Tamara and Joe Ujdur and their family, at a wonderful celebration at their home in Prapatnice, where we were reunited with Mile and his fellow musicians from our Smotra band. As the boys played, the dancing started – including an impromptu performance of Međimurje!

**DAY 20 – VRGORAC** The Ujdurs had arranged for our group to take part in local "Večer Ispod Matokit" folklore festival, which takes place each year, and where, in 2018, we had top billing in local advertising. A beautiful outdoor stage had been set up at the local high school, and was "dressed" to look like a local village scene (complete with a group of women knitting!), ready to welcome local groups and us visitors from afar. The village effect was enhanced by one group of performers in particular – Dream Team "Babe" was a group of grandmas with very big voices, who stole the show!

But it was Mother Nature's backdrop which really made it incredible. To one side of the stage was Matokit, the mountain for which the festival is named. In the middle, in the distance, a lighting storm lit up the dusky, moody hills. And to the right – a full lunar eclipse unfolded.

Against this background, the Tarara Folklore Ensemble gave it their all one more time, performing four beautifully polished choreographies, and an awe-inspiring haka.

A fittingly significant way to mark the end of a very significant performing tour.



# TARARA FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE TRIP HOME 2018

**DAY 21 – VRGORAC** With performances over, all that was left was to relax and enjoy the sights of the region. The morning after the concert, a number of us hiked up the hill to Gradi-na, the fortress that looks out over Vrgorac. And that afternoon, we visited a local ethnic village, Etno Selo Kokorići, which like many others in the area, recreates a bygone way of life. While there was still one day of the trip to go, a number of the group were departing the next morning, so we took the opportunity to get together one last time at the Etno Selo, over pršut, cheese and bread, to thank everyone who'd come on board the tour, and made the trip of a lifetime possible.

**DAY 22 - DUBROVNIK** Day 22 was our Dubrovnik day. It is always amazing to visit this beautiful city, and for a large number of the Tarara group, it was their first visit. Over the day some of us walked the walls, went up the gondola to the top of the mountain to look over the city and we even had time for a quick swim. A super special day all round!



*The final day, in Dubrovnik*

**DAY 23 – HOMEWARD BOUND** And then it was time for home – or more travels. Those returning home boarded a bus for Zagreb, and the long journey back to New Zealand (and winter!). The majority, though, took the opportunity for a little extended holiday, spending time with family in their hometowns.

Farewells were said in Vrgorac, knowing that the memories made and bonds forged during the trip of a lifetime will indeed last a lifetime. It truly was an amazing "Trip Home" in every respect.

## **The travelling party were:**

**Tarara Folklore Ensemble:** Mara Blucher, Aleksandar Božić, Andras Deli, Elena Duranska, Daniel Garelj, Pero Garlick, Natalie Matulović, Bojan Soleša, Roland Sokčević, Nataša Šulenta, Zoran Šulenta, Marin Tokmadžić, Nina Ujdur, Vanya Ujdur, Dunja Vajsaković, Sara Vajsaković, Ella Matulović (photographer)

**Organising Committee:** Mara Blucher (Kolo Leader), Robert Blucher (Tour Leader), Vanya Piacun (TFE Manager and head of Zagreb section), Nenad Rajić (Tutor and head of Serbia section), Steven Šulenta and Karolina Šulenta (heads of Novi Vinodolski section), Marin Tokmadžić (Kolo Leader), Mladen Tokmadžić (head of Istria section), Joe Ujdur and Tamara Ujdur (heads of Dalmatia section)

**Supporters:** Sonja Antunović, Dario Antunović, Carleen Blucher, Karen Dobrić, Marcella Gugich, Diane Jelas, Johnny Nola, Marilyn Pritchard, Neven Šulenta, Glen Subritzky, Tracey Ujdur-Subritzky, Maia Subritzky, Suzana Tokmadžić, Gary Ujdur, Ivan Ujdur, Karen Ujdur, James Ujdur, Thomas Ujdur, Anthony Vodanovich, Victor Yukich

**INTRODUCING....**Many of the performances were preceded by an introduction about our club, and the Tarara group. The following was read (sometimes in part, sometimes in its entirety) at a number of our performances:

*"The Dalmatian Cultural Society is one of the oldest and largest cultural organisations in New Zealand. It was established in Auckland, New Zealand, in 1930, by some of the first immigrants from Dalmatia, as a place of togetherness and familiarity as they adjusted to life in their new land.*

*Throughout the years, and changing times, the Society has striven to keep alive the culture and traditions of those pioneers, and we do that to the present day. Since those early times, we have welcomed all subsequent waves of immigrants to New Zealand, and while our Society is named for the original Dalmatian pioneers, we take an active role in preserving the history and culture not only of Dalmatians and other Croats, but all nations that made up former Yugoslavia.*

*We do this chiefly through a very strong folklore offering, in music, song and dance for all age groups. Currently we have five kolo groups, four klapa and choir groups and a tamburica orchestra, who all meet and practise weekly. We also have language classes for all ages and abilities. Our folklore groups perform regularly, both at our spacious clubrooms and in the wider community, taking part in concerts, cultural festivals and numerous other events.*

*Our main performing group is known as the "Tarara Folklore Ensemble". Members of the Ensemble are aged from 16 to 30 years, and they learn and perform a variety of choreographies, from Croatia, Serbia, and other nations of former Yugoslavia. Many of the group have been dancing kolo since they were very small children.*

*Their name – "Tarara" – is one given to the Dalmatian settlers by the native Maori people in New Zealand. "Tarara" is a term of great respect and affection, and we are very well regarded in this country, even being honoured with the status of Maori tribe, as "Ngati Tarara". "Tarara" refers to the fast and musical way that the pioneers' language sounded to the Maori – "ta-ra-ra-ra-ra" – they thought our people spoke very quickly.*

*2018 marks the Dalmatian Cultural Society's second "trip home" ("put u rodni kraj"), to perform in the lands of our forefathers, the first being 29 years ago, in 1989. On this occasion, amongst our repertoire of choreographies, we are bringing with us one particularly special dance – the New Zealand Dalmatian Kolo. It is unique to New Zealand, and is not performed anywhere else in the world. It has been performed by four generations of young people, and has been a very important part of what it is to be a Dalmatian New Zealander.*

*It was put together and first danced by some of the original Dalmatian settlers in New Zealand, and is made up of steps and the tamburica music that they brought from "back home". They pieced it together as a happy, lively celebration of the homeland they left behind.*

*In 2018, it is being performed in that homeland, for the very first time, by the Tarara Folklore Ensemble. The hopes, dreams and best wishes of the pioneers, their families, and all the generations and settlers who followed, go with them."*



# TARARA FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE TRIP HOME 2018



Above, clockwise from top left: Kragujevac: Marin and Nataša performing Glamoč ; Šumarice Memorial museum; the group farewelling "Uncle Bojan" outside Hotel Kragujevac;; Pero, Daniel and Bojan in Glamoč, view of Kragujevac from the hotel: Nenad in the starring role in Banat. Centre: Girls performing Šumadija . Below, clockwise from top left supporters stop during the train journey in Mečavnik; ethnic village in Mečavnik; on board the train; with the actual bus from the famous movie "Ko To Tamo Peva"; performing Glamoč in Čačak

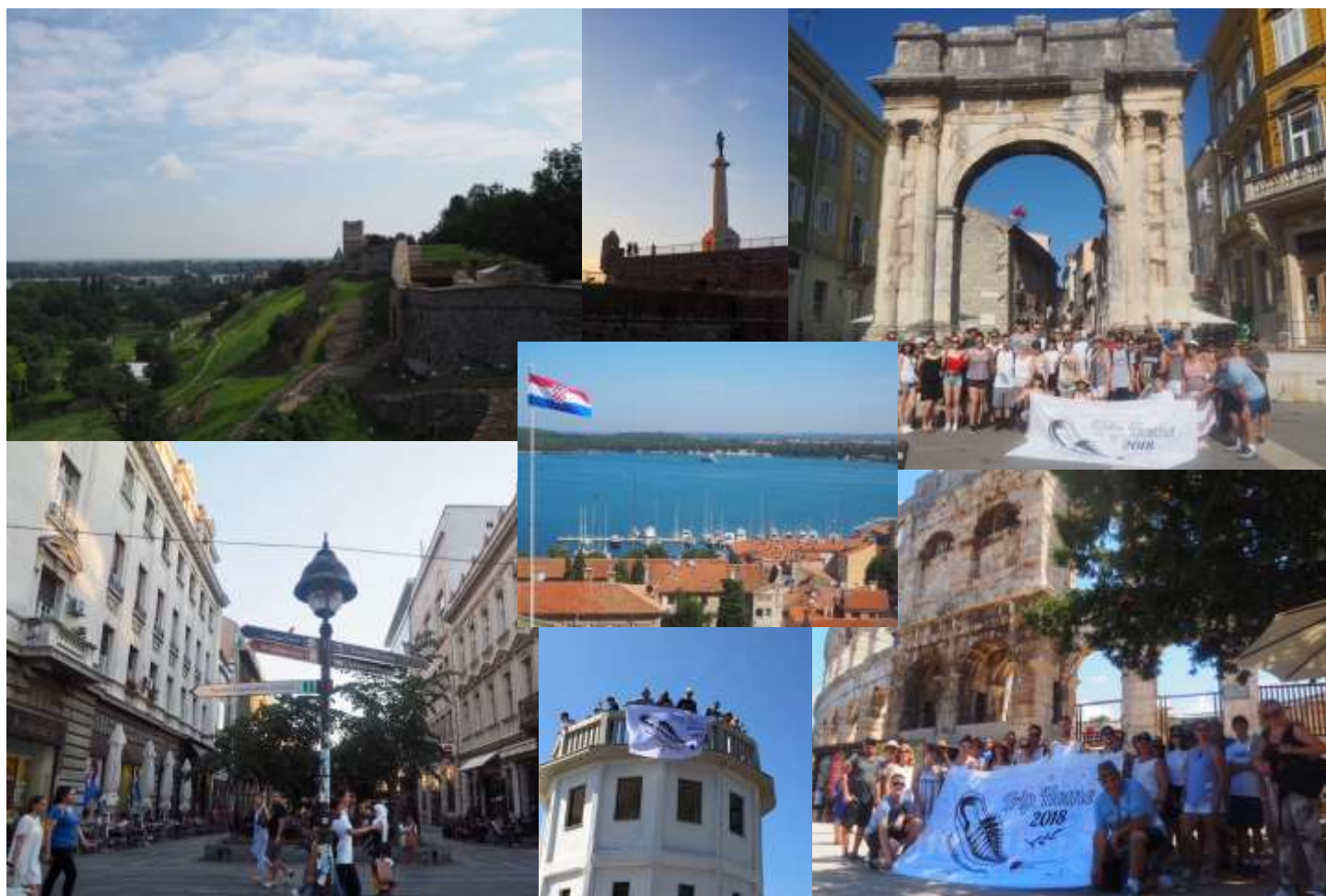




# TARARA FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE TRIP HOME 2018

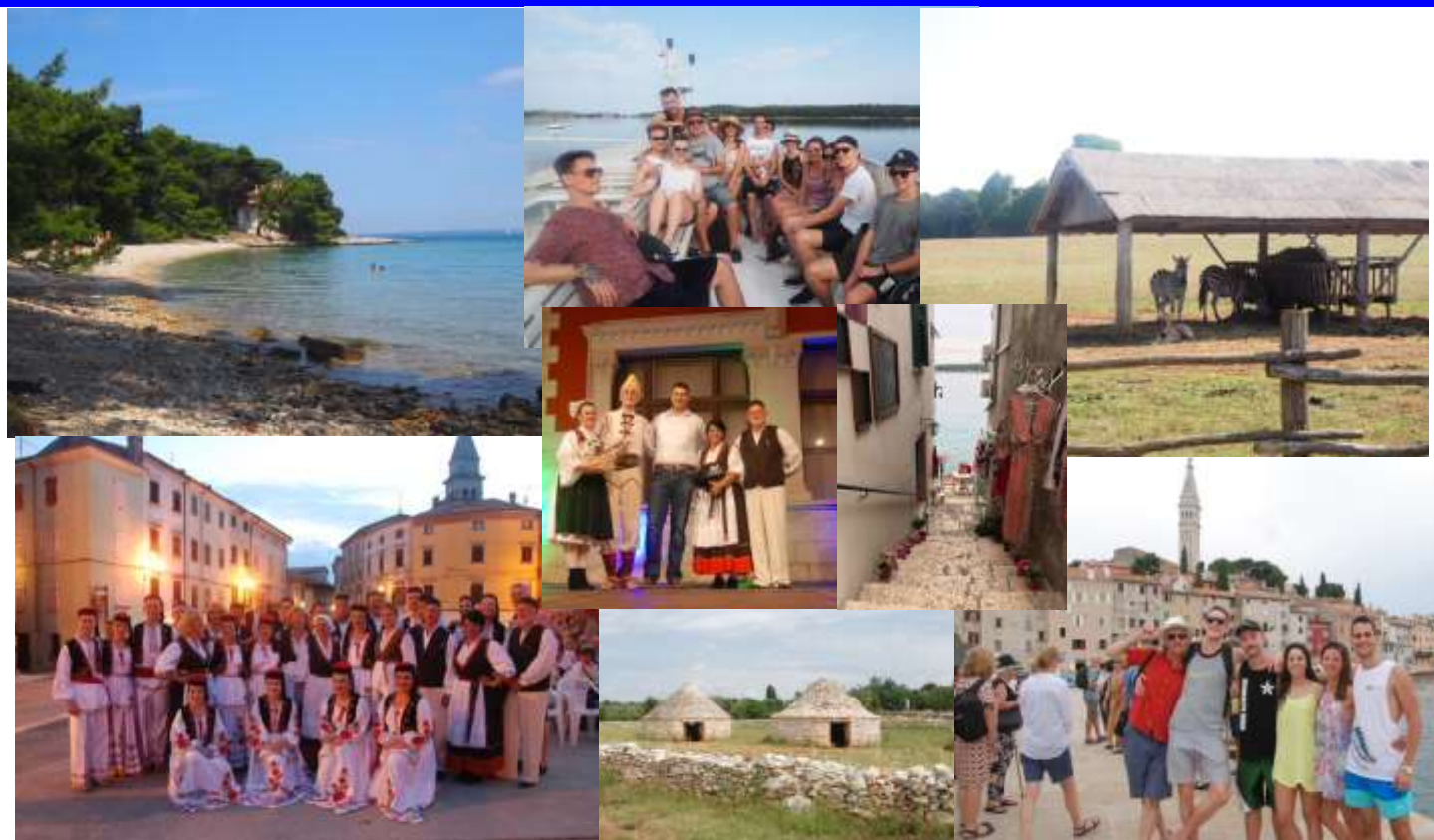


Above, clockwise from top left: Performing Šopsko in Topola; Šumadija girls ready to perform in Topola; our band from Svetozar Marković performing in Topola; Andras and Aleks in Topola; girls onstage for Glamoč in Topola. Centre: The Karađorđević mausoleum at Oplenac. Below, clockwise from top left: Kalemegdan fortress in Belgrade; view from Kalemegdan; in front of Arch of Sergii in Pula; group in front of Pula Arena; atop Pula fortress tower; Knez Mihailova Street, Belgrade. Centre: view from Pula fortress tower





# TARARA FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE TRIP HOME 2018



Above, clockwise from top left: beach on Brijuni; boat trip to Brijuni; remnants of Tito's zoo on Brijuni; some of the crew in Rovinj; in the Kažun park outside Vodnjan; in the town square in Vodnjan, pre-performance. Centre: Onstage with the Vodnjan Deputy Mayor and other group leaders; view to the water in Rovinj. Below, clockwise from top left: at Smotra in Zagreb: our musicians; Steve and Joe with the banner; Ban Jelačić with his party dress on; Marin being interviewed for television; Belgian flag dancers; Spanish performers; Međimurje boys ready to go onstage. Centre: Međimurje girls onstage.





# TARARA FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE TRIP HOME 2018



Above, clockwise from top left: NZ Dalmatian kolo in Novi Vinodolski; boys in Novi; tower in Diocletian's Palace, Split; the crowd in Novi; Hrvatsko Zagorje in Novi; Daniel jumping into the sea in Krk; the exhaustion is real. Below, clockwise from top left: Šopsko boys ready to perform in Makarska; the Makarska crowd; onstage in front of the iconic Makarska church; after another great meal at Novak at Villa Lean in Makarska; familiar faces from NZ and USA in Makarska; on Dalmatinska Ulica. Centre: cruising from Podgora to a neighbouring bay.





# TARARA FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE TRIP HOME 2018



Top, clockwise from left: Tarara dancers and locals after the show in Vrgorac; the group at the top of the Gradina tower; performing Šopsko in Vrgorac haka in Vrgorac; group at Gradina fortress; the Ispod Matokit stage; extended Ujdur family at Prapatnice. Centre: Performing Stari Splitski in Vrgorac. Below, clockwise from top left; Stari Most at Mostar; Dubrovnik views; Dubrovnik rooftops; view in Mostar; staff and supporters at lunch in Mostar. Centre: Statue of the Risen Christ in Međugorje





# IMPRESSIONS OF THE TRIP

Here is what members of the Tarara Folklore Ensemble and other members of the travelling group had to say about their experiences, and their favourite memories of the trip:



Performing in Novi Vinodolski was really special for us because we showed our family over there how their relatives that left have kept the culture going so far away. Dancing in the familiar areas where we used

to play with friends and go walking at night was really awesome for us both. **Nataša and Zoran Šulenta**

My highlight was performing in front of everyone's families and alongside the other amazing dancers and watching the different styles of kolo. **Natalie Matulović**



My favourite memory of the trip was swimming among the Roman ruins at the island of Brijuni (the water being very warm in the bay) while the rest of the group were visiting Tito's museum.

**Anthony Vodanovich**

My highlight of the trip was performing Stari Splitski Ples in Makarska in front of my uncle, aunty and cousin. I was born in Split and came to New Zealand when I was seven. I haven't seen my family in Split in over six years. My cousin Marijeta was a baby when I last saw her and now she is the same age as I was when I moved to New Zealand. She is my only cousin on my mother's side and she is learning Stari Splitski at school. It was a really special moment for me to dance this kolo from my hometown for her and my family. **Bojan Soleša**



The biggest highlight of course was watching my kids dancing on the trip. After 22 years teaching kolo at the Dalmatian Cultural Society, it was a huge thrill to take this group of dancers back home. We worked and practised very hard before the trip, and the results showed on the tour.

**Nenad Rajić, Tutor**

The trip was sensational. The most magnificent thing was seeing other young people like ourselves enjoying kolo, maintaining their own culture, being led by tutors showing them other parts of the world wanting to not only turn them into good dancers, but mould them into good people. For me to meet the people trying to enrich the lives of easily disenfranchised youth and give them something to look forward to and work on, was the best. It made me really love kolo again. **Aleksandar Božić**



It was an amazing experience dancing in different parts of Croatia and Serbia showing how we have kept our heritage alive in New Zealand. **Nina Ujdur**

Best memory....being told that some of the dancers from Ansambl Lado saw our performance at Smotra and told our supporters that we nailed Međimurje! **Andras Deli**



Although there were many memorable moments from the trip, my favourite was visiting the museum-memorial 21. Oktobar in Kragujevac and walking through the Šumarice memorial park. Learning more about my heritage and generations of people that came before me was invaluable, with the experience itself being highly emotional and absolutely unforgettable. **Dunja Vajsaković**

My favourite memory was making new friends from all around Serbia and Croatia and becoming closer with our group of dancers.

**Vanya Ujdur**



Everything about our trip was amazing, however seeing everyone's hometowns and getting to show off our two years of hard work were our favourite parts. **Elena Duranska and Daniel Garelja**



There were many highlights for me – one visiting Tito's island and in particular the museum as I have heard so much about this place over the years and the other was going to Mostar walking the ancient bridge - this too was on my bucket list for so long, as well as the stop at Međugorje. **Diane Jelas**

After our performance in Čačak, going to watch the Croatian football team beat England, watching the game in the main square in Čačak. The national team got the win, we celebrated (almost too loudly!) and ran back to the party the Abrašević Kulturno Umjetničko Društvo had hosted set up for us following the performance (which itself went awesomely) and carried on celebrating with our new friends. **Marin Tokmadžić**



My overall highlight is that our Club had the courage and commitment to undertake a trip like this one. Taking the NZ Old Kolo back home to showcase in Serbia and Croatia for the first time is a huge historical event on a number of levels. Performing to live music was very memorable especially in the outdoor settings of town squares and beautiful village countryside. **Carleen Blucher**



The trip was very enjoyable (although a little hectic!) and it was great to perform in the motherland where Baba and Dida are from. It was a once in a life time opportunity that I'm really grateful for. **Pero Garlick**

For me it was an amazing trip. The TFE performed outstandingly. Their attitude both on and off performance was amazing and I personally did not hear any negative comments about the group at any stage and am proud to have spent 3 weeks with such an outstanding professional and caring group of folklore dancers. It shows the respect that those over there have for their performances as they have been invited back and have also been invited to perform at festivals in Turkey, Greece and France. **Steven Šulenta**





# IMPRESSIONS OF THE TRIP

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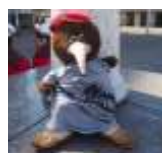
My highlight of the trip was the performance in Vodnjan. Every single performance we did was amazing and every place we visited was special, but this concert stood out for me. We were in Croatia but we performed a show of our full repertoire which included Croatian, Serbian and Macedonian choreographies as well as our own New Zealand Dalmatian kolo. One of the areas we didn't have within our choreographies ironically was Istrian. You wouldn't have known this though. The crowd were amazing throughout, clapping and cheering and singing along. It was so nice to be somewhere we could be so completely "us" and be celebrated for our diversity and uniqueness. I loved it. **Mara Blucher**

It's so hard to pick one memory from this trip. Čačak, Vodnjan and Makarska were my favourite places to dance at; Oplenac took my breath away, and the museum 21 Oktobar left me feeling emotional. Serbia had the most mouth-watering food and Zagreb the best pancakes. The World Cup atmosphere and celebrations in Pula were unforgettable and Dubrovnik had the warmest sea to swim in, as well as the most spectacular views. Lastly, every place we visited had the warmest, most welcoming, and charming people that left me feeling like every place was "home". This was definitely an unforgettable experience. **Sara Vajsaković**



There were so many highlights. I was so proud to show Dalmatia off to those who hadn't been before. I cried happy tears, watching "our" Kolo finally being performed in the square in Makarska. I cried proper tears in the Šumarice memorial park and local high school. But my overall best memory is travelling with such a great group of young people. The tour was huge fun, but also very hard work with concerts every second day, in the heat, and often on unforgiving stages and surfaces. They beamed through it all, behaved and danced like professionals – and looked after each other, and the others on the trip. They made me very proud. **Vanya Piacun**

I enjoyed being up the front of the bus with the drivers, even though they didn't speak any Kiwi. From my seat on the dashboard, I got the best view of all the cool places we visited. The dancing was awesome too, and I loved wearing my red hat and opanke everywhere we went. **Mate Kivić, Mascot**



The best memory of the Kolo trip was the end of tour party we hosted in Prapatnice. It was a great end to a great tour. James loved the bus ride from Kragujevac to Pula, when he played all sorts of games!. **Tamara, Joe and James Ujdur**

From the Coliseum in Pula, to being amongst the buzz of a football final happening while we were there. Reuniting with our family in Prapatnice, Vrgorac, to Maia experiencing playing water polo in the sea. All capped off watching our dance group perform beautifully with the most spectacular backdrops you can imagine. Thank you all for many more memories and friendships made. **Glen, Tracey and Maia Subritzky**



## WHAT THEY SAID

**Just some of the comments and compliments the group received on the trip:**

### In Serbia:

*"The performance was incredible, and it's amazing to see young people from so far away (NZ) performing cultural dancing the way they have"*

*"You should be so proud of the way the young ones have performed here"*

### In Istria:

*"It was an excellent performance, and I was so glad I came to watch the group perform"*

*"Are you sure they are not professional?!"*

*"The costumes were amazing"*

### In Zagreb:

Three young men from Croatia's leading professional folklore group Lado were watching, and they said it was a *"phenomenal performance"*

A woman came from Belgium just to watch the Tarara Folklore Ensemble as her late husband was from New Zealand, and she said it was *"well worth the trip"*

Professor Elsie Ivancich-Dunin said we are *"A wonderful example of how folklore can bring people together"*

### In Novi Vinodolski:

*"Such a professional performance, and it's amazing to see the kolo which was made in New Zealand by the pioneers"*

*"Can they please come back again next year?"*

### In Makarska:

*"I'm absolutely blown away, they danced so much better than we used to!"*

*"It brought tears to my eyes to see the NZ kolo danced in the square"*

### In Vrgorac:

The other kolo groups there all said how wonderful it is to see how the young people from New Zealand are carrying on with the culture

***Everywhere we went - we were told to please come back again in the near future - and not to wait another 29 years!***

We had a wonderful time with this great group of people. It was very special to have members of the group generously share their time and knowledge for us to experience the food, scenery, culture and history specific to their family town or region. The dancing was a highlight every time. Thank you for the opportunity. **Gary and Karen Ujdur**



# TARARA FOLKLORE ENSEMBLE TRIP HOME 2018

## *The choreographies performed on the trip:*

**NEW ZEALAND DALMATIAN KOLO** The familiar kolo created and first danced in NZ by a group of Dalmatian immigrants, from the steps and music they knew back home. It's the dance that generations of our people have performed since 1935.

**GLAMOČ** is UNESCO protected, as an important piece of intangible cultural heritage. Glamoč is sombre, and performed without musical accompaniment. It dates from the time of the Ottoman Empire, when the local people were subjugated by their foreign occupiers, and forbidden to make music.

**HRVATSKO ZAGORJE**, the area north of Zagreb, a region of rolling hills and fantastic fairytale castles. It's our newest choreography but also one of the most upbeat and enjoyable to perform with the beautiful duet of singing at the beginning, the playful and flirty dancing that makes up the majority of the dance and the spectacular flying at the end.

**MEĐIMURJE** in northernmost Croatia, is an area of strong Germanic and Hungarian influence, evident in the costumes for this choreography. It's a real show piece and was our chosen item to perform at the 52nd Annual International Folklore Festival - Međunarodna Smotra Folkloru in Zagreb.

**STARI SPLITSKI PLES** In bygone centuries, the city of Split was a flourishing port, home to wealthy merchants and traders, where culture thrived. This dance evokes that history and culture, and reminds us of elegant ladies, promenading with their menfolk.

**ŠOPSKO** named for the Šopi people, inhabiting the area on the borders of Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia. The version we perform is one for men only – it's a traditional display of male dancing skills, energetic and very strong.

**ŠUMADIJA** in central Serbia is an area of rich agriculture and rolling hills. This choreography is representative of a dance style from the area, with more intricate footwork than some of the other dances. Beautiful, and quite intricate, it is probably our most difficult choreography to perform but the hard work in practice pays off in the visually pleasing result.

## *The Flags*

Displayed in the foyer of our Society's clubrooms, just outside the Ballroom on the first floor, are three black and white "Trip Home 2018" flags. One was signed by our supporters in Auckland, one was signed by the people we met in Serbia, and the other by those in Croatia. All three travelled on the bus with us, carrying the best wishes of all those who signed along with us on our journey.



## *Two tours, 29 years apart*

Four travelers on the trip were also on the 1989 tour: Steven Šulenta, Tamara Ujdur, Sonja Antunović, and Dario Antunović. Steven and Tamara both travelled with their families, and each had two children in the 2018 touring group.

## *The final words: "Thank you" from our mascot*



The Trip Home 2018 was a very long time in the making, and hundreds of people have contributed to fundraising, planning or in some other way to making it happen.

On behalf of the Tarara Folklore Ensemble, I'd like to thank everyone who was involved in any way, either here in NZ, or while we were away on tour. You all played a part in making our Society's dream come true. It couldn't have happened without you!

- Mate Kivić

