

# Lyrids Festival 2024—A Smashing Success!

By Kathy Sandstrom

With great teachers, a new location, a new big Festival Committee, excellent band, new caterer, and some new volunteers, a terrific fragrance-free Lyrids Festival was pulled off April 19–21 in Pitt Meadows, B.C., Canada, about 40 minutes east of Vancouver.

Headlining as instructors were two husband/wife couples: Cristian Florescu and Sonia Dion teaching Romanian dances, and Tom Bozigian and Sheree King teaching Armenian. The teacher resource page is here: <https://lyridsfolkdancefestival.org/teacher-resources/>. You can find the list of dances each teacher taught, and you can view and download Tom Bozigian's syllabus for free. In addition, there is a link to buy Tom Bozigian's music and/or video.



Left to right: Sonia Dion, Tom Bozigian, Sheree King, Cristian Florescu

Our excellent band was Zakuska, directed by Jana Rickel, from Seattle, which played for our Saturday night party and our singalong. On the above teacher resource page link, you can also find their set list and download 39 pages of lyrics for the songs they sang, for free!

The new venue was Pitt Meadows Heritage Hall, a large two-story building with the dance hall on the top floor, and a lower floor where tables that could remain up the entire weekend were set up for our meals. Phil and Birgit Ages from Seattle provided background music during a couple of the meals. Though the hall did not want us to put any decorations on the walls, we still managed to do some decorating with Sophie Larsen's beautiful handmade flowers that have adorned our festivals for many years. They are always a hit with attendees.

The weekend schedule was full of classes, breaks for snacks, more classes, more breaks, catered meals, culture hours from each set of teachers, and did I mention more snacks, and dancing, dancing, dancing! We received many nice comments about the caterer we used, and he said he'd love to work with us again.

Before the Saturday evening party, we were treated to performances by local Vancouver Serbian dance group Vuk Karadžic and a Romanian singing ladies group called Romanian Treasure. Both were dressed in lovely original costumes. All of our teachers performed, as well. What a special treat!!



Romanian Treasure singing group. Photo by Sonia & Cristian.

Our Saturday party was also Zoomed out so folks who could not come could tune in and join us dancing. We had a great team of tech folk who made this happen. During the performances, these Zoom dancers were treated to special videos of past Lyrids Festivals, thanks to Dale.



Tom Bozigian and Sheree King. Photo by Kathy Sandstrom.



*Festival dancing. Photo by Dale Adamson.*

Other celebrations over the weekend included a visit from the Romanian Consul General, bestowing Certificates of Recognition on Sonia and Cristian for their contributions to Romanian culture, and a 10th anniversary Lyrids sheet cake.

We had a folk shop in the back of the main hall full of costume pieces and treasures being sold by the lovely Elissa Mladjo and her team. Elissa came dressed in a full Bulgarian costume every day to run the shop, setting a gorgeous tone for the day.



*Elissa Mladjo at Festival shop. Photo by Sally Martin.*

Our hotel was a mere 5–7 minutes walking distance from the hall. It could not have been more convenient. With a block of rooms reserved for us until mid-May, and breakfast included in the price, it was convenient to stay there or in other nearby hotels. There were restaurants nearby, as well as small grocery stores, a pharmacy, and a Costco.

As if we did not do enough dancing (or eating!), Dale and her husband Bruce hosted a party at their home on Sunday night after the festival. Mind you, they had just spent the entire weekend doing all the sound for the festival, as well as a million other things, and now they had a houseful of guests to cap off the weekend, with more food and more dancing.

And just for fun, how about a garden tour and tromping through Dale's wild forested area, with choppers in hand, blazing a path through the not-so-clear woods—ha! Dale has pictures to prove it and I have wobbly, inappropriate woods-walking shoes that made it through, back to the house—lots of fluffy horsetail weeds on that little excursion. Festival pictures will be posted to the website in the near future.

Though our attendance was down a bit from previous years, the enthusiasm of attendees was outstanding. The atmosphere was warm and inviting, very friendly, and well organized. We received many comments about that. To that end, we were rewarded by a number of donations, which helped make up for the lower attendance and helped cover all our costs. Big thanks to all who gave from their generous hearts!

Our outstanding Festival Chair and fearless leader was Marcy Wolter. She gave the most wonderful closing comments on Sunday. Other committee members were Dale Adamson, Bev Neilson, Melanie Marchand, Chrisanne Pennimpede, Lori Larsen, Kathy Sandstrom, Jana Rickel, Nada Dosenovic, and Elissa Mladjo—a committee across borders.



*Lyrids festival committee.*

We will need additional volunteers for the next festival. We have more jobs to fill, and some members on the committee are changing. Please let one of these people know if you would be willing to help. We are working on a date and then are planning to discuss instructors. We welcome your input.

## Contribute to *The Northwest Folk Dancer*

By Kathy Bruni

*The Northwest Folk Dancer* newsletter welcomes articles that may interest your fellow folk dancers. Photos are always a plus. What can you share with our readers? Here are some ideas to get you started:

- If you are a dancer, contribute to our column, **Discovering Dance**, and write a story about how and when you started dancing and what drew you to it. Include interesting anecdotes about festivals or camps you have attended, or other dancers who influenced your dance activities.
- If you are a musician, write about a band you play with, or an instrument you specialize in.
- Write a travelogue about a dance-related trip to a foreign country.
- Write about an aspect of culture or dance in which you are an expert.

We all have experiences and knowledge to share with others. I encourage you to enliven the pages of this newsletter with yours!