



AMAN 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

• A Once in a Lifetime, Vacation Destination Event!

AMAN's 50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Columbus Day Weekend/3 Nights, 2 Days!
Thursday, October 10–Sunday, October 13, 2013
Renaissance Marriott Hotel
Palm Springs, California USA

THREE NIGHTS OF WALL TO WALL music and dance; food and drink, kafana, panels and discussions on all things AMAN.

As we prepare for our 50th Anniversary celebration in 2013, please, make sure that we have your correct contact information by visiting the Alumni page on our website at <http://www.aman50.com>. And be sure to share the newsletter with all of your AMAN alumni friends, family and supporters. We want to reconnect our vast AMAN family for a once in a lifetime gathering and beyond.

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EARLY BIRD SPECIAL ENDS April 30, 2012!

Reserve a place now with a deposit and save \$25 off the total event package price! Registration form and registrar instructions are available at: <http://www.aman50.com/registration.php>

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AMAN ROAD TRIP 2013

(This Time With Amenities)

—By Billy Burke—



AMAN on the road again?

At a beautiful hotel complex in Palm Springs? A three night, two full day event with private rooms? A sit-down banquet? Hors d'oeuvres? Maid service? Indoor plumbing?

WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU THINKING?

The AMAN I worked for had us on the road staying in rooms with a bath down the hall, traveling in not much better than school buses, dancing in gymnasiums or outside on stages that would begin to disintegrate part way through the show. We had to change in bathrooms, closets, kitchens or wherever we could find a space. We were young, enthusiastic and willing to put up with anything for the opportunity to celebrate the art we all loved. For me that was 40 years ago. I remember it fondly;

cherish the memories, the friends and the education. I look forward to a weekend remembering, reconnecting and reflecting. I can't wait to *remember* those times—*relive* them, not so much. Love you all but...

What I do anticipate with great joy is a vacation weekend in a comfortable venue with ample facilities to dance when I want, sing when I want, play if I can or just sit and talk to old friends (meetings in the jacuzzi optional) at the Renaissance Hotel in Palm Springs.

How did we pick the venue? After six months of brainstorming, investigating, proposing, accepting and denying options, twelve members of the Alumni Committee spent a weekend evaluating the facility. Each and every one loved the place and saw the potential for creating something incredibly unique as a vehicle for remembering and celebrating our involvement in AMAN. Plenty of spaces for taking meals together, big dance parties, cozy late night Kafana gatherings, dance workshops, singing sessions, panel discussions, video presentations and intimate little comfortable

corners for quiet conversations over a nice glass of wine.

This is not going to be a cheap weekend, although every effort is being made to keep costs down without sacrificing the kind of celebration we want. All of the committee members, musicians, singers, dancers, directors and AMAN supporters working to create this event are donating their time and additional donations are being sought to bring down the package price of the event. We hope to be able to announce the exact total package cost in our fall newsletter and room reservations at the Renaissance Marriott will be open October 2012.



We all have 17 months left to save up for this once in a lifetime event. An installment plan is being created. You can reserve a spot now with a \$100 deposit. I have made my investment and hope that you will too. This will be an extravaganza weekend vacation, not just a party but rather a total celebration and opportunity to reconnect with AMAN friends and fellow alumni in a relaxed and extended way. It will be a one-of-a-kind event, never to happen again...until the 75th anniversary that is! (Volunteers are welcome to organize that one!)

It's Alive!!!

The Alumni List on the New AMAN 50th Reunion Website is up. It's growing. It's yours. Use it.

CHECK OUT THE NEW AMAN 50th REUNION WEBSITE

<http://www.aman50.com>

REGISTER NOW to reserve your space at the AMAN 50th Anniversary banquet and wingding with a Paypal click-through.

CALLING ALL AMAN MEMORABILIA! We are putting together a timeline wall at the event and trying to locate any old posters, fliers, buttons, rehearsal or tour schedules, programs, original sheet music or song words to a suite etc... Loan it to us to scan and give it back to you, or donate it to the

alumni archive.

SEND US YOUR AMAN PHOTOS to add to the Memory CD/DVD. Or, you can arrange to drop your pictures off with an Alumni volunteer to scan.

Check out the AMAN ALUMNI MASTER LIST. Click through and make sure that we've got all your current contact information. Don't forget to peruse the posted names of AMANites that we are trying to locate—you might be the only person who knows where they are hiding. Of course, all contact information will be kept private and will not be used for any purpose other than to flog you until you agree to come to the party.



Webmistress Mardi Rollow's awesome site!

In 1975 the AMAN women recorded Philip Koutev's Bulgarian delicacy *Dragana I Slavei* for the AMAN Concert Album. An homage to how absolutely cut-throat auditions could be among AMAN women, a nightingale challenges Dragana to a singing contest. "If you win, you may cut off my wings. But if I win I shall cut off your fair hair." What's a girl gotta do to get a spot in the Šop Suite anyway?

The battling beauties on this recording are: Carol Akawie, Jennifer Brosious, Kim Chait, Bonnie Edelberg, Sherry Etting,



Amy Halperin, Trudy Israel, Sharon Johnson, Penny Kamin, Jane Kirkland, Sue Komoorian, Wendy Landau, Ruth Lowensohn, Beverly Mann, Dayle Miller, Susie North, Terri Prizant, Carla Quitt, Pearl Rottenberg, Ann Rowland, Carol Schneider, Cathy Shochat, Nena Šokčić, Barbara Slade, Alison Snyder, Susie Stuffbeame, Louise Weiler and Christina Whiting.

Click <http://www.aman50.com> to download "Dragana I Slavei."

—Dragana I Slavei—

Dragana sedi v gradina mome, Dragano, Dragano,
V gradina pod bjal trendafil, mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Gergerf šie, pesen pee, mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Nad neja slavej govori, mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Ja pej, da se nadpjavame mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Ako li me ti nadpeeš, mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Krilcata mi šte otrežeš, mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Ako li te az nadpeja, mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Kosata ti šte otreža, mome, Dragano, Dragano!

Dragana nadpja slaveja, mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Slavej si ja žalno moli, mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Kračkata mi da otrežeš, mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Krilcata mi ne otrjazvaj, mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Drebni pilci shm izmuhtil, mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Slavejče le, pilence le, mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Nešta ništo da ti reža, mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Mene mi stiga hvalbata, mome, Dragano, Dragano,
Če suhm slaveja nadpjala, mome, Dragano, Dragano!



Fakelore—True (and Tall) Tales from the AMAN Storybook

Fear and Loathing in La Puente

A Brief Reminiscence of The Small Group

by Chris Yeseta

AS NEAR AS I CAN REMEMBER, it all began during the Utah tour in the early 70s. In those days, AMAN was huge, at least for local in-town performances. The promo materials at the time boasted “a company of over 85 dancers, singers and musicians.” During the last leg of this tour, a small contingent of dancers and musicians was recruited to do some teaching and performances at a couple of the local Utah schools, and thus was born ACE, the AMAN Chamber Ensemble. Or as those of us who danced the dance and lived the life came to call it, *The Small Group*.

Within days of returning to L.A., the actual ACE was formed consisting of 4 dancer couples and 4 or 5 musicians. We would each be paid \$10 per show, 5 to 10 shows a week. One could live pretty well on that back in the pre-trickle-down 70s. This was an unemployed layabout’s dream come true! Getting paid for singing and dancing and playing music! Over the next few years, initially under the direction of Billy Burke and later Barry Glass, this well-oiled unit performed at hundreds of elementary, middle and high schools over a wide geographic swath of Southern California from “Seamy Valley” to San Pedro, Ventura to San Diego.

Of course, it wasn’t all fun and games. For starters, our first curtain of the day was often 8 or 9am. For most of us this meant showing up red-eyed and bushy-headed on 3 hours of sleep or hung over or both. A typical show would run 35-40 minutes and was usually followed by a second show 15 minutes later. Many times we would pack up and move on to another nearby school and do it all over again. Or drive clear across town to the next

performance. Those 5 to 10 shows per week soon became 25 or 30.

With this many gigs across such a wide area, it soon became obvious that we needed more than simply a list of addresses from the front office. The Small Group Maps gradually became the stuff of legend. Not only did they plot out directions, locations, showtimes, and travel tips for the week, they also served as a source of in jokes, gossip, biting social satire and scatological humor— sorely needed comic relief as our schedule got more and more hectic. Because the maps were copied on the AMAN Office Xerox, what had started out as something meant to be circulated only among the Small Group performers came to the attention of the office staff, some of whom felt our sense of humor was a bit over the top. *What the... An unshaven stoned-looking Mickey Mouse... A Dirty Limerick Contest for chrissakes! What if one of our wealthy donors or AMAN Well-Wishers were offended?* What ensued was THE GREAT SMALL GROUP MAP CENSORSHIP WARS, during which the Wite-Out correction

fluid flowed like retsina at a Greek wedding.

In those early days my kids had not yet started school so they came along to many of the performances, sometimes watching from backstage, other times copping the prime front row seats in the audience. In time they became the Small Group Mascots, our unofficial roadies, and as they got to know the repertoire as well as we did, theater critics. Barry would go up to them after a show and ask “so how’d we do today?” “Not so good. Linda made a mistake in Quadrilles. My dad hit a bad note in Four Fat Horses. And Terri fell down in the Irish jig.” Brutal.

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Remember these prices?



A Kiddie Show at Hollywood Bowl's Open House

Fear and Loathing *continued*

>>> At first the Small Group began working with The Learning Tree, an organization that booked us at a number of LAUSD elementary schools, mostly in nice middle-class suburban neighborhoods that all tended to blend into one another. But soon we started getting gigs through government entities such as Title I and ICAP (Intergroup Cultural Awareness Program—“learning about others through the performing arts”) that introduced many of us to a whole different world. By and large, and despite (or perhaps because of) their disadvantaged environs, these kids from East and South Central L.A. were some of our most appreciative audiences—except for the couple of instances in which overly authoritarian teachers tried to stifle any kind of exuberance during the performance. Thankfully, that was pretty rare.

One of these inner-city shows provided a very surreal experience that almost 40 years later I remember vividly. Manual Arts High School in South Central had had two instances of assaults on teachers in the months prior to our scheduled performance there. Consequently, when we arrived at the campus we were all lined up in our cars as a security guard opened the gates to let us drive in, promptly locking them behind us. The show took place in a huge auditorium with a stage and curtains (something we

were not very accustomed to for most of our school gigs). As we waited to go on, the principal announced us and exhorted the audience to “give these fine performers a Warm Manual Greeting.” The curtain opened to reveal an audience of a dozen students at the most. Have you ever heard the sound of one hand clapping? “Warm manual greeting” has since joined the list of Small Group code words and catch phrases. Afterwards as the gates were unlocked to let us leave, we could hear the Manual Arts Jazz Band kicking major ass in the band room as we drove off.

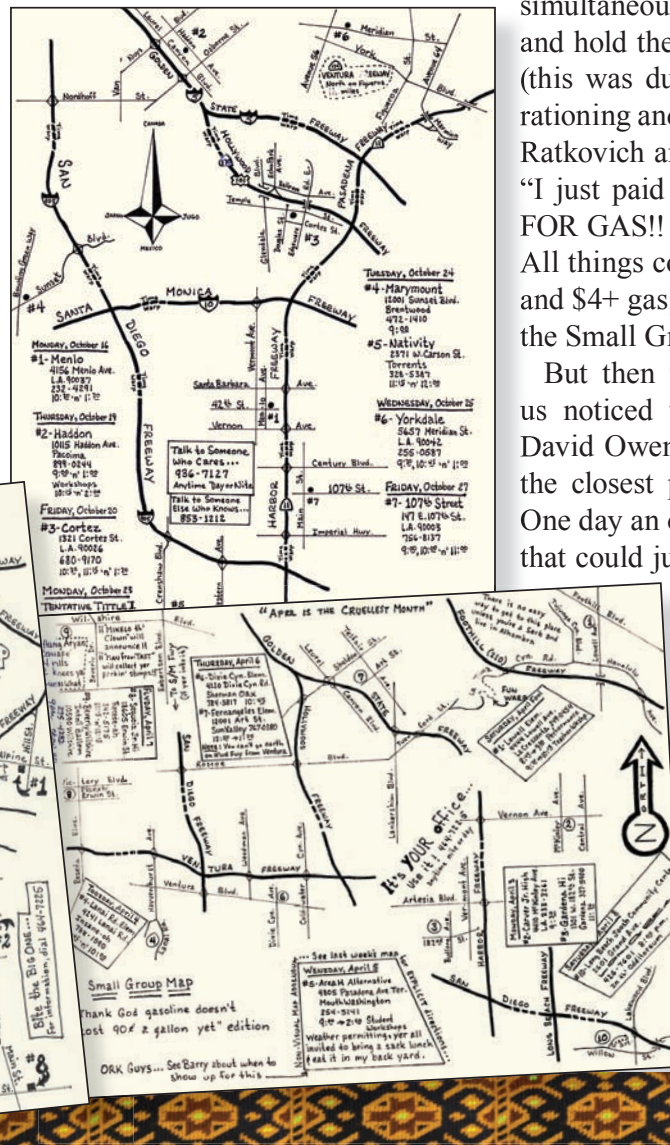
Other odd occurrences would have to include our show at a Koreatown school for the deaf. The only thing eerier than a playground full of kids running and playing in complete and utter silence is watching two girls having a violent argument—in sign! Then there was the show in one of those dreadful “Cafetoriums” where the stage consisted of several box-like risers pushed together. During one of the more strenuous dances, the risers began to slide apart leaving gaping holes in between each one. The guys in the band had to play down on the floor while

simultaneously using one leg to try and hold the stage together. Or the day (this was during the oil embargo with rationing and odd/even gas days) Danny Ratkovich announced to us in disbelief “I just paid A DOLLAR A GALLON FOR GAS!! 99.9 FRIGGEN CENTS!” All things considered, what with traffic and \$4+ gas, I don’t think anything like the Small Group could function today.

But then we had fun too. Many of us noticed that our accordion player, David Owens, always managed to find the closest parking spot for each gig. One day an opportunity presented itself that could just not go unmet. Dave had

typically found a driveway between the building and a retaining wall that led to a sort of enclosed courtyard that the stage door opened out onto, and here he cheerfully parked. The rest of us had parked on a higher level several hundred yards away. During a smoke break, some of us noticed a plywood stage >>>

A sampling of Small Group maps



Fear and Loathing *continued*

>>> prop riser about 4 feet high with steps on one side, covered with carpeting that had a color and texture very similar to the building's stucco exterior. On came the lightbulb, and the riser was moved into the driveway and up against the side of the building, looking just like a loading dock and effectively camouflaging the only exit from the courtyard. After the show we hurriedly packed up and went outside to watch Dave drive around and around the courtyard trying to figure out how the hell he got in there and how the hell he would get back out, until someone finally took pity on him and removed the obstruction from the driveway.

The Small Group was a highly efficient self-contained unit that could put on a show at the drop of a hat. The front office gave us the schedules, but we were solely responsible for finding the venues, getting ourselves there, coordinating with school personnel, introducing each dance and otherwise interacting with the audience, developing and rehearsing new material, improvising in the face of the unexpected— and doing laundry. Those costumes could get pretty rank after a week of 25 or 30 shows.

We had to be ready for anything. We never knew if one of our numbers would be suddenly interrupted by automated bells or announcements. We often didn't know until arrival if we'd be performing on a stage with lights and microphones (rarely) or on the floor of a "multi-purpose" room inches away from an audience of 1st to 6th graders (usually) or on the blacktop out in the middle of the playground in all kinds of weather (more times than we'd care to remember). Our dressing area, if we were provided one at all, was usually the teacher's lounge. To this day there are probably some elderly retired LAUSD teachers who have never quite recovered from the shock of walking into the lounge for a smoke or cup of coffee and being confronted with a crew of crazies nonchalantly parading around in their underwear. We

worked LAUSD, parochial schools, Beverly Hills School District, ABC Land (Artesia/Bell/Cerritos) and Torrance Unified— the inspiration for the aforementioned Dirty Limerick Contest (rhyming *Torrance*, *Lawrence*, and *Abhorrence*).

Somewhere along the line we were briefly involved with CETA, another government-funded entity that provided employment in the theater arts. That's how we got our announcer, Bridget, who had problems pronouncing many of those unfamiliar words, but got to wear a cool costume. Then there was Michael, our Stage Manager, who mostly walked around with a clipboard and a pocketwatch calling out "FIVE MINUTES TO SHOWTIME... FIVE MINUTES!" I think the CETA gigs lasted about 2 or 3 months, then we were back on our own.

We eventually expanded our venues to include Jewish Community Centers, retirement homes, the lunchtime shows at ARCO Plaza and the L.A. "Maul." We even performed at the Saugus Youth Probation Camp and Terminal Island Federal Prison (Johnny Cash at Folsom this was not!). But one of our favorites had to be the yearly Open House at the Hollywood Bowl where hundreds of kids were bused in to see our shows on the stage set up in the snack bar area. These shows were hosted by the squeaky-clean Orange County duo Jon & Pam. Over several years of working together we got to know each others' repertoire pretty well and would occasionally jump up on stage to spontaneously join in on each others' acts. To this

A SHORT GLOSSARY OF SMALL GROUPISMS

"My brother plays the accordion!"— During a Q&A session, one kid was waving his hand and frantically jumping up and down to share this earth-shattering news with us.

"Clown Job"— A show announced by Michael Alexander who used to work for L.A. Parks & Rec as Mikelo the Clown.

"Warm Manual Greeting"— Giving the finger.

"Mouse Gig"— Any Disney-affiliated performance. When two performances were scheduled, that was a "Double Duck Job."

"Bi-Labial Show"— A show with English/Spanish announcements.

"Seizure World"— Leisure World, a retirement community where we did many shows.

"Old and In The Way Gig"— A senior citizen show.

"Secret Agent Debelo Duck"— Billy Burke

"Zang Bozo," "Uncle Dick," "Nunzio Crispy,"

"Lean Joe," "Hungry Ann"— Various fictional and non-fictional characters who inhabited Small Group World.

day I can still hear that catchy little ditty running through my head, "Children of all a-a-ages..."

I left AMAN and the Small Group in 1979 and got a "real" job doing magazine art direction. A few years ago, I was talking with a co-worker, a young editor around my older daughter's age. She mentioned the parochial school she had attended in the Valley. When I told her that I had performed there in the mid 70s, she broke into a big smile, got all excited and said "Yes! I remember that show. You guys were *awesome*!" I guess we were.

Postcards from the Diaspora—The Latest from **AMAN** Alumni

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Flutes Across the World— Children 4 Peace



Former Music Director of AMAN John Zeretzke's *Flutes Across the World* is a multifaceted, educational and humanitarian music program designed to nurture cultural understanding across the world. A child in America

makes two flutes—one flute to keep...and one flute to give away to a child in need in another part of the world. The Friendship Flutes represent a connection of peace, learning, cultural understanding and friendship that connect the two individuals together forever! *Flutes Across the World* brings to each student a deeper understanding of world cultures and children in need by teaching them geography, cultural traditions, history, language arts, visual arts and music.



Learn more about *Flutes Across the World—Children 4 Peace* at: <http://flutesacrosstheworld.org>

Keep in Touch, Watch Videos and Photos on the AMAN Facebook Groups

DON'T FORGET to join the AMAN Facebook Groups. There are two:

One, the public **AMAN Folk Ensemble Group** at <http://www.facebook.com/groups/92420925316/>.

There is already an archive of 2000 photos and 50 videos on-stage and behind the scenes—some of you are so old you are in black and white—you *know who you are*. Peruse the blog wall and see what your AMAN pals are up to. Upload your pictures to share.

Two, the private **AMAN Folk Ensemble Reunion Group** at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100002876950355&ref=ts>.

This private group page will be your *go to* for updates on the actual event in 2013.

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MORE AMAN VIDEOS AND PHOTOS

Not on FB? Check out the AMAN videos on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com> and type "aman folk ensemble" into the search window.

More Links to the AMAN-Related

www.balkantunes.org

Bill Cope's website full of music information and downloads—*The Mehanatones, Zabava!, Trio Zulum* and *The Cope Family*.

<http://www.aisha-ali.com/>

Fantastic images from *Friends of Middle Eastern Music*. An amazing photo history of belly dance in America.

<http://www.nevenka.org>

Many of your AMAN sisters are still singing. Check out *Nevenka*. Listen to cuts from their three CDs as well as a sneak peek at their new CD project.

* * *

Got Programs, Photos or Video?

Write to us at:

amanreunion.2013@gmail.com

HELP WANTED

How Can YOU Be a Part of Planning the 50th Anniversary Celebration?

CFO Needed ASAP—

Business person with fundraising experience to supervise all finance including coordination of donations, funds and sponsorships already in place as well as sourcing additional funding for the AMAN 50th Reunion event.



To join the AMAN Alumni Committee write to us at eventchair@aman50.com



Mendocino Folklore Camp

Enrollment is ongoing for the 2012 Mendocino Folklore Camp (MFC) at <http://www.mendocinofolkloreamp.com/>. They are the non-profit international folk dance and music camp and the sponsor of our AMAN50 Reunion Weekend. A small amount of the proceeds from AMAN50 will benefit MFC's youth scholarship fund. Let's support the next generation of folk musicians and dancers!

