

# Rakiya

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## Rakiya: World Music of the Balkans

"Modern and traditional ... including music of the Roma (Gypsies) ... jazz and rock influences... electric and ethnic instruments, passionate singing, exotic harmonies, rhythms from the simple to the complex, driving frenzy and slow beauty..."

...This is the essence of Rakiya, a seven-person band based in the Boston area. Our music is as varied as the Balkans: energetic Serbian dance tunes, Bulgarian and Macedonian Rom wedding music in exotic and compelling meters, fascinating Greek melodies, and sinuous, hypnotic Turkish songs of love and longing. We can keep a whole room jumping, pumping out volumes of energy in new and exciting rhythms, or entrance audiences with ancient songs that evoke as much passion today as when they were first composed.

Rakiya musicians come from a variety of musical backgrounds: jazz, rock, classical, blues, klezmer, American folk, and Celtic. Rather than imitating a specific Balkan sound, our arrangements blend the best of the Balkans with the wealth of musical styles that each of us brings to the table. The result is irresistibly danceable, evocative music with a Balkan slant but decidedly Western overtones.

Rakiya is Balkan "white lightning". The best, of course, is home-brew. Come sample this excellent blend concocted here in America.

## Rakiya musicians

### Dean Brown, electric guitar

Dean (our founder) is a mainstay of the New England recreational folk dance music scene and a diehard fan and student of Balkan music. Dean also plays Bulgarian and Macedonian tambura and sings in Zdravets ("Boston's friendly neighborhood Bulgarian band") and in Zornitsa, a men's Bulgarian vocal ensemble led by Tatiana Sarbinska. He is also a member of Boston-based band Shining Moon and the Cambridge Folk Orchestra. Past groups include the Mandala Folk Dance Ensemble Orchestra and others.

### Colin Ferguson, accordion and keyboard

Surrounded by music and musicians since early childhood, Colin became immersed in the international folk music scene in 1991 when he joined the Mandala Folk Dance Ensemble Orchestra. Since then he has played in practically every international recreational folk dance band in the Boston area, and is featured in several recordings. He is also a member of Shining Moon.

### Heather Lee, vocals

Growing up steeped in Celtic folk music, Heather fell in love with jazz while in college. She began playing and singing Balkan music with the Mandala Folk Dance Ensemble. Since then, she has performed with several Boston area groups. Heather studied voice with internationally acclaimed singer Tatiana Sarbinska.

### **Alan Mattes, tenor and soprano sax, flugelhorn**

Alan was classically trained on trumpet but his performance background has been primarily in jazz and jazz-rock, playing mostly in the Chicago area. He attended Berklee College of Music in the late 70's studying performance and audio, and has been a professional recording engineer for the last 25 years. He's currently a staff engineer at WGBH radio in Boston and in his spare time also records and produces a variety of CD projects. During the past few years, he has been drawn to ethnic music, primarily that of the Balkans and the Middle East, and has recorded a number of CD's of this music. Alan also plays flugelhorn with the Poludaktulos Orchestra, a Boston-based Greek-Macedonian Brass Band.

### **Tim McNerney, electric bass**

Tim has been playing bass guitar in jazz and folk rock bands since 1983. In the late '80s, he discovered the wonderful rhythms of Balkan folk music, first as a dancer, and now in Rakiya as a dance musician. By day, Tim works as an engineer, designing electronics and software for biometric cameras. Tim has a bachelor's degree in music in computer science from Union College and a master's degree in media arts and sciences from MIT.

### **Grant Smith, drums**

Grant is involved in many world music, jazz, classical, and dance projects in Boston and New York. His theatre credits include the American Repertory's "The King Stag", and "Shlemiel The First", as well as Joel Grey's "Borscht Capades". He is also a contributor to Trish Cibree's "Lounge Life". Mr. Smith has toured globally from Krakow to Thailand and New Zealand. He has performed with Itzhak Perlman, Yo-Yo Ma, Don Byron, the Violent Femmes, Garrison Kellor, and Jane Wang.

### **Patrick Yacono, clarinet, keyboard, gajda, vocals**

Patrick has been studying various Bulgarian wind instruments since the late 80's. He has performed at numerous festivals and folk music events throughout the Northeastern US, Canada, and Bulgaria. Besides Rakiya, he plays with several other folk music groups (Zdravets, Zornitsa, the Cambridge Folk Orchestra, and the Pinewoods Band) and juggles his folk music activity with a career as a concert pianist and his work as a part-time researcher at the Harvard Medical School.

## Gigs

- ❖ Johnny D's, Somerville, MA
- ❖ Mehanata Bulgarian Bar, New York City
- ❖ Zlatne Uste Golden Festival, New York City
- ❖ Balkan Cafe Music Series, Hungarian House, New York City
- ❖ Vermont International Festival, Essex Junction, VT
- ❖ Brattleboro dance series, Brattleboro, VT
- ❖ NOMAD Festival of Traditional Music, Art, and Dance, New Haven, CT
- ❖ Multicultural Market Day, Laconia, NH
- ❖ First Night, Worcester, MA
- ❖ Folk Dancing at the Fountain, Copley Square Boston, MA
- ❖ Art Beat Festival, Davis Square, Somerville, MA
- ❖ Viva la Vinal Festival, Union Square, Somerville MA
- ❖ MIT Folk Dance Club, Cambridge, MA
- ❖ Lily Pad Coffee House, Cambridge, MA
- ❖ New England Folk Festival (NEFFA), Natick, MA and Mansfield, MA
- ❖ Balkan Music Night, Concord, MA
- ❖ Sudbury Day Festival, Sudbury, MA
- ❖ Arlington Summer Concert Series, Arlington, MA
- ❖ Folk Arts Center of New England Benefit Bash, Newton, MA
- ❖ National Folk Organization Annual Conference, Lowell MA

## Images



Left to right: Colin,  
Alan, Patrick, Dean,  
Grant, Dave\*,  
Heather, Tim

\* Dave is no longer with the band... :(

