

1. **Serbo Samba** (5:48) *
2. **Blue Balkan** (8:44)
3. **Suite Sanna** (8:38) *
4. **Belgrade Blues** (6:52)
5. **After Hours** (4:05)
6. **Larry's Dance** (6:04)
7. **Loving Linda** (5:08)
8. **Adriatic Nights** (6:00) *
(new version of "Mediterranean Nights")
9. **Motherless Child / O Javore** (3:53) *
(African-American spiritual /
"Maple Forest," Serbian folk tune)
10. **Changes** (4:25)
11. **In Your Own Sweet Way** (6:12)
12. **Mediterranean Nights** (3:50)
13. **O Javore** (3:09) *
("Maple Forest," a Serbian folk tune)

Total: 73:26 * *New recorded material.*

All compositions and arrangements by Larry Vuckovich published by Tetrachord Music Co./BMI, except "After Hours" (Avery Parrish, Popular Music Co.—ASCAP), "Motherless Child" (African-American spiritual-public domain), and "In Your Own Sweet Way" (Dave Brubeck, Derry Music-BMI)

Original Recording: Jan. 29-30, 1980, Coast Recorders, San Francisco, recorded and mixed by Phil Edwards on all tracks except 5, which was recorded by Steve Atkin.

LARRY VUCKOVICH, piano.
BOBBY HUTCHERSON, vibes on tracks 7 & 11;
marimba on 2, 4 & 6.
ERIC GOLUB, violin; viola on tracks 2, 4, 6, 12 & 13.
PAUL BRESLIN, acoustic bass on 2, 4, 5, 6,
7 & 11.
JOHN HEARD, acoustic bass on 10 & 12.
EDDIE MOORE, drums on 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 11.
EDDIE MARSHALL, drums on 10.

New Recording: June 18, 2001, Bay Records, Berkeley, recorded, mixed and remastered by Phil Edwards.

LARRY VUCKOVICH, piano.
TOMMY KESECKER, marimba on 1 & 8.
ERIC GOLUB, violin; viola on 1, 8 & 9.
JEFF CHAMBERS, acoustic bass on 1, 3 & 8.
EDDIE MARSHALL, drums on 1, 3 & 8.

Musicians: Larry Vuckovich, Eric Golub and Eddie Marshall appear on both the original and the new recordings. (Golub's first name is spelled Erik on the original; he later changed the spelling to Eric.)

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*Larry
Vuckovich*

guest artists
BOBBY HUTCHERSON
ERIC GOLUB
JOHN HEARD
EDDIE MARSHALL
JEFF CHAMBERS
VINCE DELGADO

BLUE BALKAN
Then & Now



The original "Blue Balkan" LP recording session recalls one of several highlights in my career in which I was fortunate to play with one of the jazz giants, namely, Bobby Hutcherson. I was a member of his working quartet in 1980-81. Bobby is tops among a list of great musicians with whom I've played, including: Dexter Gordon, Philly Joe Jones,



Don Byas, Jon Hendricks and Charlie Haden, to name just a few. It would be interesting and important for the listener to know that Bobby came to the studio without any music—and then played from memory all the original, difficult lines of the ethnic pieces—as only the great musicians can do, especially the great Roma gypsy players.

I feel particularly proud about the first studio session when these ethnic originals were recorded. The ethnic feeling of the Balkans, including Serbian folk music, emerged equally as well as the feeling of true American jazz. The musicians' hearts were into it. Likewise, the new CD session for "Blue Balkan: Then & Now," conveyed a wonderfully positive feeling in the studio, particularly "Serbo Samba" which brought out a feeling similar to that of the original recording session. Percussionist Vince Delgado's style of playing the dumbek added to the Middle-Eastern atmosphere. It was further enhanced by the



compatible rhythm duo of Eddie Marshall and Jeff Chambers, as well as the front-line feeling of violinist Eric Golub and marimba player Tommy Kesecker.

"Suite Sanna" was written for my wife and spiritual partner, vocalist-percussionist Sanna Craig, who has been a major source of inspiration and support as well as being a co-producer of this album. The three sections of this piece: "Struttin'," "Dance" and "Bebopin'," portray her personality and her feeling for various rhythms and moods of this art form. The song, "Loving Linda," from the original LP, was written for my first wife, Linda Weaver Vuckovich, mother of my son, Alexi. Linda, who was a warm, sensitive and very giving person, and an artist in several fields, passed away in 1997. One has to be fortunate and blessed to be connected with two people of such a high, uplifting human spirit.

I changed the original title "Mediterranean Nights" to "Adriatic Nights," which more accurately reflects the feeling I had when I first composed that song. I was born on the Adriatic, and wanted to convey my first-hand experience of its special romantic beauty and atmosphere. The new version, by using a sextet ensemble, projects a stronger tango feeling as well as creating a fusion with jazz elements. The solos all around reflect these points.

One of my fortunate experiences was meeting Jon Hendricks in 1965 and becoming a part of his "Evolution of the Blues" jazz musical. While playing the show, I performed the traditional spiritual, "Motherless Child," with Jon and other members of this production. I was touched by how the soulful, melodic and harmonic feeling of this song was closely related to the Serbian folk tune, "O Javore," ("Maple Forest"). I'd like to note that the similarity of both forms made it a natural union, representing a music commonality from suppressed ethnic minorities who produced some of the most soulful music on this planet, while living in captivity. I also played "After Hours" nightly in Jon's show and included it on the original "Blue Balkan" LP. (This classic blues was known in the 1940s, as "the Negro national anthem.")

I hope you will enjoy the new music that this CD offers as well as the songs on the original LP, which when released in 1980, was among the pioneering releases in what is now called jazz-world music recordings. John Coltrane explored modal tonality and East Indian influence in his later music, from 1960 until his death in 1967. The Balkans, where I was born, has a rich world music heritage of a region that features: gypsy-Roma, Romanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian, Arabic and North African music. This CD is dedicated to Trane and ethnic minorities who have created the most soulful music.

It was natural for me to unite these influences with American jazz, especially since I was lucky to have arrived in the U.S. as a teenager in 1951, at the height of the bebop era. The 1950s, in my opinion, was the richest decade in jazz because all the jazz elements-styles: ragtime, swing, big band, bebop, Latin and other emerging music forms, including excursions into Middle Eastern music, were present and active. Finally, I would add that my concept of music, my own playing as well as the performances of others, has always been to emphasize music coming from the heart over sterile, theoretical jazz playing that is overly cerebral. — *Larry Vuckovich*

BELGRADE BLUES opens the A side, grabbing and maintaining interest. With a minor blues form on the bottom and Mid-Eastern scales and motifs on top, this is a jaunty, infectious 12-bar blues. It insistently recalls Horace Silver's *SEÑOR BLUES*. "The first part is in the same mood and has the same changes as Horace's classic tune," confirmed Vuckovich. Approaching this tune, Vuckovich is skilled in creating a sense of place and atmosphere.

The legato melody *LOVING LINDA* was Vuckovich's statement for his wife, "I wanted to reflect her ... Linda's a beautiful woman and a beautiful person." Basically a slow bossa feeling pervades; there's an interesting interface descending changes and the ascending melody. Breslin's singing notes add an empathic insight to the intent of the music.

Fragments of discrete folk melodies are thoughtfully sewn together, ending up in a captivating reconstituted piece of music with expressive folk reflections. *LARRY'S DANCE* has a 7/8 first part which switches to a 4/4 mid section and finally returns to 7/8. Midway in the tune, the improv section is harmonically and soundwise closer to folk music than the other Balkan-infused tunes," said Vuckovich. "Bobby's feeling for Balkan music comes through and shows how really adaptable he is, especially how he opens his solo. And as his solo builds, he opens up, of course, and increases his polytonality. Also Erik is really into it in the rubato intro." Drummer Eddie Moore (formerly with Sonny Rollins, Stanley Turrentine, George Coleman, etc.), an Elvin Jones-influenced player with a good groove, lays down a bedrock foundation.

A favorite of mine since the days of Avery Parrish's wonderful piano solo on the old 1940 Bluebird label 78 rpm disc with the Erskine Hawkins Orchestra is *AFTER HOURS*. And not every pianist can catch the essence of it and play it in its tradition with finesse and soul. Well, Larry Vuckovich is a dynamite blues man! He learned the tune ten years ago from saxophonist Jules Broussard who is steeped in jazz history. Vuckovich played it every night along with other blues, bebop and swing when he was with Jon Hendrick's musical "Evolution of the Blues" for two years in San Francisco's On Broadway. He shows well-seasoned comprehension of the tune's personality. Not since Ray Bryant's version has there been one with such a direct focus on its essentials.

BLUE BALKAN, the title selection is a convincing model of the balance and beauty of Balkan folk and Afro-American heritages woven into thematic fabric. Vuckovich's ardor for Bartokian harmonic movement is present, especially the interlude between the solos-the triplet figures. "The improvisation in the middle is based on one chord-E minor," said Vuckovich, "and my solo is purposely heavy with folk ideas as I didn't want to get too 'out'. I also wanted to show the contrasts of each player's music; e.g., Bobby injected a little folk

rhythm and Erik was amazingly close to the Gypsy thing." Vuckovich dedicates his tune to the spirit and memory of John Coltrane as Coltrane had paid early cognizance to Eastern music and creatively adopted the modal approach for the jazz idiom.

Vuckovich used to hear a song sung in his childhood days. *MAPLE FOREST* is based on that Serbian traditional folk tune. He describes: "It's a love song sung by a man to his loved one. The lyrics tell how he wishes the maple tree would spread its branches as widely as possible to hold off the light of the dawn, as he likes the evening feeling." Musically, the interpretation is colorfully impressionistic, departing from the original line. Like any forest community from a biological standpoint, there are infinite variegated deviations among the member trees; Vuckovich's music mirrors this natural law. The moving duet is played with some blues feeling-not carrying just sadness but freighted with hope as well. Dig Golub's gorgeous viola with a strong heart-feltness in his Gypsy orientation and Vuckovich's gleamingly fresh, warm voicings.

CHANGES is literally a sequence of changes that developed when Vuckovich was playing with bassist John Heard in the sixties. It has a modal section which shifts from one tonality to another. Drummer Eddie Marshall's crisply popping, agile work and Heard's warm speech-like bass complement Vuckovich. Together they achieve a vivid statement of their deep jazz roots.

"I'll never forget Wes Montgomery's version with Tommy Flanagan on *IN YOUR OWN SWEET WAY*. It's done in the same tempo here," remarked Vuckovich in reference to one of Dave Brubeck's most attractive ballads. Hutcherson's vibes are crystalline clear and the shape of his solo work is persistently inventive and surprising, The antennae ears and deft touch of Vuckovich give big clues to his cache of abilities.

Finally, *MEDITERRANEAN NIGHTS* is a tango written years ago. "I didn't conceive it as a jazz tune as I was thinking about Argentina type tempos, flavors and such. It's the kind of romantic tango often heard in European cafes in the summer." Note John Heard's strumming of the strings with his fingers-tasteful, subtle percussive effects in the absence of a drummer and sounding as if they could be clapping castanets.

This album dramatizes a collage of facets which fit into a unified portrait of Larry Vuckovich—a brilliant pianist-composer whose reputation should be accelerated to wide attention.

—HERB WONG, *S.F. Chronicle/JazzTimes/Jazzmagazine*
Recorded January 29-30, 1980 for Inner City Records, NYC

Executive Producers: Sanna Craig, Andrew Vuckovich, Margaret and Slobodan Galeb, Marko and Cica Duchich, and Larry Vuckovich.

Music Director & Arranger: Larry Vuckovich

CD design by Zand Gee

Cover photo and inside photos of Larry Vuckovich and Bobby Hutcherson
by Kathy Sloane

Other inside photos by Will Waghorn

Cover painting of folk dancers by Vivian Zann

Painting of Mostar Bridge by unknown artist

“Blue Balkan: Then & Now” is dedicated to the spirit and memory of John Coltrane and all the ethnic minorities who have created some of the greatest, most soulful and most spiritually uplifting music of the world.

I would like to thank the following: my wife, Sanna Craig, vocalist and partner in our Tetrachord Music; my son, Alexi Vuckovich; my stepson, Josh Workman; my brother, Andrew Vuckovich; Slobodan and Margaret Galeb; Marko and Cica Duchich, all of whom made this CD a reality. I would also like to thank Marge Weaver and the late John Weaver and my late wife, Linda Weaver Vuckovich, and Milka Zhivadinovich and her late husband Rade, all of whom helped make the original LP recording possible. I also add a special thanks to Pete Douglas of the Bach Society, Herb Wong, music critic and producer; Pegi Brandley and all the KCSM music programmers; Tom Madden of Jazz Quarters, Pat Nacey, San Francisco Friends of Jazz; Dave Brambert, pianist/composer; Art Robbins of Robbins Enterprises, Tom Ulisse and Noel Lim, Vaso and Karen Novakovich, Linda McGilvray, Steve Sells, Richard Hartung, and my assistant, Taylan Coppola.

Opposite page:

Top: (1) Larry Vuckovich, (2) Jeff Chambers,

Middle: (3) Eric Golub, (4) Eddie Marshall, (5) Tommy Kesecker

Bottom: (6) Sanna Craig and Larry Vuckovich, (7) Vince Delgado

