

## NOLE: PROUD TO BE SERBIAN ORTHODOX



Milos Rastovic interviewing Novak Djokovic



Ana Veselinov supporting Serbia and Nole



Photos by Milos Rastovic and Dragan Veselinov

CINCINNATI, OH - Representing the *American Srbobran*, I was present at the ATP Tennis Masters Tournament Western & Southern Open in Cincinnati, OH to meet and support Novak Djokovic, ATP No. 1 Tennis player in the world. Once there I met Serbian colleagues from Serbia's *Sport Journal* and *Sport Club*. It was a pleasure to see them again to enjoy their friendship and be with others from worldwide media.

Djokovic had a successful year winning the fifth Grand Slam Wimbledon title (2011, 2014, 2015, 2018 & 2019) in July in London. Last year at the ATP Masters Tournament in Cincinnati, he became the first tennis player in *(continued on page 8)*

## Dancing Through the Summer: Adriana Kangrga's Amazing Opportunity

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Adriana Kangrga spent the summer performing traditional Serbian dances throughout the Balkan countries. Photos courtesy of Adriana Kangrga.



Adriana and the Kalemegdan Folklor Group of Los Angeles, California performing in Kragujevac, Serbia.



Adriana with some of her friends in front of Hram Svetog Save (Saint Sava's Church) in Serbia's capital, Belgrade.

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(continued from page 1) history to win all nine ATP Masters 1000 Tournaments at the Western & Southern Open. This year, he came with the same enthusiasm. His supporters with Serbian flags were cheering “Nole, Nole” throughout the tournament. However, in the semifinal, Djokovic lost to Russian player, Daniil Medvedev. After the match, Djokovic pointed out at the press conference that he was “very pleased with the way I have played the entire tournament. Obviously, it hurts to lose a match. Of course, it does. But at the end of the day, I am positive about my game.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite the loss, he kept a positive attitude coming to the US Open in New York. During the tournament, he also showed his altruism. Before the game, he met a little boy at the stadium, held his hand, and walked with him on the court. Djokovic let the boy sit on his seat. The boy was wearing a t-shirt “I’m a Champion.” He made the youngster very happy sitting with him on the court. The speaker at the stadium said that the boy had survived neuro-blastoma cancer when he was an infant. Djokovic wanted to make this moment precious for him: “Those kinds of moments, stay with him for a long time. I wanted to make him feel comfortable, and I know what it means to him to be on the court. For me, it’s just a little bit of attention and a gesture to make him feel good.”<sup>2</sup>

After the press conference, I had a chance to ask him some questions for the *American Srbobran*. In 2015, Novak became an honorary member of the Serb National Federation. Honorary presidents of the Serb National Federation were Mihajlo I. Pupin and Nikola Tesla, Serbian-American Scientists and Inventors, in 1929 and 1935. Djokovic kindly and with a smile responded to my questions:

**MR: The Novak Djokovic Foundation offers scholarships to Ph.D. students at Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia, and Harvard University in Boston. Those students are focusing their research on the development and education of children at preschool age. What was your main motive for focusing on children at this early stage of life?**

**NOLE:** I personally together with my wife and family help children at this early stage of life in different ways and for different purposes because we are definitely most sensitive to children. The mission of our foundation is to spread awareness of the importance of education during the preschool age. In 2011, when the Foundation became more active to address this problem, 50% of children in Serbia had not attended any preschools or other programs. They had not attended preschools because of financial problems or cultural reasons. However, the most important reason is that we have not had enough kindergartens in Serbia. Today, we still do not have enough kindergartens in Serbia. That’s why we focus more on children at an early stage of life. As a father of two children who are at an early stage of life, I work to stress the importance of early education and development of children.

**MR: How important is your Christian Orthodox faith in your professional and life in general?**

**NOLE:** I am Serbian Orthodox Christian, and I am proud of it. However, I do not limit myself to religious boundaries which we have in our religion and any other religions. I try to be more universal, to develop myself because it is more suitable for me.

On behalf of the Serb National Federation, I presented him an *American Srbobran* and the DVD “Tesla Nation” by Zeljko Mirkovic, which he delightfully accepted. Spanning more than 200 years, the film recounts the stories of many Serbian-Americans throughout history from George Fisher, the first famous Serb, to Mihajlo I. Pupin and Nikola Tesla, Serbian-American Scientists and Inventors, World War I and II immigrants up to the present time. The film stresses the overall Serbian-American contributions to building America and the world.

When I left the press room, I emphasized to him that every one of his successes is also a success of the Serb National Federation and the Serbian Diaspora worldwide.

*Translated from Serbian into English by Milos Rastovic*

<sup>1</sup> Western & Southern Open, August 17, 2019, Novak Djokovic, *ASAP Sport*: [http://www.asapsports.com/show\\_interview.php?id=152974](http://www.asapsports.com/show_interview.php?id=152974)

<sup>2</sup> Western & Southern Open, August 16, 2019, Novak Djokovic, *ASAP Sport*: [http://www.asapsports.com/show\\_interview.php?id=152962](http://www.asapsports.com/show_interview.php?id=152962)

## Dancing Through the Summer: Adriana Kangrga’s Amazing Opportunity

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Katarina Marceta, Editor-in-Chief  
August 2, 2019

Many students spent this summer sweating in the Arizona heat, waiting for the first sign of rain, or at least a breeze. One of our students, however, spent the summer enjoying the cool climate of the Balkan countries in southeastern Europe while performing traditional Serbian dances.

Adriana Kangrga spent her summer in Serbia, Montenegro, and Republika Srpska visiting many ancient monasteries and performing traditional Serbian dances, known as kolo. Kolo, also known as folklor, consists of a chain of dancers holding hands while dancing in a circle. The dances differ depending on which area they originate from but are a huge aspect of Serbian culture.

Last year Adriana performed at the International Knights Festival here at ACP with the Gavriilo Princip Folklor Group, and this summer, on July 1st, Adriana jetted off to Europe to start her happy vacation. Here’s what she had to say about her spectacular opportunity:

**Q: What places did you visit? Which was your favorite? Why?**

**A:** We traveled all over Serbia, Bosnia & Hercegovina, and Montenegro. My favorite place was Trebinje, Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Hercegovina. Trebinje was my favorite because of the scenery. It was extremely peaceful and had a cozy atmosphere, as all of the Balkans do, but Trebinje just gave me a feeling that’s practically indescribable.

**Q: What monasteries did you see?**

**A:** On our trip we probably visited around 25 different monasteries and churches. Some of these include Studenica Monastery (Brezova, Serbia), Oplenac Church (Topola, Serbia), Hram Svetog Save (Belgrade, Serbia), Tvrdoš Monastery (near Trebinje, Republika Srpska, Bosnia i Hercegovina), Monastery Hercegovacka Gračanica (Trebinje, Bosnia & Hercegoniva), Cetinje Monastery (Cetinje, Montenegro), and Ostrog Monastery (Ostroška Greda, Montenegro).

**Q: Who did you perform with?**

**A:** I performed with the Kalemegdan Folklor Group based in Los Angeles, California.

**Q: How long have you been performing?**

**A:** I’ve been dancing Serbian folklor for 13 years.

**Q: Where did you perform? What is the name of the dance?**

**A:** We performed in front of Studenica Monastery, First Kragujevac Gymnasium (a specialized school with advanced secondary education), Folk Festival in Dubica, in front of the Church of Saint Prince Lazar, and at a humanitarian event for Stefan Marković (a young boy with cerebral palsy). The names of our dances are Studenica and Bosilegradsko Krajište.

Adriana and the Kalemegdan Folklor Group of Los Angeles, California performing in Kragujevac, Serbia. Photo courtesy of Adriana Kangrga.

**Q: Are the dances complicated?**

**A:** Depending on what region the dance is from, steps can range from what some may consider easy, to what others may consider difficult. The particular dances we performed have constant footwork with very little breaks or time to breathe, which in my opinion is the hardest part about performing these two dances; you’re constantly moving your feet and gasping for air but have to make it look easy.

**Q: How did you feel about the entire trip? Would you do it again?**

**A:** This trip was an experience of a lifetime! I’m so happy that I got to spend the summer performing with some of my best friends. I would do it all over again in a heartbeat! A huge thanks to Adriana for taking the time to teach us a little about the Serbian culture! I really enjoyed interviewing Adriana because we’ve known each other for a long time, due to our shared Serbian roots. We both spent the summer visiting family and friends in Serbia, and Adriana got the experience of a lifetime. Hopefully we’ll get to see her perform at International Knights Fest again next year!

To check out Adriana’s performance, go to this link: <https://youtu.be/lfB8VF4dRdw>

**Ed note:** Adriana Kangrga, a high school junior at Arizona College Prep - Erie Campus, is 16 years old and a member of SNF Lodge #40-Kosovo in Phoenix, AZ. The article was written by Adriana’s lifelong friend, Katarina Marceta, who is a classmate at Arizona College Prep. Adriana is the daughter of Jovan and Denise Kangrga.