

Čoček (Macedonia, Kosovo, South Serbia)

Notes by Dennis Boxell

“Čoček” is a variation of an old 3-measure dance-form found in many parts of the Balkans related to the Hasapiko (Greek) or Kasapsko oro (Slavic). This dance-form had no commonly shared name throughout Kosovo, South Serbia and the parts of Macedonia where it was widely danced under various names. Folk dancers first encountered this “no-name dance-form” in the stately and elegant “Razgranjala Jorgovana”, “Bre Devojčice and “Oj Coko, Coko”, Serbian town dances from Prizren and Priština, Kosovo. These dances were named after the songs that accompanied them. The Serbian researchers, Danica and Ljubica Janković described these and many other variations when they published their eight dance volumes in the 1930’s and 40’s. When Tanec first came to America in 1956, we saw it in the form of the Moslem woman’s dance, “Kupurlika” from Titov Veles. Čoček is especially popular among the Moslem Rom (Gypsy) and Albanian populations of Kosovo, South Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia.

Nowadays, you can find recorded a large selection of music for this dance form – a form, reminiscent of the popular Turkish urban dance style, “left over” from when this area was a part of the Ottoman Empire. This “Oriental” flavor of Balkan music has been maintained particularly by Gypsy musicians who have developed their own genre which they refer to as “čoček”(from the Turkish “köçek”(a professional solo dancer). In Serbia, “čoček” refers mainly to dances in 9/16, “Karsilama” style, made famous by the opera “Koštana” by Petar Konjović in 1931. Koštana was a Gypsy woman from Vranje famous for dancing the “Čoček”. In fact, the opera named after her finishes in a rousing 9/16 “Čoček”.

In Greece, the term is not used but a similar style of music is found in the dances, “Tsifteteli” and “Karsilama”, still popular today in Northern Greece especially during Apokreas (Mardi Gras or Carnival).

Rom musicians living in areas of the former Yugoslavia have broadened the term to include variations in 4/4, 7/8, as well as 9/16. Many but not all of the 4/4 tunes are suitable for the dance. I have chosen an exciting 4/4 selection by the “Kočani Orkestar”, entitled “Burkan Čoček”. The “Kočani Orkestar” is an outstanding Rom brass band from Macedonia. Their talented and gifted leader, Naat Veliov, is also the lead trumpet player and is considered one of the masters of this tradition. I also recommend Niški Sa Sa and Cocek on my CD “Kolo Party 2005”.

Music: Recommended: Kočani Orkestar - (L’orient Est Rouge, band 4) “Burkan Čoček”, & the Dennis Boxell CD, (Kolo Party 2005, tracks 3 and 8) “Niški Sa Sa and Čoček”

Formation: Line dance, mixed men and women, hands in “W” position.

Meter: 4/4 (counted in 2/4 below for ease of standard description)

| Measure | Count | |
|---------|-------|--|
| 1 | 1 | Facing center, step diagonally backward right on Rft (Slow). |
| | 2 | Cross-and step on Lft in back of Rft (Slow). |
| 2 | 1-2 | Reaching back with Rft onto rear track, <u>three-steps</u> in place (Right, Left, Right) (Slow, Quick, Quick). |
| 3 | 1 | Continuing to face center but moving sideward right, cross and step on Lft in front of Rft (Slow). |
| 2 | | Step sideward right on Rft (Quick). (Rft reaches back onto rear track). |
| | 2& | Step sideward right on Lft (Quick). (Lft remains on front track). |

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