

Čoček
Chocek
 maschouan

Name

The name is usually written as Čoček but it can be hard to find a font with those accent marks. 'Chocek' gives a good impression of how it is pronounced - it isn't *koe-kek!*

History

Chocek describes a family of traditional Rom (Gypsy) dances from the southern Balkans. I have learnt chocheks from Jaap Leegwater, Laura Shannon, Steve Kotansky and many other teachers and dancers. The word chocek is used for several step patterns and I often add something to the name to differentiate between them, although this is (as far as I can tell) not traditional. The following names are, therefore, just my own personal way of telling the different dances apart.

Rhythm

Most chocheks are in 4/4 rhythm, although 7/8 and 9/8 versions are also common.

Handhold

I think every chocek that I've seen or danced in has had a W hold, with hands held comfortably at shoulder height. Dancers stay more or less facing centre throughout.

Simple Chocek

Step to the side with the right foot, step across behind with the left, step to the side with the right, then touch the left beside the right. Step straight forward (towards the centre) with the left, then touch the right beside the left. All the steps are on the beat and are the same length (in time).

Variation - replace the touches with two fast 'close' steps, switching your weight from foot to foot. The rhythm then becomes 1-2-3-4&5-6& with the first step coming straight after the last close. The weight change should be fast but smooth, keep both feet touching the floor and don't stamp.

Music

(This is just a sample selection from the songs I use for this dance)

Xenos - Oj Dada Sale, O Poshtari, Romanela (and others) from **Fire in the Feet**; Ushti Ushti Baba, Posadila Baba, Di Di (and others) from **Tutti Frutti**.

Jobo Horo - Hidhe Mojë Gocë, Lule Malësore (and others) from **Mastika**; Rutzin Chocek, Mishino Oro (and others) from **Esma**.

Ssassa - Devla/BuEreçaz from **Öriental Gypsy Night**

Bratsch - Mangeur de Lune from **Le Mangeur de Lune**; Zarbi from **Correspondances**.

Lifting Chocek

Often known as *Ketri Ketri*, the first of this style of chocek to be introduced into the network. This has the rhythm of the simple chocek with the weight changes variation with an extra lift added before each slow step, which puts the steps on the off beat and changes the feel of the dance quite profoundly. The directions also change - we now go straight back and diagonally in to the right.

Lift the right foot, then step straight back, Lift and step back on the left, lift and step back with the right, then step twice in place with the left and right, changing the weight. Lift the left foot, then step across in front with the left, turning to face right of centre. Step forward with the right and left, then turn to face centre to start the sequence again.

The lifts are made from the hips, try not to exaggerate them by raising the leg high. As you lift bring the standing heel off the ground and then lower it again to touch the ground on the beat.

Tips - remember that the last step is followed by a lift, so plant it solidly and be ready to move back. After the third lift and step back try not to move further back with the two weight change steps, this can cause the circle to expand alarmingly. You can step back with the left and then rock back onto the right, which gives a nice extra movement but doesn't upset the circle size.

Variation - with faster music you can reduce the lift to virtually nothing, resulting in a rhythm of 1-2-3&4-5&6 but starting on the off beat.

Other Rhythms

The lifting chocek can be done to music in 7/8 (when it is commonly called Chupurlika) and 9/8, and maybe to other too!

For 7/8 rhythms (the music should have a 3-2-2 form) make the first, third and fourth lifts twice the speed of the other steps, which will usually mean making them smaller (unless you have very slow music). You should end up with *lift*-step, lift, step, *lift*-step, step, step, *lift*-step, step, step when the lifts in *italics* are fast. Don't try to learn this from these notes!

For 9/8 rhythms (which should be structured 2-2-2-3) make each fourth beat last longer, resulting in lift, step, lift, **step**, lift, step, step, **step**, lift, step, step, **step** where the steps in **bold** are longer.

When you're dancing to these rhythms you should be able to hear from the music where the steps fit - if not stop at once and seek professional advice.

Music

(Just a selection.)

Sa O Roma, O Poshtari, Romanela, Linsey's Chocek, Pirava Daje from **Fire in the Feet** by **Xenos**
Ushti Ushte Baba, Di Di from **Tutti Frutti** by **Xenos**
Paaj Georgi Chocek from **Dances of Macedonia and the Balkans** by **Adam Good**
Antipski Chocek from **Macedonian Folk Music** by **Tsrvena Kniga**
Dad Najema, Ciganko Vatrelog Oka and Mishino Oro (7/8) from **Esma** by **Slobo Horo**
Ketri Ketri (Dance song in Balcan Gypsy style) from **Black Fire** by **Kalyi Jag**
Like Birds from **Lungoj O Drom Angla Mande** by **Kalyi Jag**
Mangeur de Lune and Danse de l'Alcool from **Le Mangeur de Lune** by **Bratsch**
Cupurlika (7/8) from **King Ferus** by **Ferus Mustafov**

Dance description by Andy Bettis 11/2002