

B1 RŮKA  
Bulgaria

Within the memory of old-timers in Dobrudja (northeast Bulgaria), Sunday afternoons were regular social occasions involving the whole village, and were spent in gossiping, eating, drinking, singing and dancing. In the areas along the Danube River, around the town of Silistra, these weekly gatherings afforded the villagers the opportunity to join in a rich repertoire of circle and line dances, chief among which were *Sborenka*, *Tropanka* and *Rŭka*.

The movements and melodies for these dances varied and overlapped from one village to the next; the *Tropanka* from one community might contain steps similar to the *Sborenka* of another, and its melodies might even include a few themes from another village's *Rŭka*. The distinguishing feature of any dance called *Rŭka* (RUCK-ah, "hand" or "arm") was that its participants joined hands and moved their arms in various patterns to accompany their other movements, whereas in other dances they grasped neighbors' belts or used a crossed basket hold.

Dobrudjans usually danced *Rŭka* in an open or closed circle made up of men and women. Often the men broke from the mixed line after a while to form their own line and proceeded to perform highly complex movements involving additional arm movements, deep knee-bends, etc., at which point the women either continued dancing in their own line or stopped dancing and watched (cf. *Pravo trakijsko horo* in the NAMA #1 syllabus, pg. 28).

The weekly Sunday-afternoon dance gatherings of two generations ago have all but disappeared in Dobrudja, but older dancers still enjoy dancing *Rŭka* and other traditional dances at special church fairs, weddings and national holidays; also, village groups often perform these dances at folklore festivals.

The melody recorded here by NAMA could be used for any variant of *Rŭka*; among U.S. and Canadian folk dancers, however, its opening themes are definitely associated with a version that was first presented by Camille Brochu and Yves Moreau in 1968 under the name *Dobrudjanska Reka* (doo-broo-JAHN-skah RUCK-ah). It is based on a segment from a larger choreographed suite of Dobrudjan dances in the repertoire of the Sredec Ensemble of Sofia. In its original setting it was intended by the choreographer to feature the women dancers at a particular moment in the suite, which also included men's and mixed-dancer segments. In this sense it is a "women's" dance, and was presented as such in the U.S. and Canada.\*

The description below is an adaptation (to fit the terminology of this syllabus) of one written by Ginny Wilder in collaboration with Camille Brochu and reviewed with Yves Moreau. It is included here by permission and with thanks.

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\* *Dobrudjanska Reka* has thus moved through three different traditions: its motifs were taken from the village dance tradition of Dobrudja and adapted to a second tradition -- that of the stage, and thence to still a third tradition -- that of the North American recreational folk dance scene. Each of these traditions has its own distinct context, its own "laws", and its own validity.

## RŮKA (Continued)

Meter: 2/4

Formation: W only, in short lines of 6 to 8 dancers. See hand positions under individual figures below.

### Steps and Styling

Basic Step (1 meas to complete): With a preparatory lift on ball of Lft, step onto ball of Rft (1); come down on full Rft as full Lft stamps beside Rft (no wt), both knees bent (&); repeat with opposite ftwk, including the preparatory lift (2,&). Thruout the dance, the Basic Step always begins by stepping onto Rft for ct 1 of the measure. There is more emphasis on lifting body from ball of supporting ft than in covering distance (i.e., the emphasis is more vertical than horizontal). On the steps, the ball of the ft contacts floor first; however, the stamps are firm and done with the full ft. Body bends from waist twd side of stamping ft; thus head and shldr tips from side to side.

The women of Dobrudja dance with simplicity and calmness and, at the same time, exhibit strength and firmness. There is a contrast thruout the dance between soft lyricism and sharp, quick, strong movements. The women occasionally shout in a high-pitched voice "ju-ju-ju-ju-ju-ju-JU!".

### MEAS

### PATTERN

(1-4) Introduction. 4 meas. Dancers wait.

Figure 1 - Entrance (This figure is never repeated)

Hands joined at shldr level ("W" position), back near shldr, not pushed fwd. Hands remain in this position, with no up and down mov't. Face slightly R of ctr, begin with wt on Lft.

1-16 With 16 Basic Steps move in LOD.

Figure 2 - Solo

Release hands, put fists on hips (wrists straight), face ctr, use Basic Step thruout. The area of mov't is confined within a radius of a normal-sized step to the R, to the L, fwd, and back to place, in a continuous, smooth, flowing manner.

- 1 During preparatory lift begin to turn 1/4 CW, and finish first Basic Step facing in LOD (1); move twd ctr, L shldr leading (2).
- 2 Retrace steps of meas 1 as follows: move away from ctr, R shldr leading (1); turning 1/4 CCW, move in RLOD (2).
- 3 Turning 1/4 CCW, move twd ctr, R shldr leading (1); turning 1/4 CW to face ctr, move L (2).
- 4 Still facing ctr, move R (1); turning 1/4 CCW, move away from ctr, L shldr leading (2). (This retraces steps of meas 3, except ends facing RLOD.)
- 5-16 Repeat mov'ts of meas 1-4 of this figure three more times (4 in all). Each repeat of meas 1 begins with a 1/2 turn CW to face LOD.

(Continued)

Figure 3 - Moving sideward

Join hands down at sides, elbows locked straight. Face ctr, but move in LOD. Note that this figure does not use the Basic Step.

- 1 Step Rft sdwd R, arms thrust bkwd low (1); step Lft across in front of Rft, arms brought fwd low (&); repeat these mov'ts (2,&).
- 2 Step Rft sdwd R, arms thrust bkwd (1); stamp Lft (no wt) beside Rft, arms fwd (&); step Lft sdwd L, arms bkwd (2); stamp Rft (no wt) beside Lft, arms fwd (&).
- 3-16 Repeat mov'ts of meas 1-2 of this figure seven more times (8 in all). Arm swings are short, tense, strong; elbows remain locked straight.

Figure 4 - Moving forward

- 1-2 Still facing ctr, move fwd with 2 Basic Steps. Arms swing fwd on ct 1, bkwd on ct 2. Elbows are straight but not rigid. Arm mov't is softer and more relaxed than in Fig. 3, because it is half as fast. Head tips from side to side (twd stamping ft), but this action must be natural, not forced, and is achieved only after familiarity with ftwk, arm motions, and the mood of the dance.
- 3 Hop on Lft, simultaneously raising arms fwd to about 45° above horizontal (1); stamp Rft beside Lft (no wt) (&); leap onto Rft in place (2); stamp Lft beside Rft (no wt) (&).
- 4 Leap onto Lft in place (1); stamp Rft beside Lft (no wt) (&); stamp Rft again (no wt), bringing hands down sharply to shldr level ("W" position) (2); pause (&).
- 5-16 Repeat mov'ts of meas 1-4 of this figure three more times (4 in all).

Figure 5 - Basic and stamps

- 1 Raise joined hands high, elbows fairly straight. Face R of ctr and move in LOD with one Basic Step.
- 2 Turning to face L of ctr, move bkwd (still in LOD) with one Basic Step. Bring hands sharply to shldr level ("W" position) on last stamp (ct 2&).
- 3 Turning to face R of ctr, move in LOD with one Basic Step. Hands move on these cts: push up (1); fwd (&); swing down and bkwd (2); swing fwd low (&). This is one continuous motion, not staccato.
- 4 Stamp Rft beside Lft (no wt), arms thrust bkwd (1); swing arms fwd (&); repeat these mov'ts (2,&). Arm motions are again sharp and tense, as in Fig. 3.
- 5-16 Repeat mov'ts of meas 1-4 of this figure three more times (4 in all).



RŮKA (Continued)

Figure 6 - Finale

- 1 Face ctr and move fwd with 1 Basic Step. Arms swing fwd on ct 1, bkwd on ct 2, with soft motion as in Fig. 4.
- 2 With same rhythmical arm mov'ts: step bkwd on Rft, arms swing fwd (1); close Lft to Rft (&); step fwd on Rft, arms bkwd (2); scuff L heel fwd, rising on ball of Rft, arms begin to come fwd (&).
- 3 Turning to face slightly L of ctr, step Lft to L, bringing hands high (1); stamp Rft (no wt) beside Lft, bringing hands sharply to shldr level ("W" position) (&); facing ctr, step bkwd onto ball of Rft, knee straight; Lft stays in place (but no wt) and may turn in slightly as body turns to face ctr; arms fwd at shldr level, elbows almost straight (2); pause (&).
- 4 Rock fwd onto Lft, hands start to come back to "W" position (1); stamp Rft (no wt) beside Lft, hands in "W" position (&); move hands up a little (uh-); stamp Rft (no wt) beside Lft again, hands come back to "W" position (2); pause (&). These hand mov'ts are short and sharp.
- 5-16 Repeat mov'ts of meas 1-4 of this figure three more times (4 in all).

The dance now repeats from Fig. 2.