

ZHENSKO CHAMCHE

(Macedonia)

- Source: As presented by Pece Atanasovski at Buffalo Gap International Folk Dance Camp, 1987.
- Pronunciation: ZHEN-sko CHAHM-chay
- Formation: Open circle of women, hands held down at sides, facing center of circle.
- Record: Mendocino Folklore Camp 2004 – Larry Weiner Balkan Dance CD
Macedonian Folk Dances with Pece Atanasovski – Vol. 1, BMA-1007
Jugodisk, LPD-0328, Side 2, Band 4 (Zhensko Chamche).
- Rhythm: This is where the fun begins.
Slow music: 1/1, or perhaps a better way of expressing it is "8 beats of somewhat variable duration to the phrase."

Fast Music: 7/8 (Slow-Quick-Quick).
 1 2 3

NOTES: In order to understand why the rhythm in the slow music portion of the dance is so complex and unusual, it is important to view the dance as it might have been danced in the old times by women in villages of the Skopje region. It seems obvious, but worth repeating, that in the villages dancing is always done to live music. The musicians are an important part of the festive event taking place, and without them there would most likely be no dancing at all (unless the dances were "song dances" where the dancers provide their own music through song). In most dances the dance tune has a specific rhythm (e.g. 2/4, 7/8, 3/4, 11/16 etc.) and the dancers dance to the rhythm provided by the orchestra. However, in Macedonia we find that a dance form still exists that has a completely different relationship between musician and dancer than the one noted above. In dances such as Chamche, Zhensko Chamche, Chifte Chamche, Teshkoto, occasionally Pravoto and others, the "rhythm" is provided by the dancers and the musicians follow that rhythm and the steps of the dancers. A typical band for this type of music would be comprised of 2 zurla (a double reeded clarinet-shaped instrument) players, one playing a constant droning note and the other playing a slow, seemingly free form melody. A single tupan (large drum) player would beat the drum following the dancers' movements. The "lead dancer," at the front (or right end) of the line, has almost complete freedom to step whenever she (in this case) feels the spirit, and it is the drummer's responsibility to follow her steps (which may or may not be rhythmic in our terms).

So now the musicians are playing according to the lead dancer's steps, but what about the rest of the dancers in the line? They are also following the lead dancer's steps. Sounds easy except that the lead dancer not only has the freedom to set the "rhythm," but also to dance whatever steps she wants to (within certain cultural norms). In summary, in this dance's traditional environment, everyone watches the dance leader, who sets the rhythm, tempo and dance steps.

Every time this dance is done in its traditional setting it is created anew. This is such a contrast to what we are accustomed to in our recreational dance environment that it boggles the mind as to how to best recreate this dance and yet stay true to its original form.

The dance presented here, as arranged and taught by Pece Atanasovski, is an excellent portrayal of Zhensko Chamche as adapted for our recreational environment. In general, it will be helpful to think of the "slow" portion of the dance as taking 3 musical phrases to complete with each phrase containing 8 beats. For the most part, the first 6 beats of each phrase are of approximately equal duration, with beats 7, and more often 8, being of longer duration. Most of the "movement" in the dance takes place on beats 1-6, with beats 7-8 used to hold position. The dance tune on the record recommended has a long musical introduction during which the dancers can walk around the room to "get the feel" of the music. After the brief pause in the introductory music the dancers should stop walking, face the center, and slowly raise and join their hands at head height during the first four beats of music.

IT IS EXTREMELY HELPFUL TO LISTEN CLOSELY TO THE MUSIC AND STEP WITH THE DRUMBEATS!! GOOD LUCK.

<u>Phrase</u>	<u>Beat</u>	<u>Pattern</u>
<u>Introductory Pattern (danced once)</u>		
1	1-4	Facing ctr, raise and join lowered hands to head height.
2	1	With wt predominantly on RF, flex down and up.
	2	Flex down and up again.
	3	Rising on ball of RF, step fwd onto ball of LF lowering L-heel to ground and flexing L-knee.
	4	Bringing inside of R-heel to back of LF with R-knee slightly turned out, bounce on LF.
	5	Step backwards onto RF, at same time lifting free LF slightly in front and starting to swing LF around to Left. (This beat arrives quickly.)
	6	Continue swinging motion of LF until it ends with inside of L-heel tucked behind RF. Rise smoothly onto ball of RF during this beat.
	7-8	Pause.
<u>Repeating Pattern</u>		
1	1	Facing ctr, standing on ball of RF, with inside of L-heel tucked behind RF, L-knee turned out slightly, bounce on RF, turning body slightly L and returning to position.
	2	Repeat pattern Phrase 1, Beat 1.
	3	Step sdwrds to L onto LF simultaneously swinging freed RF up in front of LF, R-knee bent slightly.
	4	Flex L-knee slightly while swinging R-Heel slightly L.
	5	Step fwd onto ball of RF, lowering R-heel to ground and tucking L-heel behind R
	6	Slowly bounce in place on RF.
	7	Step bkwrds onto LF, slowly lifting freed RF up slightly in front, R-knee bent.
	8	Pause (elongated).
2	1	Retaining this position (Phrase 1, Beat 7) flex on LF.

- 2 Flex again on LF while turning to face CCW.
 - 3 Step fwd onto RF.
 - 4 Step onto LF placing it behind, and slightly to R of RF.
 - 5 Continuing CCW, step fwd onto RF swinging free LF up in front of RF, L-knee bent slightly.
 - 6 Flex R-knee slightly while swinging L-heel slightly R.
 - 7 Step fwd onto LF.
 - 8 Step bkwrds onto RF, lifting free LF in front, L-knee bent slightly, and rising onto ball of RF.
- 3 1 Lowering R-heel to ground, step fwd onto LF.
 - 2 Bounce on LF, quickly bringing free RF around, and slightly in front of LF, R-knee bent and turned out slightly.
 - 3 Bounce again on LF.
 - 4 Step fwd onto RF while turning body to face ctr and bringing free LF low and in front of RF, L-knee turned out.
 - 5 Facing ctr, step fwd onto ball of LF, rolling down onto L-heel with L-knee slightly flexed and tucking R-heel behind LF.
 - 6 Bounce on LF, keeping free RF in position.
 - 7 Step backwards onto RF, at same time lifting free LF slightly in front and starting to swing LF around to Left.
 - 8 Continue swinging motion of LF until it ends with inside of L-heel tucked behind RF. Rise smoothly onto ball of RF during this beat.

Repeat the previous 3 phrase "repeating pattern" until the music changes to the "Fast Music". This will occur after phrase 1, of the repeating pattern.

<u>Meas.</u>	<u>Ct.</u>	<u>Fast Music (repeat until end of dance)</u>
1	1	Facing CCW, step fwd onto RF.
	2	Step onto ball of LF beside RF.
	3	Step slightly fwd on RF.
2	1-3	Repeat pattern Meas 1, but with opposite ftwk.
3	1	Step fwd onto ball of RF.
	2-3	Step fwd onto ball of LF.
4	1	Turning to face ctr, step sdwrds to R onto RF.
	2-3	Bounce of RF, tucking free L-heel behind RF.
5	1	Turning to face CW, step fwd onto ball of LF.
	2-3	Step fwd onto ball of RF.
6	1	Turning to face ctr, step sdwrds to L onto LF.
	2-3	Bounce of LF, lifting free RF up slightly in front, R-knee bent.

NOTE: During Meas 1 & 2, Pece often danced these steps while making one complete turn to R.