

## DOBRUDŽANSKA RŮKA

Bulgarian

PRONUNCIATION: doh-brood-DZHANS-kah RUH-kah

TRANSLATION: Hands or arms of Dobrudža (dialect)

SOURCE: Dick Oakes learned this dance from Yves Moreau who learned it from Camille Brochu of Montréal, Québec. It was taught it at the 1968 California Kolo Festival.

BACKGROUND: Camille Brochu learned the dance in Sofia, Bulgaria from *Ansambl Sredec* during the summer of 1968. Yves Moreau later worked on the dance in Sofia himself and these notes reflect additions to the original description. Although choreographed for stage in Sofia, the steps and styling are based on those movements found in the Dobrudžan ethnographic region. A Dobrudžan men's dance complemented this women's dance on stage.

This dance was initially introduced to North America among Canadian folk dancers. The Bulgarian word "pbka" was transliterated "reka" on both the dance notes and the XOPO 45 prepared for the benefit of French speakers, for whom the unaccented "e" has the value "uh." English-speaking folk dancers often mistakenly give the "e" the Continental value, "eh." As a result the dance is incorrectly pronounced "REH-kah," in the United States. The dance has also been notated as "Dobrudjanska Râka," "Dobrudjanska Reka," "Dobrudjanska Rŭka," "Dobrudžanska Râka," and "Dobrudžanska Reka."

In Dobrudža (northeast Bulgaria), Sunday afternoons were regular social occasions involving the whole village, and were spent in gossiping, eating, drinking, singing, and dancing. These weekly gatherings afforded the villagers the opportunity to join in a rich repertoire of circle and line dances, chief among which was Rŭka. The distinguishing feature of any dance called Rŭka 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.

Dobrudžans 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 the men. This dance is based on a segment from a larger choreographed suite of Dobrudžan dances in the repertoire of the *Ansambl Sredec*. 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.

MUSIC: XOPO (45rpm) X-318;  
NAMA 2 (LP) 1002, side 2, band 1.

Geisler, Richard. Sheet music, "Lark in the Morning Free Music Library,"  
<http://larkinam.com/LITMLibrary.html#Geisler>.

FORMATION: Open cir of W with hands joined and held at shldr height in "W" pos.

METER/RHYTHM: 2/4

STEPS/STYLE: The women of Dobrudža dance with much feeling but with much more calm and simplicity than the men. Head movements and slight twists of the shoulders are present in the dance and the hands are in constant motion. Women of Dobrudža often shout a rolling, ululating call: "ju-ju-ju-ju-ju . . ." (pronounced "yoo"). Steps are soft, delicate, and feminine at all times, without hard stamps or jerky movements. Both of the recommended recordings should be slowed slightly.

---

MEAS

MOVEMENT DESCRIPTION

---

INTRODUCTION

1-4 No action during the musical introduction.

I. HANDS IN "W" POS

1 Facing slightly and moving R, step up onto ball of R (ct 1); softly lowering R heel, lightly stamp L next to R (ct &); step up onto ball of L (ct 2); softly lowering L heel, lightly stamp R next to L (ct &);

2-16 Repeat action of meas 1 fifteen more times.

NOTE: All through this figure the hands are marking time with a slight down-up motion with the steps as the hips are swung from side-to-side over the active step.

II. HANDS ON HIPS

1 Facing ctr with hands on hips, fingers fwd, step R, turning to face diag R (ct 1); lightly stamp L next to R (ct &); still facing diag R, step L slightly swd (ct 2); lightly stamp R next to L (ct &);

2 Still facing diag R, step R slightly swd (ct 1); lightly stamp R next to L (ct &);

Turning to face fwd, step L (ct 2); lightly stamp R next to L (ct &);

3 Turning to face diag L, step R (ct 1); lightly stamp L next to R (ct &);

4 Turning to face ctr, step L (ct 2); lightly stamp R next to L (ct &);  
Still facing ctr, step R slightly swd (ct 1); lightly stamp L next to R (ct &);

Turning to face diag L, step L (ct 2); lightly stamp R next to L (ct &).

5-16 Turning 1/2 turn CW to again face diag R, repeat action of meas 1-4 three more times.

NOTE: As in Fig I, the hips are swung from side-to-side over the active step. In addition, the upper body tends to precede the lower body as the dancers turn to face a new dir, giving the figure a fluidity of motion. For ease in remembering, the number of steps for each dir change are: 3-1-1-2-1.

### III. HANDS IN "V" POS

- 1 Facing ctr with hands joined down in "V" pos, step R swd, swinging hands bwd (ct 1); step L across in front of R, swinging hands low fwd (ct &); step R swd, swinging hands bwd (ct 2); step L across in front of R, swinging low fwd (ct &);
- 2 Step R swd, swinging hands bwd (ct 1); lightly stamp L next to R, swinging hands low fwd (ct &); step L swd, swinging hands bwd (ct 2); lightly stamp R next to L, swinging hands low fwd (ct &).

3-16 Repeat action of meas 1-2 seven more times.

NOTE: The hips are swung from side-to-side over the active step on meas 2,4,6,8.

### IV. HANDS HIGH

- 1 Repeat steps of Fig I, meas 1, with hands moving as follows: Bring hands fwd from shldr height and down slowly (ct 1); continue bringing hands down so they are adjacent to hips (ct &); swing hands bwd (ct 2); begin swinging hands fwd so they are adjacent to hips (ct &);
- 1 Repeat steps of Fig I, meas 2, with hands moving as follows: Swing hands low fwd (ct 1); begin swinging hands bwd so they are adjacent to hips (ct &); swing hands bwd (ct 2); begin swinging hands fwd so they are adjacent to hips (ct &).  
NOTE: Arm movements are smooth throughout.
- 3 Swinging hands quickly upward to about a 50-degree angle with straight arms (no bend to elbows), hop L in place (ct 1); lightly stamp R next to L (ct &); step R in place (ct 2); lightly stamp L next to R (ct &);
- 4 Step L in place (ct 1); lightly stamp R next to L (ct &); lightly stamp R next to L again, bringing hands to shldr height in "W" pos (ct 2); pause (ct &).
- 5-16 Repeat action of meas 1-4 three more times.

### V. HANDS HIGH AND SWAYING

- 1 Bring hands up to about a 50-degree angle but this time with elbows slightly bent and, facing slightly and moving R, repeat action of Fig I, meas 1, in LOD with hands swaying as follows: Begin slight sway of hands to R (ct 1); complete slight sway of hands to R (ct &); begin slight sway of hands to L (ct 2); complete slight sway of hands to L (ct &);
- 2 Turning to face slightly to L but continuing in LOD, repeat action of Fig I, meas 2 bwd with hands swaying as follows: Begin slight sway of hands to R (ct 1); complete slight sway of hands to R (ct &); begin slight sway of hands to L (ct 2); bring hands to shldr height in "W" pos (ct &);
- 3 Facing ctr, step R slightly swd, bringing hands farther downward as elbows move bwd into a low "W" pos (ct 1); sharply brush L low fwd as hands are brought fwd straight out from shldr (ct &); step L in place as hands are brought down and bwd (ct 2); swing hands low fwd (ct &);

- 4 Lightly stamp R in place as hands are swung bwd (ct 1); swing hands low fwd (ct &); lightly stamp R in place again as hands are swung bwd (ct 2); begin swinging hands upward (ct &).
- 5-16 Repeat action of meas 1-4 three more times.

#### VI. HANDS EXTEND DIAG FWD TO L

- 1 Repeat action of Fig V, meas 1;
- 2 Step R bwd (ct 1); step L next to R (ct &); step R fwd (ct 2); lightly stamp L next to R (ct &);  
NOTE: Hand movements for meas 1-2 are the same as Fig V, meas 1-2.
- 3 Low leap onto L in place, bringing hands up high (ct 1); lightly stamp R next to L, bringing hands down to shldr height in "W" pos (ct &); step diag bwd R, leaving L toe in contact with floor and turned inward (pigeon-toed) as hands are stretched fwd diag to L and head and eyes look out over hands diag L (ct 2); pause (ct &);
- 4 Step L diag fwd to L, bringing hands in an arc into "W" pos at shldr height (ct 1); lightly stamp R next to L as hands are moved in a slightly down-up motion (ct &); lightly stamp R next to L again as hands are moved in a slightly down-up motion (ct 2); pause (ct &).
- 5-16 Repeat action of meas 1-4 three more times.

Repeat action of FIG II, III, IV, V, and VI to end of music.

NOTE: It is nearly impossible in this type of dance notation to fully describe and break down all the various hand, shldr, and head movements that form part of the typical style as danced by the W of Dobruža.