

MALO KOLO

Serbian

PRONUNCIATION: MAH-loh KOH-loh

TRANSLATION: Little circle dance

SOURCE: Dick Oakes learned the basic Malo kolo from members of the Serbian community in Los Angeles, California, in the early 1960s. Both Dick Crum and John Filcich have taught the dance and included embellishments.

BACKGROUND: Malo kolo is an old traditional dance from the Vojvodina region of Serbia. It is widespread throughout the area and is danced at nearly every Serbian gathering, most often played as the opening kolo. The small orchestra may stand in the middle of the circle as the dance begins and then moves around from one group of dancers to the other who then try to improvise on the the basic step without losing the beat. It is customary to put money in the top of the bass player's instrument to either have the orchestra begin or continue playing Malo kolo. The step-close-step-touch motif, alternating side to side, is basic to the dances of the Vojvodina area (thus it is known as "the basic kolo step," "basic step," or "kolo step") and is found in many dances, including Bačko kolo, Čarlama, Jeftanovićevo kolo, Milica kolo, Natalijino kolo, Pljeskavac, Seljančica, Srpkinja, Sremsko kolo, and Zaplet. It is interesting to note that the first migrants to the United States from Serbia were from the Vojvodina area. If those in attendance were a "kolo crowd" and the orchestra was one that particularly liked to play kolos, Malo kolo might be performed three or four times in an afternoon or evening of dancing.

Dick Crum stated, "It is impossible to fully convey the electric charge that surged through a noisy hall when the musicians struck the eight solid, rousing chords that launched Malo kolo's sparkling melody. Gleeful shouts burst out of the mass babble, and chairs and tables were scuffled aside as the dancers got up and moved onto the floor. No other kolo, with the occasional exception of Žikino kolo, had this kind of power. There were occasions when Malo kolo seemed to go on forever, especially late in the evening of a wedding reception. As the excitement mounted and the adrenalin flowed, the dancers pulled into a tight, perspiring huddle, gripping their neighbor's waists or shoulders, exchanging shrieks of exhilaration and intensifying their footwork. The musicians customarily speeded up the music at this point, modulating into a higher key, and sometimes stepped down from their platform and pushed into the center of the vibrating circle. They often moved around inside of the kolo, stopping in front of especially good dancers, inspiring them to outdo themselves. This climatic communion of musicians and dancers, music and movement, was the apogee of United States kolo dancing in the 1950s."

John Filcich, in his "Classic Kolos: Dances of the Immigrants," says, "Probably the most enjoyable of most kolos are those in the Malo kolo family. In the old country, they danced dances like this in a closed circle, but somehow in this country, a leader developed at the right end of the dance. The dance steps move a little larger to the right, perhaps, and a little bit smaller to the left so you make progress and begin to

wind."

MUSIC: Festival Records "Kolo Party" (LP) FLP 1505
Kolo Festival (45rpm) KF 4802
Folk Dancer (78rpm) MH 1004

FORMATION: A. Closed cir of dancers with hands on shldrs of neighbors (usually only if just M are in cir) in "T" pos; or
B. Closed cir of mixed M and W with hands joined down in "V" pos; or
C. Closed cir of mixed M and W with hands joined behind W backs, W hands on nearest shldrs of the adjacent M.
Dancers should form a small cir.

METER/RHYTHM: 2/4

STEPS/STYLE: LIFT: Raise on ball of supporting ft without leaving floor.

The dance described below is a higher-energy form of the basic step-close-step-touch "basic step" as danced by the Los Angeles Serbian community beg in the 1940s.

The dance is done in place or moving slightly back and forth from R to L with a light feeling. All movement should be from the hips down. Malo kolo is subject to rich variations in styling. The M, in particular, traditionally embellish the fundamental pattern with subtle cross-kicks, tiny stamps, heel-clicks, leg-shakes, syncopations, etc.

MEAS

MOVEMENT DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION - None.

THE DANCE

1 Lift on L and, at the same time, place R on floor (ct 1); step on R (ct &); step L behind R (ct 2); pause (ct &);

NOTE: A tremor should be felt between the two actions of the R ft.

2 Step R to R (ct 1); Lift on R (ct 2).

3-4 Repeat action of meas 1-2 with opp ftwk.

Repeat entire dance from beginning, adding embellishments as desired.