

Name of dance: Cherkesko

Pronunciation: cherr-kehss-koh

Place of origin: villages in north central Bulgaria between Svishtov on the Danube and Veliko Turnovo in the Balkan Mountains - the variations below are designated by the particular villages they come from.

Learned from: Ivan Donkov, 1990-91

Source of music: audio cassette made available by Ivan Donkov





About the dance: Ivan Donkov, from whom I learned this dance, began his folkdance career in a dance group from his native village of Gradishte, and in that group did the first variation of the dance listed below. When Donkov first presented this material in 1954 to wider Bulgarian folkdance community (presumably to higher-up choreographers), no one had ever seen anything like this. Donkov later researched and filmed these dance variations together with Anna Ilieva. According to him, the name of the dance refers to the "Cherkesi", or Cherkessians, who were specially fierce soldiers from the Caucasus who were used by the Ottoman Turks to subdue the Bulgarian population. The dance, with its striding and stamping, was done by the Bulgarian villagers to express anger about this. The variations with the most stamps seem to come from villages like Ovchemogila that are closest to the Danube and to Romania.

Rhythm: 9/8, counted: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & "uh"

Formation: This is a line dance done with hands held up in "W" formation.

Direction Measure Step

Basic Walking Step: this step seems to have been common to all the villages, and can be done as a refrain between other variations when they are done together.

	1	Step forward or toward center on R (ct. 1), L (ct. 2), R (ct. 3), then quickly in place on L, R (cts. 4&), pause for one eighth-note (ct. "uh").
	2	Repeat Measure 1 in mirror image, moving backwards.
	3-4	Repeat Measures 1-2.
	5	Repeat the footwork of Measure 1 facing and moving to the R.
	6	Repeat the footwork of Measure 2 facing and moving to the L.
	7-8	Repeat Measures 1-2.




(Note: In a village setting, the number of repeats would be more arbitrary, adapting to the dancer's feel for when to change with the music.)





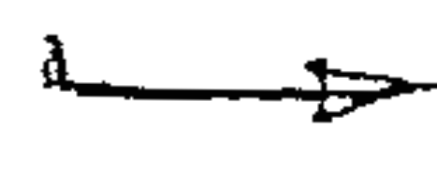
Cherkesko (continued):

Direction Measure Step

Variation from Gradishte village:

- |   |      |  |
|---|------|--|
|    | 1    | Small leap onto R in place, loosely kicking L forward and low, as the beginning of some "scissors kicks (ct. 1), small leap onto L in place, kicking R forward (ct. 2), small leap onto R in place, kicking L in a low CW arc from side to forward (ct. 3), step lightly on flat L foot in front of R (ct. 4), then quickly back onto R in place (cts. & "uh").        |
|   | 2    | Repeat Measure 1 in mirror image.  |
|    | 3-4  | Repeat Measures 1-2, ending on L foot.   |
|   | 5    | Step lightly on flat R foot to forward R diagonal (ct. 1), step slightly forward on weighted L foot (ct. &), step on R across in front of L (ct. 2), step slightly forward on weighted L (ct. &), step on R to forward R diagonal (ct. 3), step slightly forward on weighted L (ct. &), step on R across in front of L (ct. 4), step back in place on L (cts. & "uh"). |
|  | 6    | Step back on R, twisting or rotating L heel CCW forward (ct. 1), step back on L, twisting R heel CW (ct. 2), step back on R twisting L heel CCW (ct. 3), then step on L across in front of R (ct. 4), and step back on R in place (cts. & "uh").   |
|   | 7-8  | Repeat Measures 5-6 in mirror image.   |
|   | 9-16 | Repeat Measures 1-8.   |

Variation from Ovchemogila village:



- |   |      |   |
|---|------|---|
|  | 1    | Step or small leap onto R in place (ct. 1), stamp without weight on L next to R (ct. &), step on L in place (ct. 2), stamp without weight on R next to L (ct. &), step on R in place (ct. 3), scuff L heel forward (ct. &), step on L in front of R (ct. 4), step back on R in place (ct. &), stamp without weight on L heel in front of R (ct. "uh").                      |
|   | 2    | Repeat Measure 1 in mirror image.   |
|   | 3-4  | Repeat Measures 1-2.  |
|  | 5    | Leap as high as time allows onto R to the R side (ct. 1), step high onto L across in front of R (ct. &), step back onto R in place (ct. 2), step on L to L side (ct. &), step on R across in front of L (ct. 3), step on L to L side (ct. &), step on R across in front of L (ct. 4), step on L to L side (ct. &), stamp without weight on R heel in front of L (ct. "uh"). |
|   | 6    | Repeat Measure 1.   |
|  | 7    | Repeat Measure 5 in mirror image.   |
|   | 8    | Repeat Measure 2.   |
|   | 9-16 | Repeat Measures 1-8.  |



Cherkesko (continued):

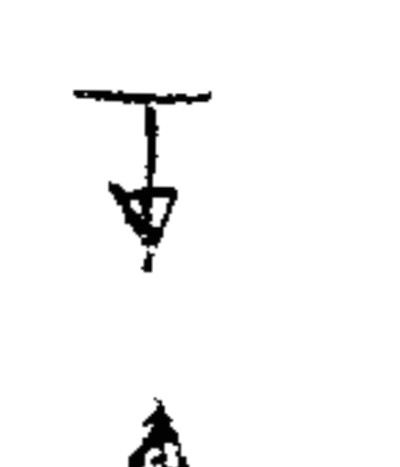

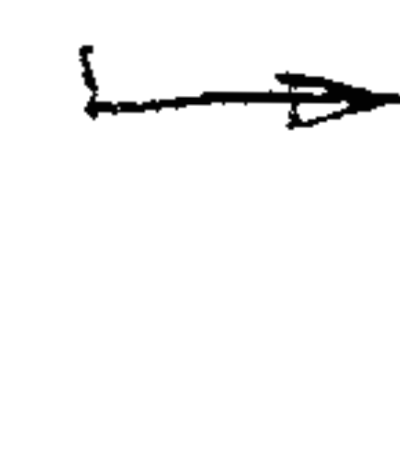
Direction Measure Step

Variation from Pavel village:

	1	Jump onto both feet in place (ct. 1), leap onto L in place, kicking R heel up behind (ct. 2), step on R to R side (ct. 3), step on L across behind R (ct. &), step on R to R side (ct. 4), step on L across in front of R (ct. &), swing free R around CCW to face center (ct. "uh").
	2	Step on R in front of L (ct. 1), step back on L in place (ct. &), step on R behind L (ct. 2), step on L in place (ct. &), step on R in front of L (ct. 3), step back on L in place (ct. &), step on R next to L in place (ct. 4), step on L next to R in place (ct. &), slight pause (ct. "uh").
	3-4	Repeat Measures 1-2 in mirror image.
	5-8	Repeat Measures 1-4.

(Note: Donkov sometimes alternates this step with four repeats of the first two in-place stamping measures from Ovchemogila. This combination seems to be for the sake of choreographic variety. Since these two villages are both in the same area around Svishtov, this seems like a minimal liberty to take with this material.)

Variation from Gorna Lipnica village:

	1	Step back on R, swinging arms down and back (ct. 1), step on L next to R (ct. 2), step forward on R, swinging arms forward and up to a "W" hold (ct. 3), step forward without weight onto R next to L and clap hands (ct. 4), clap again (ct. &), pause (ct. "uh").
	2	Repeat Measure 1 in mirror image.
	3-4	Repeat Measures 1-2.
	5	Lifting L arm to upper R diagonal, palm facing R, and dropping R arm to lower L diagonal to the rear, palm facing L, step on R to R side (ct. 1), step on L across in front of R (ct. &), step on R to R side (ct. 2), step on L across in front of R (ct. &), step on R to R side (ct. 3), step on L across in front of R (ct. &), step on R to R side (ct. 4), close L next to R without weight (ct. &), quickly reverse arm position while clapping on final beat (ct. "uh").
	6	Repeat Measure 5 in mirror image.
	7-8	Repeat Measures 5-6.

(Note: Donkov often uses this variation by itself to somewhat slower music as a children's dance.)