

Romska Gajda

(Macedonia)

Romska Gajda (ROHM-skah GAH-ee-dah) is popular among the Rom (Gypsy) communities in Kočani, Skopje, and Bitola, and also in New York. Stephen Kotansky taught Romska Gajda at the 1997 University of the Pacific Folk Dance Camp at Stockton. His sources were members of the Macedonian Rom community in the New York metropolitan area and Michael Ginsberg who taught a variation of the dance (Skopski Čoček) at Folk Dance Camp in 1994.

Gajda, including Romska Gajda, is usually danced to a specific melody, the one on the cassettes and CD listed below. The lead instrument, when not actually a gajda, imitates the gajda sound.

Variations of the eight-measure step pattern described below are found in many villages in eastern Macedonia, Pirin Macedonia, and in the Serres area of Aegean Macedonia. Some of these villages are populated by Roma and some are not. In some places, when the music speeds up, a variation of the pattern is danced that follows the three-measure form of Gajda which is familiar to American folk dancers. In others, it follows other dances or is done as an individual dance. When done as an individual dance, such as Berovka, Maleševsko, and Yeriko, other music is used.

Music: Cassettes: Steve's Stockton '97, The Big 50 Side A/1; 2/4 meter
 Cassettes: World Camp '97 Side A/1;
 CD: King Ferus, Macedonian Wedding Soul Cooking Global Style DCORBD 089 Band 7.

Formation: Open circle of dancers facing ctr, hands joined in V-pos (or W-pos, or arms in T-pos).

Steps and Styling: Dancers are generally energetic and relaxed. This is a very free dance—individual dancers can do any “variation” they choose. Some might do only one pattern throughout the dance. Variations listed below can be altered, i.e., preparatory lifts can be added before meas 1 or 4, or the steps in meas 8 of Variation D can be used in meas 8 of Variation C.

Bounce: Raise heel of supporting ft (upbeat); lower heel to floor (downbeat).

Pump-kick: While bouncing on supporting ft, raise free leg with knee bent (upbeat); straighten that knee while thrusting the relaxed ft twd the floor and fwd (downbeat).

In place: Refers to the spot where ft was on previous step.

Measures	2/4 meter	PATTERN
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I. BASIC (More common when music is slow)

- 1 Facing slightly R of ctr, step on R in LOD (ct 1); step on L in LOD (ct 2).
- 2 Step on R in LOD (ct 1); step on L slightly behind and R of R (ct 2); step on R in LOD (ct &).
- 3 Step on L in LOD (ct 1); step on R in LOD (ct 2); step on L in LOD (ct &).
- 4 Turning to face ctr, step on R to R (ct 1); bounce slightly on R and pump-kick L diagonally fwd L (ct 2).
- 5 Turning to face slightly L of ctr, step on L in RLOD (ct 1); step on R across in front of L (ct 2).
- 6 Turning to face ctr, step slightly back on L (ct 1); step on R next to L (ct 2); step on L in place (ct &).
- 7 Step on R in place or slightly to R (ct 1); bounce slightly on R and pump-kick L diagonally fwd L (ct 2).
- 8 Step on L in place (ct 1); bounce slightly on L and pump-kick R diagonally fwd R (ct 2).

II. VARIATION A (More common when music is slow)

- 1-6 Repeat Fig I, Basic, meas 1-6.
- 7 Step on R across in front of L (ct 1); step on L in place (ct &); step on R to R (ct 2); step on L in place (ct &).
- 8 Step on R across in front of L (ct 1); step on L in place (ct &); lift on L, raising R in front of L with bent knee (ct 2).

III. VARIATION B (More common as music speeds up)

- (1-4) Repeat Fig I, Basic, meas 1-4, or as music speeds up more:
 - 1 Facing R of ctr, step fwd on R in LOD (ct 1); step on L in LOD (ct 2).
 - 2 Step on R in LOD (ct 1); step on L next to R (ct &); step fwd on R in LOD (ct 2).
 - 3 Step on L in LOD (ct 1); step on R next to L (ct &); step on L in LOD (ct 2).
 - 4 Turning to face ctr, step on R to R (ct 1); bounce slightly on R and pump-kick L diagonally fwd L (ct 2).
 - 5 Turning to face slightly L of ctr, step on L in RLOD (ct 1); step on R across in front of L (ct 2).
 - 6 Turning to face ctr, step slightly back on L (ct 1); step on R next to L (ct &); step on L in place (ct 2).
 - 7 Step on R in place or slightly to R (ct 1); bounce slightly on R and pump-kick L diagonally fwd L (ct 2).
 - 8 Turning to face R of ctr, small leap onto ball of L to L and slightly back (ct ah); step on R in LOD (ct 1); leap onto L across in front of R (ct 2).

IV. VARIATION C (More common as music speeds up)

- 1-6 Repeat Fig III, meas 1-6.
- 7 Step on R across in front of L (ct 1); step on L in place (ct &); step on R to R (ct 2).
- 8 Turning to face R of ctr, small leap onto ball of L to L and slightly back (ct ah); step on R in LOD (ct 1); leap onto L across in front of R (ct 2).

V. VARIATION D (More common during fast music)

- 1-3 Repeat Fig III, meas 1-3.
- 4 Turning to face ctr, step on R to R (ct 1); step on L behind R (ct &); step on R in place (ct 2); step on ball of L in front of R (ct &).
- 5 Step on R behind L to L (ct 1); step on ball of L to L (ct &); step on R across in front of L (ct 2); step on ball of L to L (ct &).
- 6 Step on R behind L (ct 1); step on L to L (ct 2).
- 7 Turning to face L of ctr, fall onto R, raising L ft low behind (ct 1); hold (ct 2).
- 8 Turning to face R of ctr, touch heel of L to L and slightly fwd (ct 1); leap onto L across in front of R (ct 2).

VI. VARIATION E (More common during fast music)

- 1-4 Repeat Fig V, meas 1-4.
- 5 Step on R behind L to L (ct 1); step on ball of L to L (ct &); step on R across in front of L (ct 2).
- 6 Step on L to L (ct 1); turning to face L of ctr, hop on L while raising R leg fwd (ct 2).
- 7 Fall onto R, raising L ft low and behind (ct 1); hold (ct 2).
- 8 Turning to face R of ctr, touch heel of L to L and slightly fwd (ct 1); leap onto L across in front of R (ct 2).

SEQUENCE: As stated in *Steps & Styling*, the sequence danced is the choice of the individual dancer. Some dance only Fig I while the music is slow. Then, as it speeds up, they change to Fig III until the dance ends. Other dancers will do four or five variations.