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Dances from South Serbia with Alex Marković

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1. Bugarka/Bugarčica (various melodies, generally in 7/16 meter)

A rural Serbian dance form with variations found in the Leskovac, Han, Surdulica, and Vranje regions. Danced by both men and women in mixed lines. Traditionally done with a belt hold (or front basket weave hold), nowadays it is also danced holding hands with the arms down (a.k.a., the V position).

Video links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMyyxcS0bAE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AT11bj7RpZU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3bKY-amXo4>

2. Gilanka (6/8 meter, as well as other tunes in other meters)

A dance type common in Albanian communities around Bujanovac and Preševo in Serbia, as well as in the Gilane (Gjilan, Alb.; Gnjilane, Srb) region of eastern Kosovo. It is generally associated with rural dance culture, and traditionally seen as a men's dance. Dancers today generally dance this in a shoulder hold, although in places it is also done with a belt hold.

Video links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2SsEuzX7Qw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S--aqND0Y5A>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lte2ILGZHfO>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFBiV_xCfFg

3. Vranjanka (various tunes in 7/8 meter)

The iconic dance of urban Serbs in Vranje. Locals associated the generally slow (heavy) pace and dignified aesthetic of the dance with wealthy merchant culture in the late Ottoman period of the town. It was danced in lines of men and women mixed together, holding hands with arms raised (a.k.a., a W hold). It is no longer danced in the older, five measure form by locals today (instead, a shorter three measure pattern is common) but it remains common in stage choreographies of Vranje urban dances.

Video links:

Older five measure variant

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hERILnOdqxU&t=2049s> from 32:45-34:10

Three measure variant (danced with same older, heavy style)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7YQVdmWe94&t=24s>

4. Pembe (4/4 meter)

The name of the dance (and accompanying tune) comes from the Turkish word for pink, but it isn't clear how it came to be called this (perhaps a reference to song lyrics that have since been forgotten?). While this melody is known among Albanians in the region, as well as in Macedonia to the south, Vranje Serbs perform a distinctive two measure form that is unique to their community. Although it could be danced by both men and women, it was often seen as more appropriate for men- particularly with higher and drawn-out leg lifts. Hands could be held upright, bent at the elbows (the W hold)- but among men a shoulder hold was also used and, more rarely, a belt hold. Pembe is increasingly rare at Serbian dance events, even though it was once a staple dance for the community; today, it is usually danced only by few middle-aged or older people, generally people who have a reputation as good and very knowledgeable dancers.

Video link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=__9vmBmfqPk

5. Niški Čoček, or Nišovačko (several melodies in syncopated 2/4 meter)

Urban Romani dance from Vranje. Čoček (also čučeko, in Romani) is the most common dance performed at Romani celebrations today, even though there are many other dances traditionally done by Roma in the region. Niški or Nišovačko is a slightly different form from the "standard" one, though, and is danced only to a few specific melodies; it is also commonly done at the moment that Romani brides enter the dance line on the first day of wedding celebrations. Both men and women dance it, in mixed lines, holding hands upright and bent at the elbows (a.k.a., in a W hold).

Video link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Pu0h19152Y> from 3:12 to end

6. Selka (2/4 meter)

Roma in Vranje and neighboring smaller settlements have unique take on this particular dance. Selka means "the village dance" - its basic step pattern is similar to a rural Serbian dance form in the area called Emčino. However, Roma developed a distinct styling- in accordance with community preferences for a smoother groove or movement aesthetic in dance- as well as prefer a slower tempo on the whole in contrast with the bouncier, faster style common among local Serbs. Selka can be danced by both men and women, in mixed lines. Various hand holds are used, often by different groups of dancers within the same line: arms up with bent elbows (W hold), a shoulder hold, or a belt hold.

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For more information, contact Alex - email: amarko2@uic.edu

Materials for this workshop will be available from the Folk Arts Center's "Little Shop of Horas" at <https://store.facone.org/> under "Workshop Materials."