

Serbia (Yugoslavia)

U šest (oo SHEST), short for *U šest koraka* ("in six steps") is the single most popular kolo in Serbia. Since World War II it has spread to the rest of Yugoslavia, as well as other parts of Europe and to the Americas, Australia, etc., wherever Serbs have migrated. In the course of its diffusion, *U šest* has supplanted many other local dances; rare is the Serb who cannot dance it, although it may be the only kolo he knows!

Basically, *U šest* is an evolved form of an older Serbian dance type known to Yugoslav dance specialists as *Kokonješte* or *Kukunješte* (see NAMA #2). The many dances of this family are based on a symmetrical pattern of movements described under Variation 1 below. The *Kokonješte*-pattern dances were very popular in Serbia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the early 1900's it became fashionable to "double" the steps in *Kokonješte*, a phenomenon which, based on the Serbian definition of a "step," resulted in a six-step pattern and a logically derived new name, *U šest* (see Variation 3 below). Other embellishments were added to the new style, such as hops, subtle bounces (see Variation 2) and others, and the resultant highly improvised dance form has come to be referred to as *U šest*, even when some of the variations might not total six steps.

The number of *U šest* melodies is infinite -- musicians are constantly composing and recording new ones. One famous melody, *Moravac* (mo-RAH-vahts), achieved such popularity that its name became a synonym for *U šest* in the vocabulary of many Serbs.

Each individual Serb has his own *U šest*, and since the dance is still today a living, organic part of Serbian life, its variations are, like its melodies, infinite, constantly changing and evolving. The variations described below are only three of the most common forms of the dance. They are meant as an introduction to *U šest*, for only frequent observation of native dancers can give a true idea of the vast range of movements possible within the 4-measure framework.

Meter: 2/4

Formation: Open circle or line, integrated (M & W), hands joined and held down at sides ("V" position), linked arm-in-arm ("escort" position) or, especially when danced by M only, on neighbors' shoulders ("T" position). End dancers place free hand at small of back, in a pocket, or grasp lapel of vest or coat.

MEAS	PATTERN
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Variation 1 - Basic Kokonješte

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| 1 | Facing slightly R of ctr, step Rft fwd (in LOD) (1); step Lft in LOD (2). |
| 2 | Facing ctr, small step with Rft sdwd (1); close Lft (no wt) beside Rft or slightly fwd (2). |

U ŠEST (Variation 1 - continued)

- 3 Lft small step sdwd or in place (1); close Rft (no wt) beside Lft or slightly fwd (2).
- 4 Small step with Rft sdwd (1); close Lft (no wt) beside Rft or slightly fwd (2).
- 5-8 Same mov'ts as meas 1-4 of this variation with opposite direction and footwork.

Note: Sometimes native dancers accompany the above footwork with a constant, subtle series of three knee-flexes per measure in a "slow-quick-quick" rhythm pattern (cts 1, 2, &, or ↓ ↗ ↘).

Variation 2

- 1 Facing slightly R of ctr, step Rft fwd (in LOD), flexing R knee (1); low hop on Rft, bringing Lft fwd low (2); step Lft in LOD (&).
- 2 Facing ctr, small step with Rft sdwd, flexing R knee (1); step Lft beside Rft or slightly fwd (2); step Rft in place (&).

Note: The steps in cts 2, & of this meas are sometimes so tiny they amount to little more than 2 bounces "inside the dancer's shoes," and wt actually remains on Rft.

- 3 Repeat mov'ts of meas 2 with opposite ftwk and direction.
- 4 Repeat mov'ts of meas 2.
- 5-8 Repeat mov'ts of meas 1-4 with opposite ftwk and direction.

Variation 3 - U šest koraka ("In six steps")

- 1 Facing ctr, step Rft R (1); step Lft either in front, beside or behind Rft (&); step Rft R (2); step Lft either in front, beside or behind Rft (&).
- 2 Step Rft R (1); step Lft either in front, beside or behind Rft (&); step Rft R (2); pause (&).

Note: According to the Serbian concept of a "step" (*korak* - a shift of wt onto a given foot plus whatever follow-up movement of the other foot), the above meas 1-2 consist of "four steps with the Rft."

- 3-4 Same mov'ts as meas 3-4 of Variation 2 (consisting of one "step" with Lft and one "step" with Rft according to the Serbian definition; the total number of "steps" in meas 1-4 is thus six).
- 5-8 Repeat mov'ts of meas 1-4 with opposite ftwk and direction.

SEQUENCE: In its native setting, *U šest* is freely improvised by each dancer within the symmetrical pattern of 4 meas to the right and 4 meas to the left. Style and choice of footwork, therefore, vary enormously, and dancers with greatly divergent styles are able to dance next to each other comfortably by unconsciously using their arms as flexible "shock absorbers" and maintaining the basic symmetry of the pattern.