

Vrbo vrbičice

(Macedonia)

From the village of Raštak (Rashtak), mountain of “Skopska Crna Gora.” The dance and song accompanying the dance have been recorded from the middle of the 19th century. As the legend goes, one day in the plato in front of the church in the middle of the village, a little willow tree sprouted. When the villagers noticed the little shoot, they spread through the village that God send it to them and they should pay special respect to it. After a couple months the little shoot became a little young tree, and the villagers became concerned about the space where they had been organizing various events, particularly the “Sobors” (reunions with dancing). But there was no courage to remove it because it was considered holy. Because Macedonians sing many stories, they sang the story about the willow expressing the inconvenience of the location and fast growing of the tree.

The song says:

Willow little willow tree, don't grow too high,
 Don't grow too high willow, don't grow too large ...
 I can't expend willow, the dance of the girls ...
 Dance of the girls willow, the dance of the boys ...

In Macedonian:

Vrbo vrbichitse lele, ne rasti visoko ...
 Ne rasti visoko vrbo, ne siri siroko ...
 Nemoz' da razviam vrbo, tanci na devoyki ...
 Tanci na devoyki vrbo, tanci na bekjari ...

These words have been known for a long time. There have been many other stories built on the top of the above based on the actuality of the community, mainly about the love of the young people and stories around it.

The song was the dance accompaniment. Because of the easy pattern of the dance, it was often the dance starting the party. Most of the time there was no instrumental accompaniment due to the lack of the good musicians able to play in tune with the singers. This was also kind of warm-up of the festive atmosphere by the young people and an invitation for the rest of the villagers to take part in the event.

Song and the singing is characteristic of the Macedonian archaic singing called “antiphonal” singing where one person or group starts the verse, and the second group repeats the same melody and the same words. Most of the time the singing group does not dance and vice versa. After the exchange, both groups dance silently where few dancers are only screaming expressing their emotions. The dancing and singing was originally performed in separate segregated groups of women and men. My father, Ilija, remembers when the dance was performed in mixed groups, two or more semicircles in the same time. Learned from Ilija Ilievski KUD “Koco Racin”—Skopje 1945 and 1976.

Pronunciation:

CD:

2/4 meter

Formation: Semi-circle, hands joined in V-pos.

Vrbo vrbičice—continued

MeasPatternFIGURE I

- 1 Facing diag R of ctr, step fwd on R (ct 1); step fwd on L (ct 2).
- 2 Repeat meas 1.
- 3 Step fwd on R, turning to face ctr (ct 1); bounce on R lifting L ft in front of R ft (ct 2).
- 4 Turning to face L, step fwd on L (ct 1); step on R across in front of L (ct 2).
- 5 Turning to face ctr, step bkwd on L (ct 1); step bkwd on R (ct 2).
- 6 Step on L in place (ct 1); step on R in place (ct &); step on L in place (ct 2).

FIGURE II

- 1 Facing diag R of ctr, step fwd on R (ct 1); step fwd on L (ct 2); step fwd on R (ct &).
- 2 Step fwd on L (ct 1); step fwd on R (ct 2); step fwd on L (ct &).
- 3 Turning to face ctr, step on R to L (ct 1); step on L to L (ct &); step on R in place (ct 2).
- 4 Hop on R turning to face L (ct 1); step on L in place (ct 2), step on R in place (ct &).
- 5 Repeat meas 4 turning to face R.
- 6 Repeat Fig I, meas 6 turning to face R.

Presented by Boris Ilievski—Kete