

NIŠKA BANJA

Serbian Gypsy

PRONUNCIATION: NEESH-kah BAHN-yah

TRANSLATION: Baths of Niš

SOURCE: Dick Oakes learned this dance from the Serbian community of Los Angeles, California, where it had been danced since the mid 1950s, and subsequently taught the dance in 1980. John Filcich presented the dance in 1976 at the Idyllwild Folk Dance Workshop and Bora Gajicki presented the dance in 1985 in San Diego, California.

BACKGROUND: Niška Banja is a natural hot mineral spring health resort about 6 miles east of the town of Niš in southeast Serbia. It is believed that the waters help people with cardiovascular diseases. The spring, which was used by the Romans, is slightly radioactive. After the Ottoman invasion, the spa continued to be used by men and women, who came to bathe on a regular basis. The song words, which symbolize the Dionysian joy of life, music, and dance, are meant to be humorous as well as provocative. Every generation adds its own words so the lyrics are quite extensive and often quite bawdy. The lyrics have become the unofficial song of Niš.

The song on the Festival recording listed below is from the Aleksandar Petrović film "Skupljači Perja" (gatherers of goose feathers) and includes both Serbo-Croatian and Rom verses. The film was shown in the United States in 1968 with the English title "I Even Met Happy Gypsies" and was awarded a 1968 Best Foreign Language Film Golden Globe nomination. It was made in the Bačka area of Vojvodina, in the town of Sombor, and offers a poignant look into the lives of the Gypsies of that part of the world. The melody, originally called "Duj Duj," has become popular with musicians in several countries and especially with American tamburica orchestras. Macedonians play it with a different break and Romanian musicians from Făgăraș play it in 5/4 time. Niška Banja is not a folk song as it has been believed; it was written by Dusan Cvetković in 1927. The famous performer of this song on the recommended recording is Olivera Katarina. Nick Page's recording is the most well known tune as he arranged a "classical" version for choir.

MUSIC: Festival (45rpm) DY-8405
Dances of Yugoslavia (45rpm) DY-8405-B
The Ethnic Connection: An Ethnic Collection (CD)
Narodna Kola (Cassette) NK-85-2

FORMATION: Open cir of mixed M and W with hands joined and held dn in "V" pos.

METER/RHYTHM: 9/8. The rhythm is quick-quick-quick-slow (2 + 2 + 2 + 3 = 9) and is counted here in four dancer's beats with the fourth being the longest.

STEPS/STYLE: HOP: This is actually a low hop (or "lift") where the ball of the ft does not leave the floor.

The dance is spirited and lively. During the second figure, M and W who are next to each other may turn twd each other and interact by dancing fwd and bwd facing each other or moving close to each other's shldr. Often two W will do the same, and in some cases an individual may move down the line of dancers to dance with another, but returns to place before the first figure begins again. W may slowly shake their shldr during this figure as they feel inclined. Usually, only a few cpls will dance together in this manner, and then not during each repetition of the figure.

MEAS

MOVEMENT DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION (Described for the Festival recording)

1-8 No action, or dance Fig I.
9-16 No action, or dance Fig II.
17-18 This is a two-meas drum solo on the Festival recording – no action, or continue to dance the action of Fig II.

I. GRAPEVINE

1 Facing slightly R, step R swd (ct 1); step L in back of R (ct 2); step R swd (ct 3); low hop R (ct &); step L across R (ct 4).
7-8 Repeat action of meas 1 seven more times.

II. CLAPPING

1 Releasing handhold and swinging arms bwd, step R diag R twd ctr (ct 1); step L twd ctr, swinging hands fwd (ct 2); step R fwd, swinging hands up in front (ct 3); touch L heel fwd and clap hands about 6 to 8 inches in front of face (ct 4).
2 Facing ctr, step L bwd, swinging hands down and back (ct 1); step R next to L, swinging hands fwd (ct 2); step L fwd, swinging hands up in front (ct 3); touch R heel fwd and clap hands about 6 to 8 inches in front of face (ct 4).
3 Repeat action of meas 2 with opp ftwk.
4 Repeat action of meas 2.
5-8 Repeat action of meas 3-4 two more times.

Repeat entire dance from beg.

Niška Banja is a place about which many off-color song verses are sung because of its past reputation as the "Mustang Ranch" of Serbia. On the Festival recording, some of the verses are sung in Serbo-Croatian and some in Rom (the language of the Gypsies). (SC=Serbo-Croatian, R=Rom)

/ Niška Banja, topla voda za mangupe ziva zgodna. /	The public bath near Niš, hot water, for the naughty boys a real convenience. (SC)
/ Em ka lavlam, em kamavla, and'o Niši ka mekav la. /	I will get her, I will love her, and in Niš I will leave her. (SC)
/ Mi Cigani meraklije, ne mozemo bez rakije. /	We Gypsies love a good time, we can't make it without plum brandy; (R)
/ Bez rakije, šljivovice, i bez mlade Cigančice. /	Without grape brandy, plum brandy, without a young Gypsy girl. (SC)
/ Jedan, dva, tri, četir, pet, šest, sedam, osam, devet, deset. /	One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. (SC)
Deset, devet, osam, sedam, šest, pet, četir, tri, dva, jedan.	Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one. (SC)
Deset, devet, osam, sedam, šest, pet, četir, tri, dva, nula.	Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, zero. (SC)
Duj, duj, duj, dešuduj čumidav la and'o muj.	Two, two, twelve, I'll kiss her on the face. (R)
/ Em ka lavla, em kamavla, and'o Niši ka mekav la./	I will get her, and I will love her, and in Niš I will leave her. (R)

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The following is Niška Banja as interpreted by Dave Owens and Las Mariachas of the CD The Ethnic Connection: An Eclectic Collection. (They count forward and backward in Spanish!)

/ Niška Banja, topla voda za Nišlije živa zgodna. /	Spa (bath) at Niš, warm water, for young men from Niš is great.
Duj, duj, duj, duj, dešuduj, duj, čumidav la and'o muj	Two, two, two, two, twelve, two, I'll kiss her on the face. (R)
/ Mi Nišlije, meraklije ne možemo bez rakije. /	We young Niš men, fun loving people, cannot live without brandy,
/ Bez rakije, šljivovice i bez mlade Cigančice. /	without brandy, plumb brandy, and without young Gypsy girls.
Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis, siete, ocho, nueve, diez. (Spanish)	One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

Diez, nueve, ocho, siete,
seis, cinco, cuatro, tres, dos, uno.

/ Jedan, dva, tri, četir, pet, šest,
sedam, osam, devet, deset. /

Deset, devet, osam, sedam,
šest, pet, četir, tri, dva, nula!

Ten, nine, eight, seven,
six, five, four, three, two, one.

One, two, three, four, five, six,
seven, eight, nine, ten.

Ten, nine, eight, seven,
six, five, four, three, two, zero!

NIŠKA BANJA
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The following is another Serbo-Croatian version (translation by Djordje Marjanović).

/ Niška Banja, topla voda
za Nišlije živa zgoda. /

At Niška Banja's warm water
for young men from Niš (Nišlije) great.

/ Nišku Banju siljalice krase
danu gore, a nocu se gase. /

Niška Banja is decorated with street lights
that are on during the day and off at night.

/ Mi Nišlije, meraklije
ne možemo bez rakije. /

We Nišlije, fun loving people
cannot live without brandy.

/ Bez rakije, šljivovice
i bez mlade devojčice. /

Without plum brandy
and without young girls.

/ Niška Banja, voda mlaka
leci žene od stomaka. /

Niška Banja, tepid water
cures women from stomach troubles.

/ A kod kuće muza laze
da joj voda ne pomaze.. /

But at home, (a wife) lies to her husband
that water is not helping her.

/ Jedan, dva, tri, četir, pet, šest,
sedam, osam, devet, deset. /

One, two, three, four, five, six,
seven, eight, nine, ten.

Deset, devet, osam, sedam,
šest, pet, četir, tri, dva, jedan.

Ten, nine, eight, seven,
six, five, four, three, two, one.

Deset, devet, osam, sedam,
šest, pet, četir, tri, dva, nula.

Ten, nine, eight, seven,
six, five, four, three, two, zero.

Duj, duj, duj, duj, ti ne luduj
tebe dragi pamet mucu.

Duj, you drive me crazy;
You, sweetheart, torture my head.

Ostavila, ti si kriva
što me žena ostavila.

She left me; it's your fault
that my wife left me.

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The following are Serbo-Croatian words that may be sung to the same music (loose translation by John Filcich).

/ Niška Banja, topla voda
za mangupe život zgoda. /

At Niška Banja's warm waters
a rascal's life is very good.

/ Niška Banja ti si kriva
što me žena ostavila. /

Niška Banja, it's your fault
that my wife left me.

/ Mi Cigani meraklije
ne možemo bez rakije. /

We Gypsies enjoy euphoria;
we cannot go on without whiskey.

/ Bez rakije, život ide
i bez mlade Cigančice. /

Without whiskey life just goes on
and without young Gypsy girls.

/ Jedan, dva, tri, četir, pet, šest,
sedam, osam, devet, deset. /

One, two, three, four, five, six,
seven, eight, nine, ten.

Deset, devet, osam, sedam,
šest, pet, četir, tri, dva, jedan.

Ten, nine, eight, seven,
six, five, four, three, two, one.

Deset, devet, osam, sedam,
šest, pet, četir, tri, dva, nula.

Ten, nine, eight, seven,
six, five, four, three, two, zero.

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