

# UNEVEN WALKING\* WORKSHOP

WHAT IS DANCE? NON-UTILITARIAN BODY MOVEMENTS – movement to “feel good”, or for symbolic, magical, religious or artistic reasons.

WHAT ARE THE MOST BASIC DANCES? In the Balkans, where hands are held, most movements are confined to the legs and feet.

Because we’re balanced on two legs, in order to move, one can either

**A.** shift from one leg to the other (**Uneven Walking**) or

**B.** stay on one leg and move the other in the air. (Taproot dances)

During **Uneven Walking**, one can either

**A1.** Change the rhythm of the step, **A2.** Change the direction of the step, **A3.** Both.

## Uneven Walking dances, based on uneven rhythm

**SQQ – Slow, Quick, Quick / QQS – Quick, Quick Slow**

**QS – Quick, Slow / SQ – Slow, Quick**

**SSQQS Slow, Slow, Quick, Quick, Slow.**

**Many other combinations**

**Characteristics:** both feet stay on the ground during the basic pattern.

It’s like walking, but to varying rhythms and directions.

Movement is relatively constant.

Odd number of steps in a phrase (3, 5, etc) start on alternate feet (R, L).

Even number of steps in a phrase (2, 4, etc) start on the same foot.

**Variations:** A Step can include a hop, lift, stamp (weighted), or 2-step:

All start and end a beat on the same foot.

### PROTOTYPE

**EXAMPLES of** (*dances demonstrated in italics*)  
(Saturday party dances in ***bold italics***)

**SQQ –** *Syrto\**

*Kalamatiano\**

**SQQ –** *Karamfil\**, *Flor Amorosa*,

**Others:** Armenian Misirlou #3, Ashrael Ha’ish, Liljano Mome, Rododachtilos, Tapan Cuka, To Paradeisou Lemonia, Valle Pogonishte\*, and MANY others

**QQS –** *Râčenica\**,

**QQS –** ***La Bastringue***, *Ma Na’avu\**, *Malhao Malhao\**,

**Others:** An Dro Retourne, Valle e Dardhes,

**QS –** *Pajduško\**,

**QS,** *Rustemul\**, *Cimpoi*, *Dragaicuta\**,

**SSQQS –** *Setnja\**,

**SSQQS –** *Koce Berberot*, *Fado Portugues*, *Vulpiuta\**,

**QUIZ????** *Bisekra Bojerka*, *Alunelul batut\**, *Hora Veche\**, *Dospatsko horo\**,

\*a song or dance described in detail on my website [folkdancefootnotes.org](http://folkdancefootnotes.org)

I've often wondered how it is that the 'folk' (the people we imagine when we use the term folk dancing) were able to dance a simple 2 or 3-measure pattern for what we consider a long time period (say, over 10 minutes) without becoming bored. Musings of this kind usually happened to me after about 2 minutes of doing, say, pravo or syrto, when I was becoming bored.

One answer can be found in watching current 'folk' practices, like this 54-minute YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdLwKiZBH8E> of a Roma wedding celebration in North Macedonia in 2016 - a good example of why it takes 45 minutes to do a simple dance, (in this case Čoček). It's a way of giving each important family and village member a place in the wedding celebrations. Everyone is there to take part in the bride's transfer from her family to the family of her new husband.

The bride and her mother (and grandmother?) leave home, entering the public sphere, and begin dancing. At 3:56 the groom enters at the head of the line. From here he can escort the bride to his home. The bride's mother inserts other women in the front of the line giving them the honour of leading the bride, showing their important relationship to her, while other women do solo Čočeks, also celebrating the marriage. The line keeps circling around the immediate neighbourhood, where the bride is known. At 28:25 the groom and some male friends join the line, but behind the bride. At 35:05 the groom is encouraged to witness the bride's solo čoček. An older man, presumably the bride's or groom's father, joins in. At 41:29 an even older couple, presumably the bride or groom's grandfather and grandmother, dance beside the bride.

All this social activity is best done to a simple dance step that works for all ages and leaves the mind free to take in the scene and act accordingly.

Most of the 'village' folk dances we know have been in place "forever - before my grandfather". Most people lived in isolated villages without newspapers or radio, let alone movies, TV or the internet. People only knew what they or someone they knew could see for themselves. They created their own music, learned from elders, because there were no schools, no literacy. Experience was what counted. "New" was treated with suspicion, for "new" was untested by experience, and that also applied to dances. Dances were not taught, for there were no designated teachers, not even the concept of a teacher – young people learned by watching older villagers - which meant dances were introduced and modified very slowly over generations.

Dances were created from the natural impulses of the body to move in certain ways, to certain rhythms. These impulses didn't vary much from place to place, so there were only a few basic dance steps, covering large regions, though they varied in detail according to cultural and geographical differences.

When dance scholars began to visit villages – around the early 1900's, it was a time of great technological innovation, enabling researchers for the first time to take films of dancers and record their music. A few villagers had learned to read newspapers and read to others news of the outside world – educating people that change and innovation could be good things.