

**SITNA LISA** (SEET-nah LEE-sah) = small dance formation, or, small female fox

CROSS-INDEX TERMS:

**krsteno** - a generic name

**Liska** = diminutive of *lisa*

**Mala lisa** = small *lisa*

**Teška lisa** = heavy *lisa*

DO NOT CONFUSE THIS DANCE WITH:

The *lisa* dances that became *Skopska crnogorka* (described elsewhere in this book).

BACKGROUND:

Svetozar Tomić (1905) and Atanasije Petrović (1907) first mentioned a dance called *lisa* from the areas of Skopska Crna Gora and Skopska Blatija. I speculate that their *lisa* became the dance *Skopska crnogorka*, described elsewhere in this book. This article describes the *Sitna lisa* introduced to America by Pece Atanasovski in 1972 and described at that time by Bob Leibman.

*Sitna lisa*, as a dance, belongs to the *krsteno* (crossing) dance family. Other examples include *Katuše mome / Što mi je milo* (2004 *Problem Solver*), *Ne odi Džemo / Devojče devojče* (2018 *Problem Solver*), and some versions of *Postupano* (2004 *Problem Solver*). Pece Atanasovski, a dancer and *gajda* (bagpipe) player with the Macedonian folk ballet *Tanec*, described it as coming from "the surroundings of Skopje, both the Crna Gora and the lowlands along the Vardar almost to Veles" about 50 km southeast of Skopje (Atanasovski & Leibman, 1972, p. 25). But how did it get to this area in the first place? Atanas Kolarovski described the remarkably similar dance *Gilanka* at the 1975 Stockton Folk Dance Camp as "a Šiptar Albanian dance from the town of Gilani, in Kosove Metohija. It was brought to Skopje by people who moved there from Gilani." I shall leave you to speculate.

And what does *Sitna lisa* mean? The Macedonian language currently has the word *lisa* (accent on the "I"). Some folks translate it as "fox," which is how Macedonian folk literature uses it. Others translate it as the name of a special dance formation. Pronunciation could be crucial for the purposes of translating *Sitna lisa*. You see, "I" in Macedonia morphed to "E" farther east, in Bulgaria, via the great South Slavic vowel metamorphosis. So the Macedonian word *lisa* could be related to the Bulgarian word *lesá* (the name of a special dance formation; accent on the "A"). For example, Bulgarian dance scholar Boris Conev wrote "лесá" (*lesá*) with the accent mark, because otherwise the accent would be on the first syllable. Normally, Bulgarian does not use accent marks, so Conev must have thought that the pronunciation was both important and not intuitive.

From this Bulgarian example and from its dance context, I (and many others) speculate that the Macedonian word *lisa* refers here to a special dance formation. But wait! You forget two factors:

1 When Macedonia adopted the Bitola dialect in 1943 as the official language for the newly formed political entity called Macedonia, the stress in some words (in areas other than Bitola) moved forward. Two-syllable words became stressed on the first syllable. Therefore, without a written accent mark, we do not know how Skopje pronounced or used the word *lisa* before 1943. Was it *lisa* meaning fox? Was it *lisa* meaning dance? Was it *lisá* meaning dance? Anyone have an old Macedonian handy?

2 Other than *Múžko na lesá*, I know of no dance called *Lesá* without a geographical modifier, such as *Pasarelska lesá* (described in the 2019 *Problem Solver*), *Jambolska lesá*, *Radomirska lesá*. and *Šopska lesá*. Further, Conev stated that *lesá* named only the faster, more complicated "show-off" portion of a longer dance. If the Macedonian *lisa* denotes a type of dance, I think dance notators would have used geographical modifiers. Instead, dances named *lisa* have quality modifiers: *Sitna lisa* (little lisa), *Laka lisa* (easy lisa), *D'lga lisa* (long lisa), *Mala lisa* (little lisa), *Liska* (little lisa), and *Teška lisa* (heavy lisa). Interestingly, *Sitna* and *Sitnata* ("the *Sitna*") do appear by themselves in the context of Macedonian and Bulgarian dance and can mean "(the) small-stepped dance."

So does *Sitna lisa* translate to "small-stepped dance formation," or "small-stepped fox dance?" I still prefer "small-stepped dance formation," but it originally could have referred to "fox," possibly danced to music accompanying a folk song mentioning a fox (e.g., *Zajko kokorajko*, or *Ovdovjala lisičkata*).

(concluded on next page)

## Sitna lisa (concluded)

### MUSIC and SOUND RECORDINGS:

*Sitna lisa* has a meter of 7/16, counted as 3 dancers' beats per bar: Slow, Quick, Quick.  
Globestyle Records 043, *3 Mustaphas 3: Heart of Uncle*; A-2, *Sitna Lisa* - modern folk band  
Jugoton 3985b1, *Sitna Lisa* - zurla and tapan original instrumentation  
Jugoton 50985, *Makedonska Narodna Ora*; B-5, *Sitna Lisa* - zurla and tapan original instrumentation  
Jugoton 61392, *Makedonski Narodni Ora: Igrajte So Nas*; A-5, *Sitna Lisa* - "naroden" folk band

### FORMATION:

Men and women form a mixed open circle or 2 concentric open circles with men in the inner circle, with a leader at the right end of the mixed line or the right end of the men's line. Join hands and bend elbows to raise joined hands shoulder-high. Men dancing together may hold nearer shoulders with arms more or less straight. Leader twirls a knotted handkerchief to signal changes from one figure to another.

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### BARS ACTION

7/16 Introduction. Start dancing when you pick up the beat, preferably at the start of an 8-bar phrase.

The dance (to slow music). Face center.

- 1 Lift left heel, raising right knee with right foot hanging down in front of left leg (ct 1), step to right onto right foot (cts 2-3).  
*The fancy name for this lift is čukče, a raising and lowering of the heel.*  
*For all knee-lifts: men raise knees hip-high, while women raise knees much, much less because of those heavy Macedonian dresses.*
- 2 Lift on right foot, raising left knee (ct 1), touch left toe beside right foot (cts 2-3).
- 3-4 = 1-2 with mirror footwork (lift-step to left, lift-touch to right).
- 5-8 = 1-4 (lift-step, lift-touch to right and left again).
- 9 Face just a bit to right of center and lift on left foot, raising right knee (ct 1), step to right and CCW around the circle onto right foot (cts 2-3).
- 10 Lift on right foot, raising left knee (ct 1), step across right foot onto left foot (cts 2-3).



Turn to face center and dance bars 1-10 until the music speeds up.

The dance (to fast music). Face center.

- 1 Hop on left foot, raising right knee with right foot hanging down in front of left leg (ct 1), step to right onto right foot (cts 2-3).  
*Raise knees as in the slow part above.*
- 2 Hop on right foot, raising left knee (ct 1), step onto ball of left foot beside right foot (ct 2), step onto full right foot beside left foot (ct 3).
- 3-4 = 1-2 with mirror footwork (hop-step, hop-step-step to left).
- 5-8 = 1-4 (hop-step, hop-step-step to right and left again).
- 9 Face a bit to right of center and hop on left foot, raising right knee (ct 1), step to right and CCW around the circle onto right foot (cts 2-3).
- 10 Hop on right foot, raising left knee (ct 1), step across right foot onto left foot (cts 2-3).

Turn to face center and dance bars 1-10 to the end of the music.

Tom Deering reported this variation for bars 9-10, as learned from Atanasovski in Macedonia in 1976: When the leader signals, turn once to right (360° CW) with the 2 lift-steps or hop-steps.

End of **SITNA LISA**.