

**SKOPSKA CRNOGORKA** (tsur-nah-GOHR-kah) = a thing from Skopje's Crna Gora area  
or, **LISA** (LEE-sah) - a short dance line, or, an archaic folk name for a female fox

### CROSS-INDEX TERMS:

**Cnogorka** - a mis-heard name  
**Crnagorka** - a misspelling of Црногорка  
**Crno Gorka, Crnogorka oro** - rare variants  
**Crnogorka** - an ambiguous name  
**Shinogorka** - a mis-heard name  
**Skopsko crnogorka** - grammatically incorrect  
**Tsrnogorka** - another Romanization of Црногорка

DO NOT CONFUSE THIS DANCE WITH:  
*A krsteno-type dance called Sitna lisa*, as did Stevkovska (2013).  
Anything having to do with the country of Crna Gora (Montenegro), as did Bogatkova (1958).

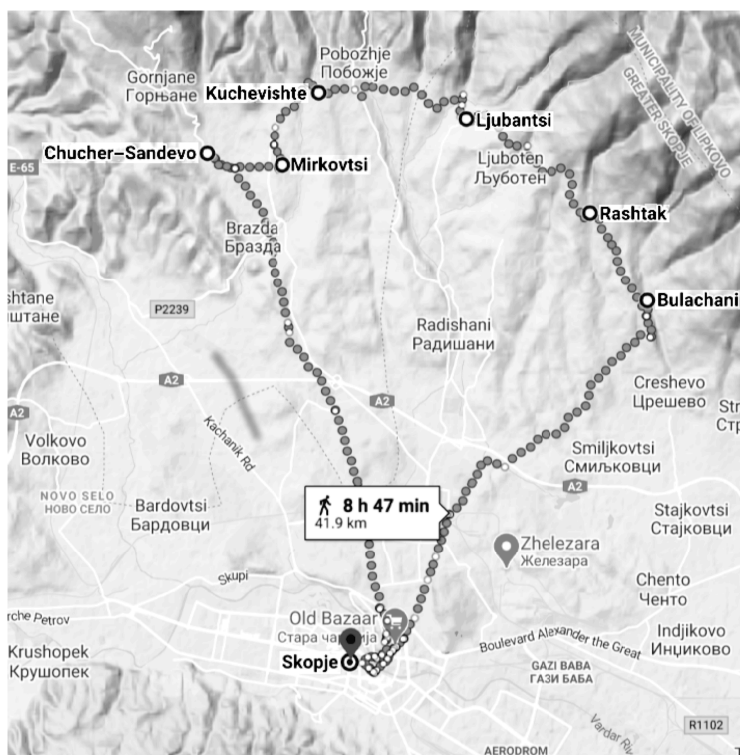
### BACKGROUND:

The politically astute among us will recognize Crna Gora ("Black Mountain") as the Slavic name for Montenegro, a country on the Adriatic Sea. The geographically astute will recognize it as the name of a mountain north of Skopje, Macedonia. The area between Skopje and the mountain is the Skopska Crna Gora.

Once upon a time, Macedonians in the Skopska Crna Gora area danced *Lisa* (Svetozar Tomić, 1905; Atanasije Petrović, 1907). Variations arose from village to village, with *Laka lisa* ("easy lisa") from Raštak, Kučevšite, Ljubanci / Ljubanice, and Mirkovci, and *Dlga lisa* ("long lisa") from Kučevšite and Mirkovci (the sisters Janković, vols. 3 & 5, 1939 & 1949). Noted dance ethnologist Elsie Dunin (1973) added the villages of Bulačani and Čučer. Boris "Kete" Ilievski (c. 1997) added the names *Sitna lisa* ("small lisa") and *Mala lisa* ("small lisa"), citing the Janković sisters and his dad, Ilija Ilievski, a native of Raštak and an original member of the *Kočo Racin* ensemble that became the *Tanec* ensemble. Elena Stevkovska (2013) added the names *Liska* (little *lisa*) and *Teška lisa* ("heavy lisa"), but she appears to have been conflating the Raštak *Lisa* with the *krsteno* ("crossing") dance commonly called *Sitna lisa*, described elsewhere in this book. "Lisa" today normally refers to the "show-off" portion of a longer dance, but for reasons explained in the description of *Sitna lisa*, the translation of "lisa" is ambiguous.

The dance's name evolved. In 1935, the Raštak village ensemble performed *Lisa* as *Crnogorska lisa* ("the *lisa* dance from Crna Gora"). In 1946, Ilija Ilievski introduced *Lisa* to the *Kočo Racin* ensemble (Kete Ilievski, c. 1997), and by 1948 the dance was known only as *Crnogorka*. Atanas Kolarovski, another original member of *Kočo Racin* and *Tanec*, arranged the figures of *Crnogorka* and used the dance to terminate various Vardar valley dance suites for *Tanec* (Dunin & Višinski, 1995). As the dance spread to ensembles across Macedonia, so did the ambiguity of its name. Slavs (e.g., Bogatkova, 1958) know the word "*Crnogorka*" also as "a woman from Montenegro" or "a dance from Montenegro." Rickey Holden and Dennis Boxell (1964) somewhat resolved this ambiguity by naming the dance *Skopska crnogorka* (*Crnogorka* from the Skopje area).

Many have presented *Skopska crnogorka* in America. Noted dance teacher Dick Crum introduced *Crnogorka* in 1961. Dunin learned the dance in 1957 while dancing with the *Orce Nikolov* and *Tanec* ensembles and presented it in about 1964. Holden and Boxell imported Kolarovski and the Folkraft recording by Pece Atanasovski in 1964, and many other teachers have presented versions since then.



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## Skopska crnogorka (continued)

Folk dance is the social dance of *other* people or *other* times. Originally, *Lisa* was a folk dance, walking six steps to the right and then six steps to the left. Personal embellishments included hop-step-steps, triples, step-ball-changes, pas-de-Basque, double-time motifs, and grapevines. As excitement increased, the better male dancers would step forward into a separate line and dance "show-off" motifs. When performing groups performed *Lisa*, it changed into the stage dance, *Skopska crnogorka* (cf. Filip Petkovski's "Crnogorka: A folk dance that does not exist" in *Macedonian Folklore*, vol. 71 (2016), pp. 369-378). In America, Kolarovski presented four relatively simple figures that formed the basis of most versions of what we dance as *Skopska crnogorka*.

As with many folk dances, the trick here is not to display your abilities or confound the line you lead, but to be able to dance communally and invisibly in a circle of natives, in other words, to look just like them. If you wish to dance *Skopska crnogorka* as the natives danced *Lisa* in social settings, you should progress from one figure to a more complex figure as the music inspires you. I have presented here the 25 variations of the basic step in order of my estimation of their complexity. The **boldfaced** figures below constitute Kolarovski's 1966 version of *Skopska crnogorka*. He presented several other arrangements over the years.

Finally, please be careful about learning *Skopska crnogorka* from Internet videos. Stage ensembles today in the Balkans dance *Skopska crnogorka* choreographies that, in my opinion, reflect the influence more of the stage than of the village. The dance music has accelerated, and the dance has become quite rigid and energetic, probably to sustain the interest of the audience. The faster music required such small steps than some traveling motifs now are danced almost in place. A reified example of this appeared in the syllabus of San Francisco's 1975 Kolo Festival. I have described that version also, because you may encounter it when you visit and dance along with other dance groups or stage ensembles.

Be careful also about learning our old 1960s *Skopska crnogorka* from Internet videos. Cultural and styling details have disappeared, producing quite a change since the descriptions by the Janković sisters, Crum, Dunin, and Kolarovski. I have tried here to give you guidelines for dancing *Skopska crnogorka* as a folk / social dance originally done by the people in the foothills of Skopska Crna Gora.

### MUSIC and SOUND RECORDINGS:

Dunin & Tsaulis, DT 1002, *Folk Ensemble Orce Nikolov*; B-6, *Crnogorka*. Rather quick, but played on zurla and tupan, the original instrumentation.

Festival 4016b2, *Crnogorka*. Really short, only 14 phrases.

Folk Dancer 3042a2, *Crnogorka*. Somewhat short, 20 phrases. This recording, alone, does not speed up.

Folkraft LP 15, *Macedonian Folk Dances*; B-4, *Crnogorka*. A very bright, modern recording with gajda backed by a near-full orchestra.

Nevofoon 15006, *Macedonian Folkdances*; B-1, *Crnogorka*. This recording has a brief gajda introduction and is played on gajda, kaval, and duduk.

RTB 1394 = Olympic 6156, *Macedonian Folk Dances*; A-4, *Crnogorka*. This arrangement has an unexpected 3-bar interlude and is somewhat short at 22 phrases.

RTB 14701, *Makedonska Ora*; B-2, *Crnogorka oro*. A modern recording of gajda backed by large band. Xopo 313a, *Skudrinka*. This really short (14 phrases) recording actually is of *Crnogorka*.

### FORMATION:

Men and women form an open circle, with a leader at the right end of the chain. Hold joined hands at sides. The leader twirls a knotted handkerchief to signal changes from one figure to another.

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### BARS ACTION

2/4 Introduction. Most recordings have no introduction, but the Nevofoon has a brief lead-in. Start dancing when you pick up the beat, and try to start with the beginning of a 6-bar phrase.

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## Skopska crnogorka (continued)

- 1a. Walk, and exaggerated "grapevine" pattern. Face to right of center. This appears to be the simplest pattern to be found in any description in our archives.
- 1-2 Starting onto right foot, walk 4 steps forward and CCW around the circle (cts 1,2,1,2).  
*Lively dancers may precede each walking step with a lift on the supporting foot, almost a low running motif. Other descriptions suggest a "skipping" (hop-step) or "prancing" motif.*
- 3 Step-lift: turning to face center, step to right onto right foot (ct 1), raise left knee (ct 2).  
*Left foot hangs down and may swings a bit to right in front of right leg. Men lift left knee thigh-high; women lift left knee much less.*
- 4 Turning to face to left of center and starting onto left foot, walk 2 steps forward and CW around the circle (cts 1,2). Pivot on right foot to face to right of center.
- 5 Starting onto left foot, walk 2 steps backwards and CW around the circle (cts 1,2).
- 6 Turning to face center, step to left onto left foot (ct 1), lift right knee, mirror to bar 3 (ct 2).

- 1b. Walk, and exaggerated "grapevine" pattern, plus a triple. Face to right of center.
- 1-5 = 1-5 of Figure 1a, above.
- 6 **Turning to face center, step in place onto left foot (ct 1), step beside left foot onto right foot (ct &), step beside right foot onto left foot (ct 2).**

*Remember, **boldfaced** figures denote the 4 figures of Kolarovski's 1966 version of Skopska crnogorka.*

- 2a. Lift-step-step. Face to right of center.
- 1 Lift on left foot (ct 1), step forward and CCW around the circle onto right foot (ct &), step forward and CCW around the circle onto left foot (ct 2).
- 2 = 1 (lift-step-step).
- 3 = 3 above (step-lift).
- 4 Turn to face to left of center and dance a lift-step-step CW around the circle (lift on left, step right, step left).
- 5 Turn to face to right of center and dance a lift-step-step **backward** (lift on left, step **back** onto right, step **back** onto left).
- 6 = 6 above (3 steps in place).

- 2b. Hop-step-step. Face to right of center.
- 1 **Hop forward and CCW around the circle on left foot (ct 1), step forward and CCW around the circle onto right foot (ct &), step forward and CCW around the circle onto left foot (ct 2).**
- 2 = 1 (hop-step-step).
- 3 = 3 above (step-lift).
- 4 **Turn to face to left of center and dance a hop-step-step to left (hop on right, step left, step right).**
- 5 **Turn to face to right of center and dance a hop-step-step backward (hop back on right, step back onto left, step back onto right).**
- 6 = 6 above (3 steps in place).

- 2c. Step-hop-step. Face to right of center. Crum (1961) taught this as his Figure 1.
- 1 Step forward and CCW around the circle onto right foot (ct 1), hop on right foot (&), step forward and CCW around the circle onto left foot (ct 2).
- 2 = 1 (step-hop-step).
- 3-6 = 3-6 of Figure 1 (step-lift, hop-step-step grapevine CW).

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2d. Traveling triples. Face to right of center. Crum (1961) taught this as his Figure 2.

1 Starting onto right foot, run forward and CCW around the circle 3 small, quick steps (cts 1,&2).

2 Starting onto left foot, run forward and CCW around the circle 3 small, quick steps (cts 1,&2).

3-6 = 3-6 of your previous figure (remember, you are building complexity).

Dunin (1964) described bars 4-5 in place, turning to face to left of center for the hop-step-step of bar 4, and turning to face center for the hop-step-step (bar 5) and 3 steps in place (bar 6).

**3. Limping grapevine. Face center.**

1 **Step a bit to right onto ball of right foot (upbeat), step behind right foot onto left foot, bending knees a bit (ct 1), straightening knees, step a bit to right onto ball of right foot (upbeat), step in front of right foot onto left foot, bending knees a bit (ct 2).**

2 = 1 (limp-step, limp-step).

3-6 = 3-6 of Figure 2 (step-lift, hop-step-step grapevine to left).

Crum (1961) taught this as his Figure 3, but stepping in **front** (ct 1) and then **behind** (ct 2) during bars 1-2. Holden and Boxell (1964) also described the limping grapevine stepping in front, first.

**4. Limping grapevine and reel. Face center.**

1-3 = 1-3 of Figure 3 (limping grapevine to right, step-lift).

4 **Hop a bit forward on right foot, bending elbows to raise hands shoulder-high (upbeat), step behind right foot onto left foot, lowering hands quickly (ct 1), hop a bit forward on left foot (upbeat), step behind left foot onto right foot, raising hands quickly (ct 2).**

5 = 4 (2 more reel motifs; hands up, down, and up).

6 = 6 above (3 steps in place), lowering hands for the next figure.

Crum descriptions (1974-5) added this figure as Figure 4, but stepping in **front** (ct 1) and then **behind** (ct 2) during bars 1-2. Holden and Boxell (1964) also described the limping grapevine stepping in front, first.

5a. Turns to right. Crum (1961) originally taught this as his Figure 4 (of 4 figures), but subsequent annotations and later Crum descriptions added it as Figure 5 (of 5 figures) or omitted it entirely -- turning is rather awkward with step-hop-steps or limping steps.

1-6 = 1-6 of Figure 2c or Figure 3, but letting go hands and turning twice to right (CW) while moving CCW around the circle during bars 1-2.

5b. Turns to right and left. Turns here involve the same awkwardness as in Figure 5a.

1-3 = 1-3 of Figure 2c or Figure 3, but letting go hands and turning once or twice to left (CCW) while moving CCW around the circle during bars 1-2.

4-6 = 4-6 of Figure 2c or Figure 3, but letting go hands and turning once or twice to right (CW) while moving CW around the circle during bars 4-5.

5c. Men (only) turn to left. Let go hands. Women place fists at waist and continue to dance Figure 3 above. Men **shift weight** to right foot (preceding bar) as they step forward toward center to dance in an inner circle with hands not joined but held palm-down a bit forward at waist. Dunin (1964) first presented this figure.

1 Hop on right foot (upbeat to ct 1), step onto left foot (ct 1), hop on left foot (upbeat), step onto right foot (ct 2).

2-3 = 1, 3 times in all, turning 2 or 3 times CCW while moving CCW around the circle. End facing center. Yes, the turns are counter-intuitive, counter-clockwise turns.

4-6 = 4-6 of Figure 1 (walking grapevine to left) or Figure 2 (hop-step-step grapevine to left).

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- 5d. Men (only) turn to left and squat-lifts. Women place fists at waist and continue to dance Figure 3 above. Men move quickly into the center of the circle and hold hands a bit forward and to sides, waist-high. All face to right of facing center.
- 1-2 Starting onto right foot, walk 4 steps forward and CCW around the circle, turning twice CCW (cts 1,2,1,2). Yes, COUNTER-clockwise. End facing CCW around the circle.
- 3 Starting onto right foot, step twice in place (cts 1,2). End with weight on both feet.
- 4 Squat to any level with arms to sides and palm-down hands waist-high (ct 1), rise a bit on left foot, raise right foot in front of left knee, and raise hands forward, shoulder-high, as you rise (ct 2).
- 5 Squat again, lowering arms as before (ct 1), rise a bit on right foot, raise left foot in front of right knee, and raise hands forward, as before (ct 2).
- 6 Squat again, lowering arms as before (ct 1), rise fully onto left foot with right foot beside left foot (ct 2). Move back and rejoin hands at sides in a single line.

- 6a. Men (only) stagger-walk and squat-lifts. Women continue to dance Figure 3, while men remain in their inner circle or move into an inner circle during the preceding bar 6. Face to right of center. Men raise hands overhead, palms forward, and bend knees to a semi-squat.
- 1-3 Starting onto right foot, walk forward and CCW around the circle 6 small steps, twisting knees abruptly to right (cts 1) and left (cts 2) by pivoting on balls of feet, swinging heels to left (cts 1) and right (cts 2).  
*Do not twist shoulders during the stagger-walk motif.*  
*Holden and Boxell (1964) specify 5 walks (cts 1,2,1,2,1) and a hold (ct 2).*
- 4 Squat lower (ct 1), rise a bit, lifting right foot forward in front of left knee (ct 2).  
*Knees remain separated during the squats, up to 45° apart in one description.*
- 5 = 4, but raising left foot (ct 2).
- 6 = 4.  
*Some descriptions raise the feet in a different order, but this might put men on the wrong foot to do subsequent motifs.*

- 6b. Men (only) stagger-walk and squat-lifts. Let go hands as men turn to face center and raise hands overhead with palms facing each other. Women continue to dance Figure 3. Men **shift weight** to right foot if you need to.
- 1-2 Starting onto left foot, walk 4 steps toward center of circle (cts 1,2,1,2).
- 3 Squat (ct 1), rise half-way, raising right foot in front of left knee (ct 2).
- 4 Step and twist body sharply to left, kneel on right knee (ct 1), step and twist body sharply to right, kneel on left knee (ct 2).
- 5 = 4 (kneel, kneel).
- 6 Rise and step in place onto left foot (ct 1), right foot (ct &), left foot (ct 2). Women dance forward to fill the gaps between the men. All take hands again, reforming the original circle.

- 6c. Men (only) kneeling and squat-lifts.
- 1 Step forward onto right foot, bending knees and touching left knee to floor beside right foot (ct 1), step forward onto left foot, bending knees and touching right knee to floor beside left foot (ct 2).
- 2 = 1 (kneel, kneel).
- 3 Step forward onto right foot, bending knees and touching left knee to floor beside right foot (ct 1), pause (ct 2).
- 4-6 = 4-6 of Figure 6a (3 squat-lifts)

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**SKOPSKA CRNOGORKA** - Carol Walker, 1975, as learned from Slavko Kvasnevski, arranged for the 14-phrase Festival recording. You may need to slow the recording because of Figure 4a below.

Formation: Men and women dance in separate lines forming concentric open circles with women's line behind the men's line. Join hands at sides. Hold free hands on hips. The leader of the men's line signals the changes from one figure to another by twirling a knotted handkerchief in his right hand.

**BARS ACTION**

2/4 1. Walking. Face to right of center.

1-3 Starting onto right foot, walk (heel first) 5 steps forward and CCW around the circle (cts 1,2,1,2,1), lift or hop on right foot, lifting left knee as described previously.

4 Starting onto left foot, step back and CW around the circle 2 steps (cts 1,2).

5 Turn to face to left of center. Starting onto left foot, walk forward and CW around the circle 2 steps on the balls of your feet (cts 1,2).

6 Turn to face to right of center. Starting onto left foot, step in place 3 steps (cts 1,&,2).

2. Triples. Face to right of center.

1 Starting onto right foot, run forward and CCW around the circle 3 small, quick steps (cts 1,&,2).

2 Starting onto left foot, run forward and CCW around the circle 3 small, quick steps (cts 1,&,2).

3 Step forward onto right foot (ct 1), raise left knee as in Figure 1.

4 Starting onto left foot, run backward and CW around the circle 3 steps (cts 1,&,2).

5 Turn to face to left of center. Starting onto right foot, run forward and CW around the circle 3 steps (cts 1,&,2).

6 Turn to face center. Starting onto left foot, run in place 3 steps (cts 1,&,2).

3. Limping grapevine. Face center.

1 Step a bit to right onto ball of right foot (upbeat), step in front of right foot onto left foot, bending knees a bit (ct 1), straightening knees, step a bit to right onto ball of right foot (upbeat), step behind right foot onto left foot, bending knees a bit (ct 2).

2 = 1 (limp-step, limp-step).

3 Step to right onto right foot (ct 1), hop on right foot, lifting left knee as in Figure 1.

4 Hop on right foot (upbeat to ct 1), step back onto left foot (ct 1), hop on left foot (upbeat to ct 2), step back onto right foot (ct 2).

5 Turn to face to left of center. Hop on right foot (upbeat to ct 1), step forward and CW around the circle onto left foot (ct 1), hop on left foot (upbeat to ct 2), step forward and CW around the circle onto right foot (ct 2).

6 Turn to face center. Starting onto left foot, run in place 3 steps (cts 1,&,2).

4a. Men dance squats and stagger-walk. Face to right of center. Meanwhile, women dance Figure 4b.

1 Jump into a squat onto balls of both feet with hands crossed in front (ct 1), jump up, landing onto both feet with hands held out to sides (ct 2).

2-3 = 1, 3 times in all. End in half-squat with hands out to sides, shoulder-high.

4-5 Starting onto right foot, walk forward and CCW around the circle 4 small steps, twisting knees abruptly to right (cts 1) and left (cts 2) by pivoting on balls of feet, swinging heels to left (cts 1) and right (cts 2).

6 = 1 (squat, up).

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## Skopska crnogorka (concluded)

- 4b. Women dance turns to right and left. Face center and place hands on hips, fingers forward.
- 1 Step in place onto right foot (ct 1), step across right foot onto left foot (ct 2), turning rapidly once to right (360° CW).
  - 2 = 1. End facing center.
  - 3 Starting onto right foot, step in place 3 steps (cts 1,&,2).
  - 4-6 = 1-3 with mirror footwork (step and turn to left).

5. Men dance threes in place. Face center. Meanwhile, women dance Figure 3.
- 1-2 Starting onto right foot, dance two sets of threes in place (cts 1,&,2,1,&,2).
  - 3 Step to right onto right foot (ct 1), hop on right foot, lifting left knee as in Figure 1.
  - 4-6 = 1-3 with mirror footwork.

6. Men dance women's 4b (turns to right and left). Face center and place hands on hips, fingers forward. Meanwhile, women dance men's Figure 5 (the threes in place).

7. = 4. Men dance 4a (squats and stagger-walk) while women dance Figure 4b (turns to right and left).

Note: our archives contains a description from Tallahassee, Florida. Among its 10 figures, the following rather unusual variations for bars 1-2 appear.

- I. Hop-swings. Face center and raise right knee.
- 1-2 Hopping on left foot 4 times (cts 1,2,1,2), swing right foot across left leg: in front, in back, in front, and in back (cts 1,2,1,2).
  - 3-6 = 3-6 of either of Kolarovski's first two figures.
- I speculate that this figure is a corruption (yes, CORRUPTION!) of the "limping grapevine" motif.*

- II. Heel clicks. Face center.
- 1-2 Hop 4 times to right on left foot, clicking right foot to left foot during each hop (cts 1,2,1,2).
  - 3-6 = 3-6 of either of Kolarovski's first two figures.
- According to folk clothing expert Marvin Moehle, Macedonian folk footwear includes moccasin-type footwear called pintsi, opanke, or tsurvuli, depending on the region. Clicking heels just doesn't seem correct for such footwear.*

- III. Scissors.
- 1 Step in place onto right foot, sliding left foot forward (ct 1), slide left foot back and right foot forward (ct &), slide right foot back and left foot forward (ct 2).
  - 2 = 1 with mirror footwork (scissors starting with right foot forward).
  - 3-6 = 3-6 of either of Kolarovski's first two figures.

In 1982, Pece Atanasovski presented *Crnogorka* with a difference. The music had changed from 2/4 to 6/8 (or 2/4 with lots of triplets). Concurrently, the dance reflected this change. For example, "threes" became syncopated as 1,2,4 or 1,3,4 (in 6/8 time) instead of 1,&,2 (in 2/4 time). A lift-step or hop-step began to be counted 6,1 (in 6/8 time) instead of 1,& (in 2/4 time). I speculate that musicians and dancers encouraged each other between the 1960s and the 1980s, exaggerating and formalizing what might have been personal idiosyncrasies. Syncopation, however, does stimulate excitement (cf. Sioros et al., 2014), and the syncopation may have been a desire to mitigate any contempt of *Crnogorka's* familiarity.

Tempo also had changed. Dunin (1995) reported that the Tanec ensemble (in 1957) danced *Crnogorka* at a steady tempo. Since then, all *Crnogorka* recordings accelerate.

End of **SKOPSKA CRNOGORKA**.