

VRTIELKA (vrr-TIEL-kah, but some say ver-TEEL-kah, or ver-CHEL-kah, or ver-tee-EL-kah)
= something (usually a woman) rapidly turning

CROSS-INDEX TERMS:

Czardas = Czardas - Vrtielka

Vrtielka (Slovak Czardas), or Vrtielka Czardas

Vrtijelka - a related dance

BACKGROUND:

Anatol Joukowsky introduced *Vrtielka* at the 1955 Stockton Folk Dance Camp. It remained popular for decades in groups that had male dancers. Of its provenance, we know only: "Learned by Anatol Joukowski [sic] while on tour in Slovakia, 1935-36. Place: Nove Zamki." (Stockton syllabus, p. 59) Natives, including one from Nové Zámky, do not recognize the word. Large Slovak dictionaries, however, define it as something, usually a woman, turning rapidly.

The sisters Ljubica and Danica Janković described a *Vrtijelka* in their *Narodne igre, Vol. 5* (1949, pp. 246-247 & 376) as a Slovak couple dance from the Vojlovica district of Pančevo, a city in Vojvodina, just across the Danube River from Beograd, Serbia. Interesting! Joukowsky-- attended military school in Belgrade (Beograd), Yugoslavia. ... At the age of 15, he began a two-year term of ballet study at Mme. Poliakoff's ballet school ..., and he went on to the State Theater School in Beograd After graduating, students went to work in the State Theater Anatol was a solo dancer for two years and, in 1935, became ballet master and choreographer for the State Theater. (Search for "Anatol Joukowsky" to find Dick Oakes's bio for him.)

The Janković *Vrtijelka* is a dance similar to the motifs of *Vrtielka* below. Both dances have music in 2/4 meter played as 6/8, but the Janković name is curious. Does the inserted "j" reflect a Serbian spelling of the Slovak word? Or does the name refer to Vrtijelka (also spelled Vrtijeljka), the site of the historic 1685 Montenegrin struggle against the Ottomans? Ya gotta wonder.

Many thanks to Richard Duree (who learned *Vrtielka* from Joukowsky) for help with the description and background for this dance.

MUSIC:

Kolo Festival KF 803b, *Czardas* (Sloboda Tamburitza Orchestra, Jos. Grcevich, Dir.)

Kolo Festival KF 4803b, *Czardas - Vrtielka* (Sloboda Tamburitza Orchestra, Jos. Grcevich, Dir.)

STYLING NOTES:

Vrtielka ... shows the influence of neighboring Hungary. This is especially reflected in the proud bearing of the dancers and the rounded silhouette of the woman's costume, with the very full skirts and many petticoats. (Lidster and Tamburini, 1965, *Folk Dance Progressions*, p. 195)

Men should wear boots, the heels of which they can click. Stamps and gratuitous heel clicking, however, are not part of the dance as presented by Joukowsky.

FORMATION:

Couples, face to face in ballroom position: man's L hand holds woman's R hand extended to side with elbows comfortably bent; man's R hand on woman's L hip; woman's L hand on man's R shoulder.



BARS ACTION

Introduction: Just a couple of tiny pick-up notes for introduction. Jump right in.

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Vrtielka (continued)

- 2/4 1. Side to side. Woman uses OPPOSITE footwork, to mirror her partner.
1-2 Starting onto man's R foot (woman's L foot), dance 2 step-close to man's R (woman's L) (cts 1,2,1,2).
3-4 Starting onto man's L foot (woman's R foot), dance 2 step-close to man's L (woman's R) (cts 1,2,1,2).

Step-close (1 motif per bar): Step onto a foot with knees straight (ct 1), step beside that foot onto other foot with knees bent a bit (ct 2). NOTE: Whether you take weight on the "close" of a step-close depends on the next step or motif.

- 5 With knees still bent a bit, swing L heel to L and slightly up with toes together (upbeat to ct 1), click L heel to R heel (ct 1), with knees still bent a bit, swing R heel to R and slightly up with toes still together (upbeat to ct 2), click R heel to L heel (ct 2).
6 Swing both heels outward (upbeat to ct 1), click heels together with knees still bent a bit (ct 1). Wait (ct 2).
7-12 = 1-6.

Note: These motifs resemble Hungarian *csárdás* and *bokázó* motifs, but the up-down movement and the styling are Slovak. Bend head and body a bit in the direction of travel.

2. Travel and pivot. Woman continues to dance with OPPOSITE footwork.

- 13-14 Starting onto man's R foot (woman's L foot), dance 2 step-close FORWARD (woman dances BACK) (cts 1,2,1,2).
15-16 Starting onto man's L foot; woman's R foot, step in place 3 times, **no weight** on last step. During these 3 steps, the man raises the joined hands over the woman's head to turn the woman once rapidly to R (360° CW) in place (cts 1,2,3). Wait (ct 4).

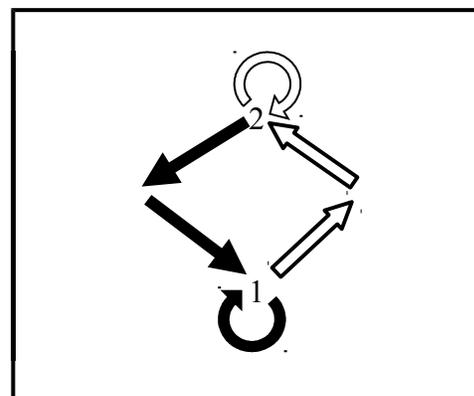
Note: According to the archives, a person named Gery Klein once danced a form of the *bokázó* during bars 15-16, and others adopted the practice. Still others began to stamp during the 3 steps and during the step-close. Neither way reflects the dance as Joukowsky taught it.

Note also: The woman turns once rapidly during the first count and steps in place facing the man during counts 2-3. During the turn, the woman removes her L hand from the man's R shoulder, replacing it there after the turn. During the turn, place knuckles of free hands (man's R; woman's L) on hips, palms facing back.

- 17-18 Starting onto man's L foot (woman's R foot), dance 2 step-close BACK (woman dances FORWARD) (cts 1,2,1,2).
19-20 = 15-16 (woman turns once CW).
21-24 = 1-6.

3. Diamond pattern. Let go partner and place knuckles on hips, palms facing back. Woman uses SAME footwork as man.

- 25-26 Starting onto R foot and leading with R shoulder, dance 2 step-close diagonally forward to R (cts 1,2,1,2).
27-28 Starting onto L foot and leading with L shoulder, dance 2 step-close diagonally forward to L (cts 1,2,1,2). End with your back to your partner.
29-30 Starting onto R foot, turn in place 1/2 to R (180° CW) with 2 steps (cts 1,2), and close R foot to L foot (ct 1). Wait (ct 2). End facing partner.
31-36 = 25-30, returning to place.



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Vrtielka (continued)

4. - 6. = 2. - 4.

37-48 = 13-24 (travel and return again).

49-58 = 25-46 (diamond pattern, and travel and return).

59-60 While the man clicks his heels as in bars 5-6, the woman backs in a small CW circle to man's R side with 2 steps (cts 1,2), and close the L foot to the R foot (ct 1). Wait (ct 2). Let go joined (man's L; woman's R) hands to place the knuckles of those hands on hips, palms facing back. Man slips his R hand around the woman's back to her R waist while woman slips her L elbow behind man's R arm, keeping her L hand on his R shoulder. End with L foot free.

The music becomes faster and slips from 2/4 played as 6/8 to 2/4 played as 2/4.

7. Side to side. Woman now stands to man's right side in "open shoulder-waist position."

61-64 BOTH dance woman's motif of bars 1-4 (step-close step-close to L and R).

65-66 MAN: Step in place 3 times, starting onto L foot (cts 1,2,1). Wait (ct 2).

WOMAN: Dance in a small CCW circle across in front of the man to his left side with 3 steps, starting onto L foot (cts 1,2,1). Wait (ct 2). End in open shoulder-waist position with the woman standing to man's left.

Note: The man will help the woman by stepping back a bit during bar 65 and forward during bar 66. The man also may guide the woman by pushing gently with his R hand during bar 65, and by stopping the woman with his L hand during bar 66. Don't forget to place knuckles of free hands on hips.

67-72 = 61-66 with opposite footwork and direction (step-close step-close to R and L; woman dances back to man's R side).

8. Forward, turn, back, and turn. Let go hands. The man must reach quickly across and in front of the woman to take her R hand in his R hand, and he must reach quickly to his R shoulder to take her L hand in his L hand. Hold the joined hands chest-high and extended forward.

73-74 Starting onto R foot, dance 2 step-close forward (cts 1,2,1,2).

75-76 MAN: Turn 1/2 to R (180° CW) with 3 steps, starting onto R foot (cts 1,2,1). Wait (ct 2).

WOMAN: Turn 1 1/2 to L (540° CCW) with 3 steps, starting onto L foot (cts 1,2,1). Wait (ct 2).

Note: Raise hands overhead to facilitate the turns. You and your partner now are facing the other way, with the woman on the man's L side. Hold the joined hands chest-high and extended forward.

77-78 = 73-76 with opposite footwork and direction of turns, returning to place, ending with the woman on the man's R side again. Let go hands to resume open shoulder-waist position.

79-80 = man's motif of bars 1-6 (step-close step-close to R and L).

81-100 = 61-80 (repeat Figures 7 and 8).

101-120 = 61-80 (repeat Figures 7 and 8).

Can't remember the direction in which to start the side-to-side step-closes in Figures 7-8? Try this cue that Elliot Zais shared with me several decades ago: ALWAYS start to the MAN's side, EXCEPT after returning from the forward and back figure.

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Vrtielka (concluded)

9. Ending. Let go hands and turn to face partner. Man's R hand takes woman's R hand (free knuckles on hips, or woman's free hand at side to avoid hurting the man).
- 1st ct Raise the joined hands over the woman's head as the woman turns once to L (360° CCW).
- 2nd ct Lower the joined hands to waist level. **Woman:** turn 3/4 to R (270° CCW). **Man:** turn 1/4 to L (90° CCW). Place joined R hands on woman's R waist.
- 3rd ct Strike a pose, gazing at your partner. Variations occur for the pose, some more Slovakian than others:
- 1 Undated syllabus instructions from Penn State specify an ending pose with L hands held high.
 - 2 Handwritten addenda to one set of instructions, probably from Seattle, concluded this dance with the man dropping to his L knee and the woman sitting on his R knee, with L hands extended separately to left.
 - 3 Other instructions, from New York, specify maintaining the handholds "to make a big window as in Zillertaler" for the ending pose.

End of **VRTIELKA**.