

Boiko -- alternate names “Taidumm” or “Gros”

Background:

Boiko is a dance that I noticed in a list of dances done by Jewish children in Lemberg that was written in 1919 in German: Hermann Ehrlich, "Abzähl- und andere Kinderreime sowie Tänze aus Lemberg," *Mitteilungen zur Jüdischen Volkskunde*, 21 (3/4), 1919, pp.58-61.

<http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/cm/periodical/pageview/2639293>

The information regarding the dance simply said: “Bojko. Stamping. Romanian” (translation of German)

Since this dance was unfamiliar, I turned to Dr. Andriy Nahachewsky Huculak Chair Emeritus, University of Alberta who was able to locate the dance in several Ukrainian dance collections written by Roman Harasymchuk, referenced below.

“The Boyko/Boiko refers to a subgroup of western Ukrainians (Rusyns or Ruthenians) who traditionally inhabit the Carpathian foothills and mountains SW of Lemberg/Lviv, around the towns of Drohobych, Skole, Turka, Nizhne Veretskiy, on into a bit of the Transcarpathian region, and also what’s now the far SE corner of Poland” (personal communication, Michael Alpert). It is not clear that this dance actually came from the Boiko themselves. More likely, the dance was simply called “Boiko.” Alternate names for the dance in some areas were “Taidumm” and “Gros” (German for large). Among Ukrainians this dance would be done by adults.

We do not have information as to how/how widely this dance was danced in the Jewish community. The list in the 1919 reference only mentions the dance in connection with children. However, in his descriptions of the dance, Harasymchuk remarked that some versions of the music suggested Jewish influence. In addition he remarked that the style of polka step might have shown Jewish influence (not sure specifically what features would indicate this). He also mentioned that in some areas the dance was called “Taidumm” which he speculated might be a Jewish word. “Taidumm” was also shouted out in some versions of the dance during the stamping figure. After consulting several people who are fluent in Yiddish, it seems that Taidumm is not a Yiddish word, nor is it obviously close to any Hebrew or Aramic term. It may be

- 1) a sound uttered similarly to the way in English you might sing “la-la-la”, or in a Hassidic nign “Dai Dai Dai” or
- 2) a marker of rhythm as in “tai-Dum,” which became attached to this dance.

The descriptions by Harasymchuk were written in Ukrainian and translated to English by Andriy Nahachewsky. It’s not always entirely clear how the dance was done based on these written descriptions, so I can only provide a summary of what seems to make sense to me and if other information comes to light, this description will be modified and updated.

Andriy Nahachewsky has plotted out a map showing where the Boiko dance was done in Ukrainian communities and any Jewish locations will be noted in future. So far only Lemberg has evidence of the dance being done among Jews (Green Icon). Villages where the dance was called “Taidum” use the bright red/orange icon and as you’ll see on the map, these villages are closer to Lemberg than many of the other localities. The areas where the dance was done in the Ukrainian community were clustered as you will see on the map:

[Boiko Dance locations](#) documented by Harasymchuk.

Areas include: L’viv oblast (1959), Ternopil oblast (1960), several Boiko villages (2008)
(more detail can be provided upon request)

Time frame: By 1924 the dance was not being done. Not sure exactly when it emerged initially.

References:

Гарасимчук, Роман [Harasymchuk, Roman]. «Народне хореографічне мистецтво Львівської області Української РСР.» [Narodne khoreografichne mystetstvo L’vivs’koi oblasti Ukrain’skoi RSR. The folk choreographic art of the L’viv oblast’ of the Ukrainian RSR.] L’viv: research manuscript for the Derzhavnyi Muzei etnohrafii ta khudozhn’oho promyslu Akademii nauk URSS, 1959. Page 51

Гарасимчук, Роман [Harasymchuk, Roman]. «Народне хореографічне мистецтво Західного Поділля. Тернопільська область.» [Narodne khoreografichne mystetstvo Zakhidnoho Podillia. Ternopil’s’ka oblast’. The folk choreographic art of

western Podillia. Ternopil' oblast'.] L'viv: research manuscript for the Derzhavnyi Muzei etnohrafii ta khudozhn'oho promyslu Akademii nauk URSR, 1960. (Ternopil oblast') Page 95

Harasymchuk, Roman. Народні танці українців карпат. Книга 2. Бойківські і лемківські танці [Narodni tantsi ukrainsiv karpas. Knyha 2. Boikivs'ki i Lemkivs'ki tantsi. Folk dances of the Ukrainians of the Carpathians. Book 2. Boiko and Lemko dances]. Edited by Roman Kyrchiv and Vira Iablons'ka. L'viv: Natsional'na Akademiia Nauk Ukrainy, Institut Narodoznavstva, 2008. Page 49, Chapter: Newer Kozachok-Rhythm Dances

Formation: couples arranged in a circle.

Ballroom position: Man right hand on woman's waist, left arm extended to left side
Woman place right hand in man's left hand, left hand on man's right shoulder

Music: 2/4 kozachok music, usually moderate-fast tempo

Figure 1a):

4 polka steps, spinning clockwise. Woman begins with right foot (stepping back) and man with left (stepping forward), progressing LOD around the circle a little bit.
Each polka step uses one measure of music .

Figure 1b):

Reverse direction of 1a) --spinning counterclockwise, thus woman must step forward on right foot and man backward on left to begin, assuming continuation of couple in LOD (Note: Harasymchuk does not say whether or not to change the footwork when switching directions, nor is it clear whether the direction of travel is RLOD when spin direction changes, so this is just what I surmise)

Figure 2):

Woman with right foot, Man with left foot, in place, stamp the following rhythm



(Vocalizations during stamping are optional and were not done in all villages call out "Boiku" in rhythm with each stamp or vocalize "Te-di-dum"/ "tai-DUM" (accent on the DUM)

In some descriptions Harasymchuk says that "Boiko" rather than "Boiku" is shouted out. Boiku is the form of the word that would be used if calling/addressing the Boiko.

Sequence of the figures. In parts of the description, Harasymchuk seems to be saying the polkas would be done in one direction, then the other followed by the stamping figure. Elsewhere in the description he seems to be saying that you would alternate as follows:

1a) Polka 2) Stamping 1b) reverse Polka 2) Stamping

Variations: Instead of Polka step, a Kolomeyka step "holubchyk" could be done (version from Orikhivtsi village) using a different hold: holding hands with partner, elbows bent.

Final stamping sequence in this variation is:

Stamp right-Stamp right- step hop on right -stamp left instead of figure 2

Footwork indicated is for the woman (reverse footwork for man).

A song is documented in the 1960 collection:

The dancers sing while they dance:

Любив бойко дівчину,

То велику, то малу.

То тобі, то мени,

А то твоїй жені.

.....

Бойка бют, бойка бют,

І платити не дают.

[The boiko loved a girl,

A big one, a little one.

This one for you, this one for me

This one for your wife

.....

The boiko is beaten, the boiko is beaten,

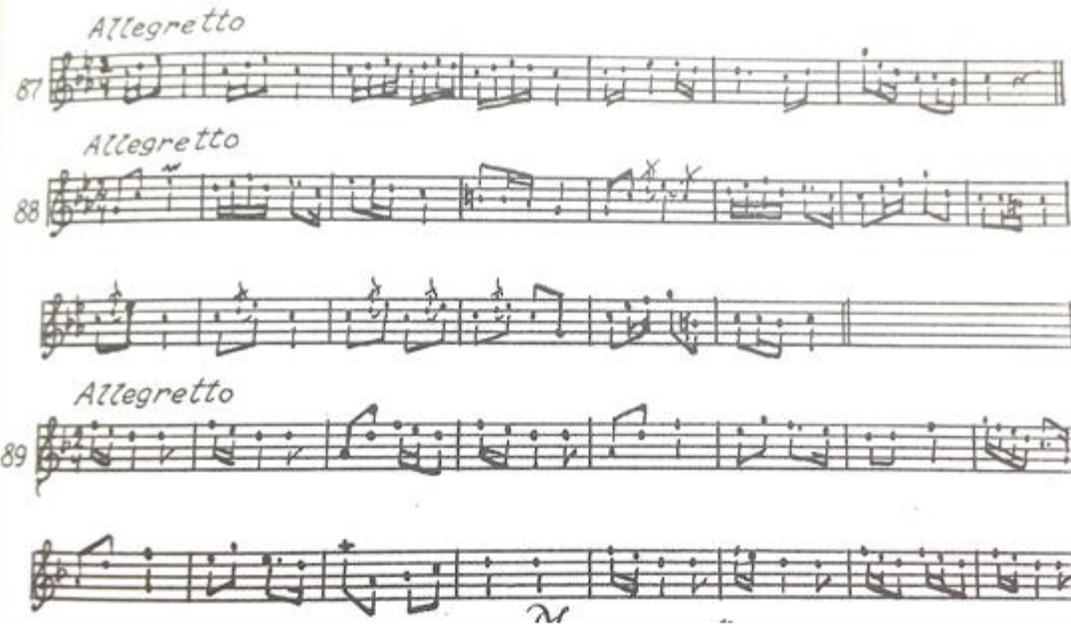
And they don't give him a chance to get paid].

(recorded from V.Iu. Palahniuk, village of Semeniv)

This lyrics emphasizes the outsider/other status of the Boiko in the song. The alternate names of this dance “Gros” or “Taidumm” may be indicators that there were songs in other languages that were omitted from the dance descriptions for reasons of political correctness, to maintain the aura of cultural purity of the dance/song. This was typical during Soviet times. The practice of calling out “boiko” when stamping may have been retained while the songs associated with the dance were abandoned.

Most often the dance was done without any singing, beyond vocalizing during the stamping.

The dance and song, based on the available written information, do not display any particularly Jewish characteristics. The reference to “Romanian” in the Lemberg description isn’t clear—perhaps Ehrlich thought stamping was associated with Romanian dancing. The word “boiko” is derived from the word “bo i e” which means “yes” according to Harsymchuk.



Musical examples from 2008 collection, pages 92-93.,

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