

IGRA KOLO NA DVADESET I DVA

Notes by Dick Crum for *živiLA TAMBURA '93*

Igra kolo na dvadeset i dva ('Twenty-two are dancing the kolo') is usually referred to simply as *Igra kolo* or *Igraj kolo*. It was danced at Croatian and Serbian weddings in the U.S. during the first few decades of this century.

By the 1950's it was no longer done, although many older informants knew versions of the song and could describe the dance. Its place in the wedding scenario seems to have been taken over by the *Bride's Dance* (*Bride's Waltz*) in the late 1920's or early 1930's (probably as the number of weddings of the American-born generation increased).

Inquiries among older members of the Croatian and Serbian communities elicited a wide variety of differing responses:

There were different versions of the dance's name:

Igra kolo u dvadeset i dva
Igraj kolo na dvadeset i dva
Igra kolo
Igraj kolo

All agreed that the dance was a kolo, i.e., was done in circle formation, with a solo dancer in the middle who at some point selected a partner from the circle, danced with that person, then left that person alone in the middle to repeat the process.

Some old-timers mentioned kissing as part of the dance, and some stated that it involved a pillow or a kerchief.

The way it was done was more or less as follows: At a point after the wedding banquet, the guests joined hands in a circle, with the bride in the middle. According to my informants, the oldest form of the dance was done to the dancers' singing, without instrumental accompaniment:

- A: /: *Igra kolo, igra kolo na dvadeset i dva. :/*
/: *U tom kolu, u tom kolu lijepa [bride's name] igra. :/*
- B: *Biraj, [bride's name], biraj, [bride's name], koga ti je drago,*
Samo nemoj, samo nemoj, koga nemaš rado.
- C: /: *Sad se vidi, sad se zna, koji koga rad ima! :/*
- (A: Twenty-two people are dancing the kolo.
In the kolo pretty [bride's name] is dancing.

B: Pick, [bride's name], pick, [bride's name] whoever you like,
Just don't pick someone you don't like!

C: Now we see, now we know, who likes who!

The bride walked around the inside of the circle, at some point chose a partner from the circle, danced with that person in the middle, then left that person and rejoined the circle. This new middle person then chose some one from the circle, repeated the sequence, and so on. The dance movements were simple walking steps during the walking part, with the middle couple dancing either polka steps or "just hopping around".

Tamburitza players eventually began to play the tune, and singing accompaniment died out. Rudolf Crnkovich, a prolific publisher of tamburitza music in Racine, Wisconsin in the 20's and 30's, printed the following instructions to musicians beneath his mimeographed score for "*Igra kolo na dvadeset i dva (ZA SVATOVE)*":

"Play '*Igra Kolo*' slowly during the walking part, keeping an eye on the bride (or whoever is in the middle); when they choose a partner, play fast, and when they stop, play the walking part again."

Some old-timers mentioned said that the middle person chose his/her partner by looping a handkerchief around the chosen one's neck and pulling her/him into the middle. Others described a version of *Igra kolo* in which a pillow was employed, the partners kneeling on it and kissing before dancing in the middle (alternate name: *Pillow dance*). (Among American Slovenes, the *Pillow dance* [*Polstertanc*] was well known.)