

Ukrainian Village Music: Historic Recordings 1928-1933 (1994)

Written by bluelover

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01. Dowbrush (kozak) - Ukrainska Selska Orchestra 02. Newelnik (Prisoner/waltz) - Ukrainska Selska Orchestra 03. Tramlia Z Pod Pagorka - Orchestra Bratia 04. Chytry Tanecne Cardasy (Artful Csardas Dance) - Orchestra Bratia 05. Kolonyjka Powitowa (County Kolomyjka part 1) - Zukowsky, Ewgen 06. Kolonyjka Powitowa (County Kolomyjka part 2) - Zukowsky, Ewgen 07. Daliwskyj Tanec - Pilip, Samuil & His Lemkiwska Orchestra 08. Skrypka Hraje Bas Hude (The Fiddle Plays The Bass Hums) - Pilip, Samuil & His Lemkiwska Orchestra 09. De Ty Buw Janiczku (polka) - Pilip, Samuil & His Lemkiwska Orchestra 10. Kozak Dla Molodych (Young Folks' Kozak) - Ukrainska Selska Orchestra 11. Zalaniwska Hreczka - Ukrainska Selska Orchestra 12. Pidkamecka Kolomyjka - Pizio, Josef 13. Ruzia Kazky Zahaniała (Ruzia Drove The Ducks To The Pen) - Pizio, Josef 14. Polka 'Czariwnyj Kaminetz' (Dazzling Jewel Polka) - Pizio, Josef 15. Kozaczka Szumka - Swystum, Theodore J. 16. Kozak - Joseph, David 17. Ebba (Evelyn/polka) - Trembita Orchestra 18. Nina Polka - Trembita Orchestra 19. Tanec 'Husar' (Hussar Dance) - Thomasa, Michala 20. Pidhirska (Foothills) - Thomasa, Michala 21. Zydiwoczka Na Seli (Jewish Girl In The Village) - Rosady, Petra 22. Shnel Polka (Fast Polka) - Ukrainska Selska Orchestra 23. Marusia (Little Mary/polka) - Ukrainska Selska Orchestra 24. Kolomyjka Lubka (Sweetheart Kolomyjka) - Ukrainska Selska Orchestra

In any part of the USA if you seek out musical roots, "dig where you stand" to borrow a phrase from Sweden's Ale Möller, you're liable to find they belong to a whole lot of different plants, still flourishing or otherwise, in countries throughout the world. Some people sort them out and follow them, others take the whole lot as their heritage and get on with it.

Fiddler Cathie Whitesides does the latter. Coming from Salt Lake City to Berkeley, she found she could make a living playing different strokes for different folks (it's not often a cliché can be so apt) in the various communities of San Francisco. She had to do it well, though. Here are Irish, Scottish, Cape Breton, Romanian, Greek, former Yugoslavian, and Whitesidesish tunes, all of them with lots of interesting corners, played with great understanding of what makes each music move, what techniques are central to it. As for centuries Gypsy and Jewish musicians,

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coming from outside a community and needing to make a living from it have learnt, people don't pay to listen to a stiff copyist; the music has to spark, and this does, having the distinctive witty lift that seems to have evolved among Berkeley musicians, of whom several prime movers, including Hank Bradley and Jody Stecher, feature here. (Like Bradley, Cathie Whitesides has now moved to another nexus of musical thought, Seattle, and that's where Avocet Records is to be found.)

As each wave of migration to the New World arrived, it brought with it its music. There were quite a lot of 78s made in the USA in the 20s and 30s of the music of Ukrainian villages, before the influence of the old country declined as a result both of the impulse to become American and of the arrival a post-WW2 wave of Ukrainian refugees from the Soviet invasion who'd had their upbringing in cities. Like other immigrant musics it's a persistent plant, though, and in the climatic change as Americans look around for their roots it's experiencing something of a regrowth. (Go for it, analogy and metaphor.)

This CD compilation from those 78s, put together by Chris Strachwitz and Dick Spottswood, begins with something familiar. Dowbush Kozak is its Ukrainian name, but it has others - Flop-Eared Mule and The Bluebell Polka for two. It's played on violin, hammered dulcimer and drum, the usual line-up of rural trio music in the Ukraine at the time. Bass sometimes replaced the drum, as it does on many tracks here, and to that are occasionally added more fiddles, trombones, piano, flute, clarinet, guitar or vocals, and one track is mandolin-led. Prevailing rhythms are the 2/4 or 4/4 kolomyjka and kozak; there's also a csardas, several polkas, a waltz and a couple of other 3/4 dance tunes. Always energetic and driving, the texture varies from raw to the fluid, gypsy-like style of a player such as Wasyl Gula, here playing with the Trembita Orchestra; as Bill Gale he later led Bill Gale's Globe Trotters, the Bee Gee Tavern Band, the International Rhythm Boys and other American-named bands reaching the wider community via radio and records with hot polka music. ---Andrew Cronshaw, folkblog.in.ua

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