

## Devojko Mari Hubava – the story

This old, melancholy ballad from Bulgaria's southern Rhodope Mountains remains widely popular well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Countless Bulgarian musicians, choral groups and soloists have their own unique recordings of *Devojko Mari Hubava*. On the internet, Google hits now total more than 10,000 – including haunting choral, a capella and musical presentations of all types, and occasional dances.

The ballad introduces a young couple in love who meet, perhaps for a last time, sensing that things are not going well. Over a drink they discuss which of them can tell the saddest story. The girl goes first; she's come to realize that no dowry she could ever possibly assemble would be enough to bring acceptance from her boyfriend's family. Then it's the boy's turn; he reveals that he has been drafted into the military – called to fight in a war he doesn't want and from which he likely will never return.

Bulgarian listeners associate the saga to a time during the country's 500-year occupation by the Ottoman Turks. Sometimes Orthodox Christians living in the Rhodopes were presented with an ultimate choice – accept the Moslem religion or lose their lives. An iconic Bulgarian movie – “*Time of Violence*” – set in this time period portrays the heart-wrenching dilemma described in the ballad, with strains from *Devojko Mari Hubava* heard in the background - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1quUDSqr5b0&feature=fvw> .

One of the newer uses of the *Devojko Mari Hubava* melody is as high-energy background for folk-rock, “popfolk” or “chalga” – music for solo dancing nightclub style.

In village dances for generations, *Devojko Mari Hubava*'s 2/4 melody has gone well with basic pravo steps (hands joined at shoulder height, 1,2,3 steps forward with the line, then one step back – Q,Q,S,S). On one variation, the dancers' arms swing down and back on the last step (see the two video links below). The musicians play one verse after another, for as long as they want to continue. This is how you'll likely see it with live music at parties and festivals, where folks who never learned “folk dancing” simply feel the urge to dance, and it merges seamlessly into a slow, familiar Rhodopian pravo. I've danced it this way at well-attended Bulgarian festivals at Saint Mary's College in Moraga, and the Croatian Cultural Center in San Francisco. For an added treat – there are often folks in the line who know the song, and sing along as they dance.

Another style is a favorite of folk dancers. In the late 1940s, Phillip Koutev traveled throughout Bulgaria to gather and arrange regional folk songs so they could be sung on the radio, or presented by musical and dance groups at home and abroad. Koutev's project marks the origin of many of the choreographed Bulgarian / Balkan / International dances we folk dancers do today. His arrangement for *Devojko Mari Hubava* includes four or five verses, each verse separated by a shorter, once-repeated musical interlude. The dance usually taught to accompany Koutev's arrangement is a 10-measure, two pattern pravo with slow, soft steps – the first figure done along the line to the verses (Q,Q,S,S,S), and the second forward toward the center and back to each instrumental passage (Q,Q,S,S,Q,Q,Q).

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Two basic Pravo dances done to the song *Devojko Mari Hubava*:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/inbows#p/u/4/N4jroqhr95Q> and  
<http://www.nme.com/awards/video/id/Ds3VtKR0fu8/search/devojko>

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The two-part, folk dancer's version done to *Devojko Mari Hubava*:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7iO\\_dKqKho](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7iO_dKqKho)

## Devojko Mari Hubava (Bulgaria) - the lyrics

2-pattern folk dance, **Yves Moreau**, California Folk Dance Federation. **Let's Dance** Magazine, Oct 2007 p17.

Dance notes: <http://www.folkdance.com/LDNotations/DevojkoMariHubava2007LD.pdf>

The second pattern is danced during a distinct instrumental interlude that follows each verse.

<b>M</b>	Devojko mari hubava, devojko	Beautiful Mari, dear girl
<b>M</b>	Sipni mi vince da pija, devojko	Pour me some wine, dear girl
<b>M</b>	Vince i bela rakija, devojko	And pour some brandy, dear girl
<b>M</b>	Da pijem, da se napijem, devojko	Let's drink and get drunk, dear girl
<b>M</b>	Balno su da si kazheme, devojko	and compare our sad stories, dear girl
<b>M</b>	Chije subalno po mnozhko, devojko	Let's see who has the saddest, dear girl
<b>W</b>	Junache ludo i mlado, junache	Young, crazy and dear man
<b>W</b>	Moe subalno po mnozhko, junache	My story is the saddest, dear man
<b>W</b>	Che imam ruba da pravja, junache	I must prepare (an impossible) dowry, dear man
<b>M</b>	Moe subalno po mnozhko, devojko	My story is even sadder, dear girl
<b>M</b>	Che imam sluzhba da sluzha, devojko	I've been drafted to the army, dear girl
<b>M&amp;W</b>	A neman s koshta gradena, devojko( <b>M</b> ) junache( <b>W</b> )	We'll never have a home garden, dear girl (man)
<b>M&amp;W</b>	Moe subalno po mnozhko, devojko( <b>M</b> ) junache( <b>W</b> )	This story's so very sad, dear girl (man)
<b>M&amp;W</b>	Che nema da se zomime, devojko ( <b>M</b> ) junache( <b>W</b> )	We'll never live together, dear girl (man)
<b>M&amp;W</b>	Che nema da se zomime, devojko ( <b>M</b> ) junache( <b>W</b> )	We'll never live together, dear girl (man)

## Devojko Mari Hubava (Bulgaria) - lyrics

Choral version (**Kitka**: "Nectar" CD 2003, track 16), sung by Sebastopol's **Gradina** and other choral groups

Music-video of this choral version: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1eSMDmYzDQ>

This version, without distinct interludes, is usually danced as a single-pattern, pravo-style dance.

<b>M</b>	Devojko mari, hubava, devojko	Beautiful Mari, dear girl
<b>M</b>	Sipni mi vince, da pijna, devojko	Pour me some wine, dear girl
<b>M</b>	Sipni mi vince, da pijna, devojko	Pour me some wine, dear girl
<b>M</b>	Da piem, da se napiem, devojko	Let's drink and get drunk, dear girl
<b>M</b>	Balnu da si kazhime, devojko	And compare our sad stories, dear girl
<b>M</b>	Chie balnu po mnozhko, devojko?	Whose story is the saddest, dear girl?
<b>W</b>	Moenu balnu po-mnozhko, junache	My story is sadder, dear man
<b>W</b>	Che imam ruba da pravem, junache	I must assemble a dowry, dear man
<b>W</b>	Che imam darje da stagam, junache	A dowry they will never accept, dear man
<b>M</b>	Moena balnu po-mnozhko, devojko	My story is sadder, dear girl
<b>M</b>	Che imam sluzhba da sluzhem, devojko	I have been drafted to the army, dear girl
<b>M</b>	A neman koshta gradena, devojko	We'll never have a home (garden), dear girl