

## **Transcript: Sword dance Moreška**

If you have ever looked up anything about the Croatian island of Korčula, among the first things you will come across is the sword dance called Moreška. If you have ever been at least vaguely interested in the landmarks of Croatian culture, you may have heard about Moreška, the pearl of Croatian and Korčula heritage. The word itself means *Moorish*, derived from the Spanish adjective “Morisco” or the Italian “Moresco”, since it came originally from Spain, Sicily or Italy (The Moors were the Muslim inhabitants who lived on the Iberian Peninsula, Sicily, parts of Southern France, and North Africa in the Middle Ages). The first recorded performance of Moreška was in 1156 in Lerida, portraying a Christian and National victory over the Moors and their expulsion from Aragon. From the 12<sup>th</sup> century and particularly in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, the dance spread to many Mediterranean countries and, through Spain, even to Germany and England. It was frequently locally moderated in regards to its music, protagonists and even to its plot. In most of the Mediterranean Moreška survived until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and in Italy and Dalmatia until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

But this is not the case in Korčula! It has been preserved since it first came there somewhere in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is still performed in its original war–dance form. Korčula has been the proud keepers of its tradition for four centuries! The text, patterns and music have been slightly altered but the original form is still preserved only in Korčula.

Every family in Korčula is proud to have its son as a young Moreška dancer or a daughter as Bula, the only female character, the fiancée of the White King. In a shorter version, the two armies of the White and Black King fight for Bula because the Black King, Moro, who is in love with her, imprisons her and wants her to be his wife. Bula loves The White King, Osman, and although The Black King offers her the kingdom of his father, she wants to return to her beloved Osman. There is the introductory part, Sfida, the menacing dance of the Black King, and seven different figures danced with the real, steel swords between the armies of the two Kings. In the end, as always, love conquers all! She is back in the arms of her beloved White King while the Black King admits his defeat and surrenders.

Adapted from: <https://www.total-croatia-news.com/travel/28442-moreska-the-korcula-sword-dance-a-local-and-parental-perspective>