

Ukrainian Hahilky-Vesnianky (Hayivky) Ukrainian Ritual Spring Songs and Dances



Presently in Ukraine, on Easter Sundays, young girls will perform hahilky in front of churches or cemeteries. In pagan times, hahilky were performed in sacred groves by a river, lake or ocean. These dances, songs, games and dramatic scenes were believed to serve a magical function with the aim of enticing Spring and chasing away Winter. The song and dances personified a funeral for frost and winter. They also imitated the planting and growth of crops, and tried to ensure a bountiful harvest through the magic of music, words and body motion.

In Pagan times, Ukrainians attempted to entice and enchant all the good spirits of a reawakened Nature with these dances and songs so that it would bring them good luck and wealth. Hahilky addressed various subjects. In some of the dances, the dancers walked in a circle imitating the rotation of the sun above, while in others various gestures of the dancers showed the continuity of human life on earth. Some hahilky spoke about the beauty and industriousness of young maidens, since Spring was also a time when love blossomed. (bwl 5/04)

