

Erdélyi Táncok (Dances of Transylvania)

Hungarian dances of Transylvania possess a dual characteristic of being extraordinarily developed while still preserving very archaic features. This is due in part to the isolation of this area, which favored the survival of old traditions. Escaping the Turkish invasions helped to ensure undisturbed cultural development. Thus, the new-style folk songs and dances spread very slowly in Transylvania.

When speaking of Transylvania, one is referring to the southeastern-most terminus of Medieval Hungary. Geographically, the Carpathian mountain range forms its natural eastern border. Presently this area is situated in Romania.

Many ethnic groups settled and lived together in this region, the most prominent being the Hungarians, Romanians, Germans (or Saxons), and gypsies. This ethnic variety has produced a most interesting and diversified peasant culture. There are areas where one can find interaction between different ethnic groups and a blending of traditional elements, as well as areas of regional and cultural separation wherein each ethnic group developed its own peculiar features.

This regional separation is evident in the folk dances of Transylvania; many regional dance dialects can be readily distinguished. One such dialect is that of the Mezőség, of which only a small part will be presented here.

Mezőségi Táncok (Dances of the Mezőség)

The ethnographic region known as the Mezőség (mező = field or farmland) is situated between the rivers Someșul Mic (Kis Szamos, in Hungarian) and Mureșul (Maros, in Hungarian), northeast and east of the city Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár, in Hungarian). Within this area there is a large Hungarian-speaking population living both in strictly Hungarian-speaking villages, as well as in villages of mixed populations (Hungarian, Romanian, and gypsy).

The Mezőségi dances are a set of dances ("táncrend", or "dance cycle") which is based on the songs and dance forms originally performed in such Mezőségi villages as Magyarpalatka and Vajdakamarás. These dances are popular not only among the Hungarian-speaking people (and in recent years, especially among the youth) of Transylvania, but also in the "táncház" (lit., "dance house") movement in Hungary. The dance cycle as it is done in the táncház was introduced by Sándor Timár.

The dance cycle in its original form is composed of two men's dances (the "Ritka Magyar" and "Sűrű Magyar"), followed by two couples' dances (the "Akasztós" = "limping" or "dragging", and the Csárdás). The Akasztós is also known as the "Cigánytánc" (= "gypsy dance"), and is characterized by its slow asymmetrical rhythm. The Csárdás is subdivided into the "Ritka csárdás", "Szőkös", and "Sűrű csárdás", which are structurally similar but differ in style, tempo, and melody.

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Of all the dances of the cycle, usually only the Akasztós and Csárdás are seen today in the dance houses of Transylvania and Hungary. The men's dances are rarely performed and seem to be dying out, as is the case with other men's dances of this region.

The dance begins with couples standing and singing in front of the musicians. Gradually, each couple starts to dance the Akasztós, with walking steps forward and back, followed by turning together with the limping step that characterizes this dance. The musical transition into the csárdás is signalled by the quickening of the tempo and the change to an even rhythm. The transition from the akasztós turn into the csárdás is usually a simple walking rida couples' turn continuing in the same direction as the couple was moving in the akasztós.

The Mezőségi Csárdás

There are seemingly endless variations to play with in the csárdás. Some are more suited to particular tempos than others (such as doing Double Turns during the Szóköös), but this is also somewhat dependent on the level of expertise of the dancers. There is no hard and fast rule as to what step is done when. As you experiment with the many possibilities, you will undoubtedly create favorite sequences all your own!

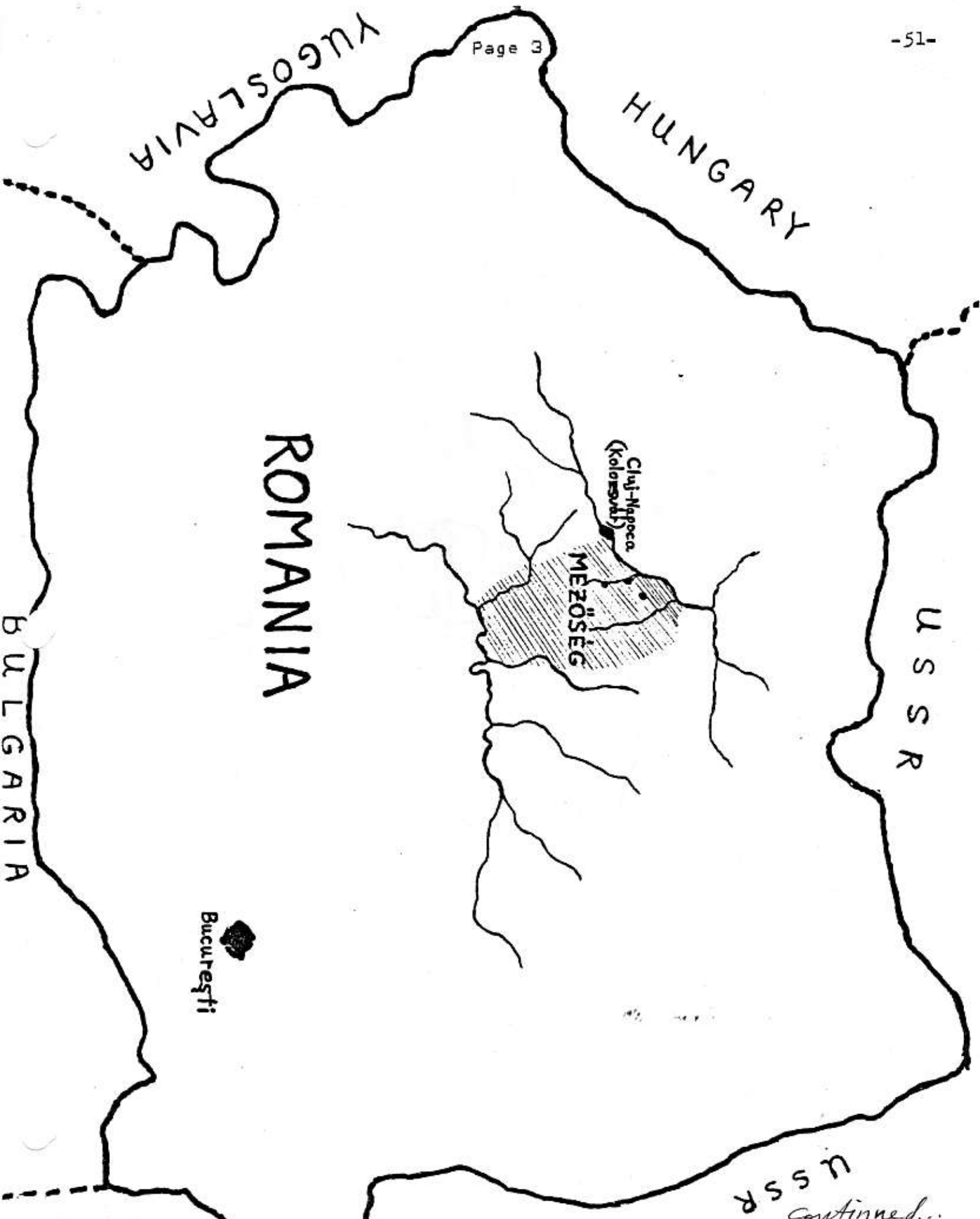
For teaching purposes, we have divided the csárdás steps into the following categories:

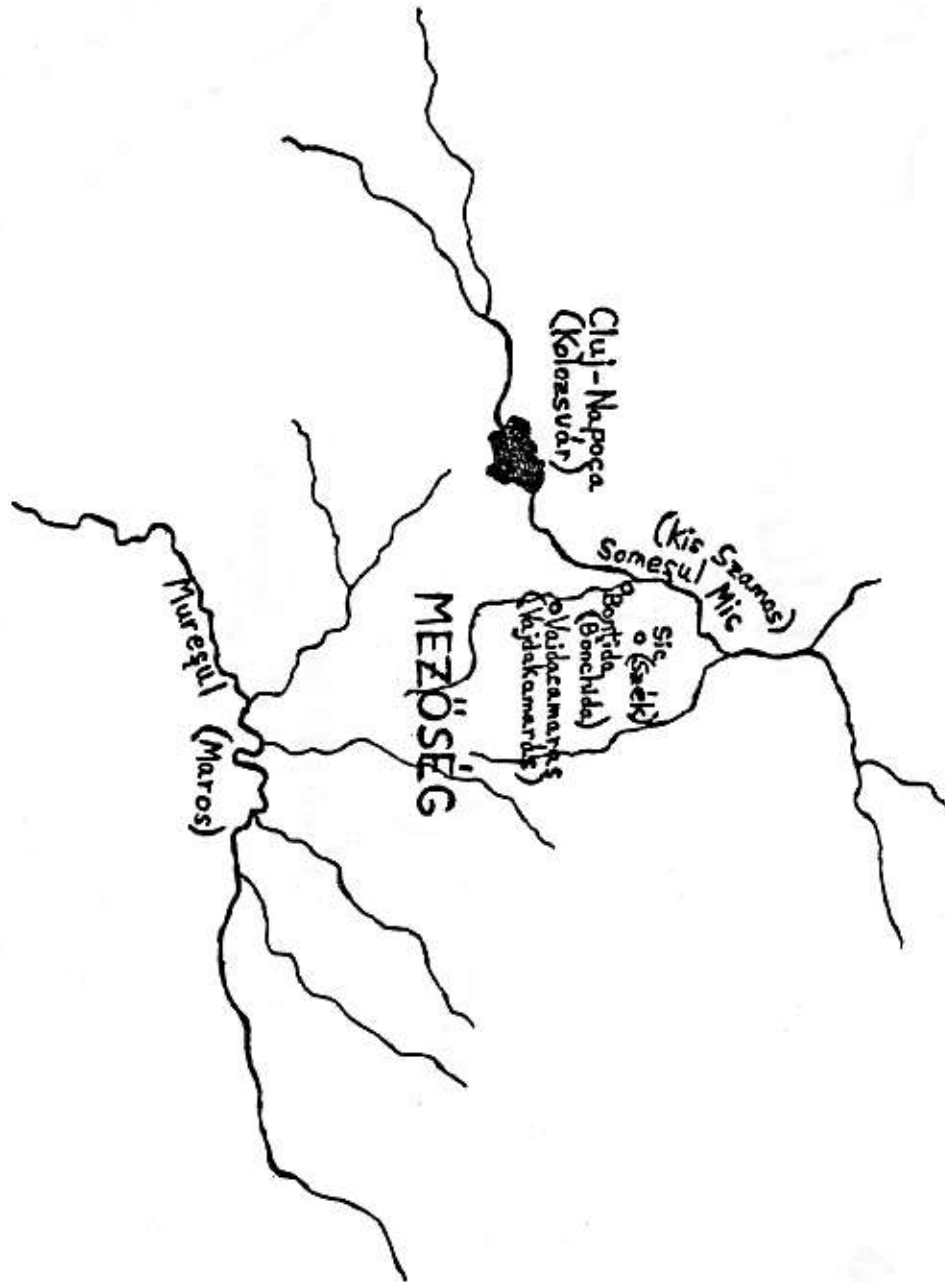
- * Átvétős Variations
- * Throw Sequences
- * Throw-and-Turn Sequences
- * Men's Steps:
 - Couple Together Variations
 - Couple Separation Variations

Steps within categories can be done any number of times, and categories of steps can be done in any order. We shall first present a few building blocks from these categories and then offer some sequences containing them. Some steps "cross phrases" (for example, a step may take 1 1/2 measures), so the step which follows begins in the middle of the phrase. However, to simplify the description, we have written all steps as beginning "on the phrase".

The man is responsible for choosing the steps to be done; this includes giving the women the appropriate "signals" so that she can follow his lead. (We will point out some useful signals for you to try.) You will see that certain steps follow others more easily, and this will probably (but not necessarily) guide your choice of sequences. Generally, a dancer tries to construct the dance so that it has peaks (high-energy parts) and valleys (low-energy parts) interspersed. This gives the dance color and dynamics, as well as being practical.

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Record: Hungaroton SLPX 18031-32, 18042
Folkcraft-Europe LP-52

Formation: Cpls scattered freely around the room, generally facing
twd the musicians.

General Styling: All steps are done flat-footed, unless otherwise noted.

Átvetős Variations

The Átvetős (átvető = cross-over) is the basic step of the csárdás. In it, M and W exchange places. It usually appears between more complicated figures, and is used as a rest step or to put the W on the appropriate side to begin another variation. In addition to the variations presented here, the átvetős may be embellished by men's slapping or clapping variations, with or without W turn. Some such embellishments may cause the M path to vary slightly. Given below are the "Basic Átvetős" and "Átvetős with W Turn".

Basic Átvetős Position: The átvetős is done with W on either side of M. If W on M R, then M R hand is on W L shldr blade, and W L hand is on M R shldr blade (crossed under M arm). Arms are bent, elbows down. Partners angle towards each other.

BASIC ÁTVETŐS

Position: Begin in Basic Átvetős Position -- W on M R used to describe step. Final position is then with W on M L.

MEN

Meas.	Ct.	
1	1	Sm step R to R, extend arm as W extends arm.
	2	Sm step L across R, cross arm in front as W pulls W arm in.
	3	Release R hand, turn 1/4 CCW into final pos as step R, catch W R shldr blade with L hand as W turns into final position.
	+	Close L to R, take wt.
	4	Sm step R bkwd.

WOMEN

Meas.	Ct.	
1	1	Lg step R outward and across M, extend L arm to allow outward motion.
	2	Lg step L inward and twd M L side, pull in with L arm.
	3	Release L hand, turn 1/2 CCW into final position as step R, place R hand on M L shldr blade.
	+	Close L to R, take wt.
	4	Sm step R bkwd.

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ÁTVEŤÓS WITH W TURN

This is an átvetős with a W 2-count turn interjected, so it takes 1 1/2 measures. To demonstrate the small flexibility allowed in the M path, the M pos in meas 2 slightly differs from (but may also be danced the same as) the second half of meas 1 of the "Basic Átvetős".

Position: Begin in Basic Átvetős Position with W on M R, but with M R hand on W upper arm. (This hand position is the signal for the turn.) Final position is with W on M L.

MEN

- | Meas. | Ct. | | |
|-------|-----|--|---|
| 1 | 1 | Sm step R to R, extend arm as W extends arm. | |
| | + | Sm step L next to R. | |
| | 2 | Sm step R in place, cross arm in front as W pulls in. | |
| | 3 | Step L in place (facing W), push W L arm to M R (to help W turn CCW) | |
| | + | Step R in place. | |
| | 4 | Step L in place. | |
| | 2 | 1 | Step R slightly fwd, catch W on M L with M L hand on W R shldr blade as W completes turn. |
| | | + | Step L near R. |
| 2 | | Step R fwd. | |

WOMEN

- | Meas. | Ct. | |
|-------|-----|---|
| 1 | 1 | Lg step R outward and across M, extend arm to allow outward motion. |
| | 2 | Lg step L inward and twd M L side, pull in with L arm. |
| | 3 | Release R hand, turn a full turn CCW on R heel approx in place. |
| | + | Put R toe down (to stop turn). |
| | 4 | Step L slightly fwd (in the direction out of the turn). |
| 2 | 1 | Turn 1/2 CCW into final position as step R. |
| | + | Close L to R, take wt. |
| | 2 | Sm step R bkwd. |

Throw Sequences

A Throw Sequence consists of a "Throw" followed by a "Throw Ending". The Throw is also used to begin both a Throw-and-Turn Sequence and a Couple Separation Sequence (both defined later). Given below are the "Basic Throw", and the "Short Throw Ending" and "Long Throw Ending". In addition to the sequences presented here, throw sequences may be embellished by men's slapping and clapping variations.

Throw Position: The throw is generally done beginning with W on M R. The M R hand grasps the W L upper arm. The W position is the same as the *Átvetós* Position (W L hand on M R shldr blade, under M arm). Grasping the W upper arm is a useful signal for the throw; plus, compared to the *Átvetós* Position, there is additional space for the W to pass in front of the M.

BASIC THROW

The W is passed to M L side, executing a 2-count heel turn as she passes behind M.

Position: Begin in Throw Position. At the end of the throw the cpl is approx facing the opp dir, W on M R. The basic throw can also be done with W on M L (all maneuvers are reversed); it is then followed by a reversed Short Throw Ending (see below).

MEN

Meas.	Ct.	
1	1	Step R to R, guide W twd M L shldr with M R hand.
	+	Step L slightly behind R.
	2	Step R in place, (W is close to M L shldr), gently push W past M L shldr and into W turn.
	3	Turn 1/4 CW as step L.
	4	Close R to L, no wt. (W is somewhere in the vicinity of M R side again.)

A variation for the second half of the measure is:

3	Turn 1/4 CW as step L.
+	Step R behind L in place.
4	Step L in place.

WOMEN

Meas.	Ct.	
1	1	Lg step R, outwards and across M, extend L arm to allow outward motion.
	2	Lg step L inwards and to other side of M, keep arm stiff in preparation for the throw.
	3	Release L hand, step on R heel along the arc begun in cts. 1, 2, turn a full turn CCW on R heel to get around M.
	+	Put R toe down (to stop turn).
	4	Step L fwd (continue along arc around M).

SHORT THROW ENDING

This is a 1/2 measure ending.

Position: Begin in final throw position (W on M R).
Final position is reversed Basic Átvétós Position.

MEN

- | | | |
|-------|-----|--|
| Meas. | Ct. | |
| 1 | 1 | Turn 1/4 CCW as step R, extend L arm to catch W R shldr blade as W turns-into final pos. |
| | + | Close L to R, take wt. |
| | 2 | Sm step R bkwd. |

WOMEN

- | | | |
|-------|-----|---|
| Meas. | Ct. | |
| 1 | 1 | Continue to turn 1/2 more CCW out of throw as step R. |
| | + | Close L to R, take wt, put R hand on M L shldr blade. |
| | 2 | Sm step R bkwd. |

LONG THROW ENDING

This is a full-measure ending. Its signal, to distinguish it from the "Short Throw Ending", is that the M R hand catches the W L shldr blade (instead of letting W continue turn and catching W R shldr blade).

Position: Same as for short throw ending.

MEN

- | | |
|-------|--|
| Meas. | |
| 1 | Catch W L shldr blade with M R hand, do a Basic Átvétós step. (W ends on M L.) |

WOMEN

- | | |
|-------|---|
| Meas. | |
| 1 | Grasp M R shldr blade with W L, do a Basic Átvétós step, finish on M L. |

Continued...

Throw-and-Turn Sequences

A Throw-and-Turn Sequence consists of a "Throw" followed by one or more "Turn" variations, followed by a "Turn Ending". The "Throw" is identical to the throw in a "Throw Sequence" (defined earlier), so is not given below. There are numerous turn variations, some using M R hand, others using M L hand; the W uses L hand. There are also quite a few turn endings, providing several interesting ways to flow into the next sequence. Men's slapping embellishments are abundant.

Turn Preparation Position: The actual turn is preceded by two cifra (or, "ti-ti-ta") steps, which begin after the throw, so the W is on M R, somewhat facing each other and close enough to take hands. R ft is free for both M and W. At the end of the two cifra steps, the M raises W L hand into turn pos. Throughout the cifra, the W moves CCW in a circle around the M as M does steps approx in place.

Turn Position: The W hand pos is critical to the success of the turn. W L arm is extended diag. sdwd, and must be bent at elbow so that lower arm is perpendicular to the floor. Depending on the height of M, the height of W elbow is between W neck and nose. The W arm stays in this pos throughout the turn. W R arm forms arc comfortably in front, approx waist-high; in this pos, W uses R arm as needed to help turn CCW. The M hand and body pos varies depending on which hand is used and whether the variation includes some slapping, but M supports W arm during turn, so M hand is always at height of W hand. Throughout the turn, the W continues the CCW motion (begun in the cifra) around the M as M backs up approx in place to serve as a pivot point.

Turn Ending Position: Two signals that a turn sequence is about to end are: (1) the M brings the joined hands DOWNWARD into position for the chosen ending, or (2) the M releases the W hand.

R-HAND TURN

After two cifra steps with M R and W L hand joined, W makes 2 2-ct R heel turns, travelling around M as M backs up in sm circle almost in place.

MEN

Meas.	Ct.	
(Throughout meas 1, "fwd" means "fwd along CCW circle".)		
1	1	Step R fwd, swoop R arm dnwd and bkwd with hand palm down to catch W L hand, begin to face twd W.
	+	Step L near R, continue motion of body and joined arms.
	2	Step R fwd, stop arms when parallel to floor.
	3	Step L fwd, swoop arms dnwd and fwd to reverse arc just made, begin to face away from W.
	+	Step R near L, continue motion of body and joined arms.
	4	Step L fwd, stop arms when parallel to floor, then move joined hands so W and M arms are bent and lower arms are perpendicular to floor.

Continued...

(Throughout meas 2, M chest should approx face W L side.)

- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 2 | 1 | Step R bkwd in sm arc, begin to turn W CCW (W turn takes 2 cts). |
| | 2 | Step L bkwd in sm arc. |
| | 3-4 | Repeat cts 1-2 |

WOMEN

- | | | |
|-------|-----|---|
| Meas. | Ct. | |
| 1 | 1 | Lg step R fwd along CCW arc around M as M catches W L hand to begin dnwd motion of arm, turn twd M. |
| | + | Step L behind R, slightly turned out. |
| | 2 | Step R fwd. |
| | 3 | Lg step L fwd along CCW arc around M as joined arms begin reverse arc, turn away from M. |
| | + | Step R behind L. |
| | 4 | Step L fwd, allow M to move arm into turn pos. |
| 2 | 1 | Lg step fwd along CCW arc on R heel, turn slightly more than a full turn CCW. |
| | + | Put R toe down (to stop turn). |
| | 2 | Lg step L fwd along CCW arc around M. |
| | 3 | Repeat cts 1, +, 2. |
| | + | |
| | 4 | |

L-HAND TURN

After two cifra steps with M L hand and W L hand joined, W makes 2 2-ct R heel turns as M moves fwd in sm circle almost in place.

MEN

- | | | |
|--|-----|--|
| Meas. | Ct. | |
| (Throughout meas 1, "fwd" means "fwd along CCW circle".) | | |
| 1 | 1 | Step R fwd, catch W L hand with M L hand, extend joined arms fwd (to W L), face so M chest is perpendicular to W L side. |
| | + | Step L near R. |
| | 2 | Step R fwd (arms are parallel to floor). |
| | 3 | Step L fwd, bring arms across to M L, turn to face W. (W faces away from M.) |
| | + | Step R near L. |
| | 4 | Step L fwd, move joined hands so W and M arms are bent and W lower arm is perpendicular to floor. |

(Throughout meas 2, "fwd" means "fwd along sm CCW circle"; M chest should approx face W L side.)

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 2 | 1 | Step R fwd, begin to turn W CCW (W turn takes 2 cts). |
| | 2 | Step L fwd. |
| | 3-4 | Repeat cts. 1-2 |

WOMEN

- | | | |
|-------|--|------------------------------------|
| Meas. | | |
| 1-2 | | Same as meas 1-2 in "R-Hand Turn". |

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SHORT THROW-AND-TURN ENDING

This is a 1/2 measure ending. Releasing hands is the signal for this ending.

Position: Coming out of W turn, W is approx on M R.
Final position is reversed Basic Átvetős Position.

MEN

Meas.	Ct.	
1	1	Release (and push slightly CCW) W hand, turn 1/4 CCW as step R, extend L arm to catch W R shldr blade as W turns into final pos.
	+	Close L to R, take wt.
	2	Sm step R bkwd.

WOMEN

Meas.	Ct.	
1	1	Release M hand, continue to turn 1/2 more CCW out of throw as step R.
	+	Close L to R, take wt, put R hand on M L shldr blade.
	2	Sm step R bkwd.

LONG THROW-AND-TURN ENDING

This is a full-measure ending, which resembles the basic átvétős except that the hand and arm positions are different. It is important to keep tension between M and W arms during cts 1 and 2.

Position: Coming out of W turn, W is approx on M R.
Final position is reversed Basic Átvetős Position.

MEN

Meas.	Ct.	
1	1	Bring joined arms dnwd to approx waist-height as W completes turn, take sm step R to R as begin to lead W across to M L.
	2	Sm step L across R, pull W in to M L.
	3	Release R hand, turn 1/4 CCW into final pos, step R, catch W R shldr blade with L hand as W turns into final position.
	+	Close L to R, take wt.
	4	Sm step R bkwd.

WOMEN

Meas.	Ct.	
1	1	Lg step R outward and across M.
	2	Lg step L inward and twd M L side, as M pulls in.
	3	Release M hand, turn 1/2 CCW into final pos as step R, place R hand on M L shldr blade.
	+	Close L to R, take wt.
	4	Sm step R bkwd.

Continued...

TRAILING CIRCLES

This is a separate step with its own ending, and almost always follows the W turning sequence. It is presented here in its simplest form. Its variations use men's slapping sequences as embellishments, but the women's step does not change.

Position: Coming out of "L-Hand Turn", M places W diag behind M L side. The M does cifra steps (or slapping variations) in a sm CCW circle; W follows M in this position with cifra steps until M passes W under M R arm to M R side, ending in Basic Atvetós Position.

MEN

Meas.	Ct.	
(Throughout meas 1, "fwd" means "fwd in CCW circle".)		
1	1	Bring joined hands dnwd and behind M back, M elbow bent, M palm up and hand slightly lower than small of back; step R fwd.
	+	Step L near R.
	2	Step R fwd.
	3	Same as cts 1,+,2, but with opp ftwk.
	+	
	4	
2		Same as meas 1.
3	1	Raise R arm (so W can pass under it) as step R bkwd to begin sm CCW circle in place.
	2	"Hop" on R (don't leave floor) as pivot slightly CCW.
	3	Release W L hand, place M R hand on W L shldr blade as step L bkwd along CCW circle.
	4	"Hop" on L (don't leave floor) as pivot slightly CCW.
4		Same as Basic Atvetós.

WOMEN

Meas.	Ct.	
(Throughout meas 1,2, and 3, "fwd" means "fwd to follow M path".)		
1	1	Grasp M upper L arm with R hand, hold M L hand in W L hand with palm down; step R fwd.
	+	Step L near R.
	2	Step R fwd.
	3	Same as cts 1,+,2, but with opp ftwk.
	+	
	4	
2		Same as meas 1.
3	1	Continue CCW under M R arm as step R fwd.
	+	Step L near R.
	2	Step R fwd.
	3	Release M hand, grasp M R shldr blade with L hand as step L fwd.
	+	Step R near L.
	4	Step L fwd.
4	1	Same as Basic Atvetós.

Men's Steps

Men's slapping steps can be performed either with the couple separated or together. If done separated, the M moves freely within a small area; the W either dances around the M with a series of 2-count heel turns prefaced by two cifra steps, or watches the M while doing a down-beat waiting step. If done together, the W angles slightly twd M, stands with L ft fwd, and in this position steps L (cts 1-2), steps R (cts 3-4) repeatedly in place, giving strong support to M. The "Forward Travel Boot Slap", "Down Slap", "Side Slap", and "Széki Slap" are described as if performed with the couple together. When danced separately, they can be done either as described, or with variations. The "Hop Slap" variation is done during couple separation only.

Cpl Together Preparation: Use the Basic Átvétő's Step with the following modifications:

MEN --- on ct. 3, slide L hand across to W L shldr;
on ct. 4, finish with wt on both ft.

WOMEN - do cts. 3,+4 almost in place, begin to support M.

Position: W is on M L, M L hand rests on W L shldr throughout the step.
ALL BOOT SLAPS USE R HAND (L hand is on W shldr).

FORWARD TRAVEL BOOT SLAP

In this step, "slap boot" means "slap boot at front of calf", unless otherwise noted.

M Position: Bent over at waist for all of meas 1 and for first half of meas 2.

Meas.	Ct.	
1	1	Step L in place.
	+	Lift R leg to low fwd pos, slap R boot.
	2	Step R slightly fwd.
	+	Step L beside R.
	3	Lift R leg to low fwd pos, slap R boot.
	+	Step R slightly fwd.
	4	Step L beside R.
	+	Lift R leg to low fwd pos, slap R boot.
1	1	Step R fwd.
	+	Lift L leg to low fwd pos, slap L boot.
	2	Step L fwd.
	+	Lift R leg to low fwd pos, slap R boot.
	3	Stand upright, step R fwd, lift L leg fwd with bent knee.
4	Slap inside L boot.	

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DOWN SLAP

Meas.	Ct.	
1	1	Jump on both ft slightly apart into semi-squat pos.
	+	Slap inside R boot.
	2	Stand up, wt on L, lift R leg sdwd R with bent knee pointing slightly inward.
	+	Slap R ankle.
	3	Step R in place, begin to lift L leg fwd with bent knee, and with slight swing from side.
	4	Slap inside L boot.

SIDE SLAP

Meas.	Ct.	
1	1	With wt on L ft, lift R leg slightly sdwd with bent knee pointing slightly inward.
	+	Slap R ankle.
	2	Hold.
	+	Slap R ankle.
	3	Step R in place.
	+	Stand on R ft, lift L leg fwd with bent knee, and with slight swing from side.
	4	Slap inside L boot.

SIÉKI SLAP

Meas.	Ct.	
1	1	Step L in place, lift R leg slightly sdwd with bent knee pointing slightly inward.
	+	Slap R ankle.
	2	Step R in place.
	+	With wt on R ft, lift L ft slightly, slap side of R thigh.
	3	Close L to R with heel click, take wt on L.
	+	Lift R leg slightly fwd with bent knee, slap top of R thigh.
	4	Extend R leg fwd, slap front of R boot.
	+	Close R to L, wt on both ft.

Couple Separation Preparation: Use the Basic Throw to separate.
(To get back together, the M picks up the W on M L.)

Position: As the M dances in a small area, the W dances any combination of 2-count heel turns around the M, interspersed with cifra steps or a down-beat waiting step. (The heel turns are usually preceded by two cifra steps.)

HOP SLAP

Meas.	Ct.	
1	1	Step L.
	+	Clap hands in front, extend R leg fwd.
	2	"Hop" on L (don't leave floor), slap R inside boot with R hand.
	+	Clap hands in front, lower R leg.
	3	
	+	Repeat cts 1+2+ with opp hand and ftwk.
	4	
	+	

DOWN-BEAT WAITING (Women)

(Also done with opp ftwk.)

Meas.	Ct.	
1	1	Step R in place, bend knees.
	+	Step on L heel near R arch, straighten knees slightly.

(Repeat indefinitely.)

Presented by
Phillip Klingman and Janet R. Roberts
Kolo Festival, 1981

Continued...

Songs for Mezőségi Táncok: Akasztós és Ritka Csárdás

Azt gondoltam, míg a világ, hogy mind ég a gyertyavilág
De már látom, hogy elalszik, az én rózsám rám haragszik
Elment, elment az én párom, világgá ment egy fűszálon
Lalala...

Ez a világ gyöngykoszorú, csak az én szívem szomorú
Ajlalalala...

Édesanyám gyengén nevelt engemet
Mégsem tudja az én bús életemet
/:Mert ha tudná az én bús életemet
Éjjel-nappal siratgatna engemet:/

Két fal között fölsütött a holdvilág
Megttagadott engemet édesanyám
/:Megttagadott, nem hív többé lányának
Csak én mondom ötet édesanyámnak:/

Fehér fuszulyka virág, ne jöjj hozzám napvilág
/:Gyere este sötétbe, hadd üljek az öledbe:/
Ha te tudnád, amit én, ki babája vagyok én
/:Te is sírnál, nem csak én, keservesebben mint én:/

I thought the candle light would burn until world's end
But I see it's dying down already, my darling's cross with me
My partner's gone away, away, out into the world, on a blade of grass
Lalala...
This world is a string of pearls, only my heart is sorrowful
Aylalala...

My mother raised me gently
Yet she knows not of my sad life
/:Were she to know of my sad life
She would bewail me day and night:/

The moonbeam shone between two walls
My mother's cast me out
/:She's cast me out, and calls me no more daughter
Yet I still call her mother:/

white bean flower, don't come to me in daylight
/:Come in the evening when it's dark, that I can sit upon your lap:/
If you knew what I know, whose sweetheart I am
/:You too would weep, and not just I, more bitterly than I:/

Presented by Mary Wallace