

Hopak (Ukraine)

Hopak (HOH-pahk) can be characterized as the national dance of the Ukraine in that it typifies the gaiety and abandon prevalent in their dances and is the most widely known dance of this region. Sometimes the name of the dance is spelled “Gopak,” but this gives it a Russian pronunciation. The name translates roughly to the exclamation “whoo-pa” or “whoopee.” The choreography described here was arranged for recreational dancers by Henry “Buzz” Glass, and published originally by the Folk Dance Federation of California (*Folk Dances from Near and Far*, vol. 2, 1946). Glass recalls (April 2002) that his choreography of this dance developed from: a) private dance lessons with Vasya Kuratov—an internationally known teacher and performer of Russian, Ukrainian, and Georgian dance; b) his attendance at many Slavic festivals put on by the Russian community in Fresno; and c) the extensive “Russian” (= Soviet Union) repertoire of Chang’s International Folk Dancers in the 1930-40s. See comments at the end of this description for notes on how the original choreography can be modified to better reflect Ukrainian styling.

Music: Records: Kismet A106, Columbia 20346F, Victor V-21123A 2/4 meter

Formation: Cpls in circle facing LOD (CCW) with hands held in Varsouvienne position.

Steps and Styling: Pas de Basque*, Buzz step*, Lunge-step*, Push-step*, Varsouvienne position*

In the free-style part of the dance men perform various *Prysiadka* (prysid—preh-seed—in Ukrainian) steps (see original description for some notes on prysiadkas, and suggestions for some basic Prysidy (preh-seed-eh) at end of this description). When hands are free, place hands on hips with fingers fwd, thumbs back (fists on hips can also be used, but this gives the dance more of a Russian character).

* Described in *Steps & Styling* (rev. 1996), published by the Folk Dance Federation of CA, Inc.

Meas	Pattern
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INTRODUCTION. The most commonly used music is from the Kismet record. There is no introduction, so typically dancers start on meas 2 of Fig. I.

I. PAS DE BASQUE

- 1-16 Starting with L ft for both and vigorously moving fwd, dance 16 prancing Pas de Basque steps. Style is high-stepping although may be more reserved for W. Start with small leap fwd onto L (ct 1); step on R across in front of L (ct &); and step on L behind R (ct 2). On meas 2, repeat starting with leap onto R ft. Posture is erect, with wt over heels, and lower body twists slightly in direction of leaping ft.

II. TOUCH-EXTEND

- 1 Still in Varsouvienne hold, hop on R (for both), bringing L ft beside R lower leg, toes pointed down (may touch floor)(ct 1); hop again on R extending L ft sharply forward, straightening leg, and pointing toe downward (ct 2).
- 2 Run forward with 3 light running steps L,R,L (cts 1,&,2).
- 3-4 Repeat meas 1-2 with opp ftwk.
- 5-16 Repeat meas 1-4 three more times.

III. RUNNING POLKA STEPS

- 1-2 Running smoothly on balls of ft with ft close to the floor: leap fwd on L (ct 1); step fwd on R (ct &); step fwd on L (ct 2)(long, short, short). Cpls lean bodies slightly to the L on ct 1. Repeat meas 1 with opp ftwk and leaning slightly to R.
- 3-16 Repeat meas 1-2 seven more times for total of 16 running polkas; accent slightly ct 1 of each meas.

IV. BUZZ STEP TURN

- 1-8 Release hands and turn individually to own R (CW) using 15 buzz steps with stamp on L ft meas 8, ct 2. Extend R arm high with palm up; return R hand to hip on stamp; L hand is on hip throughout. Alternatively, dance 14 buzz steps and on meas 8 stamp L,R,L (cts 1,&,2).
- 9-16 Repeat meas 1-8 turning to L (CCW) with opp ftwk and hand positions. End in Varsouvienne pos. M may clap on meas 9, ct 1.

V. LUNGE-DISPLACE

- 1 Lunge fwd on L, bending knee, R leg is held fairly straight out behind, and head turns in direction of trailing leg (ct 1); step on R with bent knee just behind L, displacing L ft which is extended fwd with straight knee (ct 2). An alternative is to bring L knee up in front on ct 2.
- 2 Run fwd with 3 small steps (L,R,L)(cts 1,&,2).
- 3-4 Repeat meas 1-2 with opp. ftwk.
- 5-16 Repeat meas 1-4 three more times (total of 8 lunge-displace steps). Turning the head twd the trailing leg means that the opp shldr leads fwd on the lunge step. (Note that not all groups do this head-turning style, and it is not mentioned in the original description.) An alternative hand hold is to place R hands on the W's R hip and hold L hands fwd. On meas 16 move into R hips adjacent pos.

VI. BUZZ STEP TURN WITH PARTNER

- 1-8 With R hips together, R hands on ptr's L waist, and L arms held high (about 45° angle), turn CW with 15 buzz steps; stamp with R ft on ct 2 of meas 8, and turn to have L hips adjacent.

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- 9-16 Repeat meas 1-8 turning CCW and with opp ftwk and hand positions. End with ptrs facing, M's R shldr and W's L twd ctr.

VII. PUSHAWAY

- 1-8 M move twd ctr (W twd outside) with 14 push steps followed by 3 stamps (L,R,L), leading arm held up at about 45 degree angle with elbow bent gently to make slightly rounded arm, trailing hand is on hip, and each looks back over shldr at ptr. Push step: pushing off with ball of L ft slightly behind R, fall to R on R bending knee slightly to give down feeling while flicking L (ct 1)(2 push steps per meas). Place hands on hips in meas 8.
- 9-16 Repeat meas 1-8 with opposite ft work and direction (moving back twd ptr).

VIII. TOE-HEEL-TOUCH-KICK

- 1-2 Ptrs facing, hands on hips; M on inside. Touching R toe in front and to side with heel out, hop on L ft turning R hip slightly twd ptr (ct 1); touching R heel in front and to side, toe angled to R, hop on L ft turning L hip slightly twd ptr (ct 2); touching R toe in front of L ft but with heel to L, hop on L ft (ct 1); extending R ft diag to side by sharply straightening leg, toe pointed downward, hop on L ft (ct 2).
- 3-4 Repeat meas 1-2 with opp ftwk starting with small leap onto R ft.
- 5-16 Repeat meas 1-4 three more times.

IX. POLKA TURNS

(In the original dance description, improvisations started at this point, but the pattern described here is generally done by most groups.)

- 1-8 With R elbows held horizontally and bent arms slightly behind ptr's, turn CW with 8 small polka steps; L arms are extended sdwd, palms down, or diagonally up with palms up. On meas 8 turn twd each other to face other direction.
- 9-16 Repeat meas 1-8 in CCW direction and with opp ftwk and arm positions. End with M on inside of circle facing ptr.

X. IMPROVISATIONS

- 1-16 W improvise with Pas de Basques; Back Reel Steps (step on R behind L displacing L which is lifted fwd (ct 1); L circles back behind R while R can chug a little fwd to maintain pos (ct &); repeat with opp ftwk); Toe-heel-touch-kick Steps (Fig. VIII); Turning Buzz Steps.

M improvise with Prysidy (Prysiadky) or any of the same steps used by W.

Sequence can end with cpl doing turning polkas (Fig. IX) or turning buzz steps (Fig. VI), ending with pose (ptrs can back away from each other, keeping M's R and W's L hands joined and raising free hands high).

Ukrainian styling notes based on comments from Dorothy Daw as learned by her from Vince Evanchuck:

- 1) Varsouvienne hold (Figs I, II, III, V): L hands joined and held extended fwd at chest level; R hands joined over W's R shldr and held at head level.
- 2) Free hands are on hips with fingers fwd, thumbs back. The fist on hips prescribed in the original description is Russian styling.
- 3) In Fig V, instead of a leaping lunge fwd on ct 1, slide ft fwd keeping it close to the floor.
- 4) In Fig IX, meas 1-8, W's R hand is on her chest, palm down (to hold beads in place).

Some basic prysidy for men (from notes by Vince Evanchuck, 1971):

Basic squat—Assume a squatting pos sitting over heel, on toes, with knees at a 90 degree angle and turned out (ct 1); rise to standing pos with heels together and toes diagonally out (ct 2).

Heel prysid—Repeat Basic ct 1; rise to stride pos landing on heels and with toes turned up and out (ct 2).

Prysid z udarijen (preh-seed zeh-dah-ree-yen)—Do Basic ct 1; rise to stride with stamp on both ft flat on floor (ct 2).

Detorkanya (deh-tor-kahn-yah)—Hop on L as R toe touches in front of L (ct 1); hop on L as R heel touches in front of L (ct &). Reverse ftwk for cts 2, &.

Vexholyacnek (vekh-hol-yash-nek)—Hop on L as R toe touches at instep of L with R heel turned out (ct 1); hop on L as R heel touches at instep of L with toe and knees turned out (ct &); reverse ftwk for cts 2, &.

Pedskok (peed skok)—Hop on L as R knee is lifted high (ct 1); step on R beside L (ct &); step on L in place (ct 2); hold (ct &). This step can be done with opp ftwk, but it is done several times on the same side; it does not alternate R and L.

Pereskok z presydkom (jump over; pear-es-kok za preh-sed-kom)—Leap onto R in front of L as L is brought up and behind R calf (ct 1); hop on R as L is kicked diagonally out to side with leg straight (ct 2). This is generally followed by a Basic squat.

Schupak (shoo-pahk)—Drop to Basic squat pos but with wt on L ft and with R leg extended fwd (ct 1); shift wt to R and extend L fwd (ct &); shift wt back to L, extending R fwd (ct 2); repeat ct 1& (ct &); recover as in Basic squat ct 2.