

Name of dance: Hora

Pronunciation: hoh-rrah

Place of origin: Jewish communities from northeastern Romania, Moldova, and southwestern Ukraine

Learned from: Michael Alpert, 1991

Source of music: Contemporary sources that work well for dancing include: ‘**Epstein’s Hora**’ from *The Art of Klezmer Clarinet* (Margot Leverett, Traditional Crossroads CD 4296, track 11); ‘**Klaybt Zich Tsunoyf (Gather Together)**’ from *Brave Old World, Klezmer Music* (Flying Fish CD 70560, track 10). Some old recordings are: ‘**Yiddish Hora – a heymish freylekhs**’ performed by Max Leibowitz, from *Yikhes: Frühe Klezmer-Aufnahmen von 1907-1939* (Trikont CD US-0179, track 14); ‘**Fihren Di Mechutonim Aheim**’ performed by Naftule Brandwein, from *Abe Schwartz: The Klezmer King* (Columbia/ Legacy CD CK 86321, track 24).

About the dance: The name *hora* is widely associated nowadays either with the Israeli *Hora* (a dance in 2/4 meter probably imported from Romanian or Romanian Jewish sources that originally went by other names) or with a wide variety of Romanian folk dances. The word derives from the ancient Greek *horos*, originally denoting dances or songs done by a *chorus* or group, and now the source of names in many languages for such activity (compare: Bulgarian *horo*, Macedonian *oro*, Serbian *kolo*...). Among Ashkenazic Jews, particularly those who came from northeastern Romania or the Bukovina area of western Ukraine, *hora* meant a version of the dance described below: a slow circle dance in a highly accented 3/8 meter. Their dance also went by many other names: *londre*, *landre*, *olyandre*, *zhok* (a Romanian word for ‘dance’), *krumer tants* (‘crooked dance’, perhaps referring to the bend in the circle of dancers, as it does with similarly named dances in the Balkans), *gasn nign* (‘street song’, a designation from the use of the dance as a processional down streets, usually during weddings), and among Ukrainian Jewish communities further removed from the dance’s Romanian sources also *rumeyner freylekhs* (Romanian Jewish dance) and *vulekhl* (Wallachian or Romanian one).

Rhythm: 3/8, counted 1.....&-3-&, 1.....&-3-&

While the rhythm is much of what distinguishes this old Yiddish version of the *hora* from its more recent Hassidic or Israeli cousins, its rhythmic identity can be porous or fuzzy at the edges, and can spill over into a syncopated 4/4 in one direction or a limping 5/8 in another direction. Good musicians can exploit such flexibility for its effect on dancers; less good musicians aren’t sure where they are in the rhythm or what effect it has.

Formation: The dance is done in a circle, either a closed one or an open one with a leader at the R end of the line, and can occasionally break into couple figures, as do similar non-Jewish dances from Romania. Hands are either held up in W-formation or are placed on neighbors’ shoulders.

Direction	Measure	Step
→	1-2	<u>Traveling Step:</u> Step on R to R (ct. 1), pause (ct. 2), step on L next to R (ct. 3), step on R to R (ct. 1), pause (cts. 2,3).
	3-4	Repeat Measures 1-2 in the same direction but with opposite footwork.

<u>Direction</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Step</u>
→	1-4	<p><u>Traveling Step Backwards:</u> Repeat the footwork and direction of movement of the Traveling Step, but turn to face L or CW in the circle, so that the steps are taken moving backwards.</p> <p><i>Note: The Traveling Step as well as the Traveling Step Backwards can each be done as long as dancers or their dance leader wishes. They can also be done in alternation, first 4 measures forward, then 4 measures backward, swiveling a half-turn CCW on the last step on L on Measure 4 (cts. 2-3) of the Traveling Step to prepare for moving backward, and swiveling again a half-turn CW on the last step on R on Measure 4 (cts. 2-3) of the Traveling Step Backward to prepare again for moving forward. This kind of alternation of which way you face as you progress to the R is typical of many Romanian circle dances, as well as of Yiddish dances (such as Hora or Sirba) that show Romanian influence.</i></p>
→	1-2	<p><u>Dancing in Place:</u> Facing center, repeat Measures 1-2 of the Traveling Step, moving to your own R side with small steps.</p>
←	3-4	Repeat Measures 1-2 with opposite footwork and direction.
↑	1-4	<p><u>Moving Toward Center and Back:</u> Facing center and raising held hands toward center, repeat Measures 1-4 of the Traveling Step as you move toward center. <i>Note: This move will squeeze dancers into a tighter and tighter circle, especially if it is repeated. It may be repeated as many times as the dancers or their dance leader wish. The last repeat should be the following step (which I have labeled Measures 5-8, but it could be 9-12 or 13-16, etc., depending on how many repeats there have been).</i></p>
	5-6	Repeat Measures 1-2.
	7-8	Repeat Measure 1 (cts. 1-3), stamp with weight in place on L (ct. 1), pause (ct. 2), stamp with weight in place on R (ct. 3), stamp with weight in place on L (ct. 1), pause (cts. 2-3).
↓	9-16	Repeat the footwork of Measures 1-4 twice moving back away from the center of the circle and dropping hands back to a 'W-hold'.
→	1-2	<p><u>Large Steps. Touch and Lean:</u> Raising hands up and forward, take a large step to the R on R (ct. 1), pause (cts. 2-3), take a large step to the R on L (ct. 1), pause (cts. 2-3).</p>
	3	Repeat Measure 1.

<u>Direction</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Step</u>
⊥	4	<u>Large Steps, Touch and Lean:</u> Touch L toe across in front of R (ct. 1), pause or lift L foot slightly off the ground.
←	5-7	Repeat Measures 1-3 with reverse footwork and direction.
⊥	8	Leaving feet in place, lean gradually to the L. <i>Note: This step is rather grand and gestural and very much a matter of personal expression and nuance. Timing and intention are everything here.</i>
→	1	<u>Hora Mare</u> (pronounced <i>ho-rah mah-reh</i> – a Romanian name): Facing slightly to the R, step R to R side (ct. 1), pause, bouncing slightly on R while bringing L foot close to it (cts. 2-3).
	2	Repeat Measure 1 with reverse footwork but in the same direction.
	3-4	Facing center, step on R to R side (ct. 1), pause (ct. 2), step on L next to R (ct. 3), step on R to R side (ct. 1), pause, bouncing slightly on R (cts. 2-3).
↑	5	Step on L toward center or somewhat to the L (ct. 1), pause (cts. 2-3).
↓	6	Step back on R or step on R across in front of L (ct. 1), pause (cts. 2-3).
←	7-8	Repeat Measures 3-4 with reverse footwork and direction. <i>Note: This variation or version of the Hora is widely known throughout eastern Romania and Moldova, and was popular among the nobility in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, almost becoming a national anthem during that period. Its use among Jews at that time must have carried a sense of belonging to Romania and perhaps of being associated with its nobility. The name 'Hora Mare' (which means 'large hora'), denotes any version of the Hora done in a large circle and is not specific to this version. As a national dance, this version was sometimes called 'Hora Unirii' ('the hora of unity').</i>

dance notes by Erik Bendix  
based on notes by Michael Alpert  
and by Dick Crum