

MOUSH HALAY
(Armenia)

There are many different Halays/Govanda/Kotcharis, from various areas of Armenia. Aside from these traditional versions, there are numerous modern ones created by Armenian-Americans. Originally a men's dance adopted from Kurdish mountaineers, many of the present dances are still restricted to men. MOUSH HALAY is a traditional men's dance from the Moush/Van area in Western Armenia.

Pronunciation:

Source: Seto and Armen Javian, Jack Arabian, Berzig Parsekian, Perouz Janjigian.

Music: Barbashi Tape #1 Armenian Folk Dances Side A/4
The Armenian (John Vartan) Side B "Zurna Halay"
To the First Golden Generation with Love (Richard Berberian) Side 2 - Kochare (Daroni Halay)

Style: This men's dance is characterized by a continuous flex of the knees, the dzoongodrel (knee breaks). Feet are shoulder-width apart, with the outside of the legs pressing against the legs of the next dancer. The line moves as a single cohesive unit. Despite the flexed knees, carriage remains erect.

Formation: Line of men in "Arabic hold" (dancers very close, interlocking fingers with arms down at sides).

Meas Cts

Pattern

INTRODUCTION

During the taxim (long improvisational introduction) sway to the R, L, R, L.

1-2 1-4 Flex knees four times at beginning of dance itself (cts 1-4) to begin.

I. WALK

1-14 1-28 Walk to the R with small sliding steps, keeping torso erect and knees flexed: Step on R to R (ct 1); step on L beside R (ct 2). Repeat 13 times (cts 3-28).

Note: These cts refer to dancing to the record listed above. In actuality, the line only changes when the leader decides.

II. BREAK

1-3 1-6 Step on R to R as "break knees" to the R (ct 1); break/flex to R (ct 2); break/flex to L (ct 3); repeat break to L (ct 4); step on R to R (ct 5); step on L beside R (ct 6).

4-? 7-? Repeat Fig II until leader changes.

MOUSH HALAY (Continued)III. LEAN

- 1-3 1-6 Break twice to R (cts 1,2); break twice to L (cts 3,4); step on R to R while leaning bkwd slightly, with L toe remaining on the floor (ct 5); step on L beside R as straighten carriage (ct 6).
- 4-? 7-? Repeat Fig III until leader changes the step as tempo increases.

Note: When executed properly, the lean on cts 5,6 will "ripple" the line subtly.

IV. KICK

- 1-4 1-8 Step on R to R (ct 1); step on L beside R (ct 2); kick/lift R slightly in front of L (ct 3); step on R to R (ct &); step on L beside R (ct 4); flex/break knees to R twice (cts 5,6); flex/break knees to L twice (cts 7,8).
- 5-? 9-? Continue until end of music.

The steps notated above (Fig I-IV) is the original dance. In the 1940s a new figure was developed in the Boston area to make the dance more exuberant. This Fig V is suitable for stage presentation, or for exhibition.

V. SPIN

When the tempo accelerates into a fast 6/8 rhythm, spread the line out into a closed circle and grasp shldr. Keep carriage erect and lean back to maintain tension.

- 1-2 1-4 Step/stamp onto R as L kicks fwd slightly (ct 1); leap onto L across R (ct 2); lift/twist R knee to L side at waist level (ct 3); leap onto R to R (ct &); leap onto L beside R (ct 4).
- 3-4 5-8 Close R beside L on balls of ft with legs straight, and flex knees (ct 5); "bounce" on balls of ft with legs straight twice (ct 6,&); flex knees again (ct 7); "bounce" twice again (cts 8.&).
- 5-? 9-? Continue until music ends, or until tempo slows down. If tempo slows, return to Fig II until the music ends.

Note: The closed circle should "spin" CCW on cts 1-4. If the group is ambitious, the leader can increase the spin by calling out a number for the circle to repeat cts 3,&,4 in the step. (e.g. "three" = "1,2,3,&,4,3,&,4 3,&,4, 5,6,&,7,*,&).