

SYRTAKI

SOURCE: This dance is danced mainly in the taverns with dances such as the zeimbekiko, the tsifte-telli, and the karsilamas. It is a combination of three main forms of the hasapiko. That is, the slow hasapiko, the medium tempo hasaposerviko, and the very fast tempo hasapiko.

The dance, with the name "Syrtaki", seems to be a new one in that it is just now gaining popularity with the Greeks in Greece and America. Actually, however, it is a common thing for the slow or heavy hasapiko to be followed by a fast hasaposerviko which often accelerates to a very fast tempo at the end. The "Syrtaki", then, is just a reiteration of a dance form which has become stylized.

The "Syrtaki" has become very popular since the advent of the film "Zorba the Greek" -- that is, in the last three years or so. This dance was learned by me while dancing the slow hasapiko and the fast hasaposerviko in the Greek cafes of San Francisco. As I said, it is a typical thing for the musicians to "wake things up" after a slow hasapiko with a fast hasapiko. I also observed this dance while working at the Greek cafes as a musician and while I was in Greece in the summer of 1966. The style, as done in America, was the same as the style in Greece.

MUSIC: 2/4 time in a slow tempo which gradually accelerates until, at the end of the dance, it is very fast.

FORMATION: A short line -- three to five men. Usually, the dance is done by men only, but women do dance it sometimes, both in America and Greece. The hands are on the shoulders -- the leader is at the right end.

CHARACTERISTICS: The dance is basically improvisational. That is, there are more or less "basic" steps, but there is no set pattern. The leader makes up his own pattern as he dances. Often he creates his own new steps. Some steps are common to all dancers, but often individuals have their own "special" steps and styles. The steps as described here, then, should not be followed as a pattern, but should be danced according to the mood of the leader. In order to create your own steps, however, you must be familiar with the musical and dancing idioms. That is, until one has "acquired a feel" for this type of dancing, it would be difficult to dance with the correct styling and feeling as well as to create within this idiom. In general, the steps are small and the feet are never very high off the ground.

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SYRTAKI (CONTINUED)

Counts

I

- 1 Lunge FORWARD on LEFT foot
and Bring RIGHT foot around to the FRONT (keeping it close to the left leg)
2 Step RIGHT foot in FRONT of LEFT foot (not touching the ground)
and Bring RIGHT foot around to the BACK (keeping it close to left leg)
3 STEP on RIGHT foot (it should be behind the left foot)
and Bring LEFT foot around to the BACK & BEHIND THE RIGHT foot
4 STEP on LEFT foot (it should be behind the right foot)
and Bring the RIGHT foot SIDEWARDS to the RIGHT
5 STEP on RIGHT foot
and STEP on LEFT foot (moving diagonally left & forward) (G)
6 STEP on RIGHT foot (moving diagonally left & back) (Q)
and Bring the LEFT foot BACK across in front of RIGHT foot (Q)
7 Weight remains on RIGHT FOOT (left foot resting on side of heel)
and Pause
8 Pause
and Pause

II

- 1 and)
2 and)
3 and) REPEAT #1
4 and)
5 and)
6 STEP on RIGHT foot (moving diagonally left and back)
and Bring LEFT foot around BEHIND the RIGHT foot
7 STEP on LEFT foot
and Bring RIGHT foot around BEHIND the LEFT foot
8 STEP on RIGHT foot
and Slightly LIFT LEFT foot from ground.

III

- 1 STEP on LEFT foot across to the RIGHT and in FRONT of right foot
and STEP on RIGHT foot SIDEWARDS to the RIGHT
2 STEP on LEFT foot ACROSS to the RIGHT and in FRONT of right foot
and Bring RIGHT foot all the way AROUND to the FRONT & across
3 STEP on RIGHT foot ACROSS to the LEFT and in FRONT of left foot
and STEP on LEFT foot SIDEWARDS to the LEFT
4 STEP on RIGHT foot ACROSS to the LEFT and in FRONT of left foot
and PAUSE slightly lifting LEFT foot (which is close behind right)
5 STEP on LEFT foot, slightly raising right foot
and Bring RIGHT foot AROUND and BEHIND left foot.
6 STEP on RIGHT foot
and Bring LEFT foot to RIGHT so that it is in front and across as in end of I and II
7 Pause. Weight remains on right foot (left foot resting on side of heel)
and Pause
8 Pause
and Pause

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(SYRTAKI (CONTINUED))

Counts

IV

1 and
2 and
3 and
4 and
5 and
6
and
7
and
8
and

} REPEAT #III

STEP on RIGHT foot
Bring LEFT foot around BEHIND the RIGHT foot
STEP on LEFT foot
Bring RIGHT foot around BEHIND the LEFT foot
STEP on RIGHT foot
Slightly LIFT LEFT FOOT from ground

V and VI

1
and
2
and
3 and
4 and
5 and
6 and
7 and
8 and

Lunge FORWARD on LEFT foot
STEP FORWARD on RIGHT foot (directly behind left foot)
STEP FORWARD on LEFT foot
Pause

} REPEAT FROM #I OR #II

VII

1
and
2
and
3
and
4
and
5
and
6
and
7
and
8
and

Lunge FORWARD on LEFT foot
STEP FORWARD on RIGHT foot (directly behind left foot)
STEP FORWARD on LEFT foot
With weight on left foot, bring right foot to the left leg so that foot crosses at the ankle of left leg
Pause
Pause
Pause
Bring RIGHT foot BACK
STEP on RIGHT foot
Bring LEFT foot around BEHIND RIGHT foot
STEP on LEFT foot
Bring RIGHT foot SIDEWARDS right
STEP on RIGHT foot
Bring LEFT foot to the RIGHT
Weight on RIGHT foot. Touch left foot next to right
Pause

T R A N S I T I O N

As above

8
and
9
and
10

Weight on RIGHT foot, touch left foot next to right
Bring LEFT foot sideways left
STEP on LEFT foot
Bring the RIGHT foot to the left
Weight on LEFT foot, touch right foot next to left

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SYRTAKI (CONTINUED)

Counts

VIII

- 1 STEP SIDEWARDS to the RIGHT on RIGHT foot
and Bring LEFT foot BEHIND and to the right
2 STEP on LEFT foot (behind right foot)
and Bring RIGHT foot SIDEWARDS to the RIGHT
3 STEP on RIGHT foot
and Bring LEFT foot next to the right
4 Touch LEFT foot (weight remains on right)
and Bring LEFT foot SIDEWARDS left
5 STEP on LEFT foot
and Bring RIGHT foot next to the left
6 Touch RIGHT foot (weight remains on left)
and Pause

IX

- 1 STEP SIDEWARDS to the RIGHT on RIGHT foot
and Bring LEFT foot BEHIND and to the right
2 STEP on LEFT foot (behind right foot)
and Bring RIGHT foot SIDEWARDS to the right
3 STEP on RIGHT foot
and Pause
4 STEP FORWARD on LEFT foot
and STEP FORWARD on RIGHT foot (right foot next to left)
5 STEP FORWARD on LEFT foot
and Pause
6 Thrust RIGHT foot forward
and Pause

{ 2
1
4 }

X

- 1 STEP SIDEWARDS to the RIGHT on RIGHT foot
and Bring LEFT foot ACROSS in FRONT and to right
2 STEP on LEFT foot (across in FRONT of right foot)
and Bring RIGHT foot SIDEWARDS to the RIGHT
3 STEP on RIGHT foot
and HOP on RIGHT foot
4 Bring LEFT FOOT across in FRONT of right in a KICK
and Bring LEFT foot SIDEWARDS to the left
5 STEP on LEFT foot
and HOP on LEFT foot
6 Bring RIGHT foot ACROSS in FRONT of left in a KICK
and Pause

At this point, the line breaks up into individuals dancing their own steps and variations. Often, the line will remain together during the fast nasapiko, but in general each person drops from the line and dances. Often the leader, or one of the others, will dance and the others will stand and watch and maybe clap to encourage him. It is up to the individuals how they will do this -- each way is perfectly correct.

SYRTAKI (CONTINUED)

SOLO VARIATIONS COMMON TO FAST PART OF "SYRTAKI"

Counts Pas de basque to the right
1 Leap SIDEWARD to the RIGHT on RIGHT foot
and STEP on LEFT foot ACROSS in FRONT of right
2 STEP on RIGHT foot in place
end Pause

Pas de basque to the left
1 Leap SIDEWARD to the LEFT on LEFT foot
and STEP on RIGHT foot ACROSS in FRONT of left
2 STEP on LEFT foot in place
end Pause

During these solo steps, the arms are held out at shoulder height.

Skip Step
and Weight on left foot, HOP on LEFT foot bringing right foot
around behind the left foot
1 STEP on RIGHT foot
and HOP on RIGHT foot bringing left foot around behind the
right foot
2 STEP on LEFT foot

Skip Step Forward
and Weight on left foot, HOP on LEFT foot moving forward
1 STEP FORWARD on RIGHT foot
and HOP on RIGHT foot
2 STEP FORWARD on LEFT foot
and HOP on LEFT foot
3 STEP FORWARD on RIGHT foot
and HOP on RIGHT foot
4 STEP FORWARD on LEFT foot
and HOP on LEFT, keeping right foot next to left

Skip Step Backward
and HOP on LEFT foot -- moving backward
1 STEP BACK on RIGHT foot
and HOP on RIGHT foot
2 STEP BACK on LEFT foot
and HOP on LEFT foot
3 Step BACK on RIGHT foot
and HOP on RIGHT foot
4 Step BACK on LEFT foot
and HOP on LEFT foot, keeping right foot next to left

Step Kick to Right or Left
and Weight on LEFT foot
1 STEP RIGHT
and HOP on RIGHT foot swing LEFT leg in front of right
2 STEP LEFT
and HOP on LEFT foot swing RIGHT leg in front of left

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SYRTAKI (CONTINUED)

SOLO VARIATIONS COMMON TO FAST PART OF "SYRTAKI" (CONTINUED)

Counts Squat Steps
and 1 LEAP into a SQUATTING POSITION - knees should be close
 together
and 2 Still squatting, LEAP to the LEFT
and 3 Still squatting, LEAP to the RIGHT
 "et cetera"

Squat steps
1 LEAP into a SQUATTING POSITION
and RISE on RIGHT foot
2 KICK LEFT foot FORWARD
and 3 SQUAT on BOTH feet
and RISE on LEFT foot
4 KICK RIGHT foot FORWARD
and "et cetera"

JOHN PAPPAS
MOLO FESTIVAL, 1966
