

## ARKAN

Arkon (*sic*). *Arkan* Kolomiyskiy.

### BACKGROUND:

This Western [Ukrainian](#) dance is from the Eastern Carpathian Mountains which give us some of the most physically demanding dances in the world. *Arkan* is the quintessential men's dance, requiring strength, agility, stamina, and weapons waving, but not much analytical ability. *Arkan* is traditionally said to have derived from a Scythian dance honoring the sun god's daughters. I think this is questionable for reasons given in the Choreogeography article elsewhere in this book. Ukrainian emigrants brought their dances to North America in the 20th century with encouragement from Soviets and Nazis. Some say the folk still do *Arkan* in areas where the Ukrainian Freedom Army is active and the Soviets discourage tourism. North American folk dancers picked up and wrote down *Arkan* in the 1950's, primarily from Michael Herman and Vasil Avramenko. Although there is no fixed sequence of steps, the dance is divided into a first and second half with steps traditionally belonging to one half or the other. This is the dance as done in the Ukrainian foothills town of Kolomiya, but with a wider selection of highland and lowland steps. Note: pronounce all Ukrainian vowels as short vowels: ah, eh, ee, oh, ooh.

### FORMATION:

All sit around the dung fire, drinking, singing, and wenching.

### BARS

#### ACTION

2/4

*Optional singing introduction.*

1-12

Watch the flames while you adapt to the key and tempo of the musicians.

13-24

**Sing:** *Arkan predniy volya bidniy,*

*prede robota, sche ne robota,*

*sche ne robota, Batko ne bude!*

**Which means:** Arkan means willpower watchfulness,

limit to work, still no work,

still no work, arouse not the gods!

**Instrumental introduction.** On the shout “*Hey, do kola!*” (Hey, to a circle), all real men in the room will form an open circle with alacrity, leader at R end. Place hands on neighbors’ nearer shoulders. In mountaineer versions, men on ends may carry a *topirets* (mountaineer’s axe). Others may also carry axes in their R hands.

1-8

Sway slightly to R (odd bars) and to L (even bars).

9-12

Continue swaying as the leader shouts “*Raz, dva, tri, pishov!*” (= one, two, three, we go), or “*Arkan, pishov!*” (= Arkan, let’s go).

**Basic (or Arkan) step = Pokhid Arkanovi** (= **Arkan running step**). Begin a sequence of these steps with a fertility-god arousing R ft stamp (ct 1 of bar 1 of sequence).

1

Step to R onto R ft (ct 1), step to R behind R ft onto L ft (ct 2).

2

Step to R onto R ft (ct 1), hopping on R ft, swing bent L knee up so that L upper leg is parallel to floor and L lower leg hangs straight down.

3

= 2 with opposite footwork.

4-?

Repeat action of bars 1-3 until the leader calls one of the following steps.

**S’tropachkom!** (= **with double stamps**).

1

Stamp R ft, no weight (ct & preceding ct 1), stamp to R onto R ft (ct 1), step to R behind R ft onto L ft (ct 2).

2-3

= 2-3 of basic step.

4-?

Repeat bars 1-3 until leader shouts “*Pishov!*” to signal the end of the step.

**Ras pribiy!** (= **one scuff**).

1-2

= 1-2 of basic step.

3

Leap to L onto L ft, tucking R ft behind back of L knee and swinging R knee sharply to L across L knee (ct 1), swing R knee sharply out to R (ct 2).

4

Scuff R ft diagonally forward to R (ct 1).

5-?

Repeat bars 1-4 (for a maximum of 4 times) until leader shouts “Pishov!”

*Note:* each repetition may have a “dedication” call: “*Toy samiy!*” (= that again), “*A za tata!*” (= and for papa), “*A za mamu!*” (= and for mama), “*Za divchinu (mayoo) krasnu!*” (= for (my) pretty girl), “*Sche poprav!*” (= still better).

**Alternate *Ras pribiy.* (Ukrainian origin unknown).**

1-3

= 1-3 of basic step.

4

Backpedal R ft up, back, and down to stamp, no weight (ct 1), hop on L ft (ct 2).

5-?

Continue pattern of bars 1-4 until leader shouts “Pishov!”.

***Ras pidkivka!* (= one heel click, literally, one hoof or horseshoe).** Finish the basic step you’re dancing and:

1

Step to R onto R ft (ct 1), step to R behind R ft onto L ft (ct 2).

2

Hopping to R on L ft, click R heel against L heel with legs straight (ct 1), step to R onto R ft (ct 2).

3

Step to R behind R ft onto L ft (ct 1), step to R onto R ft (ct 2).

4

Hop on R ft and lift L knee as in basic step (ct 1), step to L onto L ft (ct 2).

5

Hop on L ft and lift R knee as in basic step (ct 1). During this step, the leader calls: “*Dva razi!*” (= two times), or:

***Dva pidkivkiy!* (= two heel clicks).** This step begins on ct 2 of the previous bar 5.

5

Step to R onto R ft (ct 2).

6-7

Step to R behind R ft onto L ft (ct 1), hopping twice to R on L ft, click R heel twice against L heel with legs straight (cts 2,1), step to R onto R ft (ct 2).

8

Step to R behind R ft onto L ft (ct 1), step to R onto R ft (ct 2).

9

Hop on R ft and lift L knee as in basic step (ct 1), step to L onto L ft (ct 2).

10

Hop on L ft and lift R knee as in basic step (ct 1). During this step, the leader calls: “*Tri razi!*” (= three times), or:

***Tri pidkivkiy!* (= three heel clicks).** This step begins on ct 2 of previous bar 10.

10

Step to R onto R ft (ct 2).

11-12

13-?

Dance one (or several) basic step(s) until the leader calls: “Bezkonечно!”, or:

***Bezkonечna pidkivka!*** (= *endless heel clicks*).

1

Step to R onto R ft (ct 1), step to R behind R ft onto L ft (ct 2).

2

Hopping to R on L ft, click R heel twice against L heel (cts 1,2).

? ?

Click until the leader shouts “Pishov!” Basic step should begin with the next musical phrase. That could be up to 24 clicks, but not too many for real men.

***Shist zmini!*** (= *six times*). After the shout, finish your basic step and:

1

Swinging raised R leg to L, step to L onto R heel with a very straight R leg (ct 1), step to L directly behind and almost under R ft onto L ft with flexed L knee, raised R knee, and R toe pointed toward floor (ct 2).

2-5

= 1, 4 more times.

6

= ct 1 of bar 1 (ct 1), lift L knee as in basic step and swing it CW around to R.

7-11

= 2-6 with opposite footwork and direction.

12-15

= 3-6.

16-18

= 4-6 with opposite footwork and direction.

19-20

= 5-6. Leader (optionally) shouts “Tri na mistse!” (= three in place).

21

Step to R onto L heel with a very straight L knee (ct 1), lift R knee as in basic step and swing R knee CCW around to L.

22

= 21 with opposite footwork and direction.

23

= 21. Leader (optionally) calls:

***Haiduk dva!*** (= *two brigand steps*).

24

Drop into a full knee-bend (ct 1), half-rise, kicking R ft in front of L knee (ct 2).

25

Drop into a full knee-bend (ct 1), spring up, kicking both feet up behind you (ct 2).

26

Land on both feet (ct 1).

27

Stamp R ft (ct 1). All shout “*Raz!*” (= one).

28

Stamp R ft and shout “*Dva!*” (= two) (ct 1), all shout “*i te*” (= and n-) (ct 2).

29

Stamp R ft 2 times (cts 1,2). All shout “*-per pi-*” (= -ow we g-).

30

Stamp R ft (ct 1). All shout “*-shov!*” (= -o).

*Note:* some folks dance *haiduk tri* after *shist zmini*, but Avramenko’s book gives *haiduk dva*.

*Note:* some folks dance *shist zmini* in the second half of the dance, but Avramenko’s book places it in the first half.

***Haiduk raz!*** (= *One brigand step*). This step, if ever done, usually follows a step like *shist zmini* or *tri zmini*.

1

Swing R knee up and around CCW to face center (ct & of previous bar), drop into a full knee-bend (ct 1), arise with weight on both feet (ct 2).

2

Stamp R ft (ct 1). All shout “*Raz!*” (= one).

3

Stamp R ft and shout “*Dva!*” (= two) (ct 1), all shout “*i te*” (= and n-) (ct 2).

4#

Stamp R ft 2 times (cts 1,2). All shout “*-per pi-*” (= -ow we g-).

5

Stamp R ft (ct 1). All shout “*-shov!*” (= -o).

***Pid koleno!*** (= *behind the knee*). This step is of unknown Ukrainian origin. Tuck R ft behind L knee and:

1

Hopping on L ft, swing R knee to: L (ct 1), R (ct 2).

2-?

Continue until the leader calls “*Pishov!*”.

***Batko spiyt!*** (= *the gods slumber*).

1-2

= 1-2 of basic step.

3

Step to L onto L ft (ct 1), swing straight R leg in a large CW circle (ct 2).

4

Close R ft to L ft (ct 1).

5-?

Step slightly to R onto R ft and sway as in **Instrumental introduction**.

2 bars before the end of a 12-bar phrase, the leader calls

***Batko f'stav pishov!*** (= *the gods awaken, lets go*).

1-3

Dance a basic step, beginning with a stamp.

4-6

Dance a basic step, pretending you're going to stamp, but don't.

7-?

Continue basic steps, stamping on alternate repetitions until leader calls "Pishov!".

***A na mistse tropachok!*** or ***A na mistse s'tropachkom!*** (= *in place double stamps*).

1

Stamp in place with R ft, no weight (ct & of preceding bar), stamp in place onto R ft (ct 1), stamp in place with L ft, no weight (ct 2).

2

Stamp in place onto L ft (ct 1), hop on L ft and lift R knee as in basic step (ct 2).

3-?

Continue until leader shouts "Pishov!".

*Note:* some folks dance *a na mistse tropachok* in the first half of the dance, but Avramenko's book places it in the second half.

*Note:* some folks dance this step as:

1

Stamp with R ft (ct &), stamp onto R ft (ct 1), touch L heel forward (ct 2).

2

Step onto L ft (ct 1), hop on L ft (ct 2).

3-?

Continue until leader shouts "Pishov!".

***Tri zmini!*** (= *Three changes*).

1-3

= basic step.

4

Swinging raised R leg to L, step to L onto R heel with a very straight R leg (ct 1), step to L directly behind and almost under R ft onto L ft with flexed L knee, raised R knee, and R toe pointed toward floor (ct 2).

5

= 4.

6

= ct 1 of bar 4 (ct 1), lift L knee as in basic step and swing it CW around to R.

7-9

= 4-6 with opposite footwork and direction.

10-1

= 4-6. Leader (optionally) calls "*Tri na mistse!*" (= three in place).

13

Step to R onto L heel with a very straight L knee (ct 1), lift R knee as in basic step and swing R knee CCW around to L.

14

= 13 with opposite footwork.

15

= 13. Leader (optionally) calls:

***Haiduk tri!*** (= *three brigand steps*).

16

Drop into a full knee-bend (ct 1), half-rise, kicking R ft out in front of L knee (ct 2)

17

= 16, kicking L ft out.

18

Drop into a full knee-bend (ct 1), spring high into air, kicking both feet up behind you (ct 2).

19

Land on both feet (ct 1).

20

Stamp R ft (ct 1). All shout "*Raz!*" (= one).

21

Stamp R ft (ct 1). All shout "*Dva!*" (= two) (ct 1), all shout "*i te*" (= and n-) (ct 2).

22

Stamp R ft 2 times (cts 1,2). All shout "*-per pi-*" (= -ow we g-).

23

Stamp R ft (ct 1). All shout "*-shov!*" (= -o).

Alternate version of ***Tri zmini!***.

1-3

= basic step.

4

Swinging raised R leg to L, step to L onto R heel with a very straight R leg (ct 1), step to L directly behind and almost under R ft onto L ft with flexed L knee, raised R knee, and R toe pointed toward floor (ct 2).

5

= 4.

6

= ct 1 of bar 4 (ct 1), lift L knee as in basic step and swing it CW around to R.

7-9

= 4-6 with opposite footwork and direction. Leader calls:

***Dva zmini!*** (= *two changes*).

10-11

= 5-6.

12-13

= 5-6 with opposite footwork and direction. Leader calls:

***Chotiri na mistse!*** (= *four in place*).

14

Step to L onto R heel with a very straight R knee (ct 1), lift L knee as in basic step and swing L knee CW around to R.

15

= 14 with opposite footwork.

16-17

= 14-15. Leader has (optionally) called:

***Haiduk tri!*** (= *three brigand steps*).

18

Drop into a full knee-bend (ct 1), half-rise, kicking R ft in front of L knee (ct 2).

19

= 18, kicking L ft out.

20

Drop into a full knee-bend (ct 1), spring up, kicking both feet up behind you (ct 2).

21

Land on both feet (ct 1).

22

Stamp R ft (ct 1). All shout "*Raz!*" (= one).

23

Stamp R ft and shout "*Dva!*" (= two) (ct 1). All shout "*i te*" (= and n-) (ct 2).

24

Stamp R ft 2 times (cts 1,2). All shout "*-per pi-*" (= -ow we g-).

25

Stamp R ft (ct 1). All shout "*-shov!*" (= -o).

***Haiduk svyerlik!*** (= *brigand's drilling step*). *This step is called at the beginning of a basic step. Finish the basic step and:*

1

Drop into a full knee-bend, facing to R (ct 1), swivel knees to L (ct 2).



2

Swivel knees to R (ct 1), swivel knees to L (ct 2).

3-?

Continue action of bar 3 until leader shouts “Pishov!” on a ct 1 of bar ?.

*Note:* don’t stamp on the first basic step after this step. Instead, come to full height gradually during the first step, exaggerating the lifts. Stamp on the second basic step instead.

***Haiduk krut!*** (= *brigand’s circling step*) or ***Bezkonechno krut!*** (= *endless circling*). This step is called at the beginning of a basic step. Finish the basic step and:

1

Drop into a full knee-bend, facing to R or center (ct 1), rise half-way, on toes, with knees swiveled to L (ct 2).

2-?

Continue until leader calls “Pishov!”.

*Note:* this step makes a good finale if you jump up highly on the last ct 2 and kick your feet up behind you. Leader may call “Hup!” to signal this jump.

*Note:* *haiduk krut* is the lowland equestrian version of the mountaineer step *haiduk svyerlik*.

***Presid za kolozenya!*** = ***Presid ka speryaskoko!***. I don’t know the translation of this step or its Ukrainian background.

1

Drop into a full knee-bend (ct 1), rise on L ft while kicking R leg straight out diagonally to R (ct 2).

2

Step across in front of L ft onto R ft (ct 1), kick L leg straight out diagonally to L (ct 2).

3-4

= 1-2 with opposite footwork and direction.

5-?

Continue until leader calls “Pishov!”.

***Gvizda!*** (= *star*). Also called ***Arkanova zirka*** (= **Arkan star**). This step requires an even number of men. You odd men should leave now. Carrying axes will make this step rather dangerous.

1-?

March CCW to R, 2 steps per bar: R ft on odd cts, L ft on even cts. Join hands in a wrist grasp, to make a closed circle. Count off by 2’s: leader shouts “Raz!”, the next man shouts “Dva!”, the next shouts “Raz!”, and so on around the circle. Leader stamps twice (or better, shouts “Raz!”) and all “raz”-men jump, and slide feet into center, where they drum their feet as the “star” rotates. “Dva”-men continue marching CCW, supporting them.

?-?

Leader shouts “Raz, dva!” (or better, “Hup!”) and those in the center back out, jump out, or back-flip out.

?-?

The leader stamps twice (or better, shouts “Dva!”) and all “dva”-men jump into center where they drum their feet as the “star” rotates. “Raz”-men continue marching CCW, supporting them.

?-?

Leader stamps twice (or better, shouts “Hup!”) and those in the center back out, jump out, or back-flip out. Replace hands on shoulders. Leader shouts “Pishov!” to resume the basic step.

*Note:* when you take the wrist grasp, it’s important for the “ras”-men to have their hands underneath, facing up, with thumbs to the outside of the circle. After they come out of the middle, all switch hand positions so that the “dva”-men have their hands underneath, grasping up, with thumbs to the outside of the circle. You’ll lose your grasp and drop someone (maybe yourself), or break a wrist if you don’t.

*Arkanova zirka!*. (more purely Hutsul mountaineer version). Lose the axes now, if you’re still carrying them. Continue dancing the basic step. Form a closed circle and grasp wrists with the man on the other side of your neighbor, hands joined behind your neighbor’s neck. Count off from one to eight: “Raz, Dva, Tri, Chotiri, Pet, Shist, Sem, Vosem!”. One man, for example Dva, and the man opposite him, Shist, place the soles of their shoes together. Chotiri and Vosem add their feet and all 4 push until they are upside down, supported on the shoulders of their neighbors. After a little of this, those-who-can do a back-flip out of the center. They who also serve by only standing and waiting hold their heads back to avoid the smoke of the dung fire.

End of **ARKAN**.