

Kuku

(West Africa)

West African ritual celebration dance. Traditional figures arranged and presented by Becky Gordon at 2005 August Camp; these four figures were selected from at least 28 different figures traditionally included in this dance.

Pronunciation:

CD: Becky Gordon CD. Local Albuquerque drummers; recorded ABQ, 2005 4/4 meter

Formation: Circle, individual, no hand hold; start with weight on L facing center (or can start by stepping forward toward center on L one beat early).

Styling: Earthy, large, energetic, exaggerated movements; feet are picked up off the floor, knees often lifted; touches are exaggerated by taking some weight. While moves are strong, definite, and often precise, there is room for individuality, creativity, and craziness. Dance with whole body—shoulders, head, back, stomach, and (especially) hips—all participate. These notes give highlights, but only scratch the surface—please, be imaginative

Meas

Pattern

approx 4 meas INTRODUCTION

- A. CLAPS AND FLAPS. Clap (R-stamp), Flap (R-back), Flap (L-touch), L fwd
 Note: Move gradually in LOD as you step in and out of the circle.
- 1 Bending L knee and bending fwd at waist, clap and stamp R next to L (ct 1); stepping back and in LOD on R, bringing torso up and back, arms out and back, shoulders back, elbows bent, lower and raise elbows while rotating shldr back and arching upper back; i.e. flap arms at elbows like a chicken flapping it's wings (ct 2); repeat ct 2 except hold on R and add a strong touch with ball of L in front of R (ct 3); step twd ctr and slightly in LOD on L (ct 4).
- 2-8 Repeat meas 1 seven more times. On last beat of eighth meas, instead of stepping in on L, step on L in place facing diag R to begin next figure.
- B. DIAGONALS IN AND OUT. R, together, R, touch; L, together, L, touch.
- 1 Feet: Moving diag to R and twd ctr, step on R (ct 1); step on L next to R (ct 2); repeat ct 1 (ct 3); twisting hips a little to the R, cave or bring L knee in and next to R knee (L ft is twisted to L as well, L heel raised, ball of L ft touching floor, and L knee bent) (ct 4).
 Arms: R forearm is horizontal, elbow to R side and out slightly, palm is up, hand and arm extended in LOD. L arm is bent, L elbow extended RLOD, forearm horizontal, palm down and in front of lower chest. As you step on R, stretch and twist R shldr and chest as arms extend slightly away from each other (ct 1); arms relax somewhat retracting and ending in front of torso; R hand rotates to face slightly down and L hand slightly up (ct 2); repeat cts 1, 2 (cts 3,4).
- 2 Repeat meas 1 with opp ftwk and direction (moving diag in twd ctr but to the L).
- 3 Repeat meas 1 exactly except move away from ctr.
- 4 Repeat meas 2 exactly except move away from ctr.
- 5-8 Repeat meas 1-4.

Kuku—continued

- C. JUMPS AND CIRCLES. Jump (Clap); Jump (Clap); Back: R, L, R, L.
- 1 Jump fwd (or scoot), facing ctr, knees bent and ft apart (clap, hands circle down as you jump) (ct 1); hold, hands circle up (ct 2); repeat counts 1, 2 (cts 3,4).
- 2 Feet: backing out of ctr: step R, L, R, L (knees are lifted and ft are apart) (cts 1,2,3,4).
Hands: held about chest or shldr level, palms fwd and out, are pushing twd ctr on each step back. As one hand pushes fwd, the other is circling out and around (as the R ft is stepping back, the R hand pushes fwd and R hand circles back, etc. (cts 1,2,3,4).
- 3-8 Repeat meas 1-2 three more times.
- D. THE BANGING STEP
Feet: in LOD, touch R, R, L, R; in RLOD: touch-L, L, close-R, L; close-R, L, close-R, L.
Arms: L-up/down, R L-up/down; fist-up, roll, roll, stretch; bang, stretch, bang, down.
- 1 Facing mostly ctr but twisting twd LOD with bent R knee, touch ball of R hard in LOD, raising L arm high and across twd LOD (ct 1); step on R in place, arm coming down (ct 2); step on L slightly across R in LOD, hips turning more twd LOD while upper body twists twd ctr and both arms are extended and lifted high and to the side with hands out, palms down, wrists bent, elbows fairly straight (ct 3); step on R to R side in LOD while turning to face ctr, arms coming down (ct 4).
- 2 Twisting to face more RLOD, touch L hard in RLOD while R arm comes up and across twd RLOD and L arm extends back and down in LOD (both hands are clenched in a fist) (ct 1); step on L in place starting to move in RLOD, arms coming to chest level, forearms horizontal and in front of chest with L forearm inside of R forearm, fists still clenched (forearms are starting to rotate, or “roll” over each other, beg with L forearm moving out and over R forearm as R forearm begins moving under and in (ct 2); close R with wt next to or slightly across L, forearms continuing their rotation, making one complete revolution (ct 3); continuing in RLOD, strong step on L, knees bent, fists still clenched, extend arms, chest level, to sides (stretch)—L arm, elbow mostly straightened, extends in RLOD, R arm with bent elbow extends in LOD (ct 4).
- 3 Still moving in RLOD, step on R next to or slightly across L, bringing wrists together where the wrist joins the hand, in front of chest, R over L, fists still clenched (do this vigorously, even violently, to create the illusion of “banging” your fists together) (ct 1); repeat meas 2, ct 4, (ct 2); repeat ct 1 (ct 3); step on L in place or slightly in RLOD, facing ctr, arms down, fists unclenched (ct 4). Note: if you are starting the dance over, step on L on 4th ct, this meas.
- 4-12 Repeat meas 1-3, three more times.

SEQUENCE: Introduction; (ABCD) 3 times.

Dance notes by Gary Diggs
Presented by Gary Diggs