

TSAMIKO

One of the most widespread and popular dances of mainland Greece, the Tsamiko is often referred to as a "national" or "pan.Hellenic" dance, mainly as a result of its dissemination through the school system rather than its natural evolution. Originally a dance of the "Klephts" (mountain based bandits and guerillas) and the "armatoles" (a police force drawn from the Klephts) of Ottoman times, it is still most often associated with the central region of Roumeli and especially the western areas of Aetolo-Acarania, the heartland of the old Armatolikia. The name most probably refers to the "ta tsamika," the white kilted full regalia worn by the Klephts and adopted from the dress of the Albano-Epirot tribe "Tsamides" (Chams). In a more simplified form this outfit, whose characteristic component is the fustanella skirt, was gradually adopted by the peasant populations of southern Greece during the latter part of the 19th century.

The Tsamiko is characterized by its 3/4 or 6/8 meter, rhythmically subdivided into S Q and its basic step pattern of R to R, L across R. Because the emphasis of the dance is centered on the leader, who performs various improvised leaps, turns, squats and other figures, it is often performed with continuous movement CCW, with the line of dancers taking smaller steps or dancing in place according to the leader's movements. However, it is as often performed with a basic movement which includes CW travel as well. The most widespread structure, especially in the Peloponnese and among Greek Americans, is the 6 measure 12 step pattern of 8 to the R and 4 to the L. Also common, especially further north, is the 5 measure 10 step pattern of 6 to the R and 4 to the L.

The following is the most common structure for the Tsamiko dance as found especially in southern Greece, the Morea, and among Greek-American communities.

MUSIC: Any good Tsamiko music

METER: 3/4

PATTERN

Meas

- 1-3 Facing slightly R of ctr, step R fwd LOD (ct 1); Hold (ct 2); Step L fwd across and in front of R (ct 3) Repeat 2x
- 4 Step R fwd (ct 1,2); Lift L up or touch L next to R (ct 3).
- 5 Repeat Meas 1 opposite direction & footwork.
- 6 Repeat Meas 4 opposite direction & footwork.

The following are stylistic variations of the basic measures which can be performed according to the preference of the dancer. For the travelling motif, ie. measures 1, 2, 3 or 5:

- A Step R fwd (ct 1); Drag L next to R, no weight taken (ct 2); Step L fwd across and in front of R (ct 3).
- B Step R fwd (ct 1); Quick rock back onto L (ct 2), quick rock back onto R (ct &); Step L fwd across and in front of R (ct 3).
- C Step R fwd (ct 1); Quick step L fwd near to yet slightly behind R (ct 2), quick step R slightly fwd (ct &); Step L fwd across and in front of R (ct 3).

For the hesitation motif, ie. measures 4 & 6 (esp. for women):

Step R fwd (ct 1); Step L fwd, with a sl rock, in front of R (ct 2); Rock back onto R (ct 3).

The following are syncopated variations for measures 1-3:

- 1 Step R fwd (ct 1); Hold (ct 2); Quick step L fwd in front of R (ct 3), quick step R fwd (ct &).
- 2 Step L fwd across & in front of R (ct 1); Hold (ct 2); Quick step R fwd (ct 3), quick step L fwd next to R (ct &).
- 3 Same as Meas 3 Basic.
- 1 Same as Meas 1 Basic.
- 2 Touch R next to L or (swing) across in front of R (ct 1); Hold (ct 2); Quick step R fwd (ct 3), quick step L next to R (ct &).

Presented by Joseph Kaloyanides Graziosi at the Laguna Folkdancers Festival 1994