

KARSILAMAS

Greek

PRONUNCIATION: kar-see-lah-MAHS

TRANSLATION: Face to face, which refers to the starting pos of the dance. The Greek name of the dance is Antikristos Makedonikos, meaning "face to face dance from Macedonia."

SOURCE: Dick Oakes learned this dance from Athan Karras. Folk dancers in the United States were dancing the karsilamas at least as far back as the mid 1950s. Vilma Matchette taught the dance at the 1967 Santa Barbara Folk Dance Conference. John Pappas taught it at the 1976 Folk Dance Symposium.

BACKGROUND: Karsilamas is danced by two people. While usually danced by a man and a woman these days, two women or two men may also dance Karsilamas.

The 9/8 rhythm is the most prevalent dance and song rhythm in the northern provinces of Greece, such as Macedonia, Thrace, Epirus, and in some Aegean islands as well as Cyprus and the islands west of Cyprus and Turkey. The dance varies in execution of style and tempo which often identifies the locale. Within the last half of the past century, the Greek urban communities became more aware of their traditional music than tributes paid to western popular music. Just after World War II, Greek musicians and composers resorted to Greek traditional forms and rhythms and the 9/8 rhythm was evidenced in new and popular songs. Thus the Karsilamas, which was a village traditional dance, became the rage among urban communities as well, but to new tunes based on the ancient rhythm.

Originally the dance in the northern provinces was referred to as "Antikristos," but because much of the "rebetika" music popular in Smyrna (currently İzmir), the name Karsilamas, from the Turkish word "karsilamak" (meaning face to face) remained. The dance now is called both Karsilamas and Antikristos Makedonikos (ahn-tee-krees-TOHS mah-keh-don-ee-KOHS). It is often used as a slang word designating the pickpocket's method of knocking against someone to steal his wallet.

The dance was popular around Constantinople (now İstanbul, Turkey) during Byzantine times. Originally a warlike dance, the Turks adopted and modified its characteristics when they conquered the area.

MUSIC: Festival (45rpm) F-3504
Festival (45rpm) F-3512
Festival (45rpm) F-3515
Festival (LP) F-3001, side 1, band 4
Folkraft (LP) LP3, side A, band 5
Nina (LP) LP-61
Nina (LP) PLS-201, side 1, band 5
Nina (45rpm) 4549-A
Nonesuch (LP) H-2004, side 2, band 1
Phillips International (P.I.) Records (LP) PI-LPS-33, side 1, band 5

or any good Karsilamas melody.

FORMATION: Couples of M and W facing each other at random about the dancing area. There is no handhold. The hands are either held out to the sides about shoulder level, or, less often, at the waist, especially by W.

METER/RHYTHM: 9/8. The rhythm is quick-quick-quick-slow (2+2+2+3 = 9) and is counted below in four dancer's beats with the longest beat being the fourth.

STEPS/STYLE: BASIC STEP: Step swd (ct 1); step free ft across supporting ft (ct 2); step swd (ct 3); bounce twice on supporting ft swinging free ft across in front with slightly bent knee (ct 4).

The Basic Step can be danced swd, fwd, and bwd, as well as with turns. The steps are small, and the partners should never be far apart. Danced in Greece, Macedonia, and Asia Minor, Karsilamas is a dance with a great variety of styles, body movements, and gestures. For instance, in Macedonia it is lively and bouncy. With the popularization of the bouzouki, a stringed musical instrument with a very long neck, the dance has lost its peasant style in the tavernas and has become more flowing and freeform.

Each variation is danced until the partners' creative moods dictate an improvisational change.

Handkerchiefs are often flourished from the right hand, or held at face level by opposite corners--sometimes in a teasing manner. When partners advance almost touching shoulders, the right hand with the handkerchief usually moves to touch the dancer's own L shoulder.

MEAS

MOVEMENT DESCRIPTION

I. BASIC DANCE

- 1 Basic Step R moving swd away from each other.
- 2 Basic Step L moving swd toward each other.

II. FORWARD AND BACK VARIATION

- 1 Basic Step R moving fwd to almost touch R or L shldr.
- 2 Basic Step L moving bwd to original starting pos.

III. CROSS OVER AND CROSS BACK VARIATION

- 1 Basic Step R moving fwd to almost touch R or L shldr.
- 2 Basic Step L moving to ptrs original pos facing away from each other.
- 3-4 Retracing same path, move bwd with Basic Step R and Basic L to end facing ptr in original pos.

OR

- 3-4 Creating a "do-sa-do" pattern, move bwd with Basic Step R and Basic Step L passing opp shldr to end facing ptr in original pos.

IV. TURNS VARIATION

- 1 Dance Basic Step R making one full CW turn.
2 Dance Basic Step L making one full CCW turn to end facing ptr in original pos.

V. M FOLLOWS W VARIATION

- 1-? With flirtatious movements, the W dances Basic Steps bwd several times in a serpentine pattern, while the M dances Basic Steps fwd "chasing" her.

VI. M DEEP KNEE BEND VARIATION

- 1 M dance Basic Step R except that on ct 4 drop into a deep knee bend with knees together and back straight. Sometimes the M clap hands on the squat.
 W dance Basic Step R. More recently, especially in the taverna situation, W sometimes partially bend their knees when the M do their deep knee bend.
2 Repeat action of meas 1 to L with opp ftwk.

VII. M FOOT SLAP VARIATION

- 1 M dance Basic Step R except that instead of swinging the L leg on ct 4, the M lifts the L leg straight fwd and slaps the inside of the L ft with the R hand.
 W dance Basic Step R only.
2 Repeat action of meas 1 to L with opp ftwk.

NOTE: There are several other variations possible. Experiment to get the most enjoyment from the dance.