

VARIS HASAPIKOS

Greek

PRONUNCIATION: vah-REE hah-SAH-pee-kohs

TRANSLATION: Heavy butcher's dance. The name "Hasapikos" comes from the Greek word "hasapis," meaning butchers.

SOURCE: Dick Oakes learned this dance from members of the Greek community of Los Angeles and in Greek night clubs across the United States. He also danced it with Athan Karras at the Intersection folk dance coffeehouse in Los Angeles. Many other teachers have taught this dance, including Vilma Matchette, Sonny Newman, John Pappas, and Chris Tasulis.

BACKGROUND: Varis Hasapikos developed in the cities and tavernas of Greece during the 20th century, unlike most other Greek dances, which we associate with the past and outdoor village life. The dance is also known as Argos (heavy) Hasapikos, Naftikos (sailor's) Hasapikos, Peiraiotikos (from Peiraius, the seaport of Athens), Ploioritikos (stevedore's dance), and Koulouriotikos (dance from Koulouri, a fishing village on the island of Salamis).

The dance came of age in the tavernas of Piraios, Athens, Salonica, Constantinople, and Smyrna. It is usually danced in short lines of two to four persons, mainly because: 1) the Varis Hasapikos is freely interpreted by the leader with the remainder of the dancers following his lead by signals passed from hand to shoulder or by the leader's preparatory body actions, and 2) in addition, the dance has been a very personal one, danced usually only by friends, so that strangers would not join in a line unless specifically invited to do so.

There is no set number of times one does any figure, nor is there a set sequence of figures. You may see many lines of dancers and each line is doing something different as each line is following its own leader. One should not assume leadership unless one not only knows the dance, but is able to move from one figure to another in a comfortable way so the rest of the line can follow easily.

An infinite number of variations can be developed by the leader and it is not necessary to do a "basic step." In fact, many Greeks who do this dance do not know a "basic step," but are so familiar with the form and the mood that they can dance to the music without reference to any definite step.

According to Ted Petrides, "[Varis Hasapikos] was a war dance and was adopted from an ancient shepherd dance of the Macedonian-Thracian region. The movements depicted a stealthy approach on the enemy; contact and battle with them; then victory. This was used to prepare the soldiers for battle; teaching them to move silently, signals for movements were transmitted by touch."

In case you were wondering, Varis Hasapikos is in the nominative case and Vari Hasapiko is in the accusative case.

MUSIC: Aris (LP) LARS-2006;
 Aris (LP) LARS-2038;
 Audio International (LP) AIR-206;
 EMI (LP) LARS-2028;
 Festival (45rpm) F-3508;
 Festival Records (45rpm) F-3514;
 Festival (LP) F-3001;
 Festival (LP) F-3002;
 Folkdancer (45rpm) MH 4052;
 Folkraft (45rpm) 1462;
 Folkraft (LP) LP-3;
 Grecophon (LP) 303;
 Grecophon (LP) 304;
 Grecophon (LP) 307;
 London (LP) SW 99519;
 National Records (45rpm) N-4537-A;
 Nina (LP) L-63;
 Nonesuch (LP) H 2004;
 Odeon (45rpm) HGRA-1154;
 P.I. (LP) PI-LPS-33;
 P.I. (LP) PI-LPS-940;
 Tikva (LP) T-131;
 Worldtone (45rpm) WT 10024;
 Worldtone (45rpm) WT 10025;
 or any of thousands of recordings of the slow hasapikos.

FORMATION: Short lines of mixed M and W with hands on neighbors' shldr in "T" pos. It is also danced with arms around neighbors' necks and resting on their far shldr. End dancers' free arms extended out to sides at shldr height.

METER/RHYTHM: 4/4. The tempo will vary somewhat from recording to recording.

STEPS/STYLE: The ultimate Vari Hasapiko is dictated by the actions of the leader. Some dance with very erect postures and slight flexing of the knees, while others dance bent slight fwd from the waist and with more flex in the knees. This dance, like the Zeybekiko (Zeimbekiko), is one of the few Greek dances in which the dancers look down at the floor and at their feet. The styling can be crisp, clean, precise, tight, deliberate, and with active concentration, yet retain a certain subtlety, fluidity, and sinewy cat-like motion.

MEAS

MOVEMENT DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

None. Leader begins on any phrase.

I. KOUNIEME (Sway - may begin either R or L)

1 Step R swd, bending R knee, leaning slightly swd R, and leaving L in place (ct 1); drag L twd R (ct 2); take wt on L next to R, straightening body (ct 3); pause (ct 4);

2 Repeat action of meas 1 to the L with opp ftwk.

Repeat at leader's discretion.

II. VARI HASAPIKO (Slow - Basic Step begins L)

- 1 Lunge L fwd, bending fwd (ct 1); tap R toe near L heel or hold it slightly off floor (ct 2); raise R leg fwd with bent knee as body straightens (ct 3); lower R leg as R knee straightens (ct 4);
- 2 Step R bwd, raising L leg fwd with bent knee (ct 1); lower L leg as L knee straightens (ct 2); step L bwd (ct 3); touch R across in front of L using outside edge, toe, or ball of R ft (ct 4);
- 3 Step R diag fwd (ct 1); step L across in front of R, bending L knee (ct 2); step R back to place, turning to face ctr (ct 3); raise L in front with bent knee (ct 4);
- 4 1/2 MEAS: Touch L next to outside of R toe, using L heel or toe (ct 1); pause or slightly raise L knee (ct 2).

Repeat at leader's discretion.

NOTE: While the first lunge is fairly definite, the other counts may be almost "slid through" without stops or jerky motions. The above description also should not be considered absolutely definitive as there are as many variations of the basic step as there probably are Greeks! The "correct" way to do the basic step is as the leader is doing it.

III. ZEIMBEKIKO (Zeybek style - variation of Basic Step)

- 1-2 Repeat action of Fig II, meas 1-2.
- 3 Step R swd, bending R knee and leaving L in place (ct 1); keeping R knee bent, transfer wt to L, bending L knee (ct 2); step R in back of L (ct 3); raise L in front with bent knee (ct 4);
- 4 1/2 MEAS: Touch L heel or toe next to outside of R toe (ct 1); pause or slightly raise L knee (ct 2).

Repeat at leader's discretion.

IV. TRIA (Three - may begin either L or R)

- 1 Step R across in front of L (ct 1); step L swd (ct 2); step R across in front of L (ct 3); step L swd (ct 4);
- 2 1/2 MEAS: Step L across in front of R (ct 1); pause on L as R is brought around in front of L with bent R knee (ct 2).

Repeat in opp dir with opp ftwk at leader's discretion.

V. DIO (Two - may begin either L or R)

- 1 Step L across in front of R (ct 1); step R swd (ct 2); step L across in front of R (ct 3); pause on L as R is brought around in front of L with bent R knee (ct 4).

Repeat in opp dir with opp ftwk at leader's discretion.

VI. ENA (One - may begin either L or R)

- 1 1/2 MEAS: Step L across in front and next to the outside of R ft (ct 1); step R across in front and next to the outside of the L ft (ct 2).

Repeat at leader's discretion. Usually ends with a close of the unsupported ft.

VII. ZORBA (Zorba's Grapevine variation of Tria, may begin either L or R)

- 1 Step L across in front of R (ct 1); step R swd (ct 2); step L across in back of R (ct 3); step R swd (ct 4);
2 1/2 MEAS: Step R across in front of L (ct 1); pause on R as L is brought around in front of R with bent L knee (ct 2).

Repeat in opp dir with opp ftwk at leader's discretion.

VIII. KATO (Down - usually done to L)

- 1 Repeat action of Fig IV (Tria), meas 1, or Fig VII (Zorba), meas 1;
2 Step R across in front of L, turning to face L and bending both knees so that L knee almost touches floor (ct 1); rise slightly from crouch (ct 2); bend knees twd floor again (ct 3); stand, transferring wt back onto L and turn to face ctr (ct 4).

May be "finished" with Fig II (Basic Step), meas 4 (1/2 meas).

IX. ANIKTOS, KLISTOS (Open, Close - begins with ft together)

- 1 With wt back on heels and leaning slightly bwd, open toes (ct 1); place opened toes on floor (ct 2); taking wt and rising on balls of ft, open heels (ct 3); place opened heels on floor (ct 4);
2 Retaining wt and rising on balls of ft, close heels (ct 1); place closed heels on floor (ct 2); taking wt on heels and leaning slightly bwd, close toes (ct 3); place toes on floor (ct 4).

Repeat at leader's discretion. May start on last ct of previous meas.

X. MESA (Jump - begins with ft together)

- 1 Bend knees (last ct or ct & of previous meas);
1 Jump to both about shldr width apart (ct 1); bend knees (ct 2); jump to both ft together (ct 3); pause (ct 4).

Repeat at leader's discretion.

XI. PSEFTIKOS (Lean Fwd - usually done to L)

- 1 Repeat action of Fig IV (Tria) or Fig V11 (Zorba), meas 1;
2 Step R across in front of L, leaning upper part of body fwd horizontally and extending L leg bwd (ct 1); pause (ct 2); step L across in back and next to the outside of R as body comes upright and R leg is raised fwd with bent knee (ct 3); lower R leg as R knee straightens (ct 4);

- 3 Step diag fwd R (ct 1); step L across in front of R, bending L knee (ct 2); step R
back to place, turning to face ctr (ct 3); raise L in front with bent knee (ct 4);
4 1/2 MEAS: Touch L next to outside of R toe, using L heel or toe (ct 1); pause or
slightly raise L knee (ct 2).

Repeat at leader's discretion.

NOTE: Fig IV, V, and VI (Tria, Dio, and Ena) are often used in combination, dancing two of Fig IV, two of Fig V, and enough of Fig VI to complete a musical phrase with a close of the unsupported ft.

There are many other step patterns available to the native dancer, but by just combining and modifying the variations given here, the average folk dancer has a good background for following and even leading the dance.