

ARMENIAN MISIRLOU — RACINE VERSION

OTHER NAMES:

Mechus Gyank Chi Menatz — first line of one song

Racine Armenian Misirlou

Varter — another song

Yarus — another name for *Varter*

BACKGROUND:

American-Armenians Tondee Akgoulian and her family developed this dance in the 1960s in Racine, Wisconsin. The Akgoulian family band played for Armenian weddings, parties, picnics, and other events in southeastern Wisconsin for a number of years and devised this *Armenian Misirlou* for the performing dance ensemble that sometimes accompanied their band.

The dance is a mixture of steps found in other Armenian dances done at the time, set to the song *Mechus Gyank Chi Menatz*. You may also use *Varter / Yarus*, which is the Armenian version of the Israeli song *Erev Shel Shoshanim* [see the *Folk Dance Problem Solver (1987)*], or any "slow-quick-quick" Armenian tune played by the Akgoulian family in the 1960s and 1970s in Racine.

Forrest Johnson noted my reference to *Yarus* in the 1987 *Problem Solver* and we began extensive correspondence. He, with his wife Carol, compiled these background notes and dance description in March, 1988 with help from Jeanine Bothun who learned the dance from the Akgoulians. Tatiana and I visited the Johnsons for the first time in 1991 and observed this *Armenian Misirlou* as danced in Milwaukee.

FORMATION:

Open circle with leader at right end. Link little fingers with your neighbor, shoulder-high, elbows bent. As in many Armenian dances, free hands are held head-high with flat palm facing away from the body.

Forrest reports that the Kurdish hold was used optionally at the time the dance was developed; this is no longer done.

BARS ACTION

4/4 Variable introduction. Start with the beginning of any 8-bar musical phrase.

Back pas-de-Basque. Face center.

- 1 Step to R onto R foot (ct 1), step behind R foot onto ball of L foot (ct 3), step in front of L foot (in place) onto R foot (ct 4).
- 2 = 1 with opposite footwork (back pas-de-Basque to L). Note: these are not yemenite steps in that there is no down-up motion.

Long grapevine. Face center.

- 3-4 Step to R onto R foot (ct 1), step behind R foot onto L foot (ct 3), step to R onto R foot (ct 4), hop on R foot (ct &), step in front of R foot onto L foot (ct 1), step to R onto R foot (ct 3), step behind R foot onto L foot, facing to R and CCW around the circle (ct 4).
- 5 Step forward and CCW around the circle 3 steps onto: R foot, L foot, R foot (cts 1,3,4). Flick L foot up in back during cts 1-2.

Cross-two-three.

- 6 Step in front of R foot onto L foot (ct 1), swing R foot in a CCW circle to end facing CW around the circle (ct 2), walk forward and CW around the circle 2 steps onto: R foot, L foot (cts 3,4).
- 7 = 6 with opposite footwork (cross R over L and walk 2 steps CCW).

Cross and shimmy.

- 8 Step in front of R foot onto L foot (ct 1), close R foot to L foot (ct 3), and execute an optional shoulder shimmy if you can.

Repeat bars 1-8 to the end of the music.

End of ARMENIAN MISIRLOU — RACINE VERSION.