

OPAS
Bulgaria

Opas is from Dobrudža, the area of north-eastern Bulgaria. From the end of the 17th century until the beginning of the 19th century, a huge migration took place of Bulgarians coming from Thrace (Trakia) to Dobrudža. They tried to escape from the Turkish oppression which was at its worst in their homeland at that time. So a considerable part of the population of present Dobrudza has Thracian ancestors. This explains the similarity we often find in traditions, songs and dances of Thrace and Dobrudža.

Actually we could consider Opas as the Pravo Horo of Dobrudža.

Other dances that reflect the historical relationship between the two regions are:

- Triti Pâti from Thrace and Djortajak, Ljavata and Dvata Pati from Dobrudža
- Trakiiska Râčenica and Dobrudžanski Râčenik
- Buenek and Danec

There is no other region in Bulgaria where the body as a whole is so much involved in the movements of the dance as in Dobrudža.

The dependence and strong bond of the Dobrudžanic with their property, the ground, becomes visible in the performance, styling and motives of the dances. A merely technical description of the dance style of the region therefore is hard to give, since it also has a strong emotional impact.

The dance usually begins very gently, slowly and very relaxed with rocking movements. Almost like a meditation, the dancer opens himself for the energy that comes from the earth. In this way we could speak from some similarities with more eastern dance cultures. As the dance progresses energetic and vivid movements of the body and shoulders come in.

It is interesting to know that the flowing movements of Part 1 is sometimes called Zaspi (go to sleep) by the local dancers.

This description version of Opas was taught at Jaap Leegwater's 2nd annual Summer Dance Seminar 1982 in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria by Mitko Donkov.

TRANSLATION: This dance derives its name from the way the people hold each other in the line w.i., na lesa za pojas ("at the belt on the waistband"), or like they say in Dobrudžian dialect, za opas.

Another dance of this same area got its name in a similar way: Râka which comes from, za roce ("hand hold").

RECORD: Folk Dances from Bulgaria - 2,
Balkaton (LP) BHA 11154. Side B, Band 7

FORMATION: Mixed lines, medium length, joined in belt hold (L over R).

METER: 2/4

PATTERN

Meas

No IntroductionPART 1:

- 1 Facing ctr and moving sdwd R, bend L knee and lift R leg, moving R heel in an arc first out then straight fwd (ct &); step on R heel, straightening both knees (ct 1); step on L behind R, bend both knees slightly (ct &); step on the whole R ft, moving L heel in an arc first out then straight fwd (ct &).
- 2-16 Repeat meas 1, alternating ftwk and direction, 15 more times (16 in all).

PART 2:

- 1 Facing and moving twd ctr, step R fwd (ct 1); low hop (cukce) on R, as L swing in a fwd arc close to the floor (ct 2).
- 2 Step L fwd (ct 1); extend R leg fwd close to floor, ft flexed (ct 2).
- 3 Still facing ctr, but moving bkwd, step R-L (ct 1-2).
- 4 Chug bkwd on both ft, bending both knees and body fwd from waist (ct 1); hold (ct 2).

PART 3:

- 1 Step R diag R bkwd, turning to face diag R and lifting L heel (turned out) (ct 1); lift on R (ct 2).
- 2 Step L in place, lift R heel (turned out) (ct 1); lift on L as R leg extends diag R fwd (ct 2).
- 3 Slap R sdwd R, take wt (ct 1); step L behind R bending both knees (ct 2).
- 4 Repeat meas 1. (R diag R bk, lift on R)
- 5 Step L diag sdwd L, turning to face diag L (ct 1); stamp R next to L, without wt, bending both knees (ct 2).
- 6 Step R in place, turning to face ctr (ct 1); step L next to R toes, bending both knees, wt equally divided on both ft (ct 2).
- 7 Stamp R-L-R-L in place (cts 1,&,2,&).
- 8 Repeat meas 5. (L diag L-face diag L; stamp R)

Presented by Jaap Leegwater
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