

SYRTOS

(Naxos)

The Syrtos is probably the most common and widespread dance type to be found in the Aegean cultural region. A generic term for a dance of 2 or more people based on some two-step dance pattern, the Syrtos differs from island to island in its specifics. Characteristic of most Aegean Syrtos dances is the "island style" two-step (or Aegean or Nisiotic or Thalassic) with its tendency to elongate the rhythm of the second step and "catch up" on the third step. Also characteristic is the tendency to "sit" into the step i.e., to push down from the knee/thigh while resisting from the ankle/heel, resulting in a slight push up immediately following the weight changes, especially on steps one and three. The Syrtos is the chief dance of the island of Naxos as it is on the other Cycladic islands as well. On Naxos the Syrtos usually starts as a medley of relatively slow tunes (which can increase in tempo) and then cuts to the Ballos couple dance and ends in the fast tempo "Sousta" or "Repanti".

MUSIC: Dances of the Greek Islands

RHYTHM: 2/4, 4/4 or 8/4 (3 3 2)
S S Q

FORMATION: Open circle, usually arranged in mixed sex couples.

METER: 2/4, 4/4 or 8/4

PATTERN

Meas

BASIC PATTERN

- 1 Facing slightly R of ctr; Step R fwd LOD (ct 1); Step L fwd slightly behind R (ct 2), Step R slightly fwd (ct &).
- 2 Step L fwd in front of R (ct 1); Step R fwd (ct 2), Step L fwd close to and to the side of R (ct &).

Variation A & B start on the second measure after a Basic 1

VARIATION A

- 2 Step L fwd across and in front of R (ct 1); Small step R fwd behind and in back of L, slight pivot of L heel R (ct 2), Step L RLOD (ct &).
- 1 Same as Meas 2 with opposite footwork & direction.

VARIATION B

- 2 Step L fwd across and in front of R (ct 1); Step R fwd slightly in front of L (can pivot to face slightly L of ctr) (ct 2), Small step L back (ct &).
- 1 Step R back (behind across) of L (ct 1); Step L slightly back of R (ct 2), Step R fwd near to L (ct &).

Variations A & B return to Basic after Meas 1 Variation.

Note: Variations A and B are performed at the indication of the lead dancer, or "Kavos", and are usually danced as a "refrain" from the basic traveling step. The variations can also occasionally be performed in immediate succession before returning to the basic step.

Note: The leader can also form a simple bridge under which the entire dance line passes, the dancers once having passed under will tend to dance slightly out from circle center to keep the concavity of the circle intact. In a more complicated formation from the point of either variation A or B both ends of the dance circle returning to a basic island syrto lead their respective ends down across the circle center to pass under the upraised arms of one specified center of dance line person and then turn away from each other i.e. dance leader 'Kavos" in LOD (CCW) and end leader RLOD (CW). Once everyone has passed under, the end section immediately reverses its direction to dance CCW with the entire circle. In the meantime the center of the circle dances the variation B step until it feels the "tug" to dance in the line of direction to pass under the bridge.