

MISIRLOU: Greek with American roots

PRONUNCIATION: mih-sihr-LOO

TRANSLATION: Misirlou is named for Misiri, an Egyptian girl's name

SOURCE: Brunhilde Dorsh choreographed the dance from Kritikos Syrtos material.

BACKGROUND: Misirlou, the tune, was published as sheet music in the 1930s by Nicholas Roubanis, a Columbia University musical scholar and professor. The words to the song are by Fred Wise, Milton Leeds, and S.K. Russell.  
 In the 1940s, the Mitchell Ayers band recorded the tune. Jan August had his first and biggest hit with the tune in the late 1940s and it was a hit for band leader Wayne King. "Dick Dale and His Del-Tones," as well as "The Beach Boys," recorded the tune in 1963; and other surfer bands subsequently put it into their repertoires. Misirlou was featured in the opening scene of the movie *Pulp Fiction* by Quentin Tarantino in the late 1990s.  
 In 1945, a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, women's musical organization asked Professor Brunhilde E. Dorsch to organize an international dance group at Duquesne University to honor America's World War II allies. She contacted Mercine Nesotas, who taught several Greek dances, including Syrtos Haniotikos (from Crete), which she called Kritikos, but for which they had no music. Because Pittsburgh's Greek-American community did not know Cretan music, Pat Mandros Kazalas, a music student, suggested the tune Misirlou, an Arabian Serenade, although slower, might fit the dance.  
 The dance was first performed at a program to honor America's allies of World War II at Stephen Foster Memorial Hall in Pittsburgh on March 6, 1945. A folk dance leader in Pittsburgh, Monty Mayo, introduced the dance in New York and Michael Herman listed it in his catalogue, eventually calling it "Misirlou" so as not to confuse it with the genuine "Kritikos Syrtos" and Brunhilde introduced the dance at Oglebay Park Camp in 1948.  
 Anne Pittman learned Misirlou at Oglebay and introduced it to Southern California in the early 1950s.  
 The dance was first noted in *Partners All, Places All* by Mimi Kirkell and Irma Schaffnit in 1949. The rest, as they say, is history. Misirlou is danced all over the world, even by the local Pittsburgh Greeks.

MUSIC: Many available

FORMATION: Open cir of mixed M and W with hands joined and held at shldr height in "W" pos, leader at R end.

METER/RHYTHM: 4/4

STEPS/STYLE: Rather than having the quick-actions of a Haniotiko Syrto, Misirlou has more of a languorous quality.

MEAS	MOVEMENT DESCRIPTION
THE DANCE	
1	Step in place R (ct 1); pause (ct 2); touch L fwd (ct 3); bring L around in back of R with a circular movement (ct 4);
2	Step L across in back of R (ct 1); step R swd (ct 2); step L across in front of R (ct 3);

pivoting on L to face RLOD, bring R around in front of L, keeping R ft close to L calf with R knee raised (ct 4);

3 Moving in to the L in RLOD, step R (ct 1); step L next to R (ct 2); step R (ct 3); rise on ball of R, raising L knee slightly with L ft close to R calf (ct 4);

4 Still facing to the L in RLOD, step L bwd (ct 1); step R next to L (ct 2); step L bwd (ct 3); pivot on L to face ctr (ct 4).

Repeat entire dance from beg.

#### VARIATION FOR MEAS 4

4 Still facing RLOD, step L bwd (ct 1); pivoting to face ctr, step swd R (ct 2); step L across in front of R (ct 3); pause (ct 4);

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