

Horse Step

Definition

Step-brush flat-footed halftime downbeat right foot with demi-plié on step and heel-bounce on brush. The brushed foot pushes through floor and sweeps into a Low attitude front with a relaxed foot in demi pointe. Shoulders angle forward quartertime downbeat right [2, 4]. Right arm extends forward to 2 o'clock [2], right index finger to side of right eyebrow [4]. Left index finger stays at left hip, palm down.

Notes

- The step has a bounce effect inherent throughout with a demi-plié on step and heel-bounce on brush. (step-brush-step-brush, demi plié-heel bounce-demi plié-heel bounce).
- Upper body has a natural counterbalance (angling in opposition) to the footwork.
- Note that the footwork and shoulders alternate, but the arms do not.



Debke Family

Suhaila grew up attending parties where regular people celebrated with Arabic Family styled steps and debke lines. In 1981, at the age of 14, Suhaila saw her first professional debke troupe at a Fayrouz concert held in the newly opened Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco. Lebanese singers and musicians had been touring the U.S., but it was after 1981 that their tours become more frequent and their popularity soared. By the time Suhaila began dancing at Byblos in 1985, it was pretty much mandatory that belly dancers performing in the clubs know enough debke steps to dance with the crowd.

The debke is a folk line dance performed in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Palestine. Each village or group has their own variations of the basic step and rhythm. The line is traditionally led by a group of well-respected men from the community who typically embellish the basic steps in a collaborative display of strength and stamina. Professional troupes incorporate a wider variety of steps, stylizations, and sometimes acrobatics.

Prior to her official retirement from teaching in 1985, Jamila requested that Suhaila include basic debke steps in the Salimpour format, and these steps now are being added officially to *The Danse Orientale*. These examples are based on traditional, Lebanese “folk” debke. The goal is to understand and connect with the underlying vibe and sentiment of the movements and the other dancers in the line.

The debke step is traditionally done in a line traveling to the right while holding the hands of dancers to your left and right. For the purpose of learning in a classroom environment, we use the following defaults (unless otherwise noted in step descriptions):

- The feet are flat and turned out in a relaxed, open 5th position.
- You are traveling to the right.
- The arms are down, whether holding hands with dancers on either side of you or loose at your sides.
- When holding hands, keep your four fingers connected.
- When holding hands as you move to the right, hold hand on your right upper handed and hold the hand on your left under handed.

Basic Debke 1

Definition

Step flat halftime downbeat left with a demi-plié [1] and a slight double bounce in home [2-(2)&]. Shoulders angle slightly halftime downbeat right.

Basic Debke 2

Definition

Walk forward-and-back-and flat quartertime downbeat left [1-4] with a demi-plié on each step followed by a slight bounce on the same foot on each "&"; Basic Debke 1 [5-6&].

Notes

The upper body has a delayed lean that organically moves with the forward and back footwork.

Basic Debke 3

Definition

Chassé halftime downbeat left [1-3]; swing right leg in a low rond de jambe en dedans [4]; cross right foot in front of left foot and step flat [5]; swing left leg in a low rond de jambe en dedans [6]; cross left foot in front of right foot and step flat to begin phrase again with chassé halftime downbeat left [1-3].

Notes

- The upper body slightly angles in opposition to the weighted leg.
- The rond de jambe has a relaxed and loose quality and is held just a few inches off the floor.

Basic Debke 4

Definition

Basic Debke 1 [1-2&,3-4&]; brush forward through floor with left foot [5]; bend left knee slightly [(5)&]; stomp left foot [6].

Basic Debke 5

Definition

Hop on left foot flat in home [a(1)], right heel dig forward without a weight change onto right [1], step right foot on ball [(1)e], cross left foot over right and step flat [(1)&].

Notes

The cadence for the footwork is hop-dig-step-cross [a1e&]. The bounce on the flat foot flat [a] has the effect of feeling like a hold, but is also the preparation for the right heel dig.



4-1-5-4

\overline{RLRL} R \overline{RLRLR} \overline{RLRL}
{&-a}1 & 2e&a3 {&-a}4

Alternating 4s & 5s

\overline{RLRL} \overline{RLRLR} \overline{LRLR} \overline{LRLRL}
1{e-&} a2e&a 3{e-&} a4e&a

R-L-RL

\overline{R} L \overline{RL} \overline{R} L \overline{RL}
1 & 2e 3 & 4e

2s

\overline{RL} \overline{RL} RL RL \overline{RL}
1e a2 &a (3)e& 4e

\overline{RL} RL RL \overline{RL} \overline{RL}
a1 &a (2)e& 3e a4

RL RL \overline{RL} \overline{RL} RL RL
&a (1)e& 2e a3 &a(4) e&(a)

2-1-2-1-2

\overline{RL} R \overline{RL} R \overline{RL}
1e &(2) a3 & 4e

2-2-7

\overline{RL} \overline{RL} $\overline{RLRLRLR}$
1e a2 &a3e&a4

2-7-2

RL RLRLRLR RL
1e &a2e&a3 4e

2-5-5

RL RLRLR RLRLR
a1 &a2e& 3e&a4

5-5-2

RLRLR RLRLR RL
1e&a2 &a3e& 4e

2-5-1-2

RL RLRLR R RL
a1 &a2e& 3 &a(4)

2-1-5-2

RL R RLRLR RL
a1 & 2e&a3 &a(4)

Left-Right-Together (LRT)

LRT LRT LRT LRT
&a1 &a2 &a3 &a4

3-1-3-1-3 with LRT

LRT L LRT L LRT
&a1 & 2e& 3 &a4