

SUOMALAINEN POLKKA

FINNISH
(SOO-oh-mah-lyn-en POHLK-ka)

Skandia CD, track 30

NOMENCLATURE

Credible English Title Finnish Polka.

ETHNO-CULTURAL ATTRIBUTES

Heritage Finland
U.S. Source As danced in Finland by Gordon E. Tracie, and taught at Skandia Folkdance Society, Seattle.
Motivation and application Recreational non-performance-oriented.

MUSICAL ATTRIBUTES

Type Duple-meter (2/4).

CHOREOLOGICAL ATTRIBUTES

Function Individual couple dance.
Character and form Light and "bouncy," kept well under control.
Footwork Opposite
Specific steps Springy run, Finnish polkka (described below).
Dance holds Open shoulder-waist and Baltic/mazurka holds (see descriptions in Appendix A).
Formation Any number of couples moving forward in LOD (CCW).

THE DANCE ROUTINE

There is no pattern to this dance. Like the majority of Scandinavian old-time dances (called *gammaldans* in Sweden, and distinguished from the figure-type folk dances which the Norwegians call *turdansar*), this is a freestyle dance. The step is the Finnish polka (described below), and the turn may be either CW or CCW. As a transition from one direction to the other, it is not uncommon for the M to stamp. This change is preferably made on an even phrase of the music. If a **single stamp** is used, it would normally come on the first beat of the first measure of the phrase, that is, it would **begin** the new turning direction

ften **three stamps** are used in the change of turning direction. In this case, they always come on the **final measure** of a phrase rather than at the beginning. M will thus stamp R, L, R; using these steps as a means

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of changing his direction of rotation, so that the first measure (M's L polka) of the following turn is in the new direction. If even 4-measure phrases are used, the following footwork would ensue:

| MEASURES | ACTION |
|----------|---|
| 1 - 3 | Beginning with M's L foot, M dances 3 polka steps: L, R, L. W dances opposite footwork. Rotation is CW. |
| 4 | M stamps R, L, R, while at the same time changing rotation from CW to CCW. W continues with L polka step. |
| 5 - 7 | Couple repeats action of measure 1, except that rotation is CCW. |
| 8 | Action of measure 4 repeated in order to change rotation back to CW. |

The Polkett (Finnish "Polkka") step:

Description is for M, W's footwork is opposite.

Count 1: Land on both feet (with bounce), L foot leading (not too far apart!).

Count &: Close R to L (with bounce).

Count 2: Step L (with bounce) a very short step (if rotating, start turn on this count).

Count &: Hold, with bounce (if rotating, complete half turn on this count).

Repeat above, but with opposite foot applying.

Maintain even bounces throughout. There are four distinct bounces in each measure, as if counts were "1, 2, 3, 4."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Suomalainen Polkka, or Finnish Polka, is really nothing more than the polka step as it is danced in Finland; which is quite different in temperament from the contemporary polka of Norway and Denmark. Sweden, on the other hand, retains this same type of polka step in a simple little old-time dance called Polkett. It has survived, it seems, only in the lands bordering the Baltic Sea, and might logically be called "Baltic Polka." Research indicates, however, that at one time the same step existed in the rest of Scandinavia too, the Danes calling it Polket or *svensk polka* (Swedish Polka), the Norwegians referring to it as *norsk bygdepolka* (Norwegian Country-polka), but it is no longer danced in those countries today.

The step is characterized by a little "bounce" or hop on every beat of the music, rather than the single hop preceding the "one"-beat as in the more conventional "regular" polka known to American dancers. The most common dance hold position for the Polkett or Finnish Polka is, again, found only in the Baltic nations: Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. As is true with most all dance steps in the Northlands, the turn is made in either direction. This polka is always very light, with "spring" coming from being up on the balls of the feet. The feet are held close together, so that the steps are exceptionally small. When danced well and naturally, it appears quite effortless.

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