

## CHICKEN DANCE

Swiss

PRONUNCIATION: CHIH-ken DANS

TRANSLATION: The actual name of this dance is Ententanz (EHN-ten-tahnz), which means "Duck Dance." This dance is also known as the Bird Dance, the Little Bird Dance, the Birdie Dance, Dance Little Bird, Tchip-Tchip, the Bird's Dance, Dance de Canards, Song of the Chicken, etc.

SOURCE: Dick Oakes learned this dance from John Filcich who is one of the teachers who introduced this dance to folk dancers in the United States.

BACKGROUND: The tune was composed for accordion in the 1950s in Davos, Switzerland, by Swiss accordion player Werner Thomas when he was in his 20s. Thomas tended a flock of ducks and geese, so the tune was first named "Der Ententanz" (The Duck Dance). Several renditions of the song became hits. In 1963, at age 71, Thomas played the tune in a restaurant and people started to dance to it. Sometime in the late 1970s, the song acquired the name "Vogeltanz" (bird dance) or "Vogerltanz" (Little Bird Dance or Birdie Dance), although these names never caught on seriously in Germany. On some sheet music and recordings it is called "Dance Little Bird." It appears that no one in Germany uses the term "Kükentanz" (küken means chicken).

The tune and its accompanying dance became so popular in German clubs and restaurants that it has been played by virtually every "oompah" band in the world. It is known in Australia as "The Birdie Dance," in St. Louis, Missouri, as "The Ducky Dance," and around the U.S. as "The Bird Dance" or "The Chicken Dance." People can be found doing the dance on every continent at polka dances, swing dances, folk dances, parties, grade schools, and sports stadiums (played by marching bands). It is very popular at weddings, including in the German area of San Antonio, Texas; in the Croatian-American community of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; in communities of recent Romanian immigrants of Detroit, Michigan, and Chicago, Illinois; and in non-ethnic weddings in Milwaukee and Rochester, New York. The dance can be found in just about every setting where people get together and listen to music and to dance, including from Russia's Red Square, where children danced it in a Mr. Rogers televised interview.

The dance was introduced in the United States in 1981 during the Tulsa, Oklahoma, Oktoberfest by the Heilbronn Band from Germany. They wanted to demonstrate the dance in costume but there were no duck costumes available anywhere near Tulsa. At a local television station, however, a chicken costume was available which was donated for use at the festival. And that is how the "Chicken Dance" got its name.

According to Werner Thomas' son, "My father Werner Thomas is the composer of "The Duck's Dance," also called "Tchip-Tchip," "The Bird's Dance," "Dance de Canards," "Song of the Chicken," etc. Worldwide there exist approximately 140 versions recorded on approximately 40 million records."

Apparently, in Europe it is danced as far west as Spain and France, and eastward at

least to Croatia and Romania. The dance is included in a number of parties during northern Germany's Karnival, during the Bavarian Fasching, and during Oktoberfest.

At the New Braunfels, Texas, Wursthfest held annually on the first ten days of November, the dance song has become so popular that the Fest management has imposed a rule on all bands: "Don't play the Chicken Dance more than once an hour!"

MUSIC: AVIA DISK (45rpm) A-831  
Birdie Song (45rpm) PRT-7P219A  
There are probably dozens of Ententanz (Chicken Dance) audio CD recordings available at your favorite local or online music stores. Their proliferation is a testament to how popular and widespread the music is.

FORMATION: Ptrs scattered about the floor facing each other.

METER/RHYTHM: 2/4

STEPS/STYLE: Action is in the typical style of barnyard fowl going about their daily business . . . you know, acting like stupid ducks and chickens!

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## MEAS

## MOVEMENT DESCRIPTION

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### INTRODUCTION

Wait for any introduction, typically four meas.

### I. TWEETS\*, FLAPS, WIGGLES, CLAPS

- 1-2 TWEETS: Hold hands in front of shoulders with fingers together and held forward, thumb under fingers (like a chicken's beak). Close and open thumbs and fingertips 4 times.
- 3-4 FLAPS: Tuck hands under armpits (as if making wings) and Flap elbows backward and forward 4 times.
- 5-6 WIGGLES: Put hands on backs of hips, palms out, fingers spread (like tail feathers), and wiggle hips R, L, R, L, bending knees lower with each Wiggle. (Some dancers leave their hands under armpits for the Wiggles, especially if the music gets faster.)
- 7-8 CLAPS: Clap hands together 4 times.
- 9-32 Repeat meas 1-8 three more times (until music changes).

\* or QUACKS?

### II. ELBOW HOOKS AND SKIPS

- 1-4 Hook R elbows with a ptr or any neighbor and skip 8 times CW in place.
- 5-8 Change directions, hook L elbows, and skip 8 times CCW in place.
- 9-16 Repeat action of meas 1-8.
- 17-32 Repeat action of meas 1-16.

Repeat entire dance from beg.

NOTES:

Should a group wish to do the dance as a mixer, here are a few possibilities:

1. Ptrs may face each other in dbl cir, M backs to ctr; hook R and L elbows with ptr and then with new ptr to R.
2. Ptrs face each other in several small cir and do skips in a R-hand and L-hand stars.
3. Ptrs face each other in single large cir and do skips in grand-R-and-L.

In some circles, so to speak, dancers do not have ptrs. Rather, they join hands in small or large cir and skip first CW and CCW (makes for great fun on the transitions!).

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GERMAN LYRICS

Gestern Abend in Verein,	Last night in the tavern,
Gestern Abend in Verein,	Last night in the tavern,
Trank ich zuviel roten Wein...	I drank too much red wine...

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CASTILIAN SPANISH LYRICS

Pajaritos por aqui,	Birdies over here,
Pajaritos por alla,	Birdies over there,
Y el mundo a bailar.	And the whole world dancing.

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MEXICAN SPANISH LYRICS

Pajaritos, a bailar.	Dance, little birdies.
Cuando caban de nacer,	When you finish being born,
Sus colitas a mover.	Move your little tails.
¡Pío, pío, pío, pío!	Cheep, cheep, cheep, cheep!