

## GAMMAL POLSKA

Swedish

PRONUNCIATION: GAH-mahl POHL-skah

TRANSLATION: Old polska

SOURCE: Dick Oakes learned this dance from Gordon E. Tracie who learned it in Sweden doing field research during the years 1950-51, 1955, and 1960-61, and subsequently taught it at the 1962 Stockton Folk Dance Camp, the 1965 Santa Barbara Folk Dance Conference, and the 1985 San Diego State University Folk Dance Conference. It was presented by Ingvar Sodal at the 1977 North Country Folk Dance Camp in Duluth, Minnesota.

BACKGROUND: Gammal Polska may well be the archetype of the couple-turning dance type found in Scandinavia. Both as a musical and rhythmical form, the polska (known as pols in Norway) has been known in Scandinavia since the Middle Ages, and had been called Sweden's "national dance" for over two centuries, up to the middle 1800s, when the waltz first made its appearance. Today, except for the Hambo (or Hambo Polska), which still survives as an oldtime dance, and a few specialized folk dances preserved by societies in Scandinavia, the traditional polska is virtually gone as a popular dance form in Sweden. Only the country fiddlers have retained a significant part of the incredibly rich treasure of polska music. Fortunately, during the past few years, thanks to a number of devoted fiddlers and other folklore-oriented persons, a number of all-but-forgotten variations of polska dances have been brought to light through field research among the old folks. Gammal Polska contains the most fundamental of the polska steps used in a partner turn and in effect is just an extension of a forward-moving promenade-type walking step done in treble time with two movements to a count of three. The open step, with its "one, ---, three; one, ---, three" weight-shift pattern, is merely adapted to a closed turn, easily and naturally, without losing the basic rhythm. As in nearly all Swedish dancing, the man is the master of the dance and must lead it firmly, thoroughly, and unerringly, with the woman following his strong lead.

MUSIC: Aqua Viking (45rpm) V 830  
Viking (45rpm) V-821-A  
RCA (LP) INTS-1242, Sied A, Bands 2 or 4  
Odeon (LP) E 054-34262, "Dans I Dalom," side 1, bands 1,5 and side 2, band 4  
Telestar (LP) TRS 11101, "Dalabröllop," side 2, bands 2,7  
or any of several old-time Swedish polska selections.

FORMATION: Cpls facing CCW around the dance area with W to M R side in Open Pos, outside arms hanging loosely at sides (NOT with hands on hips), M R arm around W waist, W L hand on M R shldr.

METER/RHYTHM: 3/4

STEPS/STYLE: OPEN POLSKA: Beg M L and W R, step fwd with outside ft (ct 1); pause (ct 2); step fwd with inside ft (ct 3). The movement is smooth and flowing and resembles an ordinary, natural walking step with the heel making contact first and with the wt rolling fwd onto the ball of the ft in LOD.

CLOSED GAMMAL POLSKA: The step takes one meas to complete.

MEN'S STEP: Step L fwd, turning L toe inward around ptr (ct 1); pivot CW on L, keeping R close to L (ct 2); step R fwd in LOD with R toe turned slightly outward (ct 3).

WOMEN'S STEP: Retaining the same rhythmic pattern as in the Open Polska, step fwd R in LOD with R toe turned slightly outward (ct 1); pivot CW on R (ct 2); step L around ptr, turning L toe inward (ct 3).

One complete revolution is made in one meas and is very smooth and without too much bounce or dip, but not lifeless or stilted either.

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MEAS

FREESTYLE MOVEMENT DESCRIPTION

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#### THE DANCE

The dance starts with an unlimited number of Open Polska steps. When the M determines, the Closed Gammal Polska step is started by the M as he steps L across in front of the W and assumes a closed Swedish Folkdance Hold (also called Hambo Hold): Ptrs almost facing with M R arm around W waist, W L hand on M R shldr, M L arm sharply bent and forearm parallel to floor with palm upward and holding W upper arm near elbow, W R arm nearly straight out from her shldr with her hand holding M upper arm near his elbow.

When the M determines, the cpl may open into the Open Pos with the M allowing the W to open outward, stopping her outward rotation by a firm pressure with his R hand in the small of her back.

The dance repeats at M discretion.

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