



BOHEMIAN NATIONAL POLKA

This [choreography](#) by Richard Powers is based on a reconstruction by the Czech dance historian Frantisek Bonus (1919-1999). It is intended to portray the steps and forms of the original 1830s National Style of Polka from Bohemia, ten years before "polkomania" swept the world. Prof. Bonus' long and complex original choreography was intended for stage performance by a professional company. This version is still challenging but has been shortened to a social form danced for pleasure.

Music: Josef Strauss' "Feuerfest Polka" at 104 beats/min (slower than modern polkas). An especially good recording is by the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra on the CD "Ein Straussfest". Telarc CD-80098.

Note: One bar of music equals the time of two walking steps or one polka step.

Introduction: 4 bars. Taking hands (his R, her L), honor partners: 1) Step back away from partner. 2) Close feet together, stand tall and look at partner. 3) Honor partner (she plies, head still raised, as he inclines slightly forward, flat back, bending at the waist). 4. Rise and face line-of-direction (LOD).

1. PROMENADE

Position: Side-by-side, both facing LOD, lady on the right, taking inside hands, raised to chest height. Man's free L hand is akimbo (on his L hip). Lady's R hand holds skirt down, or may also place free hand akimbo as shown in the illustration. This convention of free hand placement is kept throughout.

- Take 2 low, heavy Polka steps (step-close-step-hop) forward, beginning outside feet.
- Walk forward 2 elegant slow steps.
- Rock forward on outside foot, honoring partner; rock back on inside foot.

Repeat this 4-bar sequence a total of 4 times. On the last repeat, replace the rocking steps with two more walking steps, man leading the lady into the next position.

2. CHASSEZ IN AND OUT

Half-close into open waltz position, without taking hands, both facing into the center. Her left hand is at the nape of his neck.

- Chassez into the center (slide-close-slide); chassez back out, turning a quarter clockwise so that the gent faces out of the room.
- Take two turning Polka steps to revolve 3/4 of a turn, still without taking hands.
- Repeat the 4 bars.

- Take hands palm-to-palm (closed to waltz position) and chassez in and out as before, except turning a little more than a quarter because the man needs to be in backing position for the following pivots.
- Turn as a couple with four slow pivot steps (two full turns, as in a Schottische, but without the hops). Take each step with a heavy down-up undulation.
- Dudacka (doo-DAHTCH-ka) Polka step: Chassez in (slide-close-slide), look toward the outside wall and stamp outside foot to that side, looking down toward the stamp. Chassez out rotating a quarter CW and stamp toward LOD.
- Take one complete turn of a Polka (2 bars), then cast away from partner, walking around in a tight circle four steps (he to his left, her to her right), to meet again.

3. PIVOTS AND POLKAS

- Quickly take waltz position upon meeting and pivot four slow steps as before, traveling LOD.
- Polka two bars (one full turn).

Repeat the four bars. End with the man facing LOD, placing his partner to face him.

4. REDOWACKA (ray-doe-VAHTCH-ka)

Position: Drop both hands to face partner at a close distance. Man's (and possibly also lady's) hands akimbo.

- The lady backs against LOD as the man advances LOD with the opening sequence of steps: Two polkas, two walks and two rocking steps in place. Twist the body with the steps (not in opposition) during the polkas, and twist somewhat during the rocking steps.
- Lady backs the man with the same steps. Always begin with man's L and lady's R foot.
- Take hands in waltz position: Repeat the 2 twisting polkas, but then pivot two full turns with 4 slow pivot steps, traveling LOD.
- Repeat the 2 twisting polkas backing the lady; pivot once around with 2 steps; then he turns the lady under by raising his L (her R) arm as she polkas (not pivots) under with 3 quick steps R L R (to gain her L foot free for the next section).

5. CHASSEZ AND POLKA TREMBLANTE

- Push off from the held hands into: Both chassez to their left side (slide-close-slide), and chassez back to the right side, without touching partner.
- The lady does 2 Polka Tremblante steps turning to her left, traveling LOD. (Polka Tremblante is a polka with small steps where the body bounces down and up with each step and hop.) Meanwhile the man walks forward 4 short steps, clapping boldly 4 times.
- Repeat chassez and polka tremblante pursuit.
- The man drops strongly to one knee (either one) and claps 15 times (8 plus another 7) as the lady does 7 polka tremblante steps in a large counter-clockwise circle around him. He watches her as she encircles him. The lady only travels 3/4 of this circular path, ending on the outside of LOD, facing him. He rises to face her as he claps the last time and as she steps two steps in place R L (to gain her R foot free for the next part).

TRANSITION

- Taking closed waltz position, polka one full turn (2 bars) and cast away with four steps, as done at the end of Part 2.

REPEAT FROM THE TOP

- Take inside hands and repeat parts 1 (without the introduction), 2 and 3 only.
- Final honors: 1. Release from waltz position, keeping his L (her R) hand, and step back away from partner. 2. Close feet together, stand tall and look at partner. 3. Honor partner. 4. Rise.

Choreography and description by Richard Powers
© 1986, 2003 Richard Powers

[More dance descriptions](#)

Dance music discography, classes, dance thoughts and more on the [Home Page](#)
