

CHODZONY I OBEREK OD ŁOWICZA
(Poland)

Pronunciation: hoh-DZOH-nih ee oh-BEH-reck oht woh-VEE-chah

These are two couple dances from the region of Łowicz: the Chodzony, or walking dance, and the Oberek. Łowicz is the name of a picturesque town in central Poland, about 50 miles from Warsaw. Łowicz gave the name to the surrounding region which is part of Mazowsze (Mazovia). In early Polish history this whole territory was covered with forest and was the property of the Mazovian prince. The prince and his court held big hunting parties ("łowy"), and the common folks caught fish in the forest's brooks and lakes ("łowić ryby" = to fish). That is how the name of the region probably came about.

In the beginning of the XII century prince Konrad I of Łowicz killed the local priest in a quarrel. As penance he offered the territory to the Church. In this way the Łowicz region came under the control of the Archbishop of Gniezno. Later in the course of the turbulent Polish history, the Łowicz province became the property of several masters, some native, some foreign. The end of World War I brought independence to Poland, including Łowicz. Because of their relatively early emancipation from fiefdom the Łowicz peasants were wealthier than the ones in other districts of Poland. This is one reason that the Łowicz folk dress, richly embroidered and made out of colorful striped woven material, is one of the most beautiful and best known folk costumes in Poland. It can still be seen in the town of Łowicz on festive occasions.

The name of the dance Chodzony derives from "chodzić" = to walk. Chodzony is the precursor of the Polish grand march - the Polonez. The Chodzony was danced first to music in 4/4 time, and only later it changed into 3/4 time. It was originally part of the wedding ceremony and was done with singing. The marching line was led by a "wodzirej" (voh-JEE-ray, the leader) and his partner. Sometimes the "kapela" (kah-PEH-lah, the folk orchestra), or just a fiddler, would walk in front of the leading couple. It is characteristic for the Kujawy and the Łowicz regions that dance partners do not join hands but hold the opposite corners of a handkerchief. The music to the Łowicz Chodzony is in 3/4 time. There are several versions of its song. Three selected stanzas follow the dance description.

Many students of Polish dance are familiar with the bouncy Oberek step with a kick of one foot in the back. This step, which originated in the Kielce and Opoczno regions, is used in the national Oberek style which incorporates the prettiest Oberek's steps and figures from all over Poland. But peasants in individual regions of Poland most commonly dance an Oberek with small flat steps and simple figures. This "flat" Oberek, like Oberek od Łowicza, is danced turning to the right or to the left while moving in either direction around the room. The music for Oberek od Łowicza is played in 3/8 time and is composed of three melodies. In this arrangement the Oberek follows immediately after the Chodzony.

CHODZONY I OBEREK OD ŁOWICZA (continued)

Chodzony Step: Step R ft, bending knees slightly (ct 1); step L ft (ct 2); step R ft (ct 3). Repeat of Step is done with opp ftwk. The Chodzony is danced with flat feet and slightly bent knees. M places his free hand (in a fist) on the fwd part of his hip. W holds her skirt out to side. Ptrs maintain eye contact throughout the whole dance.

Record: ZM-46729 "Tańce ludowe z Polski - Volume 2"
(Folk Dances from Poland), side A, band 10. 3/8 meter.

Formation: Cpls around the circle, facing LOD; with inside hands ptrs hold opp corners of a white handkerchief at shldr level and slightly in front, arms relaxed. Both begin all Figures with R ft.

MeasPatternINTRODUCTION

1-2 No action.

I. MAN CROSSES IN FRONT OF PARTNER

1-3 Dance three Chodzony Steps moving in LOD.

4 Facing LOD, change places with ptr, M moving in front of W, M with three stamps, W with three steps.

II. MAN CROSSES IN BACK OF PARTNER

5-7 Repeat action of meas 1-3.

8 Repeat action of meas 4, except M move in back of W.

III. WOMAN TURNS

9-11 Repeat action of meas 1-3.

12 M: with L ft do a weighted stamp in place (ct 1); hold (cts 2,3).

W: with three steps (L,R,L) do one full CCW turn under the joined arms.

IV. PARTNERS TURN AND CHANGE DIRECTION

13-14 Dance two Chodzony Steps moving in LOD.

15 With three steps (R,L,R) ptrs do one full turn (M CW, W CCW) in place under the joined arms.

16 M: with three steps do a 1/2 CCW turn in place leading ptr around you.

W: with three steps walk a 1/2 CCW circle around ptr. Both end facing RLOD.

Repeat the entire dance moving in RLOD, end facing LOD.

Repeat the entire dance again, moving in LOD; music is played in a faster tempo.

Oberek od Łowicza

Flat Oberek Step (described for M turning CW): Step R ft to R, bending knees slightly, and begin to turn CW (ct 1); step on ball of L ft to side of R ft without completely transferring body wt, and partially straighten knees, while continuing CW turn (ct 2);

CHODZONY I OBEREK OD ŁOWICZA (continued)

step on R ft slightly bending knees and completing a 1/2 CW turn. Repeat of Step is done with opp ftwk, turning in the same direction. W does the same Step but starts with L ft. Reverse of Step (CCW) is done with the same ftwk turning in opp direction. Begin all Figures with M's R, W's L ft.

MeasPattern

1-4 INTRODUCTION (Oberek is done without the handkerchief)
Melody A.

While moving to music, get into ballroom pos with M's L palm on top of the back of W's R hand; W's palm on M's L hip; turn so that M faces out of the circle.

I. SEVEN HALF TURNS AND A STAMP

1-7 With seven Oberek Steps cpl make 3-1/2 CW turns moving in RLOD (CW around the circle); end with M facing ctr.

8 With a small preliminary bend of knees, do a weighted stamp in place (M L, W R), extending joined arms to the side (ct 1); hold (cts 2,3).

9-16 Returning joined hands to M's L hip, repeat action of meas 1-8 turning CCW and moving in LOD; end with M facing out.

II. THREE HALF TURNS AND A STAMP. Melody B.

1-3 Returning joined hands to M's L hip, dance three Oberek Steps making 1-1/2 CW turns, moving in RLOD; end with M facing ctr.

4 Repeat action of meas 8 (Figure I).

5-8 Repeat action of meas 1-4 turning CCW and moving in LOD; end with M facing out.

9-16 Repeat action of meas 1-8.

III. SEVEN HALF TURNS AND A STAMP. Melody A

1-16 Returning joined hands to M's L hip, repeat action of meas 1-16 (Figure I).

INTERLUDE. Melody C

1-2 Cpl lift joined hands at head level, M still holding back of W's hand, ptrs' elbows together. This pos is called "ze szklaneczka," (zeh shklah-NECH-kom = with a small glass, probably filled with vodka). Cpl will now turn in place smoothly as if not to spill the contents of the glass.

IV. TURN IN PLACE

1-7 With seven Oberek Steps done very smoothly, cpl turn CW in place, completing approximately a 1/2 turn with each Step.

8 Do a weighted stamp in place (M L, W R).

9-16 Repeat action of meas 1-8 turning CCW.

INTERLUDE Melody A

1-4 Repeat action of meas 1-4 (Introduction), except M face LOD, W RLOD.

CHODZONY I OBEREK OD KOWICZA (continued)V. OUT-AND-IN AND TURN

- 1 M: extending joined arms to side and leading ptr firmly to R, step R ft in place (ct 1); moving L ft slightly fwd do a weighted stamp on it (ct 2); hold (ct 3).
W: do a horizontal leap to L with L ft, making a 1/8 CW turn (ct 1); place ball of R ft in back of L ft (ct 2); hold (ct 3).
- 2 Repeat action of meas 1 with opp ftwk and direction.
- 3-4 Returning joined hands to M's L hip, make one CW turn with two Oberek Steps, moving in LOD.
- 5-16 Repeat action of meas 1-4 three more times (four in all).

THE SONGPolish (in the old "gwara")

Oj, siano, siano, siano zielune
Przewracaj dziewce na drugom strune,
Na jednom strune, na drugom strune
Przewracaj dziewce siano zielune.

Siano grabiła, snopki wiązała,
Po tej robocie trzy dnie leżała.
Oj, lezy, lezy, bolom ją kości
Nie od roboty, ino od złości.

Oj siano, siano, pod sianem woda,
Wczoraj desc padoł, dzisiaj pogoda.
Oj, lezy, lezy, bolom ją zęby,
A jesce woła: daj, Jasiu, gęby.

Translation

Oh, hay, hay, hay, green hay,
Turn it over to the other side, girl,
To onside, then to the other side
Turn the green hay to the other side, girl.

She was raking the hay and tying it up in sheaves.
After that labor for three days she lay in bed.
Oh, she lays, she lays and her bones ache
Not from the labor but from anger.

Oh, hay, hay, and under the hay there is water,
Yesterday it rained, today there is good weather.
Oh, she lays, she lays and her teeth ache
But she is still calling: Johnny, give me a kiss.

CHODZONY I OBEREK OD ŁOWICZA (continued)Pronunciation

Oy shah-noh shah-no shah-no zyeh-loo-neh
 psheh-vrah-tsaay geh-ftseh nah droo-gom stroo-neh
 nah yeh-dnom stroo-neh nah droo-gom stroo-neh
 psheh-vrah-tsaay geh-ftseh shah-noh zyeh-loo-neh

Shah-noh grah-bee-wah snoh-pkee vyon-zah-wah
 poh tey roh-boh-cheh tchih dnyeh leh-zah-wah
 oy leh-zih leh-zih boh-lom yom kosh-chee
 nyeh ot roh-boh-tih ee-noh ot zwoh-shchee

Oy shah-noh shah-noh pot shah-nehm voh-dah
 fchoh-raay dehstz pah-dow jee-shaay poh-goh-dah
 oy leh-zih leh-zih boh-lom yom zem-bih
 ah yes-tzeh voh-wah daay yah-shoo gem-bih

Dances introduced in November 1978 at a workshop for the Folk Arts Center of New England, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and at the August 1979 San Diego State University Folk Dance Conference, in California, by Ada and Jaś Dziewanowski, who learned them in Łódź from a Polish dance authority, Irena Kik. Do not reproduce these directions without the Dziewanowskis' permission.

Presented by Ada Dziewanowska