

OBEREK NA LEWO
(Poland)

Oberek, a Polish national couple dance in 3/8 time, has its origin in Mazowsze in central Poland. It is lively, spectacular, and almost acrobatic. From Mazowsze it spread all over the country and in some regions (for instance, in Opoczno, Lublin, or Poznań) it has some special characteristics. It is danced not only by peasants, but also by town people at parties, together with ballroom dances, although in a less exuberant style. In olden times it was called the obertas, wyrwas, drygant, zwijacs, drobny, or okragły. The name oberek is derived from the verb obracać się (to turn, to spin), and truly so, as it is composed mainly of spinning and twirling around the room. It usually starts with couples running around the room, as if they wanted to outline the space in which they will be dancing, or, if it was danced outdoors in the fields, to flatten down the grass. Although done in a group, each couple may dance it in their own way. The leader might only call a change of direction, for instance, "na lewo!" (to the left), hence the name of this dance oberek. The woman's role seems less important, as the man has harder feats to accomplish, but he cannot do them without her help. The men try to outdo each other, and often the whole group stops to admire a "show-off." It is a wild and noisy dance with stamps, swishes, and shouts, the most popular of which are "oj dziś, dziś" (oy jeesh, jeesh) or "uha" (oo-hah). It has many steps and figures, out of which only several of the most characteristic ones from central Poland have been chosen for this arrangement done by Jaś Dzięwanowski.

Pronunciation: oh-BEH-rehk nah LEH-voh

Record: ZM-40591 "Tańce ludowe z Polski" (Folk Dances from Poland), side A, band 8.

Formation: Cpls in a single circle, facing LOD, in Round Pos. Begin all figures M with R, W with L ft.

Steps and Styling: Running Step: Three long steps, done smoothly on very bent knees, with no up-and-down motion; the first step (ct 1) is longer and done with an accent, the next two steps (cts 2,3) are slightly smaller. Repeat of Step is done with reverse ftwk.

Basic Oberek Step which can be done running fwd or bkwd or turning. The movement in any given direction occurs mainly on ct 1: Do a small leap onto R ft, bending knees slightly (ct 1); step on ball of L ft near the heel of R ft, momentarily put wt on both feet, bending knees some more, push off the ground with

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both feet (ct 2); land on R ft, flicking L knee bent and L ft back and off ground (ct 3). Repeat of Step is done with opp ftwk. When turning CW, step fwd with R ft, bkwd with L ft. The Step can be modified to make it smoother by bending the knees less, making the leap smaller, and flicking the ft lower.

Oberek Kneels (done only by M): First Kneel (done from standing pos): From L ft do a small leap onto R ft, bending knees fully and keeping them almost together, R knee slightly lower than L knee, top of L ft flat on floor near R ft, wt shared by both feet, torso erect (cts 1,2); rise slightly by straightening knees a little bit (ct 3). Consecutive Kneels: Exchange pos of the two legs, stepping slightly fwd onto the other ft (cts 1,2); rise slightly by straightening knees a little bit (ct 3).

Fist on own hip: Place closed (not clenched) hand on own hip, slightly fwd, with wrist straight and elbow also slightly fwd.

Round Position: In open ballroom pos, facing slightly twd ptr, bend knees and keeping torso straight, bend slightly fwd from waist; join outside hands, arms rounded, palms facing in, M's hand on outside of W's.

Supporting Position: In open ballroom, pos, facing slightly twd ptr, M's L fist on his L hip or L arm extended to side straight; W: support ptr by holding his R hand in your R hand on back of your hip, and hold him under his R upper arm with your L forearm or hand, lean slightly away from ptr.

MeasPatternINTRODUCTION

1-4 No action.

I. RUNNING FIGURE (Bieg dookoła sali - BYEHG doh-oh-KOH-wah SAH-lee).

1-7 Do seven Running Steps in LOD.

8 With two stamps (M-L,R, W-R,L) do 1/2 CCW turn.

9-15 Repeat action of meas 1-7 with opp ftwk and direction ("na lewo!")

16 Repeat action of meas 8 with opp ftwk.



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II. TURNS AND KNEELS (Obroty z przykłękami - oh-BROH-tih z pshih-klen-KAH-mih).

- 1 Acquire ballroom pos, M with back to ctr, and with one Oberek Step do a 1/4 CW turn.
- 2-12 Dance 11 Oberek Steps, moving in LOD and making 1/2 CW turn with each Step. Acquire Supporting Pos with last Step.
- 13-16 Do one or two CW turn, M with four Oberek Kneels moving around ptr, W with 12 small steps in place.



INTERLUDE 1.

- 1-4 Dance four Oberek Steps in place, getting into ballroom pos, M facing LOD.

III. SMALL HOŁUBCE (Hołubczyki - hoh-woop-CHIH-kee).

- 1 Cpl do 1/2 CW turn, moving in LOD. M: step fwd with an accent, knee slightly bent (ct 1); brush L heel diag to side, ft flexed (ct 2); do a small hop on R ft, clicking heels in the air, feet flexed, knees straight (ct 3). W: do one Oberek Step.
- 2 Cpl do another 1/2 CW turn, moving in LOD, repeating ptr's action of meas 1 (Fig. III). W's styling will be smaller.
- 3-16 Repeat action of meas 1-2 (Fig. III) seven times (eight times in all).

IV. MEN'S JUMPS (Skoki chłopców - SKOH-kee HWOHP-tsoof).

- 1 Make 1/2 CW turn with one Oberek Step while acquiring Supporting Pos, M's L arm extended to side straight.
- 2 Make a 1/2 or less CW turn with one Oberek Step.
- 3 M: step on R ft in front of ptr, knee bent, as you begin to strongly swing L leg straight, ft pointed, fwd and slightly to R (ct 1); continuing swing of L leg as high as you can and using its momentum, jump from R leg and bring R ft to back of L knee, R knee bent. L leg should be as vertical as possible (ct 2); hold pos in air (ct 3).
W: With three very small steps, knees slightly bent, continue the CW turn, supporting ptr and helping him in his elevation.
- 4 M: land from jump on L ft in Oberek Kneel pos (ct 1); hold (ct 2); begin to rise by straightening knees (ct 3).
W: stand in place, wt on both feet, knees slightly bent, and support ptr (cts 1,2); help ptr to rise (ct 3).
- 5-16 Repeat action of meas 1-4 (Fig. IV) three times (four times in all).

INTERLUDE 2.

- 1-4 Repeat action of Interlude 1.

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V. RUNNING FWD AND BKWD (Figura niesiona - fee-GOO-rah nyeh-SHOH-nah).

- 1-7 Run in LOD M fwd, W bkwd, with seven small Running Steps.
 8 Do two stamps in place (M-L,R, W-R,L).
 9-15 Repeat action of meas 1-7 (Fig. V) with opp ftwk and direction.
 16 Repeat action of meas 8 with opp ftwk.

VI. MEN KNEEL, WOMEN TURN (Przyklęki chłopców i obroty dziewcząt - pshih-KLEN-kee HWOHP-tsoof ee oh-BROH-tih JEHF-chont).

- 1-7 M: do seven Oberek Kneels, move with the leap of the First Kneel into circle and face out and twd ptr; on ct 1 of each meas clap hands, brushing them vertically.
W: with fists on own hips, do seven Oberek Steps in place, making 1/2 of one CW turn with each step.
 8 Do one accented jump, landing with both feet together, facing ptr, M: place fists on own hips (ct 1), hold (cts 2,3).
 9-12 Acquiring Round Pos, with four Oberek Steps move fwd to a clear space on the floor.
 13-16 With four Oberek Steps do two CW turn in place. W: place L forearm or hand under ptr's R upper arm.

VII. MEN'S SWISHES (Zawijany - zah-vee-YAH-nih)

Cpl continues turning CW in place throughout this Figure, making approximately 1/2 revolution per meas.

- 1 M: drop onto ball of R ft, R knee fully bent, torso erect, as you extend L leg straight, ft pointed, knee facing ceiling, fwd and diag (45°) to L. L ft should not touch floor (ct 1); sweep L leg fwd as you pivot on R ft(ct 2); continuing pivot, rise a little by slightly straightening R knee (ct 3).
W: with three small steps, knees slightly bent, continue turn in place and support ptr, keeping your R arm firmly in place.
 2 M: step fwd and around ptr onto L ft into Oberek Kneel pos (ct 1); hold (ct 2); begin to rise by straightening knees (ct 3).
W: repeat action of meas 1 (Fig. VII), helping ptr to rise on ct 3.
 3-4 Beginning M-R, W-L ft, do two Oberek Steps.
 5-16 Repeat action of meas 1-4 (Fig. VII) three times (four times in all).



VIII. SPINNING ON A TALER (an old German silver coin) (Na talarku - nah tah-LAHR-koo).

- 1-7 In shoulder-waist pos turn CW in place, as quickly as you can, with 21 small even steps.

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- 8 Changing into open ballroom pos, end with two stamps (M L R, W R,L), both ptrs facing ctr, extending outside arm diag up and yelling "uha!" (oo-hah) (cts 1,2); hold (ct 3).

Variation: If you want a more spectacular ending, turn "na talarku" for only four meas. Then, do a preparation by bending knees, W feet together (meas 5);

M: lift ptr over head.

W: spring off both feet, bend knees so that shins are parallel to floor, and support yourself on M's shoulders with straight arms (meas 6);

M: continue turning CW.

W: hold (meas 7).

M: place ptr down (meas 8).

Dance introduced at 1976 Stockton Folk Dance Camp, University of the Pacific, California, by Jaś and Ada Dziewanowski. Do not reproduce these directions without their permission:
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