

SUOMALAINEN POLKKA (Finnish Polka)  
(Finland)

Suomalainen polkka (SOO-oh-ma-line-en polka), or Finnish Polka, is really nothing more than the polka step as it is danced in Finland -- which is quite different in temperament from the contemporary polka of Norway and Denmark. Sweden, on the other hand, retains this same type of polka step in a simple little oldtime dance called Polkett. It has survived, it seems only in the lands bordering the Baltic Sea, and might logically be called "Baltic Polka". Research indicates, however, that at one time the same step existed in the rest of Scandinavia too, the Danes calling it Polket or "Svensk Polka" (Swedish Polka), the Norwegians referring to it as "Norsk Bygdepolka" (Norwegian Country-polka); but it is no longer danced in those countries today. The step is characterized by a little "bounce" or hop on every beat of the music, rather than the single hop preceding the "one"-beat as in the more conventional "regular" polka known to American dancers. The most common dance position for the Polkett or Finnish Polka is, again, found only in the Baltic nations: Sweden, Finland, Estonia, and Latvia. As is true with most all dance steps in the Northlands, the turn is made in both directions. This polka is always very light, with "spring" coming from being up on the toes. The feet are held very close together, so that the steps are exceptionally small. When danced well and naturally, it appears quite effortless.

Source: As danced in Finland by Gordon E. Tracie, and taught at Skandia Folkdance Club, Seattle.

Music: Record: RCA FAS-665 (Finnish Polka). Same also on RCA LPM 9910.

Formation: For any number of cpls, moving fwd LOD (CCW) around room. Dance pos is closed Baltic dance hold, as follows: M's R arm around W's waist; W's R hand's fingers in M's L hand which he holds tightly against his own L hip (not too far fwd).

Step: Finnish polka step (described below).

Character: Light and "bouncy", kept well under control

There is no "pattern" to this dance. Like the majority of Scandinavian oldtime dances (called "gammaldans" in Swedish, and distinguished from the figure-type folkdances which the Norwegians call "turdansar"), this is a freestyle dance. The step in the Finnish polka (described below), and the turn may be made either CW or CCW. CCW LOD maintained thruout.

As a transition from one direction to the other, it is not uncommon for the M to stamp. This change is preferably made on an even phrase of the music. If a single stamp is used, it would normally come on the 1st beat of the 1st meas of the phrase, that is, it would begin the new turning direction, and would be in lieu of the M's 1st (L) polka step.

Often three stamps are used in the change of turning direction. In this case, they always come on the final measure of a phrase rather than at the beginning. M will thus stamp R, L, R -- at the same time, he uses these steps as a means of changing his direction of rotation, so that the 1st meas (M's L polka) of the following turn is in the new direction. If even 4-meas phrases are used, the following pattern would ensue:

## SUOMALAINEN POLKKA (cont)

<u>Measures</u>	<u>Pattern</u>
1-3	Beg with M L ft, M dances 3 polka steps: L, R, L. W dances opp. Rotation is CW.
4	M stamps R, L, R, while at same time changing rotation from CW to CCW. W continues with L polka step.
5-7	Cpl repeats action of meas 1, except that rotation is CCW.
8	Action of meas 4 repeated in order to change rotation back to CW.

Note: The above 4-meas alternation of CW and CCW turn, with 3 stamps between each, has been widely danced in the Finnish communities of southwest Washington State, and is commonly referred to as "Finn Polka".

Presented by Gordon E. Tracie