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Český Polonéz

(Czech Republic)

The Polonaise, one of the national dances of Poland, became an international dance form in many countries during the 19th century, each with its own way of spelling and pronouncing "Polonaise." Many variations of the Polonaise were danced in Bohemia and Moravia at that time. The choreographic arrangement described here is based on a choreographic reconstruction by František Bonuš (1919-1999) of 19th century polonaise dances as done in the Czech Republic. It was devised by Richard Powers as an adaptation for recreational folk dancers, and was taught at the 2003 Stockton Folk Dance Camp. It was also presented by Denise Heenan at the Autumn Harvest Festival Institute in Fresno, Calif. on October 18, 2003.

The Czech spelling "Polonéz" (POH-loh-NEHZ) is used for this choreography to emphasize its Czech origin and character. In the Stockton syllabus the dance was named "Bohemian Polonaise." Combining "Bohemian" with "Polonéz" met with objections from our Czech informants, because not only is this an English/Czech hybrid name, but it implies to them a non-existent Bohemian ethnicity rather than a place. Therefore we have used the adjective "Český" (CHEHS-kee). Note that at the 1979 Stockton Folk Dance Camp F. Bonuš included in the camp syllabus a dance which he called simply "Polonéz," but he did not teach this dance, and it is unlike the dance described here and uses very different music. At the Dvorana dance seminar held in Benešov, Czech Republic, in the summer of 1996, Bonuš's daughter, Živaná Vajsarová, taught an expanded version, possibly the original, of the Bonuš choreography used by Powers. The music was labelled "Polonéza z Hořicka." Bill and Louise Lidicker attended this seminar and so have annotated this description with a few comparative comments. Basically, Powers eliminated repeats of some of the figures and simplified the finale.

CD: *Vintage Dance Music* -- Stockton 2003, Band 1 ("Z Hořicka"). Slow 3/4 meter (96 bpm)

Formation: Cpls in processional arrangement, usually a circle facing LOD with inside hands joined, W to M's R.

Steps: Polonaise Step: On upbeat of previous meas, plié on inside ft, extending outside ft (M's L, W's R) fwd; step fwd strongly onto the ball of the ft (ct 1); walk fwd elegantly two more steps (cts 2,3). Plié immediately after taking 3rd step and repeat with opp ft. Upper body and head can twist slightly to the L when the L ft leads and to the R on alternate measures.

Polonaise Chassé Step: Step fwd onto ball of R ft with a slight upward thrust of the body (ct 1); quickly cut L under R (ct &); step fwd on R (ct 2); step fwd on L (ct 3). This can also be done starting with the L ft.

Balancé: Step to L on L (ct 1); close L to R rising on balls of ft (ct 2); lower heels to floor (ct 3). Repeat with opp ftwk.

Polonaise Pas de Basque Step: Step on L to L side (ct 1); step on R across in front of L with plié on supporting ft and lift L up behind R, swing R arm across in front and down (ct 2); step on L ft in place (ct 3). Step to R on R (ct 1); close L to R while rising on balls of ft (ct 2), lower heels to floor (ct 3) (M present open arms with palms fwd during this meas; W arms are at sides). This can also be done to the R with opp. ftwk.

Balancé Ouvert: Take small step to R on R ft, turning 1/8 to R (45 degrees) (ct 1); point L toe twd ptr (ct 2); hold (ct 3). Repeat with opp. ftwk. M have hands on hips, W's hands at sides.

Styling: Dancers stand tall and dance elegantly throughout.

Meas	3/4 meter	Pattern

INTRODUCTION

1-4 No action.

5-8 Honor ptrs: Step back from ptr, releasing hands and facing (meas 5). Hold (meas 6). Bow to ptr (M bend fwd at the waist; W bend knees but keep head upright) (meas 7). Step together regaining inside hand hold and face LOD (meas 8).

I. PROMENADE

1-6 Dance fwd in LOD with 6 Polonaise Steps; inside hands are joined and held fwd (can be straight out in front or down at about a 45 degree angle), free hands down at sides; W are slightly fwd of M.

7-8 M step fwd on L (ct 1) and close R to L (ct 2); hold (ct. 3) while bringing the W across to his L side. W takes 3 smooth steps to get there (R,L,R). On meas 8, W steps on L turning to face LOD (ct 1); both rise on ball of ft (ct 2) and down (ct 3). M's R hand remains joined to W's L (at elbow level), and M's L hand is raised in protective position behind the W's back, neck, or head.

9-14 Beginning with new outside ft (M's R, W's L), dance 6 Polonaise steps in LOD.

15-16 M unfold ptr to his R side to end with ptrs facing (M facing out), both taking 3 smooth steps. On meas 16, step almost in place (ct 1), close and rise on balls of ft (ct 2), down (ct 3).

(Vajsarová version: W moves across to M's L side on meas 8, and unfolds to face ptr on meas 16.)

17-20 Place R palm to R palm and dance 3 Polonaise Chassé steps starting with R ft, and making one complete CW turn. M's free hands are on the hip (Powers) or down to the side (Vajsarová). On meas 20, dance 3 steps in place while M assists W to turn to R so both face LOD; regain inside hand hold.

21-24 Dance 3 Polonaise steps in LOD, starting with outside ft. On meas 24, turn to face ptr with a step, close-up, down.

25-28 Repeat meas 21-24 with opp ftwk and directions. Start with L palm to palm and L ft lead. On last meas, M turns to his L to face LOD.

29-32 Repeat meas 21-24.

II. SOLO

1-2 Both dance Balancé step to L and then to R. M place hands on hips; W's are down at sides.

3-6 Both dance Polonaise Pas de Basque step, first to the L and then to the R.

7-8 Both dance Balancé Ouvert step, first to the R and then to the L; close R ft. to L ankle on last ct. M's hands can be placed on hips for these 2 meas.

9-10 Both beg. R ft, dance 1 Polonaise step passing R shldr with ptr and hooking to the R. Curve to the L with 1 large step to face ptr (ct 1); close-up (ct 2); down (ct 3). The path taken on these 2 meas is a backward S-shape.

11-18 Repeat meas 3-10 with opp. ftwk and directions.

(Vajsarová version: meas. 3-10 and 11-18 are done in reverse order.)

III. WEAVING AND FINALE

1-3 Both cast to own L, starting L ft, dance in a large circle with 9 smooth walking steps, and return to single circle. (Vajsarová version: dance same circle with 3 Polonaise Chassé steps.)

4 Both step fwd on R ft to face ptr, M facing LOD (ct 1), close L to R and rise to balls of ft (ct 2), lower heels to floor (ct 3).

5-12 Dance 7 Polonaise steps in a Grand Chain, beginning with R ft. and passing R shldrs with ptr; pass one person on each meas and do not take hands (make eye contact with person passing on ct 1 of each meas). On meas 12, step around the 7th person to face in opp direction with L ft (ct 1), close R to left and rise on balls of ft (ct 2), and lower heels (ct 3).

13-19 Repeat meas 5-11 back to ptr.

20 With 3 steps (L,R,L) move around ptr and form a large circle holding hands held at shldr level (W are now on ptr's R).

(Vajsarová version: Grand Chain, meas 5-20, is done giving hands.)

21-22 All circle L (RLOD) with 2 Polonaise steps, starting with R ft.

23 M drops hand hold with W to L (on ct 1 or 2) and with 1 Polonaise step moves fwd and to R on inside of circle to face his ptr. W continues moving in RLOD.

24-25 M joins L hand with ptr's R and with open 2-hand hold circle as a cpl CW with 2 Polonaise Steps. At end of meas 25, open up into large circle again all facing ctr and rejoin hands with adjacent cpls.

26-28 Advance twd ctr with 6 smooth walking steps (meas 26-27), gradually raising arms to above eye level; on meas 28 bow, keeping hands up.

ALTERNATE ENDING

In his Stockton description, Powers provides an alternative finale (Fig III, meas 21-28) which is more suitable for exhibition groups, but could readily be used by recreational dance groups as well.

20 At the end of the Grand Chain, instead of forming a circle with hands joined, each cpl turns CW with R hands joined for 3 steps to both face RLOD. M's L arm is placed in protective pos behind the W (as in Fig. I, meas 8).

21-23 Both beginning with R ft, dance 3 Polonaise Steps fwd in RLOD.

24-25 Cpls turn CW in place one full turn, W going fwd, M backing slightly with 2 Polonaise Steps.

26-28 Step away from ptr maintaining R hand hold (meas 26); M goes down on one knee (meas 27); M kisses W's hand (meas 28).

(The Vajsarová finale is 12 meas. long and different from both of Powers' versions.)

DANCE DESCRIPTION ERRATA:

In the description for **Český Polonéz** in the March issue, page 9:

In the description for Balancé under "Steps", it should read "close R to L" (not "L to R").

March, page 10: Fig. II, meas. 11-18, second line should read: (Vajsarová version: meas. 7-10 and 15-18 are done in reverse order.)