

Name of dance: Kolomeyke

Pronunciation: koh-loh-may-keh

Place of origin: western Ukraine

Source of music: *Brave Old World: Klezmer Music*, FF70560, track 8; *Glik: Klezmer fun Brunen Aroys*, track 11 - 'Hutsulca'. There are many other recordings by both klezmer and Ukrainian musicians, but these are some of the most danceable ones.

Learned from: Michael Alpert, 1991, and Fr. Bohdan Hladio, 1993

About the dance: The name of this dance comes from the Ukrainian *kolomyjka*, named after the Ukrainian town in eastern Galicia called Kolomyja, known in Yiddish as Kolomey. The dance was popular among both Ukrainians and Ukrainian Jews. A faster version, called *hutsulka*, was also done among Hutsul Ukrainians in the Carpathian mountains of southwest Ukraine, and was captured on film in Sergei Paradzhanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*. In Jewish communities, the dance was often primarily a couple dance. In Galician Ukrainian communities, it was often just a group circle dance. But just as often, the dance would start as a big group circle, split at some point into couples, and at some later point coalesce again into a group circle, a pattern familiar from the Jewish *freylekhs* or the Ukrainian *hopak*. The same basic steps can be done in either formation, but in couple formation the steps spin you around a common center, while in the large group they take you along the group's line of travel.

Rhythm: 4/4

Formation: For the group version, begin in a circle of couples with the men on their partners' L sides. Hands may either be held joined in "V" position or in a back-basket hold, as long as everyone does it the same. For the sake of simplicity, the dance will first be described in the group version. Then the adaptations needed to dance it as a couple will be introduced.

<u>Direction</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Step</u>
→	1	<u>Basic Step:</u> Side to Side Facing center and moving to your own R, step on R to R (ct. 1), flex on standing R (ct. &), close L to R (ct. 2), flex on standing L (ct. &), step on R to R (ct. 3), flex on standing R (ct. &), close L to R (ct. 4), flex on R again (ct. &).
←	2	Repeat Measure 1 with reverse footwork and direction. <i>Note: The style of this step is generally bouncy, but can also include some tilting side to side and even rotation of the shoulders to face a little L and R, usually done only subtly.</i>

Direction	Measure	Step
←	1	<p><u>“Dorishka” Step: Traveling Down-Up Step</u> Facing and moving to the L, step onto R on full sole with a flexed leg (ct. 1), step up onto the ball of the L foot with a straight leg, still traveling to the L (ct. 2), repeat counts 1-2 (cts. 3-4).</p> <p><i>Note: This step may be repeated as many times as wanted. If whoever is leading wants to change direction of travel, they can signal this to the others by taking a measure to stamp with weight on R,L,R (cts. 1,2,3) and leave a pause on ct. 4, thus freeing the L foot begin the step(with reverse footwork, of course) in the opposite CCW direction. If the leader stamps 4 times rather than these 3, then the dance continues in the same direction as before.</i></p> <p><i>The basic “down-up” movement of this step described under Measure 1 above is the Ukrainian version of the “Rida” step from further west in Slovakia and Hungary. With its repeated weighting of the inside foot, it is thought to imitate the planting of seeds in a row.</i></p>
←	1	<p><u>“Sewing Machine Step”:</u> Facing and moving to the L, step on R (ct. 1), pause (ct. 2), hop on R (ct. 3), step on L (ct. 4)</p> <p><i>Note: This step may also be repeated as many times as wanted. The same stamping signals as in the previous “Dorishka” step may be used by the dance’s leader. Again, the same step with reverse footwork can be used to travel in the opposite CCW direction. The hops in this step are done off of a fairly straight leg, using much more foot flexion than knee flexion. This gives the step a bouncy style.</i></p> <p><u>Couple Version:</u> The couple version of the <i>Kolomeyke</i> uses exactly the same steps as the group version, and the man and woman use the <b>same</b> steps as each other (not mirror image). This makes them travel or rotate around a common center, just in their own very small circle. When rotating CW around each other, man supports the center of the woman’s back with his L hand, while holding her upper L arm with his R hand. Woman’s L hand holds man’s upper R arm while her R</p>

Direction	Measure	Step
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hand comes behind his upper back. When the direction of rotation switches to CCW on the faster steps (not on the Basic Step), so does the arm configuration to match and support it. The man uses the hand he has behind his partner's back to gently help propel her from CW position to CCW position or back again whenever he decides to change directions. Any of the steps may be used to help the couple travel to a different position on the dance floor, for example to join up with another couple to create a 2-couple circle, or a 3-couple one, or a 4 or 5 . . .etc. As a matter of style, if the couple is swaying at all side-to-side during the Basic Step, the man must sway toward the side he puts weight on, while the woman sways away from her weighted side, thus making their swaying a mirror image of each other even while their steps are **not** in mirror image. As with any couple's turning dance, the partners must yield their upper body weight into the support of their partner's arms.

dance notes by Erik Bendix



*photo: Kiev winter wear, ca. 1922*