

VÄSTERDALSK BAKMES MED POLSKA
Bakmes från Särna & Transtrand
Sweden

The dance translates as: Western Dalarna Reverse-Turn Dance. As the names indicate, it is done in the province of Dalarna, in the towns of Särna and Transtrand. It is considered a restored regional ethnic dance and was learned in Sweden in 1951 and subsequent years in Sweden by Gordon Tracie.

"Bakmes" is a Swedish dialect word implying "baklänges" (backwards), hence its reference to the reverse - or backwards - turn in certain dances. Most of these dances are found in Western and Northern Sweden, but one also survives in the Swedish districts of Finland (Finländsk Bakmes-Polka). The same reverse-rotation form is found in Norway in one of the figures of Rørospols, where it is called "vrangsnå" (literally, wrong-turn). The form described here is from the Western districts of the province of Dalarna which border Norway's Østerdalen (the East Valley), home of Rørospols, so it is not surprising that there are similarities. Compared with the Norwegian Pøls, however, it would appear that over the years the Swedish counterpart polska has fragmented, so that some parts of the full "suite" as still danced in Røros today (and can be traced back to the 16th century in Sweden) are found in some places, others in other places. As an example: when the Hambo began to replace the "rundpolska" (as in Gammal Polska) in the Transtrand area, the half turn "bakmes" outlived the fullturn L-ft polska.

As danced in "the old days," the polska and bakmes were far from mundane. To quote from J.D. Lamb, who did research in Western Dalarna recently: "The dance lends itself to show-off figures. It is usual for the man to slap the outside of the right boot from time to time during the bakmes turn, on ct 2. He can also drop to the R knee on ct 1, the L on ct 4, or even do both in succession. Another characteristic stunt is called "kasting" or high kicking. Here the man kicks his feet over his head on ct 2 and clicks his heels, or kicks the ceiling if it is low enough. A good dance used to be considered one in which there were as many footprints on the ceiling as on the floor! "Kasting" is easier in closed position with the man's R arm reaching under the woman's arm to grasp her shoulder. The man uses her for support as he jumps. In modern Sweden it is not unusual for young women to do all the slaps and "kasts" alternately with the men."

PRONUNCIATION: Vest-ehr-dahlask Bawk-mehs

RECORD: Viking V821-a (45)

RHYTHM: Triple meter; quaver (8th note) polska rhythm; moderately slow to moderately fast tempo; temperament varying according to musical style being played.

FORMATION: Cpls in a circle, moving LOD (CCW) in open shldr-waist pos.

STYLE: Legato; restrained and smooth, or animated, depending on tempo and temperament of music being played.

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METER: 3/4

PATTERN

NOTE: The following parts are not figures in the regular sense, but merely non-turning and turning segments which can be alternated at will, with no fixed number of meas for either.

PART A: OPEN POLSKA FWD (FÖRSTEG)

In open shldr-waist pos, with M facing fwd, W bkwd, begin on L and do 3 (or more if desired) L-ft open polska steps fwd in LOD.

PART B: TRANSITION TO REVERSE-HALFTURN POLSKA

Whenever desired, cpls assume reverse-sidecar polska pos, as follows:

- Ct 1: M step L in LOD with emphasis (usually a stamp), W step on L to begin cross-over in front of M.
- Ct 2: M hold L on floor, W continue turn on L.
- Ct 3: M step R in LOD, W step on R to complete cross-over to reverse-sidecar polska pos.

PART C: REVERSE HALFTURN POLSKA (BAKMES)

Cpls turn with L-ft (reverse) halfturn polska steps, completing 1 full turn CCW per 2 meas, thus:

- Ct 1: M steps L diag L to initiate CCW turn, W step L around behind R.
- Ct 2: Hold, allowing R leg to reach around CCW in front.
- Ct 3: M step R in front of L and form a "T" (L toe at R instep), W close R to L.
- Ct 4: M step L around behind R to form "L" (L toe adjacent to R heel at R angle), W step L diag fwd in LOD.
- Ct 5: Hold, allow body to continue to turn CCW.
- Ct 6: Both close R to L.

As can be seen from the above, the 6 ct turn is such that the M starts the pattern on ct 1 directly after the transition, while W simultaneously starts the same pattern on ct 4. Thus the M steps fwd as the W steps bkwd and vice-versa.

Whenever desired, cpls can break out into open shldr-waist pos again, and repeat open polska steps fwd, followed by transition and turn, etc., to end of music.

ALTERNATE FÖRSTEG

Cpls move fwd in LOD with L-ft open polska steps, as above, but in reverse-sidecar polska pos, M facing fwd, W bkwd, or vice-versa, as desired.

Presented by Gordon Tracie at the 1980 San Diego S.U.F.D. Conference

Presented by Armond and Sharon Deny
San Diego S.U.F.D. Conference Afterparty
Sept. 13, 1980

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(ERRATA)*

VÄSTERDALSK BAKMES: *MED POLSKA*

Change name to Västerdalsk Bakmes med Polska

Add the following notations to the dance:

PART A: Open polska fwd (försteg)

In open shldr-waist hold, begin on outside ft and move fwd in LOD with open polska step.

Note: The Deny's taught the dance with a L fwd open polska step. It may be done either way.

PART B: Closed polska turn (rundpolska)

Whenever desired, cpls assume closed basic polska hold, and rotate CW with full turn polska steps: M - L, both, R; W - both, L,R.

Cpls may revert to open "rest steps (promenade) at any time by merely breaking out into open position again.

Note: The entire dance is usually done with a bouncy feeling rather than being smooth. There is a hop-skip preceding the first ct on the R ft on ct "&".