

Presented by Gordon Tracie

GAMMAL SCHOTTIS
Sweden

The dance is also known in Sweden as: Schottis i äldre stil (Schottische in Olden style). This dance is not to be confused with the formalized folkdance "schottische i turner" (Schottische in Figures), which is a choreographed pattern dance. At one time the dance was done generally throughout Sweden, but now is mainly associated with certain local regions. These variants primarily from northern districts of the country. The dance is a restored old time dance, found in numerous regional ethnic variants. It was learned by Gordon Tracie in Sweden in 1963.

As an oldtime dance found generally throughout Sweden for well over a century, the Schottis has understandably acquired many localized forms, which, when collected in these latter days, acquire the status of a "bygdedans" (regional ethnic dance). To date there are published variants from over a dozen districts in 8 different provinces. They all have many things in common, but local figure variations give each of them a distinctive character. Not infrequently styles can vary within a given district as well. Thus it is not unusual to find dancers using a variety of danceholds on both the open and closed portions of such a dance as the Schottis. In the older forms (generically: Gammal schottis), a closed polska hold is widely favored for the turn. In dancing the Basic form, described below, an interesting variation is often used: following the open schottische steps in firm hand hold, the W's L hand remains joined with the M's R hand for the closed pivot-spin turn, being held in the center of the W's back rather than disengaged and brought up to the M's R upper arm as in the normal polska hold. In this manner the partners' inside hands are kept in contact throughout the entire dance -- a snug, nice feeling!

In contrast to the common "PE class" schottische with its "1,2,3, hop" flamboyance, the Gammal schottis is a rather elegant dance; reserved, even dignified, but not without a sense of solid power throughout. The primary style difference between the ordinary "garden variety" Schottis, and the older Gammal schottis in all its variants, is something called "svikt" (springyness), a lilting feeling brought about by keeping the knees flexed at all times so that there are no sharp or harsh movements. On the forward schottische step, the hop or skip on the 4th count is replaced by a gentle lifting of the free foot. And in keeping with the overall style, the turn is danced without a semblance of a hop! The key word is "legato".

The importance of proper music for this dance (and other Swedish ethnic dances as well) cannot be over-emphasized! If the dance is to be performed "legato", then the music must be played "legato." Thus the choice of recordings is critical. Old style Swedish fiddling, which has perpetuated an ancient "legato" playing style, is especially recommended.

PRONUNCIATION: Gahm-mahl Shoht-tees

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RECORD: Viking V 821-b (45)

RHYTHM: Duple meter; schottische rhythm; moderately slow tempo; definite legato temperament.

FORMATION: Cpl in a circle (W on M's R), facing and moving LOD (CCW) in basic polska hold (see Preface) or modified polska hold (see above).

STYLE: Smooth and flowing; semi-freeform

METER: 4/4

PATTERN

Meas.

NOTE: The following figures are traditionally not looked upon as set routines in a sequence dance, but may be used either selectively or freely alternated at will. Although the basic pattern structure is the same as that described for the common Schottis, the character and style of dancing are entirely different. The Gammal Schottis should be danced with flowing, "legato" movements, ft much closer to the floor, and in a comfortable, relaxed manner. Differences in dance holds are described above.

PART A: Basic form

1-2 Begin on outside ft and do 2 "soft" schottis steps fwd in LOD.

3-4 In closed hold (see above), 2 steps of smooth pivot-spins (M L,R; W R,L) to make 2 turns CW while progressing fwd in LOD.

PART B: Variation with W's twirl

1-2 With light handd hold, begin on outside ft with M dancing 2 small "soft" schottis steps fwd in LOD, while W do 2 "soft" schottis steps twirling CCW 2 turns uner M's raised R arm.

3-4 In closed hold, turn in Basic form (see above).

Repeat from beginning until end of music.