

GAMMAL SCHOTTIS

(GAHM-mahl SHOHT-tees)

Skandia CD, track 19

NOMENCLATURE

Credible English Title Old-style Schottische.

ETHNO-CULTURAL ATTRIBUTES

Heritage Sweden. At one time general throughout the land, now mainly associated with certain local regions. These variants primarily from northern districts of the country.

U.S. Source As researched and learned in Sweden from 1963 on, by Gordon E. Tracie, and taught at Skandia Folkdance Society, Seattle.

Category Restored old-time dance, found in numerous regional ethnic variants.

Motivation and application Recreational, non-performance-oriented.

MUSICAL ATTRIBUTES

Type Duple-meter, schottische rhythm, moderately slow tempo, definite legato.

CHOREOLOGICAL ATTRIBUTES

Function Individual couple dance.

Character and form Smooth and flowing. Semi-freeform.

Footwork Alternating plus repetitive. Opposite.

Specific steps Schottische (style described in Background Information), smooth pivot spin.

Dance holds Firm handhold (as described in Appendix A). Basic polska hold (also described in Appendix A), or modified polska hold (described below).

Formation Couples in circle, progressing in LOD (CCW).

THE DANCE ROUTINE

Note: The following parts are traditionally not looked upon as set figures in a sequence dance, but may be used either selectively or freely alternated at will. Differences in dance holds are described for each part.

MEASURES 4 counts each	ACTION
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	Basic Form:
1 - 2	A. Forestep (open schottische forward): With firm handhold, beginning on outside foot, 2 "soft" schottische steps (as described in Background Information) forward in LOD.
3 - 4	B. Turn (closed pivot-spin): In closed polska hold (see Basic Polska Hold in Appendix A) or in Modified Polska Hold (as described below) 2 sets of smooth pivot-spins (Men: L, R, L, R) (Women: R, L, R, L), to make 2 rotations CW, while progressing forward in LOD.
	Variation with alternate turn:
1 - 2	Precisely as in 1 - 2 above.
3 - 4	In closed hold (basic or modified polska hold), as above, but turning with 2 "soft" schottische steps (the equivalent of 2 springy two-steps) in lieu of 2 sets of pivot-spins, to make 1 rotation CW.
	Variation with W's twirl:
1 - 2	Light handhold, beginning on outside foot, M dances 2 small "soft" schottische steps forward in LOD (CCW), while W dance 2 "soft" schottische steps twirling CCW 2 rotations under M's raised R arm.
3 - 4	In closed hold, turn as in Basic Form, above.
	Variation with schottische separation:
1 - 2	Beginning on outside foot, both arms loose at sides, partners separate by dancing the 1st "soft" schottische step diagonally forward in LOD (M inward to L, W outward to R), and the 2nd schottische step diagonally forward returning to partner.
3 - 4	In closed hold, turn as in Basic Form, above.
	Variation with "Overtake":
1 - 4	While one couple is dancing the Basic Form above, the couple behind them can dance the variation with schottische separation so as to overtake the 1st couple during the 2 schottische steps. For the closed turn they will therefore be in front of that other couple! This obviously implies that for the "traveling" couple, their schottische steps must be taken with somewhat longer strides.

Modified polska hold used in closed position turn following the schottische steps: W's L hand remains joined with M's R hand, and placed in center of W's back, rather than being disengaged and brought up to the M's R upper arm as in regular polska hold. In this manner the partners' inside hands are kept in contact throughout the entire figure -- a nice snug feeling!

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As an old-time dance found throughout Sweden for well over a century, the *schottis* quite naturally developed numerous localized forms. Looked upon from the perspective of modern times, these versions

acquire the status of *bygdedans* (regional ethnic dance). As a result of intense research in the 1970's and 80's, there are published to date variants from over a dozen districts in eight different Swedish provinces, each variant's name usually denoting the area of origin. *Gammal schottis* can logically be considered a generic form of the dance, since all of the local variants have the basic schottische form in common. Local interpretations, however, give each a distinctive regional character. Not infrequently, dance style can vary within a given district, even between individual dancers. Thus it is not unusual to find the use of a variety of dance holds on both the open and closed parts of the dance, as well as a spontaneous choice of rotation and non-rotation figures.

In contrast to the common "PE class" schottische with its "1, 2, 3, hop" flamboyance, the *gammal schottis* is a rather elegant dance -- dignified, reserved, but with a sense of confident power. It should be danced with flowing, almost "floating" movements, in a comfortable relaxed manner, with feet close to the floor.

The secret of this "soft" or "floating" style is to be found in the common Nordic word *svikt*, meaning springiness - a lilting feeling brought about by keeping the knees flexed at all times so that there are no harsh movements. On the forward schottische step, the hop or skip (on count 4) is replaced by a gentle lifting of the free foot as the other (supporting) knee is straightened out. In keeping with the overall style, the turn is danced without a hop, but is instead a "soft" pivot-spin. An especially effective style interpretation is for the man to take the pivoting point on each heel on counts 1 and 2 (instead of heel-sole or sole-sole as in the *snoa*). This gives a gentle lilt on each count of the turn.

The importance of proper music for this dance (and for the other Swedish ethnic dances as well) cannot be over-emphasized. If the dance is to be performed "legato," the music must be played "legato." Therefore, the choice of recordings is critical. "Any old schottische" won't do! For a good *gammal schottis*, old-style Swedish fiddling, which has perpetuated an ancient legato playing style, is especially recommended.

The *gammal schottis* described here is a nineteenth-century ballroom version of the schottische, graceful and flowing, reflecting the legato character of the older music. The fine minor melody on the "Skandia" CD is "Schottis från Haverö" from Medelpad, in northern Sweden.

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