

Oberek od Opoczna

(Poland)

Another of Poland's national dances is the Oberek. The Oberek od Opoczna is a variation of this popular national dance adapted to the regional character of Opoczno. The name Oberek originates from the word "rotating." It is a dance that allows the men the chance to display their agility. The Oberek is most often the featured dance in the central regions of Poland. Done in varied tempos of 3/8 time, the dancing is lively and calls for plenty of yells and screams by the dancers. It is considered one of the hardest of Poland's dances to master, but is definitely worth the effort. The Opoczno version calls for smaller and flatter steps, making it slightly easier on the dancer, but the turns and twirls are expected to be quicker.

Pronunciation: oh-BEH-rehk ohd oh-POHCH-nah

Music: *Folk Dances from Poland, Vol. 1, Band 5* 3/8 meter
The name of this particular Oberek from Opoczno is "Ani Rocek" (Not Any Year) and was recorded by the folk band of the Folk Dance Company Podhale of Montreal, Canada. Edited by Richard Schmidt.

Formation: Circle of cpls. M and W stand side-by-side facing LOD in "arm-in-arm" pos.

Styling: This particular Oberek is danced with small, but quick steps with bent knees and the movements are fluid and smooth. Dancers keep their upper bodies quite erect. The positioning and motion of the arms is important in keeping with the character of this region so the coordination of the ftwk and the arm movements have to be in sync.

It is worth noting that there exists a huge variety of steps and combinations. Only those used in this particular interpretation of the Oberek are described below.

Steps: Basic Oberek: One Oberek step takes one meas to execute and can be done step in any direction, including in place with or without rotating. With knee bent and a flat foot, take a small hop on R while slightly lifting the L ft off the floor (ct 1); leap onto the ball of the L ft with bent knee and begin straightening out the L leg, causing a slight upward movement of the body while the R ft remains in place where you put it in ct 1 (ct 2); leap back onto R (ct 3). The next Oberek step is done in the same fashion using opp ftwk. Note: Unlike its National counterpart, the dancer does not flick the leg back on ct 3, but leaves it very close to the floor.

Przytup: 2 accented stamps on cts 1 and 2 starting with either L or R ft and then using the opp ft for the 2nd stamp; hold (ct 3).

Hop step: Leap onto ball of L ft, bringing the R knee up in front (M only) keeping the bottom of the ft parallel to the floor (ct 1); accent with the R ft leaving the L ft on the floor (ct 2); slight flat hop on L (ct 3). This step is embellished with a fantastic head movement from side-to-side. Starting with ct 1 tilt the head to the L, ct 2 to the R, ct 3 to the L and so on.

Hand formations: Arm-in-Arm: The cpl stand beside each other with M on W's L. M puts R fist on R hip and the W puts w L arm through it in "promenade" pos.

Oberek od Opoczna—continued

M's L arm in an "L" pos (elbow bent at front of body at a 90° angle), rhythmically move up and down every 1/2 beat. Keeping the L hand in a fist with the thumb sticking up, there are 6 movements to every one Oberek step (up, down, up, down, up down). On accented steps (Przytup) M throws L elbow out to side keeping the 90 degree angle (ct 1); and brings it back in on ct 2.

W's R hand holds her apron or skirt. On meas 1, she swings her arm in front on R side. Meas 2 she swings it back to her side to its starting pos. On meas 3 she once again swings it fwd. On meas 4 (accent step) on ct 1 she flicks it slightly further behind its original starting pos and on ct 2 flicks it into the starting pos.

Open-Hold: Cpl stand beside each other with M on W's L. M's R arm is extended behind W holding her back at waist level while W's L hand is placed on M's R shldr. The other arms (M's R, W's L) are completely bent at the elbow and the hand is kept sticking straight up adjacent to the shldr (M's R, W's L). These arms are moved in twd each other on meas 1, out on meas 2, in on meas 3, and out on meas 4. The arms are kept quite rigid with the movement in and out coming from the shldr.

Closed-Hold: Cpls stand facing each other in "social dance" except that M's L arm is kept at his side with L hand turned in palm up, and W places her R hand in his OPEN palm. The arms are kept quite stiff on the side of their bodies.

Individual: Closed fists are placed on their respective hips. R to R and L to L.

MeasPattern

4 meas

INTRODUCTION

- 1-2 Ptrs wait in place facing LOD in Arm-in-Arm pos (M on the inside of the circle).
 3 M look at ptr and remove hat, W return the look but do not move.
 4 M return hat to head and W bow to ptr by bending their knees.

FIGURE 1

- 1-4 Beg with outside ft (M L, W R) in the Arm.in-Arm pos, do 3 Oberek steps fwd in LOD (3 meas). On meas 4 do a Przytup step. Remember to make the appropriate arm movements that correspond with each step.
 5-8 Repeat meas 1-4.
 9-12 Switch to Open-Hold pos and make 2 revolutions CW while continuing fwd motion. The Przytup step is once again done on the 12th meas and cpls must finish facing LOD.
 13-16 Repeat meas 9-12.

FIGURE 2

- 1-4 Beg with outside ft (M L, W R) in the Arm-in-Arm pos, do 3 Oberek steps fwd in LOD. On meas 4 do a Przytup step. Remember to make the appropriate arm movements that correspond with each step.
 5-8 Switch to Open-Hold pos and make 2 revolutions CW while continuing fwd motion. There are no Przytup steps and cpls finish with M facing LOD and W having their backs to LOD.

Oberek od Opoczna—continued

- 9-11 Individually take 3 Oberek steps sideways to the R so that W move twd the ctr of the circle while M move out of the circle. (Fists on hips.)
- 12 W leaving fists on hips, make 1 turn to the R (CW) continuing the Oberek step while M do a Przytup step and swing the R elbow out and in (cts 1,2).
- 13-16 Repeat meas 9-12 with opp ftwk and direction to end in front of ptr.

FIGURE 3

- 1-8 In Closed-Hold pos cpls do the Oberek step to the side (M to L, W to R) twd the ctr of the circle for 7 meas. While keeping hold, make a 1/2 turn CCW (M bkwd, W fwd) so that they are now facing the opp direction (meas 8).
- 9-16 In Closed-Hold pos cpls do the Oberek step to the side (M to L, W to R) twd the outside of the circle for 7 measures. While keeping hold, they make a 1/2 turn CCW (M bkwd, W fwd) so that they are now back in the orig pos at the beg of this figure.
- 17-20 In Open-Hold pos, make 2 revolutions CW in place. The Przytup step is done on meas 4 and cpls finish facing the ctr of the circle.
- 21-24 Repeat meas 17-20.

FIGURE 4

- 1-8 M: Take 8 hop steps to the ctr of the circle with fists on hips.
W: Do 3 Oberek side steps to the R and turn 1/2 CW; then take 3 Oberek side steps to the L and turn 1/2 CCW.
- 9-12 M: Do 1/2 turn CCW on meas 9 continuing the hop steps twd the outside of the circle.
- 13-16 M: Take 4 Oberek steps back to ptr.
- (9) W: Dance 1 Oberek step making a 1/4 turn with body to R.
- (10) W: Dance 1 Oberek step making a 1/2 turn to L
- (11-12) W: Make 1 1/4 revolution CW.
- (13-16) W: Repeat meas 9-12.
- 17-24 Ptrs in Open-Hold pos (outside arms now remain on hips) rotate CW with W doing small Oberek steps turning in place while the man does hop steps accenting in 1/4 positions so that the cpl's ending pos is facing LOD.

Sequence: The complete dance consists of all 4 Figures done one after another in sequence, done 4 times from beginning to end. The introduction music is played only once at the very beginning. Introduction, (Fig 1, Fig 2, Fig 3, Fig 4) four times.

Dance notes by Richard Schmidt
Presented by Richard Schmidt