

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE "GAMMAL SCHOTTIS"

As an oldtime dance found generally thruout 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 Idre, Bingsjo, Lima, Transtrand, and Sarna, in the province of Dalarna; Haverö in Medelpad; Viksta in Uppland; Arsunda in Gästrikland; and from Karlskoga-trakten. They all have many things in common, but local interpretations -- "dialect", if you will -- give each of them a distinctive character.

Styles vary not only between districts, but within a given district as well. Therefore it is not unusual to find dancers using a variety of dance holds on both the open and closed portions of such a dance as the Schottis. For the older form, Gammal schottis, the closed basic polska hold (described in the Introductory Notes) is generally favored. An interesting variation is often used in the basic form, however: on the pivot-spin turn, the W L hand remains joined with the M R hand, being held in the center of the W back, rather than disengaged and brought up to the M upperarm as in the normal polska hold. Thus the ptrs inside hands are kept in contact thruout the entire pattern -- a rather nice feeling!

In contrast to the common "PE class" schottische with its "1,2,3,hop" flamboyance, the old Swedish schottische is a rather elegant dance, reserved, dignified. But not without a sense of real power on the rotation. The essential difference between the ordinary "garden variety" Schottis, and the Gammal schottis, in all its variants, is something called "svikt" (springyness), that lilting quality found in the latter, older form. Knees are flexed thruout so there are no sharp movements. On the "soft" schottische step, the hop or skip on the 4th ct is replaced by a gentle lifting of the free ft. 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 and other ethnic-style dances cannot be overstressed. If the dance is to be performed "legato", the music must be played "legato", so the choice of recordings becomes critical. Oldstyle Swedish fiddling, which has perpetuated an ancient legato playing technique, is especially recommended.

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