



# Smithsonian Folkways

## Let's Polka!

### The Polka, its Function and Place in Different Cultures

#### A Smithsonian Folkways Lesson

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#### Summary:

The following is designed for elementary and middle general/classroom music students and can be easily adapted for other types of music classes. The following includes experiences in the areas of performance, dance, and socio-cultural heritage of polka music. These experiences are designed as part of a two week unit; each week includes one lesson plan.

**Suggested Grade Levels:** K-2, 3-5, 6-8

**Country:** Poland, Czech Republic, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Finland Denmark, Russia, Ukraine

**Region:** Europe

**Culture Group:** Polish, Czech, Austrian, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Danish, Russian, Ukrainian

**Genre:** Polka

**Instruments:** Accordion, Guitar, Bass, Clarinet, Trombone, and Tuba

**Language:** Same as Culture Groups

**Co-Curricular Areas:** Social Studies, Dance

**National Standards:** 1, 6, 8, 9

**Prerequisites:** None

#### Objectives:

- Clap on the beat of a polka
- Sing “Roll Out the Barrel”, a popular polka melody
- Identify countries where the polka music style is/was prominent
- Identify the instruments typically played/used in Polka music
- Perform a basic polka dance, the “Cuckoo Polka”
- Review/identify countries where the Polka is/was a prominent part of culture
- Compare folk dances of Europe with modern group dances today

#### Materials:

- “Bip Bip Polka” From *Polish Dance Time* (Cat. #MON71598)  
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/the-kaszowski-brothers/bip-bip-polka/world/music/track/smithsonian>

- “Muziky Muziky Polka” From *Deeper Polka: More Dance Music from the Midwest* (Cat. #SFW40140)  
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/brian-and-the-mississippi-valley-dutchmen/muziky-muziky-polka/american-folk/music/track/smithsonian>
- “Kuckucks-Polka (Cuckoo Polka)” From *Folk Dances of Austria, Vol. 1* (Cat. #FW08837)  
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/karl-kubat/kuckucks-polka-cuckoo-polka/world/music/track/smithsonian>
- “Studentenpolka” From *Folk Dances of Austria, Vol. 2* (Cat. #FW08838)  
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/karl-kubat/studentenpolka-students-polka/world/music/track/smithsonian>
- Map of the world
- Story sheet for the Polka dance
- Dance sheet for the “Cuckoo Polka”

### **Lesson Segments:**

- 1. Musical and Cultural Significance of the Polka** (National Standards 1, 6, 8, 9)
- 2. Polka Dance** (National Standards 1, 6, 8, 9)

#### **1. Musical and Cultural Significance of the Polka**

- a.** Teacher plays “Bip Bip Polka” From *Polish Dance Time* (Cat. #MON71598) as the class enters the room and students are asked to clap along with the teacher.
  - i.** “How do you think these dances were created/invented?” Student answer/discussion
- b.** Teacher explains the story of the Polka dance.
  - i.** Teacher asks students to identify and locate countries on a map where they think Polka is/was a prominent part of the culture: Poland, Czech Republic, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Russia, Ukraine
- c.** Students listen to “Studentenpolka”.
  - i.** Identify instruments used in Polka music
- d.** Discussion about polka music and the day’s lesson.

**Assessment:** Are students able to clap on the beat with the “Bip Bip Polka”? Are students participating appropriately in discussion segments?

#### **2. Polka Dance**

- a.** Teacher plays “Muziky Muziky Polka” as the class enters the room and teacher leads class in whole body movement.

- b.** Students and teacher review countries where the Polka is/was a predominant part of culture: Poland, Czech Republic, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Russia, and Ukraine.
- c.** Search on the internet for and watch appropriate videos of middle school students doing a Polka dance.
  - i.** Students learn a basic polka dance
  - ii.** Teacher asks students about other dances that they might know or what type of event a polka might be performed at (weddings)

**Assessment:** Are students able to perform a basic Polka dance? Are students participating appropriately in discussion segments?