

(SVENSK) MASKERADE (svensk mahs-keh-RAH-duh) = Swedish masquerade

CROSS-INDEX TERMS:

Danish Masquerade - Michael Herman's name for the dance

Masquerade - the common name, or **Swedish Masquerade**

BACKGROUND:

This Danish dance, in spite of its lively spirit and variety of kinesthetic sensations, has inspired more fakelore than others that deserve it more. Even the name itself caused some confusion. Quoting Michael Herman's dance notes from the late 1940s:

The real name of the dance is SWEDISH MASQUERADE, but nevertheless it is Danish. Many European folk dances have such misleading titles. For example the French Reel is not French, but Danish. La Russe is English not Russian, etc. To avoid misleading the public we refer to the dance as Danish Masquerade.

Unfortunately, not everyone accepted Michael's explanation and nomenclature, and one prominent German dance teacher published *Swedish Masquerade* as a Swedish dance, crediting the German record company *Taenze der Voelker* for their "disregard of important information."

The dance's first motif also created confusion, prompting Mary Ann Herman to write:

... the first part of the dance is done with 16 brisk marching steps counterclockwise, then 16 the other way. The slow, funeral-type walk originated on the East coast, probably by a leader who confused the Masquerade with the Swedish Gustaf Skoal wherein dancers walk slowly as they pay homage to the king.

Mary Ann may be right. The tunes are similar, and their first bars are even identical to the untrained ear.

And the choreography as a whole: one story says the dance relates the adventures of Danish peasants as they imitate nobility by marching and waltzing, but ultimately succumb to peasant exuberance. A similar story describes peasants ridiculing nobility "in a regal snobbish style, with noses in the air, while the final polka motif is carefree and fun, peasant style." Appealing explanations to us closet peasants, but they ignore the reality of peasant life in which few found time to learn the dances of nobility.

Need more stories? Eleanor Wakefield published this one in 1966:

The following tale engenders interest be it fiction, legend, or fact. It tells of a couple taking a walk.

Their liking for each other increases to the point where they waltz together and finally discard their sedate disguises to dance joyously and freely to the rapid 2/4 music.

So what's the real story? Was it peasants pretending sophistication, sophisticates pretending rusticity, or folk dancers pretending both? I don't know, but I suspect that this was simply a medley of tunes and motifs joined together by a Danish folk dance organization and entitled so as to represent a masquerade ball or simply the role-playing of the dance.

Maskerade appears to have been presented in the U.S. in the late 1940s. It came to Texas, I don't know how, and lay forgotten for years until Betty White showed it to me in the early 1960s and we re-introduced it. It's been popular since then, in various versions. Speaking of versions, various partner-changing versions appear in the literature, but seldom are done. I've described three on the next page.

FORMATION:

Couples in a circle, woman to man's R, all facing CCW around the room. Man holds woman's palm-down L hand in his palm-up R hand, with arms extended proudly forward. Place outside hands on hips, fingers forward.

BARS ACTION

4/4 Introduction.

4 cts No action.

(concluded on next page)

Maskerade (concluded)

- March. Start onto outside feet: man's L; woman's R.
- 1-4 March briskly but proudly 16 steps CCW around the circle, 4 steps per bar. Turn toward partner to face the other way, CW around the circle, and join new inside hands.
- 5-8 = 1-4 (again march 16 steps, this time CW). Turn toward partner again to face CCW around the circle, new inside hands joined, and outside hands on hips, as always.
- 3/4 2. Open and closed waltz, twice. Don't forget those free hands.
- 1-4 Dance 4 running waltz motifs forward (3 steps per bar, long-short-short), turning a BIT back-to-back (bars 1,3), and face-to-face (bars 2,4). Swing joined hands a BIT forward (bars 1,3) and back (bars 2,4).
- 5-8 Take ballroom position and dance 4 turning waltz motifs, turning CW as a couple and progressing CCW around the room.
- Turning waltz-motif (1 motif per bar): **Man**: step diagonally forward to L onto L foot, turning 1/8 CW (ct 1), step beside L foot onto R foot, turning 1/8 CW (ct 2), step just a bit to L onto L foot, turning 1/8 CW (ct 3). Repeat with opposite footwork. First step is longer than second or third step. **Woman**: use opposite footwork but same direction of turn.
- 9-16 = 1-8. End facing CCW around the circle, inside hands joined and outside hands on hips.
- 2/4 Hopsa. Okay, you heard the lady. Discard your sedate disguises to dance joyously and freely.
- 1-4 Dance 4 hopsa motifs diagonally forward and CCW around the circle, balancing away, toward, away, and toward your partner. Man starts onto L foot; woman onto R foot.
- Hopsa motif (1 motif per bar): leap to L onto L foot (ct 1), step in front of L foot onto R foot (ct &), step beside R foot onto L foot (ct 2). Repeat of motif uses opposite footwork. Woman uses opposite footwork.
- 5-8 Take shoulder-waist position and dance 4 hopsa motifs turning CW around partner and CCW around the circle. *Note: Turning hopsa generally requires placing the second step behind, not in front of, the first step (cts & of 1).*
- 9-16 = 1-8 (4 open- and 4 closed-hopsa motifs).
- Prominent teachers (e.g., the Hermans) prescribe, and international folk dancers usually dance, a simple step-hop instead of hopsa motifs. Michael warns us not to "turn this into a rowdy brawl by jumping on both feet with a loud bang instead of a step-hop. Try to show your group that you can have just as much fun doing dances traditionally as doing them like a wild exercise."*
- Note also: Hopsa is also called Balance Polka Step, Tyrolean Hopsa, and single Tyrolian [sic] step (described as a step-swing), as far back as 1906. But the Tyrol is far to the south, in Austria and Italy. So how did a Danish motif get a Tyrolean name? Morry Gelman suggests that it was a misnomer that simply crept into the dance nomenclature unchallenged.*

Face CCW around the circle and repeat the dance.

VERSIONS: 1) Michael Herman suggested that this "may be turned into a mixer by having men move up one person on each repeat of the dance."

2) Gordon Tracie taught a couple-changing version at the 1954 Stockton Folk Dance Camp in which women move forward to the next man during the opening steps of the March.

3) Lidster and Tamburini (1965) wrote:

As observed and danced by Danish groups in west Jutland in 1960 (by Gordon E. Tracie) the dancers did not reverse the march, but continued fwd LOD all 32 steps. During this time "cut-ins" from the sidelines occurred. New M or W simply taps the shoulder of a dancing M or W, and takes his place. Person thus displaced moves fwd to one just ahead, tapping him (or her) on the shoulder to take his place, and so on - as long as march music lasts. Last person to have ptr when waltz starts holds said ptr to end of hopsa sequence.

End of **MASKERADE**.