

Romany Polka

by Richard Powers

Long polka choreographies existed in the 19th century, choreographed for dance academy balls. In the 1840s, **Henri Cellarius**, **Charles D'Albert** and **Charles Durang** were the three most famous French/English/American dance masters. All three of them choreographed long polka sequences.

POLKA RÉGLÉE PAR CELARIUS.		
8 mesures, — en place.	8 mesures, — en se donnant les mains et avançant l'un sur l'autre.	8 mesures, — avancer l'un sur l'autre.
8 mesures, — départ en face.	8 mesures, — en se donnant une seule main, l'une après l'autre, en les croisant.	16 mesures, — avancer l'un sur l'autre sans se tenir, pendant 8 mesures, et reculer.
8 mesures, — en se regardant et tournant le dos.	8 mesures, — en se tenant les mains en tournant.	8 autres mesures.
8 mesures, — valse à gauche.	8 mesures, — valse à gauche.	8 mesures, — valse à gauche.
8 mesures, — valse à droite.		8 mesures, — coups de talons.
8 mesures, — valse à gauche.		8 mesures, — coups de talons, en l'air.
		Coda, — valse à droite et à gauche.


A polka sequence by Henri Cellarius, c.1845. It's 128 bars long, exactly the same length as my Bohemian National Polka (Feuerfest Polka) choreography.

GRAND POLKAS.
DURANG'S GRAND BADEN POLKA.
FOR TWO OR MORE COUPLES.
AS TAUGHT BY C. DURANG AND DAUGHTER.

	<i>Bars.</i>
1. Grand promenade round,	16
2. Polka chase step round, gent. following lady,	16
3. Polka waltz round, ending with heel and toe,	8
4. Allemand passes and poses, heel and toe,	8
5. Pas d'allemand, gent. turning lady back and forward,	16
6. Oblique elbow allemand figure, finishing with heel and toe,	8
7. Polka sissone, lady receding—gent. following with the Mazurka step, and vice versa,	16
8. Coquette chase around, lady deceiving four times,	16
9. Allemand passes (<i>tour sur place</i>), heel and toe,	16
10. Coquette chase resumed, gent. leading,	16
11. Polka waltz round,	16
12. Waltz (a la Polka) (4 bars,) grand chassé four times going round, the waltz and chassé intervening,	32
13. Waltz or promenade, (4 bars,) allemand passes, forming Poses with lady right hand and left hand, ending each arabesque or attitude with heel and toe,	16

4. En carré Polka step, or square balancé, 16
15. Bremen step round, 16
16. Grand waltz,—FINI.

The Polka is ended sometimes with a change to the New York Polka air, played very quick, the dancers performing in Valse position, a Polka reel step. This is discretionary with the dancers.
A Gallopade may be substituted.



Allemand attitude in the Baden Polka.

NOTE.—This Polka has been modified and embellished with the Allemand passes and groupings, to relieve the monotony otherwise pertaining to its plain waltz character; and, which may be deemed suitable for the modern Ball Room, into which has recently been introduced the light Ballet movement of the Opera.

Charles Durang's Grand Baden Polka, one of three long polka sequences in *Durang's Terpsichore*, 1847. Both this and his Monsieur Hazard's Polka are 240-bar choreographies, which are five minutes long.

A third example of a long polka choreography is shown on the next page. It's a 152-bar sequence by Charles D'Albert, 1844. You will recognize all of the elements of the Romany Polka sequence (galops, allemandes, stamps, heel and toe, moulinet, coup de talon, tour sur place) in these original examples. *Howe's Complete Ball-Room Hand-Book*, 1858 Boston, contains two similar long polka choreographies.

La Polka :

Taught by M. D'ALBERT, late of Her Majesty's Theatre.

THE POLKA owes its origin to BOHEMIA: as danced in that country, it has all the characteristics of the "*Cosaque*" or "*Danse Russe*," and is executed in boots with metal heels, both by the cavalier and his partner. The French, and the Germans, who were the first to introduce the Polka as a "*Danse de Société*," very necessarily divested it of those peculiarities, when, from its truly novel, graceful, and interesting character, the Polka became the favourite dance in all the Soirées, and has since been adopted both at Almack's and the Nobilities' Balls.

DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES.

Like the Galop or Waltz, the Polka is a general dance, therefore any number of couples may stand up, and may either adopt the figures in the order here laid down, or as the fancy may suggest, commencing or withdrawing from the dance at pleasure.

The Polka step being completed in three beats of the music, although the melody is in 2-4 measure, should be counted thus:—1-2-3 rest, 1-2-3 rest. Upon 1, the gentleman hops very slightly on his right foot, and nearly at the same moment slides the left forward. At 2, he draws the right foot to him. And at 3, he makes a light step forward with his left foot, and brings the right against it, a little drawn up behind, at the same time making a slight sweep of the foot. This manner of doing the last part of the step is practised by the Germans. The French bring at once the right foot to rest against the left, until the first part of the step is resumed. The Polka step may be done forward, backward, sideways, or turning, either to the right or to the left.

Figure 1. The gentleman takes his partner's left hand with his right, when both perform the Polka step forward "*en Promenade*," gracefully moving the head and body a little to the side, upon each step. The gentleman commencing with his left foot, the lady with her right (8 bars).

Figure 2. Holding themselves as for Waltzing, the shoulders of each describing parallel lines, they do the "*Polka Valse*" to the right (4 bars), and continuing the same step, they reverse the turn to the left (4 bars).

Figure 3. The gentleman, followed by his partner, now does the back step four times (4 bars), they both "*Polka Valse*" to the left (4 bars). They repeat this figure, but the lady this time does the back step (4 bars), and both "*Polka Valse*" to the right (4 bars).

Figure 4. The gentleman, again followed by his partner, makes two back steps, and both do two "*Valse*" turns to the right, after which the lady goes back with two steps, then both do the "*Valse*" to the left (8 bars).

Figure 5. The lady and gentleman Polka up the middle of the room, with four steps, the lady backwards, the gentleman forward (4 bars), then return down the room with the reverse Waltz (4 bars).

Figure 6. The last figure is repeated, but the gentleman in his turn does the back step up the

room (4 bars), and both return again with the Waltz (4 bars).

Figure 7. The gentleman and his partner now execute the heel and toe step. The lady with her right foot, and the gentleman with his left, then both make half a turn of the "*Polka Valse*," they repeat the heel and toe step with the contrary foot, and finish the other half of the turn. This step is done four times (8 bars).

Figure 8. Both resume the "*Polka Valse*," turning to the right (4 bars), then reverse it to the left (4 bars).

Figure 9. Retracing the ground they have gone over, they now Waltz the contrary way of the circle, turning to the right (4 bars), again they reverse the Waltz to the left (4 bars).

Figure 10. The lady and gentleman in this figure perform a square, making half a turn upon each corner (4 bars), and waltz round the room as usual (4 bars).

Figure 11. The square is repeated, but in another part of the room, as also the Waltz (4 bars).

Figure 12. The heel and toe step is again introduced, forming in this figure a square (8 bars).

Figure 13. "*Polka Valse*" (8 bars).

Figure 14. The gentleman leaves his partner, places both hands on his sides, then does four Polka steps backward, down or up the middle of the room, his partner following him with the same step forward (4 bars). The lady goes back, when the gentleman follows with the step forward (4 bars).

Figure 15. "*Polka Valse*" (8 bars).

Figure 16. Both do the heel and toe step as before, but upon the Polka step they turn their backs to where their faces were, the gentleman at the same time taking his partner's waist with his left hand. They repeat this figure, but with the contrary foot, when the gentleman retakes his partner's waist with his right hand. This figure may be done four times (8 bars).

Figure 17. Doing the Polka step sideways, but remaining nearly in the same place, the gentleman disengages himself from the Waltzing position, and rests both hands upon his sides, when the lady places both of her's through his right arm, and executes the Polka step forward, gracefully bearing her head and body a little to the right, and to the left, whilst her partner at the same time does the back step round the room (16 bars).

TO CONCLUDE.

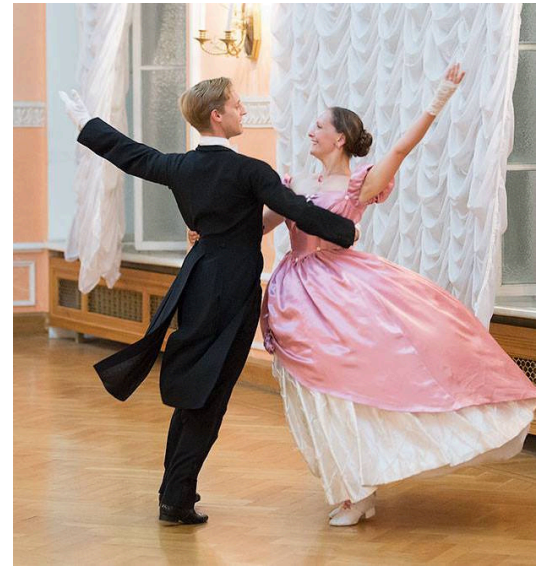
In crowded assemblies the Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 are those mostly adopted, and if care be taken to make the three movements of the "*Valse*" turn "*light*" and "*clear*," at the same time imparting all that quiet sentiment peculiar to the step, "*La Polka de Société*" has a most beautiful and fascinating effect.

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by Richard Powers

This polka is choreographed to the music *Romany Life* by Victor Herbert, from his 19th century opera *The Fortune Teller*. The choreography is named after the music, just as Durang's Grand Baden Polka sequence was named after the tune Baden Polka.

The elements in this choreography are from 19th century dance manual descriptions, from polka descriptions accompanying sheet music, and some are from period illustrations (for instance, the opening promenade position is from two illustrations of Jules Perrot dancing a polka). These variations continued into the late 19th century, like the 120-bar New York Polka sequence in the 1882 *Howe's New American Dancing Master*. By the time Melvin Ballou Gilbert wrote *Round Dancing* in 1890, he and other dance masters had collected several decades of variations, keeping all of them in their repertoire. So this polka sequence could have happened anytime between 1844 and the 1890s.



Julien Tiberghien and Marie-émilie Capl dancing Romany Polka in Moscow

Introduction

Phrase 1 Take partner's R hand in R hand.

Phrase 2 Honor partner.

Phrase 3 Lady turns CW under gent's R arm, then both face LOD on the final note.

meas

- 4 Walk LOD 8 slow steps in shoulder promenade position, gent beginning L, lady beginning R foot. R hands are held extended forward; lady places her L hand on the gent's R shoulder.
- 1 Rock forward acknowledging partner and replace back. You may bob forward as in La Polkinade.
- 3 Cast away 6 walking steps to take open 2 hands.
- 4 Face-to-face polka, back-to-back swinging held hands forward, face-to-face, back-to-back.
- 2 Holding 2 open hands, do La Polkinade (by Henri Boizot, 1858): Gent glissé side L, chassé (close) R to L, Jeté L LOD while lifting straightened rear leg RLOD, close R to L. Accent count 3. Lady steps opposite.
- 2 Gent does a small L Pas de Basque in place then step R and lightly stamp L without weight, as lady does a CW Allemande turn under the gent's L arm, with a two-step, then step L and close R.

Chorus

- 4 4 turning polka steps traveling LOD. 19th century style is to lean toward the direction of travel.
- 2 Heel & Toe toward LOD, then half-turn polka. (This is D'Albert's Figure 7 in the above example.)
- 2 Heel & Toe on opposite feet, toward LOD, then second half-turn of the polka.

Charles D'Albert's polka choreography said that dancers "may adopt the figures in the order here laid down" or they may dance the figures "as the fancy may suggest." So continue with 4 polkas, or do this:

- 2 Optional variation: 2 turning polka steps, then releasing waltz position handhold.
- 2 Non-turning Polka step sideways toward LOD, releasing waltz position handhold. Gents half-turn left (CCW) as ladies half turn right (CW) and do a back-to-back turning polka toward LOD.
- 2 La Polkinade, taking open 2-hand position. Or keep waltz position if you are doing 4 polkas.
- 2 Ladies CW Allemande underarm turn, as above. The gent lightly stamps L at the end, as the lady closes R without weight (although some of the more spirited women would have stamped).

Part 1 Galop

- 2 Zig: Galop 4 slides diagonally LOD toward the center. (All three of Durang's polka sequences included a gallopade.)
- 2 Zag: Turn halfway CCW and Galop 4 slides diagonally out beginning with opposite feet.
- 4 Polka in a Square. This is Charles D'Albert's Figure 10 from the above examples. Polka step toward LOD (gent facing out) and quarter-turn CW*. Polka step "over the elbows" toward the center and quarter-turn CW. Polka step RLOD and quarter-turn CW. Polka step toward the outside and quarter-turn CW. Keep the original style of leaning toward the direction of travel on each polka step.
- Then to fit the accent of the music, replace the first polka step with a schottische step-hop, leaning toward LOD. Charles Durang's "Butler Trot" style of polka (jeté polka) works best with this variation. Clearly mark the timing of the fourth polka step, to accent the music.
- * D'Albert wrote "half a turn" but he clearly meant a quarter-turn, to form a square pattern.
- 8 Repeat the Zig-Zag Galop and Polka in a Square.

Chorus As before. On the last measure ladies take 2 steps L-R instead of a step-close. Ladies only half-turn under this time, to end facing RLOD.

Part 2 Separate from Partner, Tour sur Place

- 2 Beginning L foot, Galop Chassé 4 slides away from partner, gents separating toward the center, ladies outward.
- 2 Double heel-toe R toward partner, folding arms crossed low in front.
- 2 Return to partner with 1 polka, R-L-R, and 2 walks, R-L.
- 4 Coup de Talon Tour sur Place: both partners place lowered extended R arms around partner's waist and raise L arms, as shown in the photo on the previous page. 1) Click heels to the left, 2) step side L, 3) close R (or cross R slightly over L), in QQS timing, four times, turning in place.
- 4 Slip away to take R hands and Moulinet circle around partner CW 8 pas marché walking steps. Try to walk faster (i.e. farther) with the walking steps than you did with the Coup de Talon steps. Take waltz position on the last 2 walking steps for a polka, gaining your first foot free.

Chorus As before but faster. Note in Durang's Grand Baden Polka that the polka music was "played very quick" at the end.

Coda

- 2 Galop 4 slides as a couple LOD.
- 2 Double Heel & Toe toward RLOD.
- 2 Galop 4 slides as a couple to RLOD. (D'Albert's Figure 9 also retraces a step in reverse LOD.)
- 2 Double Heel & Toe toward LOD.
- 4 4 turning polkas traveling LOD.
- 3 5 Pivots in place then Assemblé on ct. 6, keeping held hands, releasing and raising rear arms.

