

Name of dance: Korobushka

Pronunciation: kah-ROH-boosh-kah

Place of origin: 19th century Russian ballrooms

Source of music: Folk Dancer MH 1059 (Kosta Pliansky's Balalaika Orchestra)

Learned from: Dick Crum, 1991

About the dance: The name ***Korobushka*** means “the peddler’s pack”, and comes from the romantic 19th century poem by Nekrasov that form the lyrics to this song. The poor peddler in question is the ‘glorified loser’ (Dick Crum’s phrase) on whom it is the poem’s intent for us to take pity. It is quite likely that the melody of ***Korobushka*** was composed, but we don’t know by whom. The dance described below dates from late 19th century Russia, where it was invented by one of the many ballroom dancing masters who catered to the social dancing needs of the often newly urbanized middle classes and aristocracy. The dance caught on and spread into smaller towns and villages throughout Russia, where it often changed considerably in the process of transmission, appearing sometimes under the names ***Korobochka*** or ***Korobeyniki***. It also became quite popular in eastern European Jewish communities, and was a staple in the Bund and other radical circles. The version familiar among most folk dancers today evolved out of a version that Marianne Herman learned in the immigrant Ukrainian communities that she grew up in in America in the early decades of the 20th century. The version described below is older, and probably closer to the original. The entire culture in which this dance evolved was heavily suppressed with the advent of Communism in Russia, and for a long time the dances of this genre remained in evidence only in immigrant communities elsewhere. When quadrilles, contra-dances, and stately couple dances like this did finally begin to resurface in Russian performance ensembles, it was often for lack of enough suitable ‘peasant’ material, and it was often presented as farce, in mockery of the dance’s origins among the upper classes.

Rhythm: 2/4

Formation: Couples face CCW around a large circle, men on the inside and women on the outside, holding hands in “skater’s position”: R hands holding R hands, L hands holding L hands, all held forward in front of waist level. Outside feet (men’s L, women’s R) are free. The style is smooth and graceful. In Michael Herman’s words *“Because many Americans feel all Slavic dances should be wild they have at times inserted clapping, twirling, and even squat steps. These do detract from the character and charm of the dance. Good dancers don’t need such embellishments to make them look better. A sign at Folk Dance House has an amusing sign that says ‘No Hunting, No Fishing, No Clapping or Twirling in Korobushka’, signed by the dance warden. It helps dancers keep a traditional Russian style.”*

Direction	Measure	Step
♂→ ♀→	1	Man steps forward on L (ct. 1), and on R (ct. 2). Woman steps forward on R (ct. 1), and on L (ct. 2).
	2	Man steps forward on L (ct. 1), and lifts R (ct. 2). Woman steps forward on R (ct. 1), and lifts L (ct. 2).
←♂ ←♀	3	Man steps back on R (ct. 1), and on L (ct. 2). Woman steps back on L (ct. 1), and on R (ct. 2).
	4	Man steps back on R (ct. 1), and lifts L (ct. 2). Woman steps back on L (ct. 1), and lifts R (ct. 2).
♂→ ♀→	5	Man runs forward on LRL (cts. 1&2), pause (ct. &). Woman runs forward on RLR (cts. 1&2), pause (ct. &).
	6	Man runs forward on RLR (cts. 1&2), pause (ct. &). Woman runs forward on LRL (cts. 1&2), pause (ct. &).
	7-8	Man hops on R, touching L toe across in front of R (ct. 1), then hops again on R, touching L toe out to the L side in front (ct. 2), then hops again, bringing L foot next to R (ct. 1), then pauses, shifting his weight onto L (ct. 2). Woman repeats man's steps in mirror image, but leaves her weight on L at the end.
←♂ ♀→	9-10	Both partners now have their R feet free, and continue from here with the same (not the opposite) footwork. Turning to face each other and letting go of hands, both walk to their own R on R (ct. 1), on L (ct. 2), on R (ct. 1), and pause (ct. 2). While doing this, the hands remain elegantly suspended forward at about chest height, sweeping off to the upper R at the end of the phrase.
♂→ ←♀	11-12	Repeat Measures 8-9 in mirror image.
	13-14	Taking one's partner's R hand, take 2 slow stately steps CW around one's partner to trade places, stepping on R (ct. 1, 2), and on L (cts. 1, 2).
	15-16	Both partners repeat the woman's steps from Measures 7-8.

<u>Direction</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Step</u>
	17-24	<p>Repeat Measures 9-16, this time with the man shifting weight on the final count back onto his R foot, to free up his L foot for the beginning of the dance.</p> <p>Partners turn to face CCW around the large circle, take hands again in skater's position, and the dance resumes.</p>

dance notes by Erik Bendix