Let’s Polka!
The Polka, its Function and Place in Different Cultures
A Smithsonian Folkways Lesson
Designed by: Heidi D. Fedinetz-Adomshick
Penn State University

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
Lesson Segments:

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