

DANCE STYLE LOCATOR

Polish Dance

Poland is a European country bordered by Germany, Russia, the Ukraine, Austria, and the Czech Republic and is currently about the size of France. Historically, Poland was sometimes much larger than today, for example in the 14th century it stretched from present-day Lithuania in the East to present-day central Germany in the West. In the 18th and 19th Centuries, after a series of wars resulting in the partitioning of Poland's land, there were political, religious, and national uprisings compelling many Poles to immigrate to France, Germany, Sweden and the U.S.A.



Polish traditional culture has two distinct styles of folkloric dance – one from the nobility and one from the peasantry. In Poland there are nearly 40 distinctive cultural regions – each with their own specific dances, melodies and songs as well as folklore.

ZYWIEC DANCE AND MUSIC STYLE



The mountain dance style from the Zywiec region's Beskid mountains of southwestern Poland, is still vibrant today. Singing is an integral part of Polish folk dances, particularly in the mountain traditions where all dances begin with a song. In the Zywiec region (unlike the neighboring mountain region of "Podhale,") men and women often dance as partners, although the separate traditions for boys are still very important. The shepherds of the highlands develop displays of skill and challenges that include acrobatics such as jumping over one's own hat, leaping and rolling over one another, and dancing in the difficult squat position. In social settings, the prowess of the young men is used as a courtship "edge" in vying for the women.

Men and women often dance in social events such as the informal dance party depicted in *People Like Me 2005* by

Lowiczanie Polish Folk Ensemble. These dances include both partner dances and segments when the young men and women dance separately. The men's dance displays their physical dexterity, while in the women's dance and song, "Sarna" or "Deer," the girls wish to be as graceful as a deer and illustrate this with long, graceful leaps and little deer-like prances. Another favorite of the Zywiec mountaineers is "Hajduk," full of show-off steps for boys and raucous fun for all dancers, who sing, "We will dance until our *kierpce* (shoes) are in pieces, and then still continue!"

DANCE STYLE LOCATOR

(Polish dance, continued)

The music of this southern mountain region strongly differs from that of the northern regions, especially because of its predominantly double meters. Though they've been played for nearly 1000 years, written transcriptions of *górale* music only began in the first half of the 19th century, and an explosive growth in the outsiders' interest began in the late 19th century.

Several types of melodies are used for the suite of dances and songs in *People Like Me*, including the "Siustany," "Sarna," and "Hajduk." The band (called *kapela* or *muzyka*) is led by a lead violinist. The accents of accompanying violins and the contra base create the strong rhythmic foundation. Traditionally a *kapela* was strings only, with bagpipe and pipes added, but today's *kapelas* in the Zywiec region have started to include the accordion.