

Masha Poka! (Bye, Masha!) Waltz Mixer

Susan de Guardiola ~ v.2.0, February 2020

Choreographer's note: *this dance is an adaptation of the Welsh circle mixer "Farewell Marian" or "Ffarwel Marian", which was written by Gwyn Williams in the 1950s. I created it in Moscow, so the official name is the Russian version, pronounced "MAH-shuh pah-KAH". "Bye, Masha!" is the direct English translation. The name is a play on the name of the original dance ("Masha" is a Russian nickname for "Maria"), the tendency in Russia for "Masha" to be used as a sort of generic girl's name, and the repeated partner-changes (bye!) in the dance. The name turned out to be sadly prescient; just a few weeks after writing this dance and teaching it for the first time, I left Russia for what I thought would be a few months of pandemic but has turned into a yearslong, possibly permanent, absence.*

Music

Any slow (~120bpm) waltz with a 32-bar repeat structure; originally danced to "Captain O'Kane's" by The Atomic City Rhythm Rascals off the album *The Split Tree Recordings - The Waltzes*.

Formation

A circle of couples facing line of dance; gentlemen stand to the left of their partners and start the dance by putting their backs to the center of the circle and turning slightly to the right.

Figures

- 4b Ladies leave partners and progress counter-clockwise around the outside of the circle, moving forward two places to second gentleman after partner. Gentlemen don't move!
- 4b Taking left hands with this gentleman, make a half-turn to put the ladies in the center; all turn single to the right
- 4b Gentlemen (on the outside) progress counter-clockwise around the outside of the circle to their own partners. Ladies don't move!
- 4b Taking left hands, partners make a half-turn to put the gentlemen in the center; all turn single to the right

- 4b Taking right hands, partners balance forward and back, then make a bit more than a half-turn) to bring the ladies to the center and get everyone aimed toward their left diagonal
- 4b Taking left hands with the person on their left diagonal (dropping right hands), balance forward and back, then make a half-turn to change places, the lady turning CW under the gentleman's arm (he pushes his arm out and away), coming into a closed ballroom hold with the gentleman's back to the center
- 4b One complete turn of waltz (2b) followed by two sideways slide-closes (2b)
- 4b One complete turn of waltz (2b) followed by the gentleman raising his left arm and the lady turning CW under it and curling in a wide circle outward to face LOD, ready to restart

Watch points

- (1) dancers traveling around the outside should pace themselves for a just-in-time arrival at the end of four bars
- (2) turn single is not a spot-turn; use the six steps and make it a beautiful curved movement
- (3) there is no underarm turn after the right hand balance, really truly, it should be a nice, big, flowing right hand turn
- (4) the circle tends to shrink; don't let the gentlemen back up at the end or there will be no space in the center for the turns single

Special note

Masha Poka! also works just fine to polka music, becoming Masha Poka Polka! (Sorry, sorry...but it really does work!)