

Name of dance: Vengerke

Pronunciation: ven-GYEHRR-keh

Place of origin: all over the 19th century Austro-Hungarian Empire

Learned from: Dick Crum, 1991

Source of music: Kismet 107, *Vengerka* (78 rpm, hard to find); Special Folk Dances EPA-4126, *Vengerka*

About the dance: This dance, known in Yiddish as *Vengerke*, and in Slavic languages as *Vengerka* ('Hungarian dance'), is a turn-of-the-century dance based on the Hungarian ballroom *csárdás*. Its melody is probably the single most popular *csárdás* tune of the 19th century – *Ritka búza*, 'sparse wheat' – which still to this day haunts folk music researchers in all corners of what used to be the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Here are the lyrics for the Hungarian tune:

*Ritka búza, ritka árpa, ritka rozs,
ritka kis lány takaros (,takaros).
Lám az enyém, lám az enyém takaros,
kicsike picike, nem magos.
(Kicsit alacsony, nem magos.)*

Rare the barley, rare the rye, rare the wheat
rare the girls with thrifty eye,
One there is, one there is,
tiny miss, dainty miss, lovely miss.
(Tiny, short, not tall).

*Hej te kis lány, kis lány, kis lány,
(Hej te kis lány, barna kis lány!)
mondd meg az anyádnak;
(Eszem azta kis szádat!)
Ha egy kicsit nagyobb volnál, //*

Hey you girlie, girlie, girlie,
(Hey you girl, come here girl!)
go and tell this to your mother;
(I shall kiss your odd little lips someday!)
I would really show you how to kiss!

*Arcom, szemem, ajkam oly szép,
de pajkos, kezem, lábam, pici takaros,
A nővésem, a nővésem sugáros,
nem kicsi, de nem magos.*

See my pretty face, my dancing eyes & lips,
shapely legs and curving hips.
Rare the girl who has a figure trim as mine,
full of life as sparkling wine.

*Hát még aztán, aztán, aztán,
A gömbölyü két karom,
Szeretetre csalogat hat, //
ölelésre kitárom.*

And moreover that's not all.
Now just let me tell you this.
My two arms are there to hug you
When you show me how to kiss!

The popularity of the *csárdás* led to the creation of ballroom dances "in the Hungarian style", some of which bore the simple names *Czardas* or *Hungarian Czardas*. *Vengerka* was the East European product of this process. There are many, many variants of *Vengerka*, some notated in old dance manuals such as A. Sal'to, *Samouchitel' tancev bal'nykh, modnykh I kharakternykh pljasok* (*Self-tutor of ballroom, fashionable, and character dances*, by A. Sal'to, Moscow: Evdokij Konovalov & Co.,

1912). The version described below is one of the richest, and was popular in New York City Russian, Polish, Ukrainian and Lithuanian communities in the first half of the 20th century.

Rhythm: 4/4 (*czardas* tempo)

Formation: Couples, with partners standing side by side, facing CCW in a large dance circle around the room, woman on the man's R side, his R arm around her waist in back, her L hand on his R shoulder, and their outside hands on their own hips. Men's and women's footwork is *the same* throughout the dance.

| Direction | Measure | Step |
|-----------|---------|--|
| → | 1 | <u>Part 1:</u> Step on R foot forward with R leg straight (ct. 1), close L foot to R foot, taking weight on L and flexing L knee slightly (ct. 2), repeat movements of counts 1-2 (cts. 3-4). <i>Note: There is a slight "up-down" movement in these steps.</i> |
| ┆ | 2 | With weight on L foot, point R toe on floor across in front of L foot (ct. 1), with weight still on L foot, point R toe out to the R side (ct. 2), close R foot beside L foot, taking weight on both feet (men sometimes do this with a click of R heel against L heel (ct. 3), pause (ct. 4). <i>Note: This is a special "ending step", typical of Hungarian character dancing, called bokázó (BOH-kah-zoh, 'caper').</i> |
| | 3-4 | Repeat movements of Measures 1-2 with opposite footwork (i.e. begin by stepping forward on L, do the <i>bokázó</i> pointing with the L foot, etc.). |
| | 5-8 | Repeat movements of Measures 1-4. At the end of this part, release hand hold, put both hands on own hips, and face partner (man's back to the center, woman facing man). |
| ↕ | 1 | <u>Part 2:</u> Four "reel" steps moving slightly backwards away from partner, as follows: Step on R foot directly behind L heel and hop on R foot (ct. 1), step on L foot directly behind R heel and hop on L foot (ct. 2), repeat movements of counts 1-2 (cts. 3-4). |

| <u>Direction</u> | <u>Measure</u> | <u>Step</u> |
|------------------|----------------|---|
| | | <u>Part 2</u> (continued): |
| I | 2 | <i>Bokázó</i> , pointing R foot to start (cts. 1-3, pause). |
| ☀ | 3 | Each dancer turns once in place to their own R (i.e. CW), with 4 steps: R L R L (cts. 1,2,3,4). |
| | 4 | <i>Bokázó</i> , pointing R foot to start (cts. 1-3, pause). |
| ↓ ↑ | 5 | Step forward toward partner on R foot (ct. 1), step forward on L foot (ct. 2), 3 quick steps forward on R,L,R (cts.3&4). |
| | 6 | <i>Bokázó</i> , pointing L foot to start (cts. 1-3, pause). At the end of this, turn a ¼ turn or less to own L side so your R shoulder is opposite your partner's R shoulder, and place your R arm across in front of partner's waist, leaving your L arm extended upward out to the side in preparation for the turn in the next 2 measures. |
| ☀ | 7 | Do a total of 4 slow "buzz" steps to make one or two full CW turns in place as a couple: Step toward partner on R foot with a slight dip (ct. 1), close L foot to R foot, straightening up (ct. 2), repeat movements of counts 1-2 (cts. 3-4). |
| | 8 | Repeat Measure 7. |

dance notes by Dick Crum, reformatted with
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