

What is Mazurka?



The Mazurka (Polish: mazurek) is a Polish musical form based on stylised folk dances in triple meter.

The Mazur is regarded as one of Poland's top national dances, where it can be characterised by the mazurka rhythmic (triple metre), accents on the second and third beat of the bar, and its lively tempo. The dance gained popularity across ballrooms of Europe during the 19th century, and is commonly performed alongside Frederic Chopin's Mazurkas. A key step of the Mazur can be described as fast walking strides, incorporated flat leaps, as well as heel clicks and improvised dance formations.

The Mazurka originated in roughly the 16th century among the Mazurs of east-central Poland and was quickly adopted at the Polish court, yet it remained a folk dance. It eventually spread to Russian and German ballrooms and by the 1830s had reached England and France.

As a ballroom dance intended for four or eight couples or for single couples, the mazurka retains room for improvisation. The volume of mazurkas composed for piano by Frederic Chopin (some 57 mazurkas for piano) reflects his interest in the music of his homeland as well as the dance's popularity in his day. The varsovienne (Italian varsoviana) is a 19th-century French couple dance that evolved from a simple mazurka step. Also closely related to the mazurka are the smooth, somewhat slower kujawiak and the energetic oberek.