

Czeck American Polka Music in Wisconsin.

Supplementary material for pages 33-53 In [The Music of Multicultural America](#).
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Svestkova Alej (The Prune Song)

IU Libraries provides access to a recording of [“The Prune Song”](#). This piece was recorded in 1933 in Chicago Illinois and performed by Romy Gosz and His Orchestra. The piece features Romy Gosz and Jim Jirikovic on trumpet, Linky Kohlbeck on saxophone and vocals, Fritz Puls on bass horn; Gordy Kohlbeck on piano and Andy Heier on drums and vocals.

This old-time waltz, beginning with an introductory passage typical of Czech dance tunes, is dominated by the slurring, slightly dissonant trumpet of legendary bandleader Romy Gosz—whose brassy phrases are echoed by a second trumpet and a saxophone. Note, too, the parallel relaxed slur of the harmonized vocals. The characteristically precise and stately tempo established by the bass horn or tubas suited to dancers. The tinkling piano fills, meanwhile, are a jazz-age innovation, while the faintly martial drum rolls hard back to the marches favored by Czech brass bands.



Figure 1: “Polka King” Romy Gosz, with trumpet, poses with his band at a wedding dance on a farm in the vicinity of Wisconsin’s Manitowoc and Kewaunee Counties, 1950s. Courtesy Jim Eisenmann.

Wedding Polka

IU Libraries also provides access to a recording of "[The Wedding Polka](#)". The piece was recorded on August 25th 1946 in Yuba, Wisconsin and performed by the Yuba Bohemian Band. The recording features Nick Rott on trombone, George McGilvery and William Tydrich on cornet, Alfred Stanek and Rott on baritone horn; Wencil Stanek and Otto Stanek on clarinet and Anton Stanek on bass horn.

Founded in 1868 and in existence until the mid-1950s, the Yuba Bohemian Band—comprised entirely of wind instruments—favored an Old World style that Romy Gosz and others had rendered archaic two decades before this recording was made. Unburdened by a drum set or piano, the Yuba Band not only held forth in dance halls, but also led parades, particularly those of wedding parties walking from church to the place of celebration. This tune was sometimes known as "Samec Galop" (Men's Gallop), invoking a rollicking dance form pre-dating and eventually merging with the wildly popular polka by the mid-nineteenth century. Locally dubbed the "Wedding Polka," it was an essential part of such festivities, and features rollicking clarinets and 'oompahing' horns. In keeping with Czech brass band heritage, the dominant galop cum polka tempo is occasionally abandoned for bridges that assert march rhythms. Field recording for the Archive of Folksong, Library of Congress.

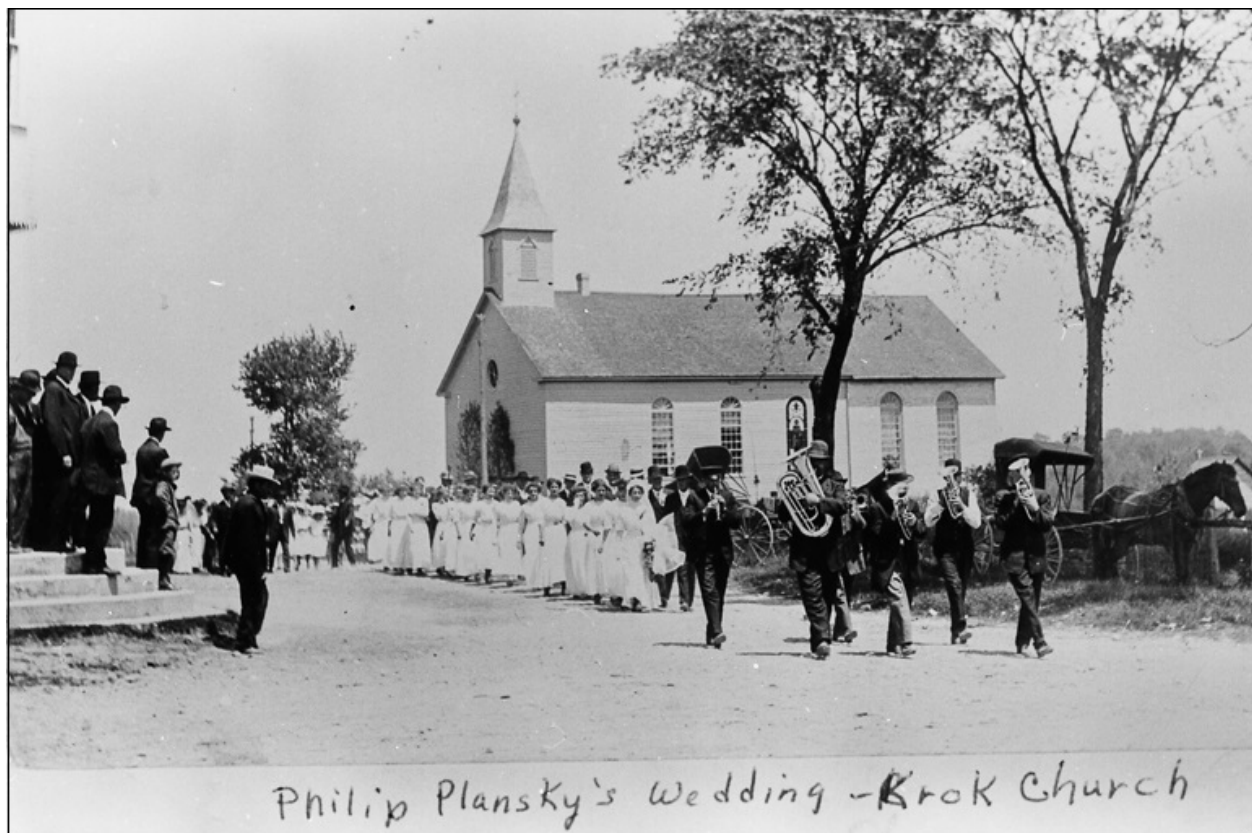


Figure 2: Adolph Blahník's Orchestra leads the Pauline and Philip Plansky wedding party to St. John's Church, Krok, Wisconsin, June 20, 1911. Courtesy Kewaunee County Historical Society.