

# levan Polkka

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"levan Polkka" or "levan Polokka" (Savo Finnish for "Eva's Polka") is a popular Finland song with lyrics written in the early 1930s by Eino Kettunen to a traditional Finnish polka tune. The name is commonly misspelled Levan Polkka, due to the similarity of lowercase L and the uppercase vowel I (i) in sans-serif fonts. It is also known as "Loituma's Polka" (or "Loituma's Polokka").

Keywords: polkka ; polka ; finland

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## 1. Origin

The melody of "levan Polkka" is very similar to that of Savitaipaleen polkka, and in South Karelia the levan Polkka is also known as "**Savitaipaleen polkka**". The melody is also similar to a folk dance from the area of Smolensk in Western Russia , known as Smolenskij gusačok ("смоленский гусачок"/"Small Gander of Smolensk").

The melody can be traced back to the Viipuri Province in the 17th century when the border with the Kingdom of Sweden ran west of the province. The number of Russian soldiers stationed in the border area outnumbered the locals for many decades. At the beginning of the 19th century collectors of Finnish folk dances and folk songs all mention that the dances in the area of Luumäki-Savitaipale were Estonian dances only and didn't write them down. Locals who are well-versed in folk music agree the melody is very old and likely to have been known back in the early 19th century and therefore probably of even older origin. However, the polka genre is of much later date. Polka was introduced in northern Europe during the late 19th century, which implies that the actual tune as it is known today originates from this era.<sup>[1]</sup>

### 1.1. Language

The song is sung in very heavy Eastern Savonian dialects spoken in North Karelia, to the point where it may not be understandable to some Finnish people.

## 2. Description

The song takes the point of view of a young man and leva/Eva/Eeva in Finnish, who sneaks away to where everyone is dancing to a polka, and dances all night.

## 3. Popularity

Owing to its viral exposure in popular culture, levan Polkka has become one of the most famous Finnish songs in the world.

Very popular after World War II, the song was almost forgotten during the late 1970s and 1980s. The song resurfaced after an a cappella performance by the *Finland* quartet Loituma, which was first released on their debut album, *Loituma*, in 1995. The album was released in the United States as *Things of Beauty* in 1998.



The "Loituma Girl" Orihime Inoue twirling her leek in the Flash animation. <https://handwiki.org/wiki/index.php?curid=1729588>

The a cappella version of the song acquired greater international popularity as part of an Internet phenomenon in the spring of 2006 when the Loituma Girl (also known as Leekspin), a looped Flash animation of an anime girl Orihime Inoue from the *Bleach* series twirling a leek, set to a scat singing section of levan Polkka sung by Loituma<sup>[2]</sup> was posted in Russian LiveJournal. For the animation, only the second half of the fifth stanza (four lines) and the complete sixth stanza (eight lines) are used. It instantly became a global hit and the song soon enjoyed overwhelming popularity as a ringtone.<sup>[3]</sup> Since then the song has been circulating and known under several misspelled variations of its original name or references to the animation, including "levas Polkka", "Levan Polkka" and "Leekspin Song". After the animation was posted, levan Polkka became widely known worldwide, with a significant rise of interest and recognition demonstrated by the search terms popularity.<sup>[4]</sup>

The Finnish folk song was also given popular covers by several Japanese Vocaloid singers, such as Megurine Luka, Kagamine Rin, and Kagamine Len. The most popular vocaloid cover belonged to that of Hatsune Miku, garnering more than 40 million views on her official YouTube music video as of December 2017.<sup>[5]</sup> Its popularity has lent itself to being used in the Vocaloid rhythm game *Hatsune Miku* as the tutorial music.<sup>[6]</sup> It has also been used in a commercial promoting the LG G5 smartphone.<sup>[7]</sup>

In 2012, folk metal band Korpiklaani recorded a cover on the album *Manala*.

Furthermore, mobile ringtones based on various mixes of "levan Polkka" gained a wide popularity among *Russian* and Commonwealth of Independent States mobile subscribers in late 2006. The tune is also the theme song to the Internet sitcom *Break a Leg*; it was remixed by DJ Basshunter of Sweden, DJ Sharpnel of Japan, and Beatnick of Poland; and a version of the song performed by Anne Kulonen was part of a Ready Brek television advert aired in the *United Kingdom*.<sup>[8]</sup> Also, some videos show a Farfetch'd spinning a leek.<sup>[9]</sup>

In 2016, Erika Ikuta, a member of Japanese idol group, Nogizaka46, sang levan Polkka as a part of her private segment on a web TV Show titled "Nogizaka46 4th Anniversary Nogizaka 46 Hour TV". This song then became well known among Nogizaka46's fans. She later sang it on several occasions such as "JUNK Bananaman no Bananamoon GOLD" radio show, "Nogizaka Under Construction" TV show which aired on TV Aichi & "Banana Zero Music" music program which aired on NHK.

## 4. Performers

- Matti Jurva [1] (1937)
- Onni Laihanen (1947) [2]
- Jorma Ikävalko (1950) [3]
- Tukkilais Orchestra (1952) [4]
- Nummi Kvartetti (1953)
- Arttu Suuntala (1966)
- Jaakko Salo (1972)
- Pauli Räsänen (1972)
- Sukellusvene (as "Savitaipaleen polkka") (1979)
- Spiritual Seasons (1994)
- Loituma (1995)
- Six B Rothers (1995)
- Kuplettiryhmä (1998)
- K2 Der Watzmann (2006)
- DJ Sharpnel (as "PRETTY GREEN ONIONS") (2006)
- DJ Slon - Финская Полька (Finnish Polka), sung in Russian (2006)
- Recall Project - "Як Цуп Цоп (Loituma Polkka)" (Yak Tsup Tsop) (2006)
- Holly Dolly (as "Dolly Song [Ieva's Polka]") (2006)
- Lena & Laurin - Der Kleine Eskimo, sung in German (2006)
- Delin (as "Dilidala (Eva's Polka)") (2006)
- Hatsune Miku (2007) - A singing synthesizer software; synthesized and produced by Otomania
- Vocaloid - Kagamine Rin/Len (2008) - A singing synthesizer software
- The Vienna Boys Choir (2008)
- Anne Kulonen (2008) - Ready Brek TV Commercial
- Vocaloid - Megurine Luka (2009) - A singing synthesizer software
- Hatsune Miku -Project DIVA- (2009) – Link
- Vox Nova (2009) Link
- Maskottina (Tonia Cestari) on YouTube (2007) and at Caserta Vecchia (Italy 2010)
- Юлич (kisanka.livejournal.com) - Евина полька (2010)

- Kuunkuiskaajat (2010)
- Korpiklaani (2012)
- Fatzwerk - album "Zeytreysse" (2013)
- Salut Salon (2013)
- Busy Signal (2014)
- NANDO, Latvian Pop Group (2015)
- Liza, the Fox-Fairy (2015) Soundtrack
- Erika Ikuta (2016)
- Otaba Ē (2017) Link

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