

GARLAND DANCE NOTATIONS

prepared
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EXTENDED SET OF NOTATIONS

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GARLAND DANCES

Garland dances are widespread in Europe, but not very common outside of Austria. They exist in many forms but the oldest are assessed to be those which appear to have once been sword dances and in which due to local laws the garland replaced the swords. The "sword" was the stock-in-trade of blacksmiths, a narrow bar which could be worked into most implements, tool edges, and, when conditions warranted it, into swords. The ban led to the use of foliage covered hoops, cooper's barrel hoops and even ropes between dancers. To be impressive the numbers of dancers can be rather large and the dances rather interminable in length. In most places the garlands are an inverted U-shape, and can be exploited as a frame for the head and top of the body. Some German and Basque garlands are the size of garden archways with spikes on the bottom ends which can be struck into the ground to allow the dancers greater freedom for stepping. In Austria many are rigid and small, of "A" frame or "Δ" triangular shape, as well as complete circles. The latter is appearing in the West Country. The earliest clear English reference available to me was in a ballet. Earlier references to garlands are to a different type of object that is not a dance implement but something that is carried to accompany a party of dancers or singers, who are perhaps "bringing in the May". These are close in concept to the heavily flowered garlands on a stave pole, such as are used on Tutti Day at Hungerford and also was used by some Friendly Societies instead of stave heads. Garlands can mean also slack streamers or decorated ribbons, like skipping ropes or even interior decorators swags.

By the mid 19th century garland dances were appearing as part of the stock in trade of the dance display choreographer along with plaited ribbon maypole dances and theatrical morris and might be seen on the stage, in at least one classical ballet, at the pleasure gardens and at revels. The Britannia Bacup and the original Whitworth dances probably date from the middle of Queen Victoria's reign but most surviving English dances seem to be late Victorian or Edwardian period compositions. A particularly well known one is the "Victory" dance from Knutsford which was danced with a slack garland, like a flower decorated skipping rope, now preserved in performance by Poynton Jemmers. Garland dances are still part of the repertoire of children's dancing schools and a waltz garland was performed at Knutsford May Day in 1982. This dance was done with small rigid framed garlands which allowed quick and easy change from linked to stand alone formations. Apparently a U-garland dance was circulated amongst Girl Guide troupes after WW I and parties went out collecting along with a maypole. Simple dances suitable for such activities were being published⁽¹⁾ in the first decade of this century, as part of general urge to exploit pseudo historical material contemporaneous with the Esperance Club and Sharp, and these sources need more exploration. This was in a period of "sharing" dances and games from many cultures and the actual source is currently unknown. There is photograph of school girls with U-garlands and a team with a plaited ribbon type of maypole at Alton at the end of the 19th century⁽²⁾.

The only English garland dance to include linked movements that has surfaced so far is the "Rose" recorded from a college team from the Sunderland area at an inter-college folk event in the early 1960's, and apparently created and taught to the leaders when at school a few years before by an ex-long sword dancer from the Cleveland area north of Whitby who did not believe in women doing the traditional men's dances. Originally intended to be danced by twelve or more, it

now is often done with eight with loss of scale and even by six. English Miscellany of Open Morris used a character carrying a separate object such as a bouquet who passed through the figures at appropriate moments to fill out the tune. Although it was done at the fast long sword walk, the dance has been developed in both rapper like running and slow polka stepping versions to suit different club requirements. There are similar linked dances in Spain, Flanders and Provence.

English dances seem to include bows, made from the waist but keeping the head up, as at Bacup, Blennerhasset and in the Mayers "Maze" dance at Lancaster. Garland dances have not attracted fancy stepping sequences, although one like a Three Hand Reel was composed for Minden Rose. Within a club's repertoire there is always a need for a variety of rhythms and speeds from waltzes to polkas, and it is not unusual for a team to change the collected or acquired material for the sake of the balance in their shows.

A good garland dance uses the garland as part of the dance, rather than having the garland just to look pretty. They can be waved from side-to-side, laid on top of each other, or even used to catch other dancers. However garlands have been added to existing dances such as to the reconstruction of Mrs Hepple's dance. There are now in circulation a number of composed dances, ranging from the four handed Sweet Garland dance, seen danced by Wessex Woods, the five handed dance by Plymouth Maids, the six handed Tina's dance by England's Glory, up to the Wain for fourteen. This is one of very few dances with one garland shared by each pair of dancers. It is now a much longer dance than when first seen at Sidmouth danced by a visiting Flemish team as English clubs have added several good figures. Several garland dances have been composed for use in Australia, New Zealand and in the USA. I have seen there good garland adaptations of Playford dances such as Newcastle and a comic version of Hey Boys Up We Go.

Garlands can be made of a variety of materials - plastic domestic water pipe is just about the right diameter and flexibility and was first suggested by Tony Barrand of Boston University, USA. Some teams have used hoola-hoops, but cane is desirable if the garlands are to be clashed, or even wood steamed to a permanent shape. A set of garlands in basket wickerwork has been seen. Decoration is very much a matter of the team's personal taste. Weight seems to be an important criterion, specially if someone has to carry eight or twelve of them around.

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- 1 G T Kimmons The Guild of Play - Book of Festival and Dance Part 1
J Curwen, London, 3rd Edit, 1907.
- 2 Local School Brochure, seen by courtesy of T Munday

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ARCOS, THE ARCHES

Source : video of Burgos Women's side from Spain at Sidmouth 1989. A dance in the style of "The Rose" which is otherwise unique.
Music : typical spanish tune with 1-23 rhythm, suggest slow jigs
Tool : U shaped garland, reasonably rigid
Step : 1-23 not a skip-change
Set : 12 dancers with garlands plus a leader without.

ENTRY - in single file following leader moving into an anticlockwise circle, each with own garland and swaying garlands together, outwards first. End with the leader standing in the centre and all the dancers in pairs back to back, evens facing in and odds out.

CIRCULAR HEY - dancers start to move to their left with a left lead, ie evens go back, weaving in a circular hey all the way round, turning with a strong swirl of the skirt so as to pass each dancer back to back. End back to back, turn so that all face in in a circle and swing the left end of their garland from left to right into right hand neighbour's left hand, the all quarter turn to left to face round circle anticlockwise, handles together in front of body so that garlands are over shoulders (*suggest that it would be tidier to take both ends in right hand, move sideways to right to put ends in front and to separate hands*) Leader takes free end. Free hands on hips.

TUNNEL - leader starts tunnel on odd side moving up centre of set. Others take alternate sides, facing in, one side has hands apart, opposite has hands crossed at the wrists.

LEAD OFF - leader crosses set and goes round next clockwise, leads across set and around neighbour anticlockwise and proceeds in this way down to the bottom, through every garland (*except perhaps the last*) The others follow but do not move off until they are pulled round on the spot and have to move.

ARCHES - leader immediately starts another tunnel but on the even side moving up the set as the previous lead-off finishes. When at top start down the middle to get there just when the previous lead off finishes and tunnel complete - ie the movements overlap.

DOUBLE CIRCLE - lead off into anticlock circle until out of arches then back end starts going clockwise so that ends overlap and form into two circles, one in the gaps in the other, knuckles touching, leader releasing end and going into centre. Dance 6 slips to left with garlands lowered in front, 2 equivalent to raise garlands while standing still, 6 slips to right with garlands up. Start to reform single big circle anticlockwise with leader in front.

SPIRAL - with garlands over shoulders as at end of Circular Hey to keep close together, leader moves to centre of set and the leader hands garland end to no 3 so that 2 & 3 are linked by two garlands and they stand still. Rest wind round anticlock, each in turn stopping on right side of a stationary dancer odds by odd, evens by evens, so that garlands form a crown across the centre each laid on in turn. The leader still dances around ahead of moving dancers. Keep it close and quick.

LIFT - member of team or crowd brought in, if small the crown is lowered and the person is sat on top and raised, if adult put underneath. The crown is rotated once around and the person allowed to leave.

UNWIND - minimise time. Form a complete circle facing in.

STAR - odd move in, turn left to face out, hands crossed and pas de basques. Change with evens. Repeat.

IN & OUT - leader takes an end and winds in and out the windows, letting each loop go through before the next. Then exit.

*(This can be speeded up by not letting loops complete before next arch.
Also could end dance at the Lift)*

6

4

"BEAU KNOT"

Source : cine film of Provençal team taken at Sidmouth in 1976.

Music : Knots of May use a French Tune "Cochon Chine".

Step : hop step danced for clatter, lifted not skipped, start right.

Set : 6 dancers linked with 5 garlands. Number as normal morris set,

2 4 6

m

Dance is led by No.2.

1 3 5

Nos 1 and 2 hold side edge of skirt with free hand.

ENTRY : enter in a line with garlands hanging down. Stand in a horseshoe.
Raise garlands all together during once to yourself.

- 1 8 bars on spot facing in.
- 2 No.2 leads a winding or stitching up, between 1&3 first, as each is turned they stand still facing out. Bring knuckles together but do not cross hands. When in starting place No.2 turns under own garland. Then turn other way under own garland and lead the unwinding.
- 3 Wind up two at a time. Nos 1&2 going under 5&6 first. Unwind in reverse direction.
- 4 All circle once round anticlockwise.
- 5 **Bower** : No.1 stops near centre facing back to own side, No.3 stops opposite facing opposite side. Others stop, No.5 by right side of No.1, No.6 by right side of No.3, No.4 between Nos.5&1, No.2 between Nos.6&3. Raise the bower high and stand still for 4 bars.
- 6 No.2 leads out the easy way, by changing hands she faces in while rest face out. Each comes out as late as possible. Before completely unwound, No.2 changes hands and turns back, leading rest into a circle, now all facing in.
- 7 All circle once round anti-clockwise
- 8 **Tunnel** : build up a tunnel, No.1 stops as in fig 5, No.3 opposite, but No.5 stands to left of No.1, No.6 to right of No.3, No.4 to left of No.5, and No.2 to right of No.6. Now 3 v 3.

1 5 4

3 6 2

- 9 **Exit** : Starting with No.2, the dancers exit up the tunnel, taking both ends of own garland as they go. The last two have only one garland between them so they both dance under it, side by side.

FLORIBUNDA a GARLAND THREE HAND REEL

Source : composed by Jean Piper for Minden Rose to fill an obvious gap in the repertoire. The steps were chosen from different traditions, to be British.

Music : composed by Jean Piper for the dance.

Set : three dancers in a line side by side, facing "forward", numbered 1, 2 and 3, each with a garland.

STEPS - each "step" takes two bars, except the last which needs four.

A. "Lilt" (lunge) the right foot over the left foot and hop, then step back onto the left foot and hop. Move to the right with a right, close the left, and a right (& hop?). Count 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 (a).

B. "Drop" (spring) onto the right foot with the left foot going straight out to back behind, then drop (spring) onto the left foot with the right out behind. Pas de Basque to the right, with the foot crossed in front.

C. Hop on the left foot and dance "heel, toe, heel" with the right in front of the left, then bring the right back beside the left.

D. "Hitch" (hop on the left while kicking the right out with the knee up) and travel to the right, with the right to the side, the left up behind, right to side, left up behind, right to side, left up behind. Pas de Basque to the right and then to the left with the leading foot crossed behind.

DANCE

Each figure starts with two dancers turning to face and the third facing the other way, either > < > or < > <. After the "stepping" they all turn 180° to face the other direction, to the right, ie right shoulder going back. (All three do the "stepping" ?). The Reels of Three finish with the ends of the line moving forward to form a circle facing "in", and the numbering running around clockwise.

A 1- 8 No.2 dances step A to No.1, while No.3 faces out. The step starts on the right, and is repeated on the left and the right, then four "skips", which are step-hops with the knee well raised, No.2 turning to face No.3, starting on the right foot. No.2, 1 & 3 turn right shoulder going back to face the other way, turning out and in respectively.

9-16 No.2 dances step A to No.3, while No.1 faces out, four times through.

17-24 Reel of Three with the "skip-change", or 1 2 3 hop step, starting by passing by the right shoulder, and end with the right shoulders to the centre, for a three person right hand star.

25-32 Go round for two polkas, all turn out to the left to face back on two more polkas, take two polkas to come back, and two polkas to turn out to the right. No.2 now ends facing No.3.

B 1- 8 No.2 dances step B to No.3, while No.1 faces out. The step starts on the right, and is repeated on the left and the right, then all do four skips turning to face the other way starting right foot. No.2 now faces No.1. Nos.3 and 1 turn out and in respectively, with right shoulders going back to turn.

9-16 No.2 dances step B to No.1, as No.3 faces out, four times through.

- 17-24 Reel of Three, end facing "in" for a circle to the left.
- 25-32 All take six polkas to the left to circle once around, then two polkas out to place, at the end No.2 faces No.1.
- C 1- 8 No.2 dances step C to No.1, while No.3 faces out. The step starts by hopping onto the left, and this is repeated twice on alternate feet, then four skips round for No.2 to face No.3, starting on the right.
- 9-16 No.2 dances step C to No.3, while No.1 faces out, four times through.
- 17-24 Reel of Three, ending facing in for the movement called "Teapots".
- 25-32 Take two polkas to the left. Put the Garlands up and turn for two polkas. Take two polkas back and two polkas to turn out. No.2 now faces No.3.
- D 1- 8 No.2 dances step D to No.3, while No.1 faces out. The step starts by hopping on the left and moving to the right. Repeat it all by moving to left but replace the Pas de Basque with four skips round for No.2 to face No.1, starting with the right foot.
- 9-16 No.2 dances step D to No.1, while No.3 face out, twice through.
- 17-24 Reel of Three, ending with all facing in.
- 25-32 No.2 turns out taking two steps, clockwise. Dancer on the right, No.1, turns out taking two steps, then the last, No.3, turns out on two steps. Then in turn each turns in taking two steps. Raise the garlands to touch at their tops.

KNOTS OF MAY - a Composed Garland Dance

Once to self : set of 8, face up in column, numbered round set clockwise.
 Opening : All face in, cross over to opposite side, quarter turn to right
 and move into a clockwise circle.

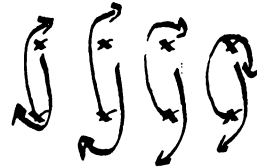
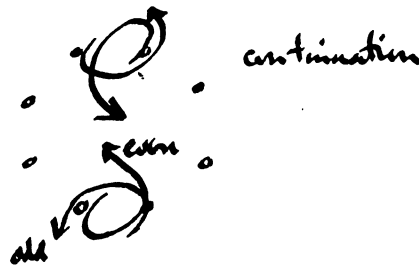
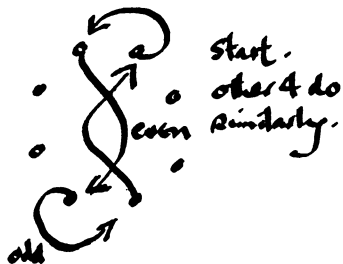


Figure One:

1. "Centre" - all face centre. Evens go to centre, 8 steps, to momentarily form a ring with the garlands, and retire to place, 8 steps, while odds mark time. Odds then move to centre ditto while evens mark time.
2. "Four Chain Across" - Evens cross centre of set, passing right shoulders and forming a star for part of the crossing, to opposite odd. Odds at same time dance a near complete circle anticlockwise. They turn each other once round, touching knuckles, and evens then return the same way to own place, passing right shoulders in a star. Odds do a further anticlockwise turn by themselves, picking up their even for a final turn to place.



3. "First Knot" - All 8 into a circle clockwise. Evens break off into a small circle anticlockwise away from music, making a loose star. Odds continue original clockwise circle tightening up into a loose star also. The two rotating circles should interleave - ie be "cogged". After a complete rotation the dancers change circles one at a time as they reach the point where the two circles interleave. After another rotation the dancers in the second circle join the first, which widens out to original size.

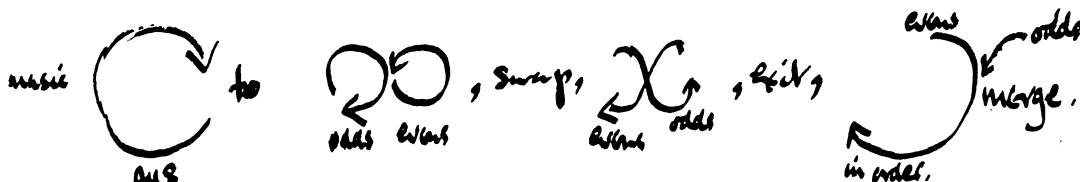


Figure Two:

1. "Centre" - as above
2. "Reels Across" - Evens dance same track and timing as 2 above but odds mark time for two bars and then follow them around the same track.