

RØROS-POLS  
(Norway)

Røros-pols (approx: RØER-ohs-pols), a couple dance from eastern Norway, is as genuine a "folkdance" as can be found in all of Scandinavia, yet there are no published descriptions nor printed instructions in Norwegian on how to dance it! For Røros-pols is one of those ethnic terpsichorean survivals known in Norwegian as "bygdedansar" (country-, local-, or village-dances). Unlike the "turkansar" (figure-dances) such as Reinlendar med Turar, Seksmannsril and Attetur, which are thoroughly documented in the official Norwegian folkdance manual, the ethnic country-dances have not passed through a "formal" stage of development, but have evolved independently among the folk, varying from district to district. Among them are: Pols and Springleik (both close cousins of the Swedish Polska), Springar, Gangar, Rull and Halling. No other Scandinavian land has anywhere as rich a living tradition in native dance forms as Norway.

Besides being a delightful and exhilarating dance in its own right, Røros-pols is of unusual interest to the folklorist. Among the art treasures preserved in the Gripsholm castle near Stockholm, Sweden, there is a wall textile from around the year 1500, showing a fiddler, a bagpipe-player and 4 couples in various dance positions. It is entitled "Bonddans" (Farmer or Peasant Dance). The remarkable thing is that the dancers are pictured in 4 sequences in which every detail corresponds to the figures of a dance found in Norway in the area of the town Røros, exactly as it is danced today! The musicians' instruments, however, are not the same as those used nowadays. The bagpipe (once widespread in the Northlands) has disappeared, and the fiddle pictured is quite different from the violin types now played by Scandinavian country fiddlers. But the most intangible aspects of the dance, the dance figures themselves, are still there. Thus the Swedish tapestry indicates that this most ancient of couple dances, once common throughout northern Scandinavia (it was danced in western Sweden up to a generation ago) has managed to survive up into our day, a span of 4 to 5 centuries, in Norway--- without any perceptible change!

The area of eastern Norway between Oslo and Trondheim is typical Pols country. There the ordinary fiddle, and not the unique Hardanger-fiddle, is the prevailing folk instrument. A driving rhythm frequently broken by subtle syncopations, and of times a strange mixture of modal keys, characterizes the music. Although the Pols has lost much ground the last few decades, its former popularity is attested to by the vast number of Pols tunes which have been handed down through the local fiddlers.

Among Norse wedding customs was a widespread tradition of a Bride's dance done to special music, namely Pols. The male guests (including the minister, by the way!) all took turns dancing with the bride -- clearly a pre-Reformation custom. The dance seems to have had two parts: A slow, dignified polonaise-like opening, followed by a fast, gyrating "round-dance" Scholars point out a definite similarity to the combination of

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Pavane - Gallard, so common at the time of the Renaissance. Quite likely the Gammal-polska of Sweden and Sonderhoning of Denmark are remnants of this same tradition. However in all of these dances the slow fore-dance music has given away to the livelier afterdance music, leaving the introductory figures to be done to the same rhythm as the following fast turn. In most areas of Norway the latter fast part, mostly in closed position, is the only figure still danced (for example Springpols, which is similar to the Hambo). Only in the district of Røros has the entire "original" sequence of figures, in suite form, survived.

It should be pointed out that Røros-Pols is no easy dance, even though figures may appear simple enough. The accomplished Pols dancer employs a lot of "tricks" that the outsider easily overlooks, for example, subtle syncopations. This gives the dance a fascinating character, that certain "something" is difficult to describe or learn, but infinitely rewarding once it is mastered. Only through long exposure can an outsider become a true Pols dancer. It is hoped that the introduction of this Norwegian dance to American folkdancers may, despite all the inevitable shortcomings of such transplantation, serve to provide an insight into the genuinely traditional aspects of Scandinavian dancing.

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**SOURCE:** As observed and danced in Norway by Gordon E. Tracie. Notes and description prepared with the assistance of Anders Anderssen.

**MUSIC:** NGK TD7, LPNES 65, Polydor 2382 018.

**FORMATION:** Any number of couples moving LOD (CCW).  
Position described in text.

**STEPS:** Special for this dance, as described in text.

**CHARACTER:** With spirit and agility; flowing, not tense.

**NOTE:** To conform to descriptive techniques understandable in the U.S.A., deliniation of the various components of this dance must and need be based upon arbitrary phrasing and use of terminologies of which the "native" dancers are of course, unaware.

In a sense, the following is a kind of little dance suite, with a series of figures done in a given order but with no fixed phrasing or precise number of measures for each figure. The changes from part to part are pretty much left up to the whim of the Man, but not without respect to the "flow" of the couples dancing in a given space.

While dance style and exactitude of the figures varies considerably between areas, groups, and dancers in Norway, the order and general form of the dance remains constant. In the case of exhibition, a certain concession to the exigencies of performance may be granted; All the dancers may be coordinated so that the figures and transitions are uniform and synchronized.

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INTRODUCTION:

M initially takes his ptrn by inside hand (M R, W L), and they begin moving out to floor and fwd in LOD, with open L Pols step, both dancing as follows:

- Ct. 1 -- Step L (natural walking step, heel contacting floor first).
- Ct. 2 -- Hold position (L in front of R).
- Ct. 3 -- Step R

After a couple of measures or so, W begins to trail behind M, and M changes handhold (down and behind his back) taking her L hand in his L, and couple continues several measures (to end of a musical phrase, for example) with same step. Gradually, W comes up along side M's L side.

TRANSITION:

W crosses over in front of M as she twirls CCW 2 or 3 times, under joined L hands (W ends on M's R side). Dance position now changes so that the M still holds W's L hand with his L, but directly in front of them, in addition to which he places his R hand under her L forearm and grasps her L wrist with his R hand.

OPEN STEP I:

In this new position, couple moves fwd LOD, both dancing open L Pols step as before, for some measures.

TRANSITION: (This preferably occurs on the last meas. of a phrase.)

M stamps L foot (ct. 1) and stops in place, as he simultaneously pulls W completely across in front of him and to his L side. W turning  $\frac{1}{2}$  turn CCW with L Pols step, assuming new dance position for both as follows: R arm sharply bent, holding ptrn upper arm, and L hand around ptrn's waist. W is to the L of M in this position (L shldr to L shldr.)

CLOSED STEP I: (Reverse turn)

In this position, cpl turns CCW with same basic L Pols step, but in the following manner, making full revolution for each measure (6 counts).

MEN'S STEP

- Ct. 1 - Fwd on L in order to begin CCW pivot.
- Ct. 2 - Hold position
- Ct. 3 - R up to L, continue CCW pivot
- Ct. 4 - Bkwd on L
- Ct. 5 - Hold position
- Ct. 6 - R up to L, continue CCW pivot, to complete one full revolution.

WOMEN'S STEP

- Ct 1 - Bkwd on L foot
- Ct 2 - R up to L
- Ct 3 - Turn CCW on L, L turn LOD
- Ct 4 - R fwd LOD
- Ct 5 - L fwd, L past R turning foot 90° CCW
- Ct 6 - Turn so back is LOD R ft turned opp LOD.

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Repeat above figure (Closed Step I - Reverse Turn) several times.

TRANSITION: As M steps back, he grasps W's L hand with his R, twirls her one or more turns CCW under her arm, to take a semi-closed waltz position (but with M's L hand grasping W's R fingers slightly, rather than palm-to-palm hold as in ordinary dance position) facing fwd LOD.

OPEN STEP II: In this semi-closed position, couple moves fwd LOD with open L Pols step for several measures.

TRANSITION: For the M, the transition from the L Pols step to the Pols turn is direct without pause, starting on L (ct 1). W holds (ct 1) while M steps in front and they assume the following position: R hand on ptr's back, slightly above waist, and own L hand on ptr's R shldr. W is a bit to the R of M.

CLOSED STEP II (Pols Turn). In this new closed position, cpls turn CW moving fwd in LOD, for several measures, making one revolution for each measure of music (3 cts.). This step is very similar to that found in the Swedish "Gammal polska" turn but the Pols is considerably livlier, largely due to a much faster tempo.

MAN'S STEP

Ct 1 - Step on L, leading around CW  
Ct 2 - Continue turning L while keeping R close by so that it trails around in contact with floor, dip slightly.  
Ct 3 - Step onto R, turning enough to complete a full revolution landing on R in fwd LOD

Ct 1 -

Cts 2-3 -

W's ftwk is very close together and low to the floor.

WOMAN'S STEP

Ct 1 - Hold (only done during transition)  
Ct 2 - Step on R between M's feet (dip slightly)

Ct 3 - Step L

Ct 1 - Retain weight on L, touch R.

Cts 2-3 - Repeat above Cts 2-3.

CONCLUSION:

After completing a number of closed Pols Turns, the couple separates, M moves LOD while dancing basic L Pols step. As M lets the W go, she continues to make 1 turn CW and then falls behind the M in the L Pols step. Then the entire sequence is begun anew.

Obviously there is no fixed number of times the sequence is to be danced to the music available, for this depends on how fast the M wishes to progress.

The background by Gordon E. Tracie is the most extensive, if not the only written information available on this dance. It is therefore a privilege to be able to include his material in our notes.

REROS POLS

(The instructions in the syllabus are as Gordon Tracie has taught the dance.) The instructions below are as taught by Ingvar Sodal at S.D.S.C. Folk Dance Conference 1970. In comparing the two, you will find that the main change came in the transition into the last figure.

**SOURCE:** As observed and danced in Norway

**MUSIC:** NGK A/S TD-7

**FORMATION:** For any no of eps moving LOD (CGW). Pos desc in text.

**STEPS:** Special for this dance, as desc in text

**CHARACTER:** With spirit and agility; flowing, not tense.

**NOTE:** To conform to descriptive techniques understandable in the USA, the delineation of the various components of this dance must meet needs and be based upon arbitrary phrasing and use of terminologies of which the "native" dancers are of course unaware.

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In a sense, the following is a kind of little dance suite, with a series of figures done in a given order but with no fixed phrasing or precise number of meas for each fig. The changes from part to part are pretty much left up to the whim of the male pdr, but not without respect to the flow of the pils dancing in a given space.

While the dance style and exactitude of the figures varies considerably bet areas, groups and dancers in Norway, the order and general form of the dance remains constant.

Introduction: Same as in original text in syllabus.

Transition: W crosses over in front of M as she twirls CCW 2 or 3 times, under joined L hands (W ends on M R side). Dance pos now changes so that she still holds W L hand with his L, but directly in front of them, in addition to which he places his R hand under her L forearm and grasps her L wrist with his R hand.

Open Step 1

In this new pos, epl moves fwd LOD, both dancing open L Pols step as before, for some meas.

Transition (This preferably occurs on the last meas of a phrase). M stamps L ft (ct 1), and stops in place, as he simultaneously pulls W completely across in front of him to his L side. W turning one-half turn CCW with 1 L Pols step, assuming new dance pos for both as follows: R arm sharply bent, holding pdr upper arm, and L hand around pdr waist. W is to L of M in this pos (L shldr to L shldr).

Closed Step I (Reverse turn)

In this pos, epl turns CCW with same basic L Pols step, but in the following manner, making full revolution for each meas (6 sts):

<u>MEN'S STEP</u>	<u>WOMEN'S STEP</u>
Ct 1 Fwd on L ft in order to beg a CCW pivot	Bwd on L ft
Ct 2 Hold pos	R up to L
Ct 3 R up to L, cont CCW pivot	Turn CCW on L, L turned LOD
Ct 4 Fwd on L	R fwd LOD
Ct 5 Hold pos	L fwd, L past R turning 1/2 90 CCW
Ct 6 R up to L, cont CCW pivot, to complete one full revolution	Turn as back to LOD, R ft turned opp LOD

Repeat above figure several times.

Transition As M steps back, he grasps W L hand with his R, and twirls her one or more turns CCW under her arm, to take a semi-closed waltz pos (but with M L hand grasping W R fingers slightly, rather than palm-to-palm hold as in ordinary dance pos) facing fwd LOD.

Open Step II: In this semi-closed pos, epl moves fwd LOD with open L Pols step for several meas.

Transition: For the M, the transition from the L Pols step to the Pols turn is direct without pause, starting on L (ct 1). W holds (ct 1) while M steps in front & they assume the following pos: R hands pdrs back, slightly above waist, and own L hand on pdrs R shldr. W is a bit to the R of M.

Closed Step II (Pols Turn) In this new closed pos, epls turn CW moving fwd in LOD, for several meas, making one revolution for each meas of music (3 sts)

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This step is very similar to that found in the Swedish "Gamml polska" turn but the Pols is considerably livlier, largely due to a much faster tempo.

MAN'S STEP

- Ct 1 Step on L, leading around CW  
 Ct 2 Continue turning L, while keeping R close by so that it trails around in contact with floor dip slightly  
 Ct 3 Step onto R, turning enough to complete a full revolution, landing on R in fwd LOD

Ct 1

Cts 2 &amp; 3

W ftwk is very close tog and low the the floor.

WOMAN'S STEP

- Hold (only done during transition)  
 Step on R between M ft (dip slightly)

Step L

Retain wt on L, rt such R

Repeat above cts 2 &amp; 3

Conclusion:

After completing a number of closed Pols Turns, the cpl sep M moves LOD while dancing basic L Pols step. As M lets the W go, she continues to make 1 turn CW and then falls behind the M in the L Pols Step.

Then the entire sequence is begun anew.

Obviously there is no firm number of times the sequence is to be danced to the music available, for this depends on how fast the M wishes to progress.

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