

1965 SANTA BARBARA FOLK DANCE CONFERENCE

Presented by Gordon E. Tracie

SNURRBOCKEN
(Traditional Swedish Couple Dance)

Pronunciation: SNOOR-book-en (NOTE): not schnur-bocken!

SOURCE: Next to the Hambo, Snurrbocken is perhaps the best-known Swedish dance among American folkdancers. Like the Hambo it is a form of polska, belonging to that typically Nordic family of 3/4-time rhythms which predate the waltz by hundreds of years. A lively dance with an added touch of humor, Snurrbocken (Snurrebocken, Snorrbottjen, depending on dialect) is said to have come from either Hälsingland in northern Sweden or Uppland in central Sweden, but it has long been popular thruout the land.

The dance's name precisely describes its action: "snurr" denotes a whirling or gyrating motion, while "bock" means a bow or bend. The latter word can also be taken to mean a he-goat (buck); thus, using a play on words, the dance name becomes "the whirling billygoat". This derivation is of somewhat dubious validity, however, and leads to a most ungraceful exploitation of the bowing figure, which should be discouraged.

Snurrbocken, being a polska, properly and historically begins with the polska turn -- not with the bow as in one Americanized version! The bowing sequence seems to be a bit of rustic satire in which the farm folk burlesque the gentry and its pompous, affected mannerisms. Traditionally it was at just this point that the fiddler could have his fun with the dancers, by setting the tempo of the bow: sometimes with long delays, sometimes without any pause at all, it being up to the dancing couples to follow him best they could. In the VIKING recording, Hälsingland fiddler Eric Öst, in a display of musical buffoonery for which he is famous, imparts the original jesting temperament of this lighthearted dance.

TRANSLATION: (see text above). CATEGORY: Tradition Couple Dance

REGION: Now general thruout land.

SKILL LEVEL: Intermediate

MUSIC: 3/4.

RECORD: 1) Aqua VIKING V 200 a.
2) RCA LPM 9837.

TUNE TITLE: Snurrbocken.
Snurrbocken.

INTRO: 1) 2 meas.
2) 4 meas.

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FORMATION: Any nr of cpls in ring, LOD CCW.

POSITIONS: Closed shldr-wst, open shldr - wst. Free hands on hips, fingers fwd, thumb back.

FOOTWORK: Opp thruout: Swedish L-ft polska (as described below), running step.

CHARACTER: Lively, light, and with humor.

1-8 A. Polska turn:
In closed shldr-wst posn, 8 polska steps turning CW and progressing fwd in LOD.

9-16 B. Run fwd:
In open shldr-wst posn, free hand on hip, bgng on outside ft, one step to ea beat of the music, a sprightly moving fwd in LOD with small, light running steps (NOTE: not shuffles or kicking steps!), stopping at end of phrase.

C. Exchange of bows:
With feigned dignity, and following the tempo set by the music (recordings vary greatly), ptrns exchange bows as follows:

--- Both hands on hips, M and W turn slowly toward one another and bow deeply for each other, then ...

--- ea turn slowly half about CCW and bow again, away from ea other, then ...

--- ea continue the CCW turn so as to face ptrn once more, whereupon they take closed shldr-wst posn, and ...

Dance is resumed from beginning (A) with polska turn. This same sequence is followed as long as music allows.

SWEDISH L-FT POLSKA, AS USED IN SNURRBOCKEN:

Though closely related to the turning step found in the Swedish Hambo, the polska used in this dance is different both in character and foot order. Called "vänsterpolska" (L-ft polska) due to the M's beginning on his L ft rather than his R as in the hambopolska, it also bears the name "Delsbo-polska" after a district in Hälsingland, where many believe the dance originated.

As in the hambopolska turn, one full revolution is made for ea meas of music. However there is no "dip" as in the hambo, but rather an even "bounce" with equal emphasis on ea beat of the meas. The step pattern is as follows:

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M's step:

Cnt 1 = pivot CW on L ft;
Cnt 2 = continue pivot on L, while
 placing R ft alongside without
 shift of weight, i.e., "both";
Cnt 3 = step R ft.

W's step:

Cnt 1 = step on both feet;
Cnt 2 = pivot on R ft;
Cnt 3 = pivot on L ft.

The steps must be short, and close to but off the floor. Since the turn is very fast, good foot control and careful balance must be exercised.

Description by Gordon E. Tracie