

3  
LANGDANS  
 (Sweden)

This restored ethnic dance in ancient times was probably common thruout much of Sweden. It has been researched and danced in Sweden from 1970 by Gordon E. Tracie, and taught at Skandia Folkdance Society in Seattle by him. Quite probably it has ceremonial roots, but is now danced recreationally. In ancient times it was likely danced to singing only.

Pronunciation: LONG-dahns

Record: Hurv KRLP-2 (Swedish import), Side B/2,4,6,7. 3/4 meter

Formation: Dancers, not necessarily paired as cpls, in broken circle, leader at L end, in firm handhold.

NOTE: There are no figures to this dance, and but one step: a continuous, almost hypnotic repetition of the open polska (described in the Introductory Notes). Success of this dance is largely dependent upon the leader, the person at the head of the line, for it is he (or she) who determines the "route" the line takes, and leads the dancers thru it. Skill, imagination, and good humor all contribute to the enjoyment of this ancient Nordic dancing experience.

Pattern

Leader, at head (L end) of line, joins his R hand with his neighbor's L hand in firm handhold (described in Introductory Notes), with each successive person in a growing single line doing the same. Thus, all R arms are over, L arms under (except person on either end, whose free arm is loose at side).

Open polska step is danced in time with the music: step L, hold, step R (cts 1,2,3). This is continued without interruption, as leader winds the line about the room in circles, zig-zags, spiral, double-backs, and whatever -- including out the door and back if practical! Occasional (but not overdone) stamps in time with the rhythm are permissible, as are "whoops" or shouts of "hey!" once in a while.

This joyful insanity continues until the record is over or the fiddler is played out.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE SWEDISH "LÅNGDANS":

The folkmusic renaissance which occurred in Sweden around 1970 -- just in time to save a remarkable ancient fiddle tradition from eventual extinction -- had a number of important side effects. For a dancer, the most important of these was an intense interest in the dances that had once been done to the old music still found in the country fiddlers' repertoire. Among the hundreds of regional ethnic dances gleaned from the memories of old

"LÅNGDANS" (continued)

folks, is to be found material dating back to the original Renaissance: serpentine-like chain-dances called Langdans (long-dance) in Swedish. Originally ballad dances such as those still in living tradition on the Faroe Islands, any words which may have at one time existed have for the most part been lost, so they are now danced to fiddle accompaniment or a simple "tra-la".

Music for the Swedish Långdans is usually in triple meter. The step used can either be a simple running one, such as in the serpentine about the greened-pole at Midsommar, and the Christmas tree at Yuletide, or a rhythmic pattern identical to that of the polska. It is believed by many that this latter step may indeed be the forerunner to the dance form which reigned supreme as Sweden's "national dance" during the 17th and 18th centuries, and survives even today in a multitude of different native dances known as Polska.

So when dancing the Långdans, one can imagine himself being transported back to an ancient time when such an activity was perhaps one of the few expressions of social entertainment available to the folk. Therefore, every moment of it is to be "lived to the hilt".

Presented by Gordon E. Tracie