

BVB Dance Workshop Notes

27th April 2025

The inclusion of dance in Brigstowe performances is currently a work in progress.

This workshop included a discussion which teased out the reasons for working dances into our programmes.

Some key points:

- Dance should enhance the musical performance, not overtake it
- Dance can be appropriate, as it is intertwined with the purpose of a village band (see Thomas Hardy)
- The purpose of dancing will change depending on the requirements of the gig
- In some situations, dance is for demonstration and to add interest to the performance (St Stephen's falls into this category)
- At other times it might fulfill the requirements of organisations who wish to book us with dancing (e.g. Stoke Gifford last year) - this would likely involve a caller and audience participation

Challenges include:

- Recruiting enough 'display' dancers to make the dancing effective - we are, after all, a musical ensemble and assume that our members' preference is to play.
- Finding enough rehearsal time to make the dances look good.
- Teaching dances for audience participation takes time out of the programme (approx 5 minutes per dance) where we could otherwise be playing music, so it should be used sparingly/only upon request.
- Do we care about distinguishing the men's and women's traditional roles in the dances? The prop department might consider whether men could wear hats and women could wear skirts, for greater visual effect?

Immediate Action:

We intend to try and incorporate several display dances into our upcoming concert at St Stephen's.

- A waltz
- A processional (Helston Furry Dance)
- A country dance (Cumberland Reel)
- A solo clog dance (performed by a guest artist)
- A dance from Briggy

Future Plans:

- Could we adapt Helston Furry Dance (or another dance) to make it so incredibly easy that audience members can join in with very little help?
- Improve the quality of display dances as band members become more familiar with them.
- We might want to try dancing to Enrico, as this is a popular tune from our repertoire and there is a dance to it written in Thomas Hardy's notes.
- Assess how St Stephen's goes and develop our plans from there!

The following dance notes are intended as an aide-mémoire, not beginner's instructions! You're always welcome to ask to go through dances in the minutes before rehearsal begins, during the break, or at the end.

1) Waltz

- This would work as a dance with just one or two couples, adding visual interest at the side of the stage, rather than showing off right in front of the band.
- It's (surprisingly) not suitable for audience participation, unless some members of the audience are already proficient at waltzing.
- Lovely Mellow Tipsiness is a slower waltz tune, whereas The Man In The Moon is quite fast (almost a 1 beat in a bar feel). Dancers should be aware of this and adjust their movements accordingly.
- It doesn't necessarily have to be danced by a man and a woman, but the prop department might consider the use of formal hats for the men, and skirts for the women, as this is most likely how it would have looked in Thomas Hardy's time.

Basic waltz step

- Ballroom hold, facing your partner. The 'man' uses his left hand for the pointy end of the ballroom hold, and the lady uses her right hand. Your other hand rests on your partner's upper back or shoulder.
- Always start by stepping towards the pointy end, and do this at the beginning of a phrase. You can count in with your partner to make sure you're both ready to go! Don't rush in, feel free to listen to the music for a bit first.
- The basic step is 6 steps in total. 3 steps towards the pointy end, then 3 steps back the other way. For the men, this is Left Right Left (towards the pointy end), and Right Left Right (back the other way). For the ladies, this is Right Left Right (towards the pointy end), and Left Right Left (back the other way).
- 1 step out of the 6 is bigger than the others, and you use it to step forwards around your partner and achieve a bit of rotation (clockwise) as a couple. For men, this is your 1st step (using your Left foot). For women, this is your 4th step (also using your Left foot).

So, the six steps are:

	Bar 1 of the music.....			Bar 2 of the music.....		
Beats in the bar:	1	2	3	1	2	3
Steps of the dance:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Dance:	towards the pointy end			away from the pointy end		
Man's steps:	BIG LEFT	Right	Left	Right	Left	Right
Lady's steps:	Right	Left	Right	BIG LEFT	Right	Left

- You'll notice above that the man's big left step does not correspond with the lady's big left step! So when your partner is taking a big step, you need to keep your own step small to give them room to move around you.
- Repeat these 6 steps for the duration of the dance.
- Some swaying movement is encouraged. As is smiling at your partner!
- Apart from your BIG LEFT step, your steps should be kept very small (and even the BIG LEFT is only big by comparison). The aim is to gradually rotate, almost on the spot, not fling yourselves exuberantly around the dance floor.

Basic waltz step with occasional twirl

- Start as above, with the 3 steps towards the pointy end, and 3 steps away. Then for the next 6 steps the man keeps still while the lady twirls under the pointy end (once) before returning to ballroom hold.
- You don't have to do this all the time. Stick to the basic step for most of the dance, with the occasional 'ok this time we'll do a twirl!'
- This is more interesting to watch than just the basic step, if you can master it!

This looks as follows:

	Bar 1			Bar 2			Bar 3			Bar 4		
Beats in the bar:	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Dance:	towards the pointy end.....			away from the pointy end.....			lady twirls underneath.....					

Choreographed dance

Instead of just the basic waltz step, you could do a choreographed couple dance. If there are two couples, they don't necessarily have to both do the same thing. Good examples of waltzes are St Bernard's Waltz and Rozsa.

St Bernard's Waltz

Starting position: ballroom hold with your partner, pointing around the circle anticlockwise (men on the inside of the circle).

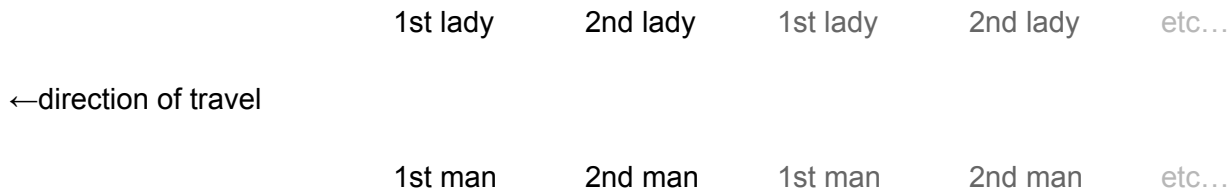
1. Three chasse (sideways) steps towards the pointy end, then stamp stamp. [4 bars of music]
2. Two chasse steps back the other way. [2 bars of music]
3. Two chasse steps towards the middle of the circle (man must step backwards). [2 bars of music]
4. Two chasse steps back out of the circle (lady must step backwards). [2 bars of music]
5. Lady twirls underneath the pointy end, and straight back into ballroom hold. [2 bars of music]
6. Basic waltz step around the circle. [4 bars of music]

Stylistic extras: keep your steps small! This will look more elegant. And I recommend a little sway/scoop/teapot lean during the chasses.

2) Helston Furry Dance - processional

It's probably easiest if you watch a video! https://youtu.be/Rj_NE1Rp0nI?feature=shared&t=80

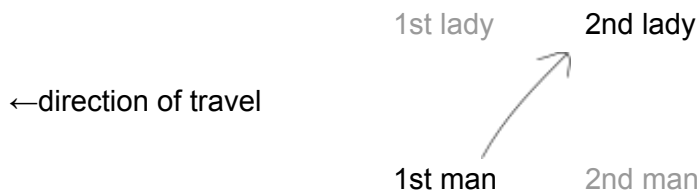
Starting positions: line up in couples, facing the direction of travel, with the men on the left. Hold one hand with your partner, at shoulder height of the shortest person. You need an even number of couples, then the couples can be numbered 1 and 2, all the way down the set.



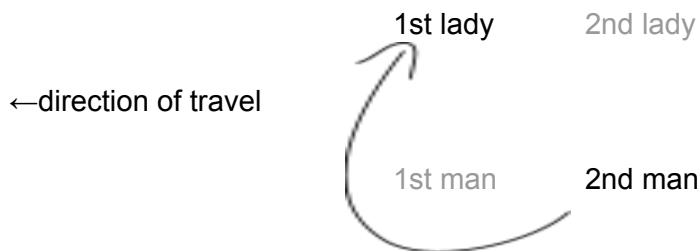
In the 'A' music (8 bars), walk forwards in couples: three steps forwards then a small pause (starting with the foot furthest from your partner). Eight times in total.

In the 'B' music (8 bars): you will change partner. The footwork is now three steps and a hop! So it's more energetic.

First corners: 1st man travels directly to 2nd lady and they do a two hand turn, once around.



Second corners: Meanwhile, 2nd man travels the long way round to the 1st lady, and they do a two hand turn, once around.



In both cases, finish the turn with the lady in her original place and the new man next to her (where her partner originally stood). [4 bars of music]

Repeat the first and second corners moves, to return the men to their original positions, standing beside their original partners. [4 bars of music]

Musicians: if processing with musicians, please bear in mind that the first half of the dance travels quite fast (during the A music), and the second half of the dance is stationary (during the B music), so you will have to stop walking during this time!

3) Cumberland Reel - lively country dance

Music: we discovered that this needed to be approximately 114 beats per minute, with 2 beats in a bar, and 32 bars in the tune. Bath Carnival worked well. 29th May didn't work well at all, for dancers (too slow!) or musicians (too fast!). Enrico might have worked, but would need very different footwork (hop step) - we didn't explore this in more detail.

Starting positions: 4 couples in a longways set (a line of 4 men facing a line of 4 women)

- A1. Right hand star in groups of 4 (top 2 couples, and bottom 2 couples). (8 counts)
Left hand star in the same groups. (8 counts)
Stylistic point - hold hands with the person diagonally across from you.
- A2. Top couple gallops down the middle (8 counts) and back to the top. (8 counts)
Gentler option: walk side by side down and back instead.
- B1. All face up to the top, then 'cast' down the outside of the set (turn away from your partner). Meet your partner at the bottom, hold one hand, and walk/skip up to the top of the set. (16 counts)
Stylistic point: don't let go of your partner at the end of this move!
- B2. Everyone except the top couple raises their hands to make a tunnel, and the top couple go through the tunnel together to the bottom of the set. (8 counts)
Everyone two hand turn your partner, once around. (8 counts)
Stylistic point: the tunnel should move up to fill the space left by the top couple, otherwise the dance will gradually migrate down the room!

The dance then starts again with a new top couple.

Bath Carnival is played 4 times in our current arrangement, so this would be danced 4 times (i.e. everyone gets one turn as the top couple).