

Halling, an introduction
(Norway)

The halling is a solo dance for men, found in many parts of Norway. It has also existed in some parts of Sweden. The halling tradition is strongest in the Hallingdal (where it is called *laus*) and Valdres regions. It is basically an improvised dance, although it may have considerable structure in some areas. The idea is to show off, and to do the tricks one knows. There are many stories about this dance as a prelude to a fight.

There is reason to believe the dance was once a couple dance. Today the woman's part is reduced to standing on a chair, holding a hat hung on the end of a broom handle over her head. In the dance's most famous move, the man turns and kicks the hat off.

The halling can be a very acrobatic dance. It is usual to have many squatting steps in a halling. There may also be Russian-style kick-outs. Other moves include holding one foot and hopping so that the other foot goes through the hole, kicking oneself in the shoulder blade, bouncing on hands and feet together interspersed with claps, kips, etc. Usually each dancer works out a sequence that fits his abilities. This sequence may vary slightly with each performance, and it usually changes through the years with changing abilities.

The following arrangement of steps does not include any of these acrobatic moves. It is made up of walking steps and rest steps from the dance. It is intended to give a flavor of what the dance is like and to provide a basis upon which to build for those who might be interested in developing their own halling dance. I also hope it will enable you to appreciate the dance more when you have the opportunity to observe it.

- Source: Ingar Ranheim, one of the very best dancers from Valdres. Arranged by Alix Cordray.
- Music: Heilo HO7012 (LP) or HK7012(cassette). Side 2, band 1 "Boralåten". The music needs to be sped up to be comfortable. Any other halling may be used, but the arrangement of steps may have to be adjusted slightly.
- Formation: People alone, facing LOD. Hold hands with fingers slightly curled.
- Characteristics: The dance has a heavy "down" feeling on each beat. The rhythm is strongly accented. Arms work loosely, and are not "held on the back" as in formal dance.

Meas PATTERN

Introduction

Wait 4 taps. Immediately after the 4th, the dance begins.

I. Walk fwd

1-8 Starting with L ft, walk fwd 16 steps. Arms move as for normal walking except the beat is accented with an up-and-down motion of elbows (and perhaps shoulders). The walk is heavy and rolling.

II. Leaping steps

9 Facing out of circle, leap on to L behind R, extending R leg fwd (ct 1). Raise hands by bending elbows so that upper arm is beside body and hands are beside each other in front of chest. Leap onto R in LOD, crossing over in front of L and raising L ft behind (ct 2). Hands go down to sides and then arms swing slightly away from body.

10-12 Repeat meas 9 three more times. The step should move fluidly in LOD.

13 Stamp on L to L, pulsing with arms (ct 1). Leap on R behind L, extending L fwd (ct 2). Lift arms to side.

14 Leap on L slightly to L, raising R ft behind (ct 1). Arms bend at elbows so that hands come in front of chest. Leap on R behind L, extending L fwd (ct 2). Open arms to side. The step moves fluidly in LOD.

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15-16 Repeat meas 14 twice more.

III. Backing up

17 Turning 3/4 around to L to end facing RLOD at the end of meas, leap onto L (ct 1). Hop on L, slapping R heel with R hand at side (ct 2). For slap, ft is raised away from body but knees are held fairly near each other.

18 Backing up (so mvt is in LOD), step on R ft behind L (ct 1). Raise L knee slightly. R hand raises slightly in front of body, L hand slightly behind. Hop on R (ct 2), at the same time kicking L fwd with a soft but quick mvt. Arms lower to sides.

19 Repeat meas 18 with opp ftwk and arms.

20-23 Repeat meas 18-19 twice more.

IV. Transition and walk

24 Repeat meas 18 but with different arms. Open slightly to side (ct 1). Clap slightly above waist level (ct 2).

25 Turn 1/4 to L and leap onto L twd L side, slapping R heel with R hand quite high behind body (ct 1). While in the air, both legs are bent, L opening to L and R somewhat behind body. This is a very open pos, with arms also open. Turn 1/4 more to L, and stamp on R ft with wt fwd in LOD.

26-27 Walk 4 steps fwd, as in intro, starting on L ft.

V. Turn

28 Hands are "overhead" as follows: upper arms out to side, lower arms vertical, palms facing fwd. Leap fwd onto L (ct 1), lowering wt slightly. Turn once around to R, with R ft making a small circle to side, behind L, and then fwd. This mvt of R ft helps you around; you also have to cheat and start turning before leap. Step R ft fwd (ct 2).

29-31 Repeat meas 28 three more times.

Repeat of dance

The dance is now repeated, but we must begin with a transition.

1 Leaping onto L continuing turn of previous figure to face RLOD, swing R ft behind body and slap R heel at L side with L hand (ct 1). Hop on L, slapping R foot with L hand approx. in front of face (swing R leg through) (ct 2). Ideally the two slaps should occur with a single sweep of the L arm from low and behind body to high and in front of it.

2 Jump onto both ft (or squat) on ct 1. Bring hands near body at waist level or raise them as in Fig V. Leap onto R ft (ct 2), extending L leg fwd and turning to face LOD.

3-8 Continue with meas 3-8 of Fig I, walk fwd. You may stamp on ct 1 of meas 3.