

Masurka fra Vågå

The masurka from Vågå is a gammeldans from the area around the town of Vågå in Ottadalen, an offshoot of Gudbrandsdal. Although both masurka and springleik are in 3/4 rhythm, they have remained distinct dances in Ottadal (while often almost merging further south, such as in Hadeland). However, the styles are closely related, as might be expected.

The Gudbrandsdal masurka variations are the basis for the masurka that has been taught as standard among folk dancers in Norway, also taught in the US as Dølamasurka by Ingvar Sødal. It is interesting to note that standard often leaves out the 2 measure turn, and that the first part has several measures to the side before changing places.

This description is based largely on a documentation project done by the group Rundsnuen in Oslo, which I (Alix) led. Our informants for this dance were Håkon Sandum and Eva Rusten. They are traditional dancers from Ottadalen and learned the dances at home and at parties.

- Recordings: Any masurka, preferably played in the Gudbrandsdal style (a bit slower than elsewhere)
- Meter: 3/4
- Formation: Couples in closed position, M with back to center and W facing center. Several hand-holds are possible, with shoulder-waist most common among folk dancers and ballroom hold a bit more common among traditional dancers. In the shoulder-waist hold, the M L hand is often raised up to the shoulder blade.
- Steps:
- Side-step. To do a side-step L: Step on L to L (ct 1), step on R beside L (ct &), step on L to L (ct 2), step on R beside L (ct 3). There are 3 relatively even svikts – down-up-down-down. Repeats with same foot. Can also be done to R.
- Slow turn (2 meas per turn). One step on every ct. Can be done turning CW or CCW. Facing center or away from center, step to side in LOD (ct 1), step on other foot beside (ct 2), turn and step forward or back in LOD (ct 3). Continue turning to start the next meas.
- Fast turn (1 meas per turn). M step around W on L (ct 1), wt on both ft facing center (ct 2), step on R toward W in LOD (ct 3). W step on R toward M (ct 1), step on L toe behind R (ct &), step on R twd M (ct 2), step around M on L (ct 3). Her step is the same footword as the side step.
- Style: The movement in LOD is continuous and rather fast, though the speed may vary somewhat.
- Most of the time there are 3 svikts on each measure. Many dancers accent the down svikt on ct 3 most of the time, but not always. Håkon in particular would suddenly accent ct 3. And sometimes he only did 2 svikts per measure, especially in the fast turn, where he would glide downward

between the first and second beats. This way of doing the fast turn was new in his generation and many believe it is due to the influence of pols from further east. (Before that, there were 3 svikts, with an accented third count, more like springleik.)

Note: This type of generalization about the style is difficult to make. When you look at traditional dancers, the first thing you notice is how different they are from each other. It is not easy to decide what is important to transmit to dancers who are not part of the local scene.

Meas Movement

I Sideways changing sides (promenade)

- 1 M dance side step L, while W dance side step R. For traditional dancers, whether you dance with weight over the "front" foot (closest to LOD) or the "back" foot seems to vary, but the standard is usually taught with weight over the "front" foot.
- 2 Change sides by turning 1/2 CCW, that is, M brings W in front of him in LOD. Use a slow turn step, so that the M is facing LOD on ct 3. They only do 1/4 turn during the step, with the second 1/4 turn as a transition into the next meas. (This is different from the standard way, which is to do the turn on cts 1 and 2.)
- 3 M dance side step R, while W dance side step L.
- 4 Change sides by turning 1/2 CW, using the same technique as in meas 2.

This motif can also start on meas 3, if the M is on the outside when he wants to start.

II Two measure turn CCW ("backward")

This turn is most commonly done after meas 4 of the first motif, sideways changing sides.

- 1 M does one slow turn step starting L, ending facing LOD. W does opposite footwork.
- 2 M does one slow turn step starting R, ending facing RLOD.

Continue turning by repeating meas 1-2 of part II:

III One measure turn (CW)

- 1 Do the one measure turn step, rotating once CW. M has L-both-R, W does R-L-R L.

Continue turning by repeating meas 1 of part III.

Dance Sequence

The length and order of the motifs is formed by the M each time he dances. Transitions from one motif to another usually happen at or near phrase changes in the music.

The M usually begins with at least one phrase of sideways-changing-sides (motif I). Then he changes to the slow CCW turn (motif II), which he dances for 1-2 phrases. Usually, he then continues with sideways-changing-sides (motif I). The change of musical phrase usually occurs when he is on the outside of the circle, so he would start the motif with meas 3 (to his R). Finally, he would dance the one measure turn (motif III). After that, he starts the dance again.

It is common to dance sideways-changing-sides (motif I) between the two turns, but it is not strictly necessary.

It is common to turn first one way, then the other, with several measures of sideways-changing-sides in between. However, it is also possible to turn the same way twice in a row.

A dance having the motifs “promenade” (motif without a turn), a slow CCW turn, and a fast CW turn is one of the most common patterns for polkas, reinlenders, and masurkas. This dance fits that pattern.

Presented by Alix Cordray and Gunnar Bogsrud