



Medieval Dancing For Village Idiots

By Hlaford Wulfric Ferreter and Mihrimah Mahidevran Hatun



Introduction	1
The Basics of Medieval Dancing.....	2
The Left Foot (Size may vary).....	3
The Right Foot (Size may vary)	4
The Named Steps.....	5
The Dances	7
Black Nag	8
Hole in the Wall.....	9
Official Bransle (Bransle de l’Official, “Toss-a-Wench”, or “Toss the Duchess”).....	10
Maltese Bransle	11
Carolingian Pavane.....	12
Horse’s Bransle.....	13
Jenny Pluck Pears	14
Dargason.....	15
Gathering Peascods.....	16
Sellenger’s Round.....	17
Epping Forest.....	18
Pease Bransle.....	19
Heart’s Ease	20
Montarde Bransle	21
Rufty Tufty	22
Bibliography/Credits	23



Introduction

Medieval Dancing for Village Idiots was inspired by our desire to help people learn to dance. We have several excellent manuals which contain explanations and steps, usually annotated with odd abbreviations to the point that many people think they need to be a cryptologist to decipher them. In an effort to eliminate this obstacle, this book was written using the same "plain English" explanations that we use when teaching.

Throughout this manual not only will you find normal information regarding dance steps and dances; you will find special nuggets of valuable knowledge. These treasures will appear in boxes on the page and the type will be denoted by an icon. The icons, categories, and their meanings are listed below:



Tips & Tricks: These sections will offer ways to remember dance steps or ways to cheat without detracting from the dance



Dance Variation: Some dances are done differently in some places and these sections will tell you what to expect (though not necessarily where to expect them)



Author's comment: If the one of the authors has something to say about a dance on a personal note, this is where you'll find it.



Historical Note: An interesting tidbit about the dance's past.

The Basics of Medieval Dancing

Medieval dancing, especially English Country dancing, is the basis for many forms of dance that are still enjoyed today. For people who do square or contradance many of the steps that are done in ECD will be very familiar. Those new to dance will find that once the basic steps are learned the individual dances will come very easily.

So now let us start on this journey into medieval dancing at the best place to start

the beginning



The Left Foot (Size may vary)



The Right Foot (Size may vary)



The Named Steps

Most medieval dances are made up of groups of common steps. Below are the steps you will need to learn to perform the dances in this book.

Single:

1. Starting with the left foot, take one step forward and then bring your right foot forward to meet it

Single-Back:

1. Starting with the right foot, take one step backward and then bring your left foot back to meet it.

Double:

1. Starting with your left foot, take three steps forward and bring your feet together with the fourth.

Double-Back:

1. Starting with your right foot, take three steps backwards and bring your feet together with the fourth.

Bransle-Single:

1. Using the leading foot, step in the specified direction and then bring your feet together.

Bransle-Double:

1. Two Bransle-Single steps in the specified direction.

Slip-Left (Sometimes called Up the Hall):

1. A sideways skipping step to the left.

Slip-Right (Sometimes called Down the Hall):

1. A sideways skipping step to the right.

Siding-Left:

1. While facing a partner, Double forward meeting left shoulders
2. Double Back.

Siding-Right:

1. While facing a partner, Double forward meeting right shoulders
2. Double Back.

Arming-Left:

1. Partners grasp each others left arm at the elbow
2. Skip in a circle, counter-clockwise, until reaching your original position
3. Release arms

Arming-Right:

1. Partners grasp each others right arm at the elbow
2. Skip in a circle, clockwise, until reaching your original position
3. Release arms

The Hey:

* Heys are performed in lines and require at least the first person in the line to be facing the next person. All dancers are in motion during the hey and following the steps of the leader.

1. The lead person begins by walking past the person he is facing, passing left shoulders.
2. The lead person then passes the next person on the right and continues to alternate back and forth until reaching the end.
3. The leader then turns around, and using the same shoulder as he last passed with begins moving back through the line until he has rounded the opposite end and everyone has returned to their original positions.

The Hey with Hands:

1. The lead person begins by grasping the left hand of the person he is facing and walking past them on the left side.
2. The lead person grasps the right hand of the next person and walks past on the right and continues to alternate back and forth until reaching the end.
3. The leader then turns around, and using the same hand as he last used with begins moving back through the line until he has rounded the opposite end and everyone has returned to their original positions.

Turn-Single-Left:

1. Spin in place one full rotation counter-clockwise (Using your right hand, point at your left shoulder and follow it around)

Turn-Single-Right:

1. Spin in place one full rotation clockwise (Using your left hand, point at your right shoulder and follow it around)

Set and Turn-Single-Left:

1. Bransle Single to the left
2. Bransle Single to the right
3. Turn-Single-Left

Set and Turn-Single-Right:

1. Bransle Single to the right
2. Bransle Single to the left
3. Turn-Single-Right

Pavane Set Forward:

1. Take two Single steps
2. Take one Double step.

Pavane Set Backward:

1. Take two Single-Back steps
2. Take one Double Back step

The Dances



Black Nag

Black Nag begins with 3 couples arranged longways (Lined up) facing forward.

Part 1: Up a double and back, twice.

* These steps should be done as a continuous set motions, no stopping.

1. Starting with the left foot, Double forward.
2. Starting with the right foot, Double backwards.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2.

Part 2: Slipping (Galumphing)

* Each couple has a set of music to perform their motions to.

1. All couples face each other and join hands with their partners.
2. The first couple Slip up the hall 4 steps
3. The second couple then does the same
4. Followed by the third couple.
5. Everyone turns single
6. The Third couple uses the same motion to move back down the hall
7. Then the second couple
8. Followed by the first couple
9. Everyone turns single

Part 3: Siding

1. All couples are facing each other.
2. Side Right
3. Side Left

Part 4: Swapping

*Each set of dancers have a piece of music to move to, just like Slipping.

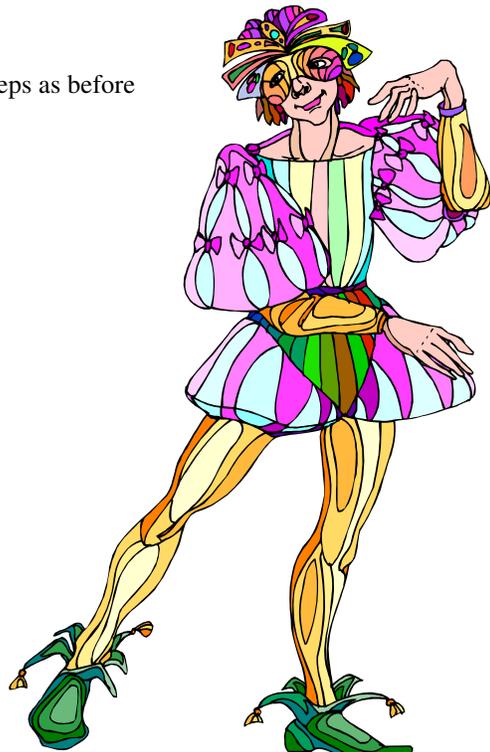
1. Man 1 and Woman 3 switch places by slipping 4 steps, passing back to back.
2. Woman 1 and Man 3 switch places the same way
3. Man 2 and Woman 2 do the same
4. Everyone turns single
5. Man 1 and Woman 3 switch back using the same steps as before
6. Then Woman 1 and Man 3
7. Followed by Man 2 and Woman 2
8. Everyone turns single

Part 5: Arming

1. Arm Right
2. Arm Left

Part 6: Heying (Weaving in and out)

1. The men perform a Hey
2. The Women perform a Hey



Hole in the Wall

Begins with couples in a line (preferably an even number). The couples count off (quietly or silently) indicating that they are either ones or twos. The number a couple receives corresponds to the dance steps they will perform. When a couple reaches the end of the line, they wait out one set and then return as the other number.

Part 1: Ones Cast Off

1. The ones reverance
2. Turning up the hall, they then walk around the back of the twos
3. Upon meeting, the couple joins inside hands and walks between the twos returning to their place.
4. The ones reverance again

Part 2: Twos Cast Off

1. The twos reverance
2. Turning down the hall, they then walk around the back of the ones
3. Upon meeting, the couple joins inside hands and walks between the ones returning to their place.
4. The twos reverance again

Part 3: Palming

1. Man 1 and woman 2 reverance
2. They extend their right hands up to each other and turn as they exchange places
3. Man 1 and woman 2 reverance
4. Woman 1 and man 2 do the same

Part 4: Hands Four

1. Everyone joins hands and begins walking clockwise.
2. When the ones reach the “front” of the circle they release hands, cast off and walk down the line
3. The two continue to walk up the line progressing to the next set of ones.



Sharking! (Also called Poaching)

The most common variation of this dance involves the act of cutting in or “Sharking”. Sharking is accomplished by smoothly working one’s way into the dance and thereby replacing another dancer. The true key is to perform the replacement without disrupting the dance in anyway.



Although this dance appears to be out of period for the SCA, having been first published between 1695 and 1698, it remains a favorite dance among us. In fact, this dance has been among my personal “Top Five” since I began dancing, and I don’t suspect it will ever fall off the list.

Official Bransle (Bransle de l'Official, "Toss-a-Wench", or "Toss the Duchess")

The dance begins with a circle of couples holding hands

Part 1: Side to Side

1. Bransle Double Left
2. Bransle Double Right
3. Repeat

Part 2: Progression

Sometimes this part is down twice before the dance begins again, the music will be the cue.

1. Six singles left
2. The ladies turn and move in front of the gentleman to their left and then jump to the left
3. The men guide the ladies as they jump.



Some dancers add flare to the progression by turning first to their partner and then to their opposite as they move through the six singles left

Maltese Bransle

The dance begins with a circle of dancers holding hands

Part 1: Side to Side

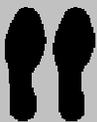
1. Bransle Double Left
2. Bransle Double Right
3. Repeat

Part 2: In and Out

1. Raise hands into the air and take three steps into the center
2. Clap three times
3. Take three steps back out to place.
4. Clap and kick three times



Even though this dance shares the name of a dance found Arbeau's Orchesography, it is not the same dance. This is an SCA invention/interpretation that is performed to post period folk tune named "Schiarazula Marazula".



As the dance speeds up, take smaller steps. This helps eliminate slipping while madly dashing about.

For the Ladies, start learning this dance in pants or shorter dresses then work your way up to more voluminous gowns. Never jump right in with a long, cumbersome gown – falls may ensue



A variation of Part 2 has the dancers throwing their heads back & raising their arms to the sky as if in praise.

It is fairly common for bells & finger cymbals to be used by the dancers during this dance.

Carolingian Pavane

The music for this dance is titled Belle Qui Tiens Ma Vie.

Part 1: Processing

1. Two pavane sets forward
2. One pavane set backward
3. One pavane set forward

Part 2:

1. Men kneel
2. Women walk around men using 2 pavane sets
3. Men Rise
4. Men walk around women using 2 pavane sets



The music titled Belle Qui Tien Ma Vie is often found to have two uses. The first is for the Carolingian Pavane, which is an SCA creation. It is also used to perform a simple pavane. A simple pavane is performed by making repeated pavane sets forward. Most often this type of dance is used for processions.

This is one of a few pieces of dance music that has vocals. Gentles should be warned that someone may begin singing during the second or third reprise.

Horse's Bransle

This dance begins with couples arranged in a double circle (women inside and men outside) with couples holding both hands.

Part 1: Side To Side

1. Bransle Double to the left
2. Bransle Double to the Right
3. Repeat this three more times.

Part 2: Horse Mime

1. Couples drop hands.
2. Men paw the ground twice.
3. Step to the right, and then turn over their left shoulder and move to the left.
4. Women do the same as the men.



The Horse's Bransle can also be done in a straight line rather than a circle. In this variation, the man at the top of the line must run down to the bottom to re-enter the dance with his new partner.

Jenny Pluck Pears

Begins with a circle of three couples. The couples need to decide which will be 1, 2, and 3.

Part 1: Slipping Side to Side

1. Everyone holds hands
2. Eight slips to the left
3. Drop hands and face partners
4. Set and Turn Single Right
5. Take hands again
6. Eight slips to the right
7. Drop hands and face partners
8. Set and Turn Single Left

Part 2: Ladies In

1. While holding hands with his partner, Man 1 “places” her into the center
2. Man 2 then does the same
3. Followed by Man 3
4. Everyone reverances
5. The men skip clockwise 8 steps
6. They then turn around and skip eight steps counter-clockwise arriving back at their place
7. The men take their ladies hands and bring them out of the center the same as they went in.
8. Everyone Reverance

Part 3: Siding

1. Partners Side Right
2. Set and Turn Single to the Right
3. Partners Side Left
4. Set and Turn Single to the Left

Part 4: Men In

1. This part is done the same as Part 2, only with the men being placed in the center.

Part 5: Arming

1. Partners Arm Right
2. Set and Turn Single to the Right
3. Partners Arm Left
4. Set and Turn Single to the Left

Part 6: Ladies In

1. Same as Part 2.



It is very common for the ladies to pirouette under their partner’s arm while returning to place on the final Ladies In (Part 6).



According to *The English Dancing Master* by John Playford (1651), Arming and siding should be done in two complete sets (Left and Right), each ending with Set and Turn Single. Here are the lines: “Sides all, set and turne S. That againe” and “Armes All, set and turne S. That againe.”. The SCA convention was most likely adopted to fit the music being used and to slow the dance down a little.

Dargason

The dance begins with four men and four women arranged in a line (MMMM WWWW) with the men and women facing each other.

Part 1: Siding

1. Man 1 Sides right with Woman 1
2. Both Set and Turn Single Right, turn should be used to move forward to the next partner
3. This continues with men and women joining in as they gain partners.
4. Upon reaching an end, the dancers turn around and start back through the line.
5. This continues until everyone is back where they started.

Part 2: Arming

1. Man 1 Arms right with Woman 1
2. Both Set and Turn Single Right, turn should be used to move forward to the next partner
3. This continues with men and women joining in as they gain partners.
4. Upon reaching an end, the dancers turn around and start back through the line.
5. This continues until everyone is back where they started.

Part 3: Grand Hey

1. The dancers perform a Hey with Hands



Gathering Peascods

The starting position is a circle of couples.

Part 1: Side to Side

1. Eight slips to the left
2. Drop hands and Turn Single
3. Take hands again
4. Eight Slips to the Right
5. Drop hands and Turn Single

Part 2: Chorus

1. Men step into the circle
2. Join hands and slip left 8 steps.
3. Men step back out of the circle
4. Women do the same
5. Men Double Forward and clap
6. While men Double Back, the Women Double Forward and clap.
7. While the Women Double Back, the Men Double Forward
8. The men spin back to their places.
9. Repeat steps 1 – 8 with the Women starting instead of the men.

Part 3: Siding

1. Couples Side Right
2. Everyone Turns Single
3. Couples Side Left
4. Everyone Turns Single

Part 4: Chorus

1. Same as Part 2 only the Women go in First and then the Men

Part 5: Arming

1. Couples Arm Right
2. Everyone Turns Single
3. Couples Arm Left
4. Everyone Turns Single

Part 6: Chorus

1. Same as Part 2



Sellenger's Round

This begins with a circle of couples all holding hands.

Part 1: Slipping Side To Side

1. Eight Slips Left
2. Eight Slips Right

Part 2: Chorus

1. Men Double Back, Women Double Forward and Clap
2. Men Double Forward to place, Women Double Back
3. Face Partners, Set and Turn Left
4. Women Double Back, Men Double Forward and Clap
5. Women Double Forward to place, Men Double Back
6. Face Partners, Set and Turn Right

Part 3: In and Out

1. Take Hands
2. Everyone Double Forward in to the center
3. Everyone Double Back to place
4. Repeat

Part 4: Chorus

1. Repeat Part 2

Part 5: Siding

1. Side Right with partner
2. Side Left with partner

Part 6: Chorus

1. Repeat Part 2

Part 7: Arming

1. Arm Right with partner
2. Arm Left with Partner

Part 8: Chorus

1. Repeat Part 2



Epping Forest

The dance begins with a circle of couples holding hands

Part 1: Side To Side

1. Everyone takes 8 slips to the left
2. Drop hands
3. Set and Turn Single Left
4. Take Hands again
5. Take 8 slips to the right
6. Set and Turn Single Right

Part 2: Chorus

1. Partners honor each other (usually done as a slow nod of the head or small bow)
2. Partners kiss (usually Men kiss the Ladies' hands)
3. Contraries honor each other
4. Contraries kiss
5. Partners join hands and turn (two handed turn)
6. Contraries do the same

Part 3: Siding

1. Partners Side right
2. Set and Turn Single right
3. Partners Side Left
4. Set and Turn Single Left

Part 4: Chorus

1. Same as Part 2

Part 5: Arming

1. Partners Arm Right
2. Set and Turn Single Right
3. Partner Arm Left
4. Set and Turn Single Left

Part 6: Chorus

1. Same as Part 2



In a circle dance, partners and contraries are determined by their position in the line. A man's partner is always the lady to his right and his contrary the lady to his left.

Pease Bransle

This dance begins with a circle of couples.

Part 1: Side to Side

1. Dancers begin with a Bransle Double to the left
2. and then do a Bransle Double to the right
3. Repeat

Part 2: Miming

1. Men hop straight up and land with their feet together
2. Women do the same
3. The Men then take a step to the left, followed by 3 small hops to the left ending with their feet together.
4. Women hop straight up and land with their feet together.
5. Men do the same
6. The Women then take a step to the left, followed by 3 small hops to the left ending with their feet together.



Arbeau describes this dance as one of the miming bransles. This bransle is presumed to represent peas popping out of a pod.

Heart's Ease

Heart's Ease begins with 2 couples facing each other.

Part 1: Forward and Back

1. The Couples Double Forward towards each other
2. The Couples Double Back to their places
3. This is repeated once more.

Part 2: Chorus

1. The partners face each other
2. The Men take a Double Back
3. Men then Double forward
4. Men turn their contraries (the other man's partner) with their right hand
5. The Men then face their contraries and double back while they turn single
6. The Men Double forward
7. Men turn their partners with their left hand

Part 3: Siding

1. Partners Side Right
2. Contraries Side Left

Part 4: Chorus

1. Same as Part 2

Part 5: Arming

1. Partners Arm Right
2. Contraries Arm Left

Part 6: Chorus

1. Same as Part 2



Montarde Bransle

Montarde begins with a line of 4 dancers holding hands

Part 1: Moving

1. The dancers take 4 Bransle Doubles to the left following the leader.

Part 2: Turning

1. Drop hands.
2. The first dancer turns in place while kicking 4 times.
3. Each of the remaining dancers do the same in turn.

Part 3: Weaving

1. The second, third and fourth dancers take hands and then take 4 Bransle Doubles to the left.
2. The first dancer weaves through the line in front of the second, behind the third, etc until he reaches the end.
3. The first person then joins hands to become the fourth.



I've heard the music done in a very stately manner and also with a Middle Eastern feel which makes for a very fun version.

Rufty Tufty

The dance begins with two couple facing each other.

Part 1: Forward and Back

1. The couples Double towards each other
2. Then they Double Back to the positions
3. The couple then repeats this.

Part 2: Escorting

1. Everyone does a Set and Turn Single
2. Everyone does a Set and Turn Single
3. The couple turn away from each other
4. Partners take hands and Double forward.
5. They then turn around switching hands and Double Back to their position
6. Everyone Turns Single
7. The dancers then take hands with their contrary (the person they are facing in the other couple)
8. They then Double forward, turn, and Double Back
9. Everyone Turns Single

Part 3: Siding

1. Partners Side Right
2. Partners Side Left

Part 4: Escorting

1. Same as Part 2

Part 5: Arming

1. Partners Arm Right
2. Partners Arm Left

Part 6: Escorting

1. Same as Part 2



Bibliography/Credits References:

Barony of Cynnabar, *Terpsichore at the Tower VIII Guide to the Dances*, 2002

Lindahl, Greg, *SCA Dance Cheat Sheets: Pennsic XXVII Version*, 1998

Playford, John, *The English Dancing Master*, 1651

Praetzel, Eric, *Eric's Dance Booklet: Version 1.3*, 1999

Whitaker, Tim, *Dance Crib: Special Black Rose Edition*, 1996

Music on the CD:

All of the music below can be obtained free of charge from http://tirannon.tky.hut.fi/dance/sca_mp3/ . The site also contains other dance and music related resources. The table below cites the actual group and/or collection the music comes from.

Seq	Title	Source	Musicians
1	Black Nag	Tape of Dance Volume 2	Debatable Consort #1
2	Hole in the Wall	Tape of Dance Volume 2	Debatable Consort #1
3	Bransle Official (Slow)	Tape of Dance Volume 4	Carolingian Guild of Jongleurs (1976)
4	Bransle Official (Fast)	The Companions of St. Cecilia Volume 2	The Companions of St. Cecilia
5	Maltese Bransle	The Companions of St. Cecilia Volume 1	The Companions of St. Cecilia
6	Belle Qui Tiens Ma Vie	Incomplete Arbeau	Joseph Casazza, Ira Braus, and Elizabeth Cain
7	Horse's Bransle	Tape of Dance Volume 4	Carolingian Guild of Jongleurs (1976)
8	Jenny Pluck Pears	The Companions of St. Cecilia Volume 2	The Companions of St. Cecilia
9	Dargason	Tape of Dance Volume 2	Ensemble Rigondon
10	Gathering Peascods	The Companions of St. Cecilia Volume 2	The Companions of St. Cecilia
11	Sellenger's Round	The Companions of St. Cecilia Volume 1	The Companions of St. Cecilia
12	Epping Forest	The Companions of St. Cecilia Volume 2	The Companions of St. Cecilia
13	Pease Bransle	The Companions of St. Cecilia Volume 1	The Companions of St. Cecilia
14	Heart's Ease	The Companions of St. Cecilia Volume 1	The Companions of St. Cecilia
15	Montarde	Tape of Dance Volume 4	Carolingian Guild of Jongleurs (1976)
16	Rufty Tufty	The Companions of St. Cecilia Volume 2	The Companions of St. Cecilia