

Creative Folk Dance for Primary Schools



Students from Loughton School, EFDSS From Archives to Action conference.
Birmingham Town Hall, July 2014.

Photo: Roswitha Chesher



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English Folk Dance and Song Society

The English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) is the national folk arts development organisation for England, which champions folk dance and music at the heart of England's rich and diverse cultural landscape. EFDSS is based at Cecil Sharp House, Camden, England, home to its Vaughan Williams Memorial Library (VWML), England's national folk music and dance library and archive, which provides free online access to thousands of searchable folk materials. We are a registered charity, a membership organisation, and a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England. We enable people, of all ages and backgrounds, to experience high quality, relevant and inspiring folk arts learning, in schools, with music hubs, and cultural organisations across England. We run the National Youth Folk Ensemble, London Youth Folk Ensemble, and our Inclusive Folk programme for learning disabled young people, and other youth activities. We also deliver professional development opportunities for educators and run the national Folk Education Network. Our award-winning Resource Bank provides many free teaching and learning resources.

The Full English was a nationwide project led by EFDSS in partnership with cultural organisations across England which took place 2012 – 2014. It made over 58,000 original source documents from 12 major folk collectors available to the world via a ground-breaking nationwide digital archive and learning programme. It was supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the National Folk Music Fund, and The Folklore Society.

Resource Credits:

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This resource, with the accompanying audio files and video, is freely downloadable from the EFDSS Resource Bank: <https://www.efdss.org/learning/resources/beginners-guides/51-english-folk-music>

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Additional resources: audio recordings of all the tunes used in the resource are available for free download at www.efdss.org/resourcebank

Introduction

1. Warm-up

Sit the children down, each in their own space. Play some dance music (jigs tend to work best for this – 6/8 rhythm) and stand the children up. Tell them to mirror your actions: clapping, stamping feet, walking, skipping, waving arms, nodding, jumping, etc, all to the beat of the music and in 4, 8 or 16 beat phrases. This helps the children to identify an eight- or sixteen-bar phrase and practise doing different movements to each phrase. It's also helpful to get the children to listen to the music and see where the tune is repeated and where it changes; most folk dance tunes are structured AABB – that is, the first (8 bar) part of the tune is repeated, then the second part (also 8 bars) is repeated as well. Use this activity to start identifying right and left hands (wave right hand, wave left, etc.).

2. Pairs

Choose someone to dance with.

1. Hold right hands and dance around each other (right-hand turn). Do the same with the left hand (left-hand turn). Practise this to some music if possible.
2. Pass your partner right-shoulder to right-shoulder, step to the right and go backwards to face them again (back-to-back, sometimes called do-si-do). Do the same, passing left-shoulders (back-to-back left). Practise to music, then practise 1 and 2 to music.
3. One person cross hands, the other keep them uncrossed. Hold both hands and dance around each other (swing). Practise to music then put all three movements to music.
4. In pairs, make up a movement to fit an 8-bar phrase. It could be a clapping sequence, dancing around each other in some way, jumping, dancing towards and away, or almost anything else! Allow children to show their ideas to each other (this often helps those who are short of their own ideas!).
5. Put the sequence together with (a) and (b) first, then (d) (own movement) and finish with (c) (swing). Try it once to music, then develop so that the children can repeat the sequence a number of times to music.
6. At this point, you could split the pairs and see if they can fit two “own movements” into the sequence (as parts 2 and three perhaps).

3. Fours

Each pair find another pair to dance with.

1. Join hands in a circle – practise dancing to the left for four bars of music (8 steps), then back to the right (circle left, circle right).
2. Join right hands to make a right-hand star – hold hands with the person diagonally opposite rather than all piling hands one on top the other. Dance round for four bars (8 steps), then the other way with a left-hand star.
3. Make up a movement to fit an 8-bar phrase as above, but for four people. This could include arching back and forward, clapping with partner and neighbour, dancing into the middle and back, dancing a back-to back with partner and neighbour, and so on. Again, have the children show their ideas in a mini-plenary.
4. Swing in pairs as above, then repeat the dance.
5. Extend by making the dance progressive: choose one of the made-up figures and teach it to the whole group, then practise the dance with that figure included. Dance the whole dance, but in the fourth part, instead of the swing, hold hands with partner, dance forward four steps, backwards four steps, let go hands and dance past opposites to meet a new pair (or have one pair making an arch over the other pair to move on).

4. Development

Introduce some traditional dances (e.g. Caerphilly March, Pat-a-cake Polka, Witch's Reel, Farmer's Jig, Goathland Square Eight). Encourage children to create new dances using figures from these dances as well as own ideas.

5. Stepping

Depending on the age and ability of the children, try to introduce a sense of “dance” into the activity, rather than simply walking the moves. The simplest way to step is to skip, which works well with 6/8 tunes (jigs), but less well with 4/4 tunes (reels or polkas), where a double-step (left-right-left-hop; right-left-right-hop, etc.) is more effective.

Some simple dances suitable for introducing figures and formations:

Caerphilly March

Form: Partner dance

Music: 32-bar jigs or marches. Three jigs are provided here; The Queen's Delight, Cock O' the North and Kingsbury Jig.

- A1** Hold nearest hand, dance three steps forward, let go hands and turn individually, then four steps backwards, then repeat to original place.
- A2** Right-hand turn (4 bars); left-hand turn (4 bars)
- B1** Clap: together, right, together, left, together, under right leg, together, under left leg; then repeat.
- B2** Swing.

Additional resource: audio recordings of The Queen's Delight, Cock O' the North and Kingsbury Jig are available for free download at www.efdss.org/resourcebank. Each tune is provided individually at a slow speed to help learning, and an additional audio recording provides all the tunes played together as a set at a normal speed.

Dance tune set - Jigs

from The Full English digital archive

THE QUEEN'S DELIGHT

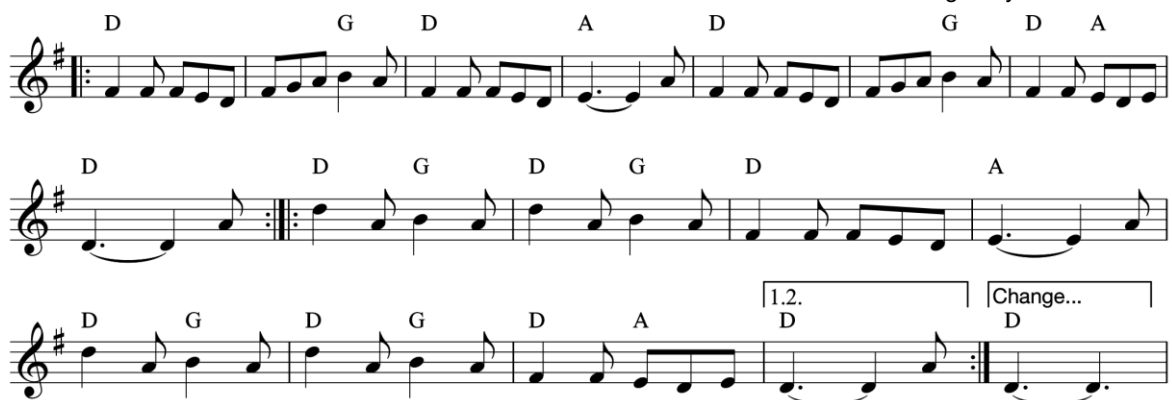
Trad. /Arranged by Rob Harbron



Musical notation for 'The Queen's Delight' in G major, 6/8 time. The piece consists of three systems of two staves each. The first system has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 6/8. The second system has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 6/8. The third system has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 6/8. Chords are indicated above the notes: G, C, D, G, C, D, G, G, C, D, G, Am, D, G, C, D, G, C, D, G, Change... D, G.

COCK O' THE NORTH

Trad. /Arranged by Rob Harbron



Musical notation for 'Cock o' the North' in G major, 2/4 time. The piece consists of three systems of two staves each. The first system has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 2/4. The second system has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 2/4. The third system has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 2/4. Chords are indicated above the notes: D, G, D, A, D, G, D, A, D, D, G, D, G, D, A, D, G, D, G, D, A, 1.2. D, Change... D.

KINGSBURY JIG

Trad. /Arranged by Rob Harbron



Musical notation for 'Kingsbury Jig' in G major, 2/4 time. The piece consists of three systems of two staves each. The first system has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 2/4. The second system has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 2/4. The third system has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 2/4. Chords are indicated above the notes: G, D, G, D, G, C, D, D, G, G, C, D, G, G, C, D, G.

Patacake Polka

Form: 2 concentric circles, one partner in each circle facing each other.

Music: 16 or 32-bar polkas, such as New Jenny Lind Polka.

- A** Hold both hands with partner; facing then travelling anticlockwise: heel, toe, heel, toe, 4 chassays. Repeat clockwise.
- B** 3 claps each to partner's right, to partner's left, to partner's both hands, to own knees. Swing partner. (right, right, right; left, left, left; both, both, both; knees, knees, knees; swing)

(A chassay is a side-step: step and close)

Additional resource: an audio recording of New Jenny Lind Polka is available for free download at www.efdss.org/resourcebank.

New Jenny Lind Polka

Collected by Frank Kidson
www.vwml.org/record/FK/6/26

Traditional



The Full English: www.vwml.org
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Witch's Reel

Form: Four pairs in a longways set

Music: 32-bar reels, such as Twin Sisters, The Morpeth Rant and Country Dance (Henry Cave's) provided here.

- A1** Top pair gallop down (8 steps) and back.
- A2** Top pair cast out and all follow; 1s arch at the bottom and all dance up through the arch.
- B1** Join hands along lines and old 1s (now at bottom) join hands across the set to make horseshoe. The top person in the right hand line starts thread the needle under arch made by the two at the top of the left hand line.
- B2** Repeat with right hand line making the arch and left hand line going under.

Additional resource: audio recordings of Twin Sisters, The Morpeth Rant and Country Dance (Henry Cave's) are available for free download at www.efdss.org/resourcebank. Each tune is provided individually at a slow speed to help learning, and an additional audio recording provides all the tunes played together as a set at a normal speed.

Dance tune set - Reels
from The Full English digital archive

TWIN SISTERS

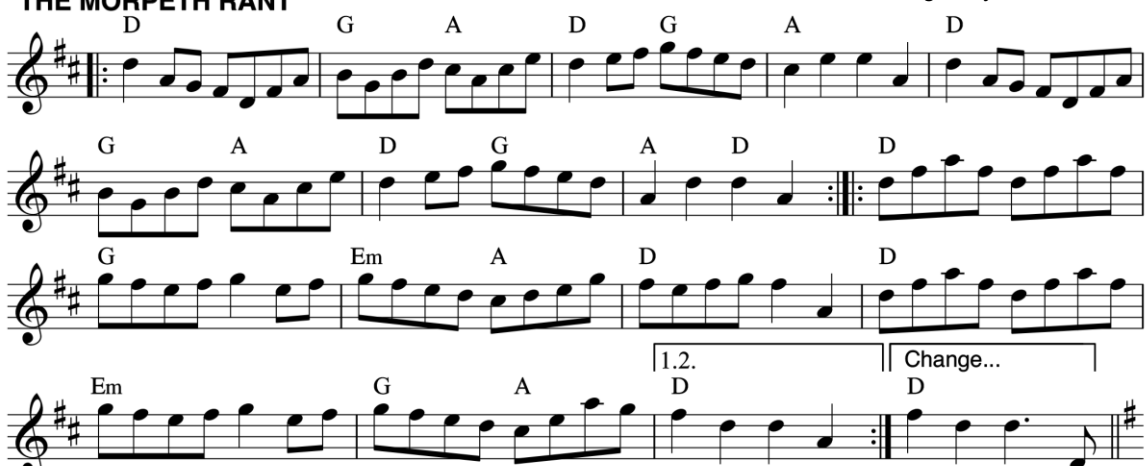
Trad. /Arranged by Rob Harbron



Musical score for 'Twin Sisters' in G major, 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. Chords are indicated above the notes: G, D, G, C, G, C, G, D, G, D, C, G, G, D, C, G, C, G, D, G, D, C, G, Am, Em, D, G, G, D, C, G, C, G, D, G, D, C, G, Am, Em, 1.2. D, G, D, Change..., G, A.

THE MORPETH RANT

Trad. /Arranged by Rob Harbron



Musical score for 'The Morpeth Rant' in D major, 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. Chords are indicated above the notes: D, G, A, D, G, A, D, G, A, D, D, G, A, D, G, A, D, D, G, Em, A, D, D, Em, G, A, 1.2. D, D, Change...

COUNTRY DANCE (Henry Cave's)

Trad. /Arranged by Rob Harbron



Musical score for 'Country Dance (Henry Cave's)' in G major, 4/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. Chords are indicated above the notes: G, D, C, Am, D, G, G, D, C, G, D, G, G, G, D, C, Am, D, G, G, D, G, D, G, C, G, Am, G, D, G.

Farmer's Jig

Form: Four pairs in a longways set

Music: 32-bar jigs, such as Month of May and Maid of the Mill

A1 All four pairs dance up the set (towards the music), turn and dance back to places.

A2 All four pairs gallop up the set, and gallop back to places.

B1 Right-hand stars in groups of four (Cps 1&2; Cps 3&4); left-hand stars.

B2 Top pair single cast to bottom of the set, others following; top pair arch at the bottom, others go through the arch – start again by dancing up the set.

Additional resource: audio recordings of both Month of May and Maid of the Mill are available for free download at www.efdss.org/resourcebank. Each tune is provided individually at a slow speed to help learning, and an additional audio recording provides both tunes played together as a set at the right speed for the dance.

Month of May

Collected from Henry Franklin by Cecil Sharp, Oxford, 7 Jan 1911

www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/2567

Trad. arr. Barry Goodman



Maid of the Mill

Collected from John Mason by Cecil Sharp, Stow on the Wold, 2 Aug 1909

www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/2235

Trad. arr. Barry Goodman



Goathland Square Eight

Form: Square sets

Music: 32-bar polkas/reels, such as Square Eight and The Sloe

- A1** All join hands in a circle, and circle left and right.
- A2** Number three pair makes a single-handed arch, and the ones and threes cross over; number four pair makes an arch, twos and fours cross over; repeat this, but with ones and twos making arches, until all are back to place. (Threes arch, ones under; fours arch twos under; ones arch, threes under, twos arch, fours under)
- B1** Grand chain halfway round the set, where everyone swings their partner.
- B2** Continue the grand chain until back to original place, then swing partner again.

Additional resource: audio recordings of both Square Eight and The Sloe are available for free download at www.efdss.org/resourcebank. Each tune is provided individually at a slow speed to help learning, and an additional audio recording provides both tunes played together as a set at the right speed for the dance.

Square Eight

Collected from Mr Nesswell Pinnock by Cecil Sharp, Goathland, Yorkshire, 15 June 1914

www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/2973

Trad. arr. Barry Goodman



Musical notation for 'Square Eight' in G major, 4/4 time. The piece consists of four staves of music. The first staff contains the first eight measures. The second staff contains measures 9-12, with a repeat sign at the end of measure 12. The third staff contains measures 13-16. The fourth staff contains measures 17-20, with a first ending bracket over measures 17-19 and a second ending bracket over measure 20.

The Sloe

Collected from John Mason by Cecil Sharp, Stow on the Wold, 2 Aug 1909

www.vwml.org/record/CJS2/10/2231



Musical notation for 'The Sloe' in G major, 4/4 time. The piece consists of three staves of music. The first staff contains the first eight measures. The second staff contains measures 9-12. The third staff contains measures 13-16.



At the English Folk Dance and Song Society, we champion the folk arts at the heart of England's rich and diverse cultural landscape.

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