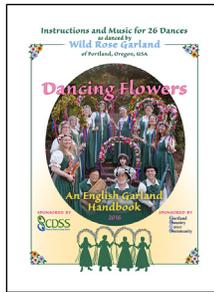


Wild Rose Garland Continues the Tradition

by Mikki Tint

In 1994, several women from the English country dance community of Portland, Oregon, took a garland dance workshop. They learned “The Rose” from Roy Dommett’s garland dance book. Realizing that they needed to have more dancers if they were ever going to do the dance again, they recruited their friends, and formed the Wild Rose Garland Dancers.



Over the years the repertoire has expanded to include more than twenty garland dances. The group performs every May Day at dawn with the other English ritual dance teams of Portland. They also perform at festivals, parks, and retirement homes around the Portland area. The personnel, both dancers and musicians, has changed over the years, but most of those original dancers are still with the group.

The dances Wild Rose performs have come from a variety of sources. Roy Dommett’s book has provided several. Some, such as “Dargason” and “Sellinger’s Round,” are traditional dances recast as garland performance dances. Others were collected from other groups in person and on YouTube. Garland dancing may have started a few centuries ago, but it is alive and well in the 21st century!

Several dances were choreographed by members of our group. Several years ago, summer vacation trips severely limited the number of dancers at practice, so one dancer created “The Curtsy,” a three-person dance, for those weeks when there were too few dancers to do even the four-person dances!

As gray hair takes over the group, we started worrying about what would happen to all these dances we have had so much fun performing. A grant from CDSS gave us the incentive to create a book of instruction for 26 dances in our repertoire as a legacy to the next generation. Additional support was provided by the Portland Country Dance Community (PCDC). It took us more than two years to write down all our dances in words and diagrams that other groups can follow. The book includes not only dances using garlands, but also several for ribbons and

jinglers (wooden bobbins with bells attached). There are instructions for making garlands and jinglers, as well as a May Pole (and instructions for dancing around it). We have collected written music for all the dances, and included a CD with recordings by our musicians, as well. Now *Dancing Flowers: An English Garland Handbook* is available through the CDSS bookstore (store.cdss.org), and the group is working to learn more dances.

Mikki Tint, now retired from the Oregon Historical Society, was one of the early recruits that first year of Wild Rose Garland, and has created several dances for the group.

Running Behind: Rush to Catch Up or Not?

by Laura Brodian Freas Beraha

While vintage or English country dancing you suddenly realize: “Oh, No! We’re behind! Do we rush to catch up?” Unless you are only one or at the most two beats behind, the answer is “NO” because the music is always faster than you are.

OK, so what do we do instead? Short answer: Be like the cat...the cat gracefully goes wherever it wants to go and makes it look deliberate.

How do we do that? Short answer: Decide where you’re going to end up at the end of the figure and just go there and wait for the music to catch up with you.

How do we know when or how to do this? How do we know where to go and with which figures we’ll wind up where we started? Short answer: Think ahead.

There are lots of figures where you wind up exactly where you started. Some examples:

1. Anytime a figure ‘goes around once’
2. Back-to-back
3. Siding (side right - side left)
4. Right hand star - left hand star
5. Circling right and circling left
6. Ladies full chain
7. Rights and lefts - four changes
8. 1s cast down and 2s move up, then 1s cast and go up and 2s move down. All back in original places.

9. Full pousette
10. Figure of eight

Trust me on this: Rushing to catch up is not elegant and you can't win: unless you are only slightly behind, the music will beat you to the finish every time. Going instead to your final place in the figure is very elegant. Just go back to where you started the figure and look smart while the music catches up with you. Guess what? Adjacent minor sets won't even notice because they'll be busy concentrating on their own figures.

Remember the cat: Whatever movement it makes, the cat wants you to believe: "I MEANT to do that."

If your minor set is running very late, at least one of you can take the lead and gesture or say to the others in your set: "Let it go. No time. Everyone home."

Something to ponder... try it the next time your minor set runs late. You'll look neat and put together if you do this. You'll also help prevent a breakdown and keep the continuity.

Laura Brodian Freas Beraha is the Dancing Mistress for Third Sunday English Regency Dancing in Pasadena, CA.

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