

Telespringar / Telegangar

(Norway)

The springar and gangar from Telemark are some of the most important representatives of Norwegian bygdedans tradition. Bygdedans originated in the 1600s, arriving in Norway together with the fiddle. Many of these dances have unbroken traditions, and the dances from Telemark are certainly some of the strongest.

Many springar dancers do only springar and gangar, so the dances are very richly embroidered. They vary from region to region, individual to individual, and execution to execution. For the best dancers, there is a strong interplay between the partners and the fiddler. There is a strong aversion in Norway to choreographing or fixing these dances for fear of narrowing the traditions. There is even very little discussion about what constitutes the important aspects of the dance, so that different dancers will give widely varying opinions.

Bygdedans are some of the most important dances in Norway today, and are certainly the most unique. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to squeeze them into the mold expected by American folk dancers, and so they have been taught very little in the U.S. Two of the simpler bygdedans with relatively fixed structures have, however, gained wide popularity both in Norway and the U.S.: rudl (or Vossarull) and pols (or Rørspols).

To learn a bygdedans is usually quite a large investment. In Norway, the telespringar courses are 2 hours a week over 10 weeks, and that is considered only an introduction. Dancers must learn to improvise within the dance framework, and this takes time. To learn one of these dances in 55 minutes is virtually impossible, but I present it to give you a taste of what the bygdedans excitement is all about. Fortunately, there are now many groups in the U. S. where you can practice, and weekend courses are often given. I have a rather modest goal in presenting this dance at Stockton: to pique your interest.

Springar and gangar are not different in principle except for the meter. Springar is written in 3/4, while gangar is in 2/4 (or 6/8) and uses a walking step. The dance traditionally has three parts: vendingsdel (one and two-hand motifs), lausdans (separate from ptr), and samdansdel (turning with ptr). Usually, once through the dance means dancing each part in order. The vendingsdel varies considerably each time through the dance, while the samdansdel is relatively fixed. In Telemark, the lausdans has an unusual placement and is not always used—we will not use it here.

The music is nearly always a solo fiddle (with foot tapping as bass accompaniment). Many melodies are built up in an unusual way. There are not phrases of 8 measures, but smaller units of 2-3 measures. The melody is a chain of themes and variations, like beads on a string, e.g. a a' a'' b a' b' a' c a' a'' b' b'' (a,b,c represent themes, the ' marks signify variations). This method of constructing melodies is thought to be quite old and Norway is one of the few places it is preserved.

Hearing the rhythm is most important. In the dance, following the rhythm with the svikt (downs and ups) pattern is the most essential characteristic of the dance; the figures are less important.

How long each motif is danced is up to the man. Of course, there are norms within which most dancers fall. M usually follows changes in the music when he changes; it is more common to change after a musical change (e.g. the beginning of a "phrase") than just before (the end of a "phrase"). However, it is very difficult to state rules that dancers don't occasionally break.

Telespringar / Telegangar—continued

Pronunciation:

Music: At Stockton, we are using springars and gangars from Heilo 7051. The best recordings are probably Knut Buen's Spel til Dans I, II, III, and IV cassettes, which have been made especially for dancing. Other recordings may or may not be suitable for dancing (many fiddlers do not play good dance music, or the foot tapping has been suppressed). On recordings, it may just say "springar" and you must know that the fiddler is from Telemark (Springar music from other districts is quite different and you cannot dance Telespringar to it.)

Meter: Gangar: 2/4 (or 6/8)

Springar: 3/4. The beats are not the same length. 1 is longest, 2 long, 3 short (approx 40%, 35%, 25% or measure, respectively). Beware: people from other regions of Norway listening to the same music will not count the "1" in the same place! If you are having trouble, you can often identify the two beats close to each other (3-1). Fiddlers from Telemark stamp on beats 1 and 2; this should be audible on music recorded for dancing. It is also much easier to dance to a live fiddler than to a recording.

Formation: Couples facing LOD around the room. Hold M R and W L at shoulder height to begin. The cpls are independent. There is disagreement about whether the cpls must move in LOD the whole time, not passing, or whether they can stop for the various figures.

Steps: Each person begins on whatever ft he wants.

Gangar: Walking steps, 2 per measure. Usually, the toe is placed on the floor first, and there is quite a pronounced svikt (down and up accents).

Springar: Step fwd L (ct 1) as in ordinary walking step; step fwd on R (ct 2), lowering wt; step on ball of L in front of R (ct 3). Repeat with opp ftwk. All 3 steps move fwd: the movement through space is at approx constant speed. Schematically:

	<u>ct 1</u>	<u>ct 2</u>	<u>ct 3</u>
rhythm	longer	long	short
step length	normal	normal (or long)	very short
part of foot	heel first	whole foot	ball
level (svikt)	flat	down	flat

In most areas, the upward movement in ct 3 does not go so high that the wt must be lowered again in ct 1.

This step can be done in any direction. M often vary the step, especially by lifting and thereby not stepping on one or more cts.

Movement Order

Dance fwd a few meas, W on M R, holding nearer hands at shoulder level.

Vendingsdel

M dance more or less on spot (actually, M moves in a small circle to make W movement easier). Lead W all the way around M CCW. She dances fwd.

Lead W around CCW once more, but change to L hand as her L hand passes M L shoulder. When W gets around to M R side, join R hands in front of W chest. This is a sort of reverse Varsouvienne position. Dance a few meas, M bkwd, W fwd.

Face ptr, so joined L hands are just above joined R hands. Keeping all 4 hands near each other, turn W once CCW. M turns once CW. W turns once CCW.

M lowers W R arm over his elbow, and they join M R and W L out to side. This is a strange sort of ballroom position, used for the samdandsdel each time. W R upper arm extends nearly horizontally from shoulder, lower arm hangs nearly vertically. M holds her forearm near the elbow with his forearm. M R and W L are joined out to the side, arms slightly bent, M hand on top.

Samdandsdel

The couple rotates CW, usually with the center nearer the M (W makes a bigger circle). W dances fwd. M may also dance fwd. In springar, M usually dances sideways to L with a special pattern: L to side, R in front, L to side, R in front, L to side, R behind L. This 2 meas pattern is repeated.

Transition: Release M L and W R, and turn W 1-2 times under joined hands.

The dance is then repeated from the beginning. Many vendingsdel patterns are possible, but again, the rhythm and svikt are what make it a Telespringar.

Another common vendingsdel pattern

Lead W around CCW, but when she gets to M L side, join L arms. Rest hand on ptr's arm just above the elbow, arms are slightly bent. Both dance fwd.

M turns bkwd under the joined arms (turns CCW). Keep L hand in front of body. W continues to dance fwd.

M holds L arm bent, hand in front of waist. W has L arm behind M, and holds L forearm with L hand. R hands joined in front of W chest. M dance bkwd, W fwd, for several meas.

Transition: Release L arms, M begins to dance fwd. He turns W CCW 1-2 times under joined R arms. Then, he lowers her R arm and takes the pos for the samdandsdel.

Presented by Alix Cordray