

Oxen Dance

(Sweden)

The Oxen Dance, or Oxdansen, is said to have originated at the college in Karlstad, Sweden, where it was used by the sophomores as a means of hazing freshmen who were required to execute it without smiling despite its many possible mirth-provoking variations. The freshmen were called "Oxen" - hence, the name of the dance. It represents a mock fight between two boys or men who, after formal salutation, re-enact the movements of treading on each other's toes, bumping elbows, pulling hair, boxing ears, et cetera. The pattern of the dance is such that these various aspects of the "fight" are performed alternately by each of the two boys or men at an established tempo and then repeated twice as rapidly or in double time. The same recurring chorus is danced by the two performers after each of the "stages" of the "fight."

The Oxen Dance is somewhat similar in pattern and theme to the Schuhplattler dance for two men from the Austrian Tyrol region. It is one of the folk dances that is particularly suitable for boys and men.

Formation: Two men facing each other, or any even number of men in two lines, partners facing three to four feet apart, hands on hips, fingers to the front, heels together, toes pointed outward. Dancers on the L are designated as No. 1 and those on the R as No. 2.

I. Bowing and Squatting

- A
1 Dancers stand still.
2 No. 1, with straight knees, bows deeply from waist to No. 2, while, at the same time, No. 2, with straight back bends both knees to deep squat position. Both return to original positions.
3 Dancers stand still.
4 No. 1 squats while No. 2 bows as in meas 2.
5-8 Repeat meas 1-4.
B
9 No. 1 bows, returning to erect position, while No. 2 squats, returning to erect position. No. 1 squats while No. 2 bows.
10-16 Dancers repeat movements analyzed in meas 9, seven times, No. 1 alternately bowing and squatting in quick tempo while No. 2 alternately squats and bows.
On last ct & of meas 16 both dancers assume an erect position, clenching fists in front of chest, elbows raised shoulder high.

Chorus.

Dancers move sideward (to No. 1's R, No. 2's L) facing each other directly. No. 1's part is described; No. 2's part is identical with feet and directions reversed so that both move together, bodies facing throughout.

- 1 No. 1 turns head sharply to R, flinging arms vigorously sideward at shoulder level with fists clenched, at same time extending R leg sideward, knee straight and rising on ball of L foot. Step R in wide stride. Close L to R, taking weight.
2 Step R to side. 2 stamps L beside R, without weight, turning L face front to glare at partner, and bringing clenched fists back to chest. Hold, and glare at partner.

3-8 Repeat three times, moving L, R, L, reversing feet and directions.

II. Treading on Toes

A
1 Dancers stand still, hands on hips.
2 Both dancers spring to L feet at the same time extending R foot fwd, toe touching floor without weight as if trying to step on each other's toes. Hold position.
3 Hold same position.
4 Both dancers spring to R foot extending L foot fwd and hold position as in meas 2.
5-8 Repeat all, springing alternately onto L and R.
B
9 Both dancers spring to L foot, extending R foot fwd as in A. Both dancers spring to R foot, extending L foot fwd.
10-16 Repeat movements of meas 5, seven times, alternately springing onto L and R feet.
On last ct & of meas 16, dancers assume erect position, clenching fists to chest as at end of Figure I and bring feet together, Dancer No. 1 freeing R foot and Dancer No. 2 freeing L foot to repeat chorus.

Chorus

1-8 Repeat chorus as described above.

III. Pulling Hair

A
1 Weight on both feet, R foot slightly fwd, dancers place R hand on top and twd back of each other's head, L hands on hips and stand still, heads erect.
2 No. 1 pulls No. 2's head fwd and down. Hold position.
3 Hold same position.
4 No. 2 pulls No. 1's head fwd and dnwd, at the same time lifting his own head to an erect position. Hold position.
5-8 Repeat all, No. 1 and No. 2 alternately pulling each other's heads fwd.
B
1 No. 1 pulls No. 2's head fwd and down, keeping his own head erect. No. 2 pulls No. 1's head fwd and down, lifting his own head to an erect position.
2-8 Repeat movements analyzed in meas 5, seven times, No. 1 and No. 2 alternately pulling each other's heads forward while lifting his own head to an erect position.
On last ct. & of meas 8, dancers assume an erect position, clenching fists to chest as at end of Figure I.

Chorus

1-8 Repeat chorus as described above.

IV. Bumping Elbows

A
1 Dancers stand still, hands on hips, knuckles to hips.
2 Both dancers make a 1/4 turn to the L with a springing jump to both feet in stride position so that R elbows touch as they glare at each other. Hold position.
3 Hold same position.

- 4 Both dancers make a 1/2 turn to the R with a springing jump to both feet in stride position so that L elbows touch as they glare at each other. Hold position.
- 5-8 Repeat all, jumping with 1/2 turns alternately to L and R.
- B
- 9 Both dancers jump with 1/2 turn L, as in A, touching R elbows. Both dancers jump with 1/2 turn R, touching L elbows.
- 10-16 Dancers repeat movements analyzed in meas 5, seven times, making 1/2 turns alternately L and R.
- On last ct & of meas 16 dancers assume an erect position, clenching fists to chest as at end of Figure I.

Chorus

- 1-8 Repeat as described above.

V. Making Faces*

- A
- 1 Dancers stand still, hands on hips
- 2 No. 1, with thumbs to temples and fingers pointing upward, palms fwd, "wags" his fingers down forcibly keeping his thumbs in place while No. 2 grasps the lobes of his own ears with thumbs and fore-fingers at the same time sticking out his tongue. Hold positions and "grimaces."
- 3 Hold same position.
- 4 No. 1 grasps lobes of his own ears and stocks out his tongue while No. 2 "wags" his hands at No. 1, thumbs to temples. Hold positions.
- 5-8 Repeat all, alternating the "grimaces."
- B
- 9 No. 1 "wags" his hands from his temples while No. 2 pulls his own ears and sticks out his tongue. No. 1 pulls his own ears and sticks out his tongue while No. 2 "wags" his hands from his Temples.
- 10-16 Dancers repeat the exchange of these "insulting grimaces" in alternating fashion as analyzed in meas 9 seven times.
- On last ct & of meas 16, dancers clench fists to chest as at end of Figure Figure 1.

Chorus

- 1-8 Repeat as described above.

VI. Boxing Ears

- A
- 1 Dancers stand still, hands on hips.
- 2 No. 1, keeping L hand on hip, swings his R arm forcibly twd the L side of No. 2's head, bringing R hand close to the L side of No. 2's face as though boxing his ears while No. 2 dodges by bending quickly twd his R side, clasping his own hands together to supply the sound for the blow, he has received. Both dancers immediately return to starting positions with hands on hips and hold.
- 3 Dancers stand still, holding position.
- 4 No. 2 boxes No. 1's L ear with his R hand, keeping L on hip, while No. 1 dodges to his R and claps his own hands together. Both dancers immediately return to starting positions with hands on hips and hold.
- 5-8 Repeat all, alternately boxing and dodging.

B
9

No. 1 boxes No. 2's ears as in A while No. 2 claps hands together. Both dancers straighten bodies but do not replace hands on hips. No. 2 boxes No. 1's ears in the same manner.

10-16

Dancers repeat movements analyzed in meas 9, seven times, dancers alternately boxing each other's ears. On the last ct & of meas 16, dancers clench fists to chest as at end of Figure I.

Chorus

1-8

Danced as at end of Figure I. The dance is sometimes concluded by having the two dancers hold positions of fists clenched in front of chest on the last ct of meas 8, glare at each other and then shake R hands with each other vigorously.

*This is a variation now often used for the historically accurate figure which popular connotation has tabooed. Originally dancers "thumbed their noses" at each other.