



Nordic Roots Dance Project Curriculum: Stav, Runes and Dance by Kari Tauring (2011)

Cultural Elements

1) Dance styles:

- *Longdans (long dance)*: Inter-generational community circle dances are preserved still in the Faroe Islands. They were an inspiration to Hulda Garborg and Klara Semb (folk dance preservationists, choreographers and performers) during the immigrant era as nationalism was surging in Norway in the late 19th Century. Children and the elderly lock arms and join the round dance side steps and singing the chorus. These dances build community and pass on history and tradition.
- *Songleik (song play or songmagic)*: Pantomime dances play out the story of the song as it is sung. These are usually instructive songs that teach children about work and life. “Klippe Sauen” is an example of this.
- *Laus (loose dance)*: In solo dance we loosen up, develop muscles, flexibility, and show our best moves to the community of dancers. Halling tunes have preserved the rhythms well suited to the vigorous and athletic end of solo dances. This athleticism harkens back to the Scandinavian Bronze Age figures of string-skirted acrobats. Hallingmaster Mads Bøhle incorporates dance moves pictured on petroglyphs into his contemporary performance.
- *Pols and springar (Scandinavian dance forms and melodies)*: This family of traditional dances is unique to Nordic culture, with many regional variations. Figures within these dances create the runes of stav using the body, for example *isa* (I ice) and *nauthiz* (𐀚 needfire). Danced in pairs, pols stances incorporating partner holds create runes of relationship and balance. *Gifu* (X), *manaz* (M) and *ing* (𐀛) are three of these.

2) Vocal styles:

- *Tralling* and *Lalling* – improvised vocalizing around a beat; often for pols and laus dans.
- *Lokkr* – an alluring call generally used in pantomime dances and ceremony (as in *vardlokkr*).
- *Kveding* – sung or chanted story telling. A *kvad* is a sung poem.

3) Runes and Lore:

Yggdrasil (the World Tree) is the basis of the Nordic worldview. Humans are connected through the spine to the core of the world tree, the great stav. Norse myths, songs, and dances explain how each individual is part of the great web of *wyrd*. All rune shapes are found in every tree. In the lore, humans are made from trees (women from elm and men from ash); our lungs and the tree's lungs are in *gifu* (a balanced relationship).

As people who live close to the Earth, each season has myths and runic associations from deep within the Nordic psyche. We will explore the intersection of these seasonal songs and dance patterns with the runes and myths of the season.

The 16 runes of the Viking Era alphabet will be used to translate each participant's name and help them create a solo dance using these rune postures.

4) Stav:

Participants will first learn to hold the spine in alignment with the world tree, creating a stav of self. We will explore the use of stav and tein (staff and stick) to create rhythms for song and dance. The Norse were a militia society; everyone was expected to defend self, property and homeland. This aspect is carried on today through the work of Norwegian Martial Artist Ivar Hafskjold.

Workshop Themes

Winter 2011:

Wild Hunt, *svartalfheim*, *juletomten*, *Jultre*, Lucia, Sunna the Sun Goddess, Sun spirals, Runes *Gifu*, *Manaz*, *Isa*, *Hagal*, *Sowulo*, *Wunjo*, *Beorc* – Birch feeds the needfire, birch oil circulates the blood, birch is the standing dead. Food supply is dried berries, root vegetables, game, preserves and baked goods. Costumes include new handwork finished in time, new wool socks and leather shoes, new hats, Lucia/Sunna's crowns and cone hats, new star wands and red sashes. Songs include "Nisse in the Barn," "Einarbaerbusk," "Takk for dansen," "Sunna Bestemor," and "O jul de min glede."

Spring 2012:

Avalanches, spring rush of water, *ljosalv* and *Freyr*, *nykkens*, Thor waking up. *Ostara* the Germanic land Goddess / *Frigg* the hare. Blue mountain / *hagriders*, feeding the *julgris* cake to the cattle. Food supply, ewe's milk, eggs, wild greens, the last of winter's stores, tansy and yarrow cakes. Costumes include hats and socks that have been darned and decorated, new wooden shoes, colorful shawls and scarves replacing coats and hats. Songs include "Trolldans," "Kjerringe med staven," and "Villeman og Magnild."

Lesson Plan

This specific lesson plan is for the Winter Workshop; the Spring Workshop will have different themes and songs as noted above. Repeat participants will build on their earlier learning and be able to compare and contrast these seasonal expressions of culture.

Workshop One: (Materials for participants include handouts, 2 name tags, markers)

- 1:00 – 1:30 pm Each participant translates his/her name in runes; learn the sounds and stories.
- 1:30 – 2:00 Learn longdans step – go around the circle, learning the first rune in each person's name. Make 2 circles facing one another as in a mixer dance. Take turns saying each person's name as a rune. Perform longdans step to the rune names.
- Break
- 2:15 – 3:15 Learn a storysong.
- 3:15 – 3:30 Introduce the stav and tein. Participants will be encouraged to find a stav and tein in the woods, memorize his/her name in runes, and find those runes in nature.
- End with "Takk for dansen."

Workshop Two:

- 1:00 – 1:30 pm Introduce each participant by saying his/her name in runes. Learn stretching with world tree imagery. The Runes of Stav postures. Stav rhythms in a circle – how we learn to listen.
- 1:30 – 2:00 Participants form a circle – Explore "Nisse in the Barn" with pantomime dance.
- Break
- 2:15 – 3:15 Introduce "Einarbaerbusk" pantomime dance
- 3:15 – 3:30 Stav rhythms
- "Takk for dansen"

Workshop Three:

- 1:00 – 1:30 pm World Tree Stretches / Rune Postures – *svartalfheim* (the dark elves' home). Learn about underworld creatures and protection runes.
- 1:30 – 2:00 "The Wild Hunt" stories and rhythms. Participants join in with stav and tein. Laus dans.
- 2:00 – 2:30 Songs "Nisse in the Barn," "Einarbaerbusk"
- 2:30 – 3:30 Dance patterns and shapes on the floor. Other "runes" are symbols such as the spiral and the sun disk. What runes are we drawing with our feet? Pols rhythm and basic partner dance.
- "Takk for dansen"

Workshop Four:

- 1:00 – 1:30 pm World Tree Stretches / Rune Postures
- 1:30 – 2:00 Sun patterns and Santa Lucia "Sunna, bestmor, raido heim" pols
- Break
- 2:15 – 2:45 Songs "Nisse in the Barn," "Jul med din," "Einarbaerbusk"
- 2:45 – 3:30 Costumes and customs, food and drink. Hope to see you all at Juletidet Fest!
- "Takk for dansen"