

MAYPOLE DANCING

- Music: 45 EMI 7EG 8559 obtainable from Cecil Sharp House
78 rpm B10422 HMV "Tunes for Maypole Dances"
The Leighton Lucas Orchestra, conductor Leighton Lucas and arrangements
by Leighton Lucas. It is highly orchestrated and tunes as per Shaw book.
Only one record ever produced.
- Pole: Usually pathetically small. Used to be sold at 9 ft and 15 ft. 9 ft is a
minimum but it looks "grotty", 12 ft is better. The tallest seen is at
Great Wishford. Dogmersfield have a good height.
- Mounting: On Grass - have wide metal cruxiform with struts to the pole. The
flats need holes through which very long marquee type tent pegs,
24/30 in long are driven.
On Hard Surface - best to have a hole. Alternatives are,
1. square bottom that fits straight into square hole.
2. spike on bottom that fits into vertical pipe let into ground.
3. two vertical plates with two bolts through the bottom of the pole.
This allows one to take out a bolt and swivel the pole down on the
other.
A GPO metal cover can be used to cover a permanent hole.
Avoid a cluster of children/teachers to hold it down.
- Ribbons: $1\frac{1}{2}$ times height of pole is the minimum, twice is the maximum.
Height of pole determines size of set. Number of ribbons depends on
number of dancers.
Woolen braid keeps width, the wider the better, $1\frac{1}{2}$ in minimum, $2\frac{1}{2}$ in best.
Cotton does shrivel up. Braid is very expensive. Some success has been had
with ribbed cotton like carpet backing which comes coloured.
- Colours: These should be at least three, arranged 1,2,1,3, in sequence so that $\frac{1}{2}$
are one colour, but 4 is better arranged 1,2,3,4,1,2,3,4, etc.
- Top of pole: three choices,
1. One, fixed for all ribbons
2. One, revolving (Great Wishford) - looks a little odd when it stops.
3. Double ring, one fixed and one revolving on top (Dogmersfield)
The figures look different and so much better with the double circle.
Construction, central spike, gear wheel with wire band around the edge,
ribbons attached by dog lead clips. The fixed ring can be just stapled in.
- Number of dancers: 16 usual number, 24 next best, must multiples of 4, it is a
very tiny dance with only 12, 24 is quite enough. With 32 or 48 the dance
should be in 4 rings with effectively one team inside another.
- Dance: 1. skipping figures - use jigs
2. slow skip-hop figures - use schottisches
3. polkas/hornpipes
4. "tripping" = running (out of fashion)
- Bowing and curtseying is out of fashion

ADVICE

- 1 Consider the motivation for doing the dance, the occasion, the role in a show, eg is it the climax? Chose figures and dance length accordingly.
- 2 Decide how to unravel the ribbons at the start. Suggest done in pairs and then pegged out.
- 3 Decide where to put the best dancers.
- 4 Decide how to teach each figure. With or without ribbons?
- 5 Decide how to untangle when in a mess. Suggest look up and work it out and walk it out - never, never let go.
- 6 When in trouble go back to the start
- 7 Get the dancers used to stopping on command and not to carry on to finish "their movement".
- 8 The Pole needs a top knot of flowers (real or phony) for the sake of its appearance.
- 9 The ribbons should not be twisted except by the plaiting, dancers should be responsible for ensuring they are flat at the start and finish.
- 10 It pays for pairs to be of similar height.
- 11 If initial practice is without ribbons then remember that handling the ribbons has to be taught, eg the raising and lowering on passing.
- 12 Normally the ribbons are handled to keep them moderately taut at all times, slack ribbons (especially in a wind) can produce tangles of their own.
- 13 The length of music for each figure depends on numbers, length of ribbon and how much plaiting is possible etc and must be worked out for each team. (assuming live music - with a record it just has to fit)
- 14 Consider the dance space as having three rings - the outer with the ribbons fairly fully stretched, the inner where they would be shoulder to shoulder, and a middle circle half way between.
- 15 When working in twos or three etc a decision has to be made for each figure whether all ribbons are held by one dancer, whether they all hold them in the same way, whether they are held in outside or inside hands, high or low.
- 16 Contrasting stepping, music, pace as well as the path in the figures make up a "good" dance.
- 17 Holds can be introduced into figures for singing or musical items, facing in or out.
- 18 Figures can be varied by using mirror images of figures, by doing parts of the moves alternately rather than all together, by introducing bows at passings, or by introducing moves that do not change the plait at the half way point before unplaiting such as dancing all together or alternately to the pole and back, or if the top of the pole rotates for all ribbons, just circling.