

BITTE MAND I KNIBE (BIT-tuh MAHN ee KNIH-beh) = little man in a fix

CROSS-INDEX TERMS:

Little Man in a Fix

BACKGROUND:

This Danish dance presents a **puzzle** as well as a **story**. Here's the **story**: couples dance this waltz medley composed of the usual Tyrolian (or Tyrolese) waltz for solo couples, plus a figure waltz for two couples in a set. With an odd number of couples on the dance floor, one couple will be unable to dance the figure waltz. The woman of that odd couple then berates her partner for being slow, making him the "little man in a fix." So here's the **puzzle**: WHAT WAS THE ORIGINAL NAME OF THIS DANCE? Think about it! Did someone sit down and make up a dance that portrays Danish women as competitive and abusive of their partners and title it "Little Man in a Fix? I think not! More likely, Danish people enjoyed this simple waltz medley but, like folk dancers today, couldn't remember its name! So they requested "that dance in which the little man is in a fix." And if that be so, what was the original name of the dance?

Directions for this dance from 1906, 1917, 1922, and so on, attribute it to the vicinity of Randers, a port and manufacturing town in east Jutland, Denmark, noted for textiles, railway wagons, beer, margarine, and especially gloves, at the head of Randers fjord at the mouth of the Gudena River. International folk dancers changed the handhold, perhaps confusing the dance with the German *Kreuzkoenig*, or perhaps wanting to try out their Randers gloves. Who knows? To facilitate "flying" the women, folk dancers again changed the handhold to the gymnastic hold in which women grasp hands behind the men's necks or men grasp the opposite woman's hand behind her partner's neck. Interestingly, this specious handhold even appears as a couple dance to *kopanica* rhythm among Bulgarian ~~fakelore~~, oops, I mean folklore, ensembles. Footwork changed also, as a waltz motif replaced the *Tyrolervals*. A final modification, changing partners after the "mill" figure, would seem to dilute the story of the dance and occurs in mercifully few instructions.

FORMATION:

Viggo Bovbjerg (*Danish Folk Dances*, Chicago, 1917) states: "An odd number of couples form promiscuously about the room." If we ignore the precognition inherent in this statement, we have couple facing couple around the dance floor in open position, woman to man's right, right hands joined at woman's right waist. Most early notes specify woman's left hand on man's left shoulder, but some say man's right shoulder.

BARS ACTION

3/4 Introduction.

3 cts No action and, on some recordings, no introduction!

1. Lines of four. Men start onto L foot; women start onto R foot.

1-8 Men link L elbows and all run forward 24 steps, 3 steps per bar, to turn the set of 4 persons CCW, or against the sun, or contra sunwise, or in the direction opposite to the hands of the clock.

Note: Under certain conditions of angular velocity and relative size, the women may be swept off their feet. Early notes recognized the possibility of this "flying" and recommended that the women lean back to maintain an upright position.

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Bitte Mand I Knibe (concluded)

2. The mill.

9-16 Men grasp L hands in an arch and grasp their partner's L hand with their R hand. Women then run under the men's L-hand arch and turn CCW in place to face the opposite woman. (Note, please, that women face their partner throughout this transition.) Men lower their L hands without letting go, and women then grasp R hands on top of all the other hands to form a "mill." All face somewhat CCW around the small set and run forward to turn the "mill" CCW. Keep faces toward the center of the small set and pull away just a bit. No, no need for men to stop moving at any time during this figure.

Note: the odd couple without another couple with whom to dance during bars 1-16 must stand out, the man suffering the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune (well, Hamlet was a Dane, wasn't he?).

3. Tyrolervals. Let go everyone's hands except your partner's hand; then place your free hand on your hip, fingers forward.

17 Dance 1 *Tyrolervals*, forward, turning away from partner and pushing the joined hands forward a bit.

Tyrolervals (1 motif per bar): step forward onto leading foot (ct 1), touch ball of following foot beside leading foot, rising onto balls of both feet (ct 2), sink onto flat leading foot (ct 3). Repeat with opposite footwork.

18 Dance 1 *Tyrolervals* forward, turning toward partner and pulling the joined hands back a bit.

19-20 = 17-18 (2 more *Tyrolervals* motifs forward, turning a bit away and toward partner).

21-24 Take ballroom position and dance 4 turning waltz motifs, turning CW as a couple and dancing CCW around the couple with whom you were just dancing. (This 2-couple proximity makes difficult the unfortunate little man's task of breaking into a set!)

Turning waltz motif (1 motif per bar):

Man: step diagonally forward to L onto L foot, turning 1/8 CW (ct 1), step beside L foot onto R foot, turning 1/8 CW (ct 2), step just a bit to L onto L foot, turning 1/8 CW (ct 3). Repeat with opposite footwork. First step is longer than second or third step.

Woman: use opposite footwork but same direction of turn.

25-32 = 17=24.

Resume original side-by-side "open" position and scramble for a second couple, lest you be the little man in a fix!

End of **BITTE MAND I KNIBE**.