

Dance written by Felix Mommen; first performed at *Tongeren 2000* festival.

Notation taken from video of an imperfect performance 26.9.2004.

See RUMB Series 16 Issue 1 for history.

Music	Figure
AB Walk on	Walk on cl, L foot lead, swords in R hand, shouldered NOTE: No.1 followed by 2, 3, etc, so set numbered ccl
C Clash	Low basket (4 steps), walk for 4, clash 8 times
D	High basket (4 beats), walk for 4, TS wriggly clash x 8
A	Walk cl while linking inside at shoulder level (4 steps) Swords to L shoulder (4 steps) Circle for 4 Swords to hip-height (4 steps)
B	Circle (16)
C (unnamed)	1,3,5 turn L to face out & drop back into centre, lifting own sword over head (4) 2,4,6 circle (4) 3 in middle clash own R&L x 8
D	Swap places so 2,4,6 in middle, turning left and lifting own sword over head (4) 1,3,5 circle, turning 1/4 R and lifting own sword back over head (4) 3 in middle clash own R&L x 8
A	All swords up 2,4,6 1/2 turn L to rejoin circle whole 1,3,5 do complete L turn to cross hands (4) Reach with L Make lock (12, raising on 12)
B	Circle (16)
C	Still circling, lower lock (4) All take with R hand (4) - draw on 4 High basket - single clash on 4 (4) Circle (4)
D	Linked circle, swords on R shoulders (4) Swords to hips (4) Circle (8)

A Snake	1&2 make an arch; 3 leads under & turns L to back, 4/5/6 following, 2 turning L on the spot. As 6 goes under, he raises his sword arching over and 3 leads 4&5 through under 6's sword.
B	When 3 gets to the front again he becomes L pillar, 2 rolls to the R (1/2 turn to face forward) and becomes R pillar, 1 joins on the back of the procession. In a continuous move 4 leads 5/6/1 through, 1 raising sword and 4 leads 5&6 through under 1's sword. Then 5 leads and 6.
C	
D	
Do this 6 times through.	
A	Out into circle (8) Walk round (8)
A Double under	Double under – 1&2 make arch (swingimg sword up towards the outside of the set), 3&4 lead through, followed by 2&5. (out for 8 back for 8) (16)
B	4&5 arch, 2&3 lead
B	2&3 arch, 5&6 lead
C	Circle (16)
C Arches	1 releases 6's sword, leads through arch made by 6 & 5, then 5 & 4, 4&3, 3&2, then under his own.
D	Once a sword has been raised for an arch it stays raised, its owner facing outwards. When 1 goes under his own sword everyone is facing out, swords overhead and crossed.
D Rose	Make overhead lock. Raise on 16.
A	Walk round showing the lock (16)
B	Bring lock down, circle (12) draw sword, in front to high basket (4)
C	Circle swords in high basket (4) Shoulders (8) open ring (4)
D	Circle (16)
Bridge ABCD	1 puts sword up and faces bottom, walking, slowly, down outside of set, (swords go up as dancers get to side of tunnel) 2 turns 1/4L to face front, 3 comes under 1's sword 1/2L and falls in alongside 1, 4 comes under 1/4R falls in alongside 2, 5 turns 1/2L and falls in besides 3 and 6 turns 1/4R and lines besides 4 to give:

	6 5 4 3 2 1
	1 follows 6 through and leads out to R, 2 full turn L and follows, 3 full turn R and follows, 4 full turn L and follow 5 full turn R 6 full turn L to reform circle Circle to end of music
Back lock A	All let go with L and pass own sword behind the dancer on R. Reach with L under R arm of dance in front and take sword coming towards (8) Lift swords over heads(whilst stepping in slightly and still circling)(8)
B	Lock (8) lower the lock for fool to stand on (8)
C	Hoist Fool (16)
D	dismount (8) Lock to waist height (4) hands to shoulders as HighSpen (4)
A	Music speeds up, circle (8) hands on shoulders draw and run into line up, bow audience, salute musicians and off

At this point there are two possibilities:

- lock down (4), draw (after circling for 4), and process off
- lock down, King steps on, hoist, show, lower him, draw, process off

The video shows the double under being done not three times but six. You decide.

The figures are listed by Mieke (Felix's widow) as:

- 1) Snake: curling/in a circle
- 2) Bridge: figure similar on the painting 'Fair of St. George'
- 3) Clash swords together
- 4) Rose or Star
- 5) The captain steps on the woven swords and is shown (turned) around

The two figures which are named repeatedly in historical sources are the Bridge (described as very popular with audiences) and the Rose.

Evidence from elsewhere suggests that the Bridge corresponds with the Papa Stour drop-sword tunnel rather than with anything in this dance.

Double Under – in the Spa video 5&6 put sword up 2&3 lead under first.

About the music:

The music for the Tongeren Sword dance was put together by local musician Guido Krieken, who was born in St. Truiden on the 22nd July, 1953 and died in Genk on the 6th February, 2026. It falls into four parts: *Tongerse Zwaarden* A&B and *Gex* A&B. Each part is eight bars long and is repeated. The two B parts are nearly identical. For performance the music is played $A^2B^2C^2D^2$ and start again.

There is a calling-on song, sung in the Tongeren dialect.

About the notation

A first version was attempted by Andrew Kennedy, who watched a video of De Michielen performing the dance. This version was given a run-through by the North British Sword Dancers.

Jeff Lawson then obtained two more videos and compiled this longer and more detailed notation. Jeff has written:

I was asked to run the Longsword Workshop at Whitby Folk Week. I approached Andrew Kennedy to see if he wanted to be the musician for the workshop; he agreed and suggested the De Michielen dance as something different. I had a notation for the dance, but it wasn't detailed enough to teach at a workshop.

Historically, there was a video of De Michielen dancing on the internet, so it was just a matter of finding that, or not. It had disappeared: lesson - never rely upon the internet. I eventually tracked down a video that Peter Bearon had taken and re-notated the dance from that.

Every time I try putting details of a dance into words, my admiration for Cecil Sharp increases. It seems to be fashionable to denigrate him, mainly because he was a man of his time. Even with the benefit of video, the facility to pause, slow down and repeat, the difficulty of notating dances is immense and took me hours and hours. Sharp did it, initially without prior knowledge of the mechanics of sword dance and after watching a live performance or two and chatting to the dancers who may only understand their part of the dance.

And finally

We are indebted to Mieke Juveyns for her support and encouragement, and for the information which she supplied regarding the Tongeren Sword Dance and the calling-on song.