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## SELECTED METHODS OF TEACHING THE WALTZ

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I. Method is an individual matter and the method that proves successful for one teacher may not get good results for another. Teachers should experiment with different methods in order to determine the one or ones best adapted to their own personalities and abilities.

### II. Types of Waltz Steps

A. There are many kinds of waltzes or waltz steps, among them:

1. The two-step waltz or step-close-step pattern, called the Langhalls and the Redowa at various times in history.
2. The English rotary turn waltz using a leaping or English balance step.
3. The hesitation waltz or step-swing-touch.
4. The canter waltz or step-swing-step.
5. The Tyrolean waltz - a step-step or touch in front and rise on rear foot-lower to heel.
6. The standard waltz using the step-step-close pattern.

B. Each of these is correct in certain dances but there are dancers (and even teachers) who learned only one style and who insist that it is the only correct way to waltz. They do the same kind of step in all waltz dances just as some dancers do the Russian pas de basque in English dances involving the setting balance step. The steps are closely related but in the wrong setting they are as out of place as the playing of badminton on a tennis court.

C. As leaders, interested in stimulating increased participation in dancing for recreation, we may ignore imperfections and permit dancers to do the type of waltz that they are capable of dancing or that they prefer. On the other hand, as teachers we should at least demonstrate and teach the different styles correctly and stress the one that is best adapted to the waltz dances that are commonly done in this country today.

D. With this as a precept, it seems logical to teach the standard step-step-close waltz as the basic pattern, in preference to the two-step or step-close-step pattern. Reasons for this emphasis on the standard waltz include:

1. It is required for correct execution of many folk and round dances such as Blackhawk, Beautiful Ohio, and Blue Pacific.
2. It is a more beautiful and graceful step than the two-step waltz, giving one a greater feeling of the unique characteristics of the waltz movements and a greater satisfaction when fitting it to waltz music.
3. It is very awkward in appearance and feeling when one dancer of a couple does the standard waltz while the other does the two-step version.

### III. History of the Waltz in Brief Outline

A. 1750. The Waltzer danced in Southern Germany, Bavaria, Austria, Bohemia. Derived from the ländler and other Teusche or Deutsche folk dances in triple time, traced back to the 14th century or earlier. Dances of the 18th century in 3/4 time such as Dreher, Weller, Spinner, Schleifer, Ländlerli, Ländler, Ländler.

B. Contrary opinion among French experts who claim it developed from the volta or volte of the 16th century which spread to Germany in the 17th century. Other French writers attempt to connect its origin with the French Minuet in triple time. Still others credit the pas de basque as a remote ancestor.



C. Stimulating effect of waltz music by the great Viennese composers of the 18th and 19th centuries: Haydn, Mozart, Webber, Lanner, Hummel, Johann Straus Sr. and Jr.; Johann Straus, Jr. conducted his own orchestra beginning in 1844 and composed over 500 waltz tunes.

D. Introduced into France about 1800 and into England about 1812.

#### IV. Method Outline

A. Emphasize fundamentals of dance and the relation of dance steps to musical beats.

1. Basically, dance is body movement - moving the body from one place to another in specific rhythmic patterns.

2. Start in good erect postural position with the feet close together and pointed straight forward.

3. Gent's left hand (palm up) holding the lady's right hand (palm down), arms slightly curved and held approximately chest high. Gent's right hand on lady's back just below her left shoulder blade with the arm extended or raised. Lady's left arm on man's shoulder or upper arm with her arm in contact with his.

4. Man leads primarily with right hand, arm and shoulder.

5. Start the step by relaxing the knee but stress swinging the entire leg from the hip.

6. Keep the feet close to or touching the floor with the weight primarily on the balls of the feet.

7. In moving forward or sideward the body starts moving before the leg. Move the body so that it is directly over the supporting foot when that foot takes the weight. In moving backward, the leg moves first.

B. Preliminary Musical and Step Analysis.

1. Waltz music is in  $3/4$  time - 3 beats to a measure, the first of which is accented.

2. In dancing the waltz, take 3 steps, one to each underlying beat of the music. The step pattern is step-step-close or step-slide-close, starting on the accented beat.

3. Listen to waltz music.

a. Clap the first beat of each measure.

b. Clap each beat, accenting the first.

c. Step in place in rhythm with the music.

d. Walk in a single circle counterclockwise accenting the first beat.

e. Moving CCW in circle, incorporate the standard waltz pattern, step-step-close. Many beginners and those who have been doing a two-step waltz will be doing step-close-step, so progress to the following practice routines.

C. Practice Routines for the Standard Waltz

1. Moving CCW as before, both ladies and men step forward with the left foot, turning towards the center on count 1; on count 2 continue moving in the line of dance, sliding the right foot to the side; on count 3 slide the left foot up to closed position beside the right foot. Repeat the same pattern but leading with the right foot and turning to face the wall. Prompt with "Step, slide, close" or "Turn, slide, close". Actually part of the turn will be on the first and part on the second step and beat.

2. With partners facing CCW, inside hands joined, practice the above routine with each starting on the outside foot. Thus the man turns to face the center as his partner faces the outside, the reverse being true on alternate measure. Prompt as above or "Step, back to back; step, face to face".



## 3. The Box Waltz

Draw or imagine an oblong box in the floor with sides of 12 and <sup>6 to 8</sup> ~~10~~ inches in length. (If drawn, make the forward lines 12 inches, the others ~~10~~ <sup>6 to 8</sup>).

a. The regular box. Standing at the near left corner, move forward stepping with the left foot on count 1; move sideward sliding the right foot along the line on count 2; close with the left foot on count 3. Complete the trip around the box on the next measure by moving back on the right foot, sideward onto the left, and close with the right. Do this without music first, then with music. Prompt with "Forward, side, together; back, side, together" or "Forward, slide, close; back, slide, close". Practice with a slightly longer time given to the first step, giving the effect of slow-fast-fast or long-short-short.

b. The reverse box. Reverse the above pattern by starting at the forward left corner and moving back onto the left, sideward onto the right and close with the left; then forward onto the right, sideward onto the left and close with the right.

c. Practice the regular and reverse box waltzes with partners in closed position, the man starting on his left foot and the lady on her right. Stress the fact that the first movement and step is always forward or backward on the accented beat of the music, never to the side.

## D. The Waltz Turn

1. Partners in closed position. Start with the regular box waltz and gradually work into a left turn (CCW). The man leads this by turning slightly as his left foot moves forward and again on the next measure as he steps back on his right foot. Increase the degree of turning so that there is a quarter turn and finally a half turn on each measure or waltz step. Teaching hints: (a) Prompt with "Step, side, close" or "Turn, side, together" or "Forward left, side, together back right, side, together" or "Turn, face the center; turn, face the outside", (b) Stress the turn as beginning on the first step-forward with the left in the first measure and back on the right in the second, (c) A suggestion that the dancers take shorter steps sometimes helps them to facilitate the turning motion, (d) In the waltz turn the man moves around the lady on the first and alternate measures while she does the step essentially in place. The responsibility of being the pivot person around whom the partner moves is alternated between the lady and the man.

2. Apply the left turn in performing one of the round dances in which it is basic. For example, the Blackhawk Waltz in the A part of which the balance (for the man) is forward and backward followed by 2 left turn waltz steps (CCW) - repeated 3 more times.

3. Practice the right turns (CW) by starting with the reverse box waltz, man starting back with the left foot. Follow procedure outlined in 1 above.

4. Apply the right hand turn by performing a round dance that uses this step. Examples: Waltz of the Bells, St. Bernard's Waltz, Spinning Waltz, Merry Widow Waltz, Swedish Waltz. The latter is especially good as it incorporates both open and closed positions (Partners facing CCW, inside hands joined, start on outside foot.) Four waltzes in line of dance moving first diagonally away from, then towards each other; then 4 right turn waltzes (CW) in closed position making 2 complete turns. It is important to instruct the man to move into a position in front of and facing his partner (with his back to the line of dance) at the end of the 4th measure of the open or diamond waltz. He is then in position to step backward with his left foot, turning right.

Other Methods of Getting Into the Right and Left Turns.

a. Balance backward on man's left foot to one measure, thus leaving the right foot free to start the right turn.

b. Do one forward waltz starting with the left foot, then start the right turn.



c. From a left turn - stop turning left, do one forward waltz step starting with the left foot, then start the right turn.

d. Changing directly from right to left turns without the transitions referred to above.

## V. Music

A. Use slow tempo at first. Have accompanist place heavy accent on the first beat of each measure. If using records, select those with slow tempo and accented first beats. Some good ones are: Jubilee 702, The Waltz You Saved for Me and Blue Pacific; MacGregor 649A, Tennessee Waltz, 4 Star 1310, Bohemian Waltz, Rondo 620, Sugar Loaf Waltz, Rondo 231B, Honeymoon Waltz, Windsor 1115, Beautiful Ohio. For the Blackhawk Waltz, Imperial 1006A is popular and for the Swedish Waltz referred to, any good Scandinavian waltz tune should serve (Scandinavia 1111, Baltiska Valsen is good).

VI. References. Further information on the history of the waltz and on methods of teaching may be found in many currently available books. A few of these are listed below:

1. Ballwebber, Edith "Group Instruction in Social Dance". A. S. Barnes Co., 1938.
2. ~~Carner~~ Carner, Mosco "The Waltz". Chanticle<sup>er</sup> Press, New York, 1948. (Historical)
3. Folk Dance Federation of California "Folk Dances from Near and Far", Vols. 1 to 7. Folk Dance Federation of California, 420 Market Street, San Francisco, California.
4. Hostetler, Lawrence "Walk Your Way to Better Dancing". A. S. Barnes Co., Revised 1952.
5. Kinney, Troy and Kinney, Margaret "The Dance", Tudor Publishing Co., N.Y., 1936 (Historical)
6. Murray, Arthur "How to Become a Good Dancer", Simon and Schuster, N.Y., 1942.
7. Sachs, Curt "World History of the Dance", W. W. Norton & Co., N.Y., 1937.
8. Thompson, Sidney "Old Time Dancing", John Dilworth Ltd., London, 1950.