

EDUCATION

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Around the Round Dance Circle

By Chris and Edith Wrzenski



DANCING — A LITTLE EASIER

Even the most Beginning Dancers should be including good body mechanics into their dancing. Many Round Dancers dance from the ankles down with the body above the ankles often dragging along behind. The uncontrolled upper body being held by each partner and gyrating in random directions can cause great discomfort and frustration to each dancing partner. More than twenty-five years ago when we learned to Round Dance, and even as recently as a few years ago, many teachers did not teach body mechanics as a part of Beginning Round Dancing. The result has been that most dancers progress to the Easy Intermediate level of Round Dancing and then find dancing beyond that level so difficult and frustrating that they chose not to go beyond Easy-Intermediate or in many cases get so frustrated they give up Round Dancing completely. We have experienced that frustration. For about the last five years Edith and I have searched for the answers to what makes Intermediate dancing so much more difficult and uncomfortable. The root of the problem seems to be in dancers having great difficulty with closed position figures, with particular problems with figures that turn, and weave in a closed position.

A key element in Body Mechanics is Contrary Body Movement (C.B.M.) and Contrary Body Movement Position (C.B.M.P.). We in Round Dancing borrow this information from Ballroom. One of the most renowned books on dance is **Ballroom Dancing** by Alex Moore. Moore explains "to the Novice, the term C.B.M. may appear rather frightening. It is essential that even the beginner should understand the elementary factors that govern turning movements in dancing . . ."

The term C.B.M. (Contrary Body Movement) refers to the action of turning the opposite hip and shoulder towards the direction of the moving leg. The Contrary Body Movement Position (C.B.M.P.) is the position attained when C.B.M. is used. In short C.B.M.P. keeps the upper bodies parallel as dance steps cause the lower body to twist and turn.

It is helpful to know that when starting forward turns, the figure is led by the shoulders and when starting backward turns the figure is led by the hips. When using C.B.M. in your dancing, care should be taken not to exaggerate the turning of the hips and shoulders, as this will cause your dancing to look forced and you to lose your balance. Another helpful hint is to keep the upper body parallel with your partner as much as comfortably possible. This will help you dance together without dragging your partner along behind.

All dancing should feel comfortable or else you probably aren't executing the figures properly. But in trying figures with the above pointers you may feel uncomfortable at first, but after a few tries it should begin to feel better.

It is very important!!! that whenever both partners cross in front and pass their feet, legs, etc., between their partner that the man's foot and leg goes through first!!! Now get your partner in the living room, kitchen, etc. and try it. It'll feel strange at first but try to do it in your dancing for a month. Practice this in your dancing by trying it in dances that are easy and relaxing for you and your partner.

Edith and I are trying to practice what we preach. The number of years we've been dancing makes old habits hard to break which should in theory make it easier for dancers that haven't been dancing as long. So come on, let's all try a little C.B.M. and C.B.M.P. and make our dancing more fun.

We should carefully point out that C.B.M. and C.B.M.P. should not be taken to extremes or as Alex Moore points out "C.B.M. will produce a dance that is more ugly and unbalanced than one entirely devoid of it."