

Starlight Express

"A lot of times, people don't want to dance because they don't want anyone to see them; they don't think they're good enough. But I have found . . . that dancing releases hormones that help you feel joy. I've always leaned into that." --Jen Gotch in *The Upside of Being Down*, 2020

This week, as we try to keep up just a little round dance activity, I'd like to invite you to try Goss's Starlight Express RB V 2004. It's a wonderful piece of music and a great dance that pretty much stays in one place. Go to rounddancing.net for two videos and all else you'll need.



One of the things that we may be doing, with these little lessons, is gradually getting more comfortable with the practice of learning a dance on our own. It didn't used to be this way. When we started, videos were rare, special-press records might have been available but might not, and even cue sheets were harder to come by. But now, with cue sheet and video, any dance is *ours*. There are many reasons to go to dance festivals, but being the only way to learn a dance is not one of them.

Starlight Express begins with a syncopated Half Basic that feels especially good to the music. We dance the three steps of the figure quickly -- QQ& -- and then we use the "slow" to point the trail foot toward RLOD and hold. Dance forward, recover, close/point; Underarm Turn. You can think of this as an Alemana with the two parts separated by a dramatic pause.



In Part A, the section that needs a look comes after the one In & Out Run. This puts the man on the outside in L Half OP, lead foot free. The cue is M Turn L to BJO Chkg. It is an Open Rev Trn for the man. The lady just goes forward. Next, the lady slides across to SCAR with a back, side, forward, and on the third step both swivel to face. We're in loose CP Wall, lead foot free. Here, the lady dances 2 slow Cross Swivels and then 3 Cross Swivels QQS. The man rocks. In SCP, trail foot free, we do an Aida, and again 2 slow Hip Rocks and then 3 Hip Rocks QQS swiveling to face. We dance through to Fan and finish Part A with an Alemana and Ropespin lady overturning the ending to Shadow Wall.

Again, the non-standard part of all this is the Open Reverse Turn from L Half OP to BJO RLOD and then lady sliding across to SCAR RLOD and a quick swivel to face.

Part B starts with an Advanced Sliding Door with a non-standard Cucaracha Head Loop ending. We start the Advanced Sliding Door normally. In the second measure, the lady would have danced side, recover, and back to Shadow again, all the while facing generally toward Wall. But here she steps side with a sharp turn RF to face RLOD as the man's left arm passes over her head. She recovers turning LF

as his arm passes over her head again, and then she steps back to Shadow. She has added a little turn right on step 1 and turn left on step 2 as the man does the Head Loop.

The second measure of the Advanced Sliding Door for the man is normally a lowering on the left foot, pointing the right leg to RLOD, and then rising and stepping forward to Shadow -- one weight change. Here, he dances a Cucaracha and forward on the third step -- 3 weight changes -- and he does the Head Loop with left arms.

Now comes what I've always thought was the biggest challenge in the dance (for us) -- figures that are straight-forward enough but full of little swivels this way and that. Let's think about this and hope that our cuer will provide some directional help. We start a second Advanced Sliding Door, and on the third step the lady spirals one-half. Being a spiral, she knows that it turns LF -- that step is with her right foot. And her third step is toward DLW, so a half turn will have her facing DRC at the end. Next, I cue "lady step swivel to LOD & fwd." She steps forward L swiveling LF, again about 1/2 to face LOD and forward R (SS).

I've been criticized for this, but I've found it helpful to think of swivels as being of two kinds. First, if you step on a given foot and then swivel in the opposite direction, e.g., step right and turn left, that is like a spiral, no matter how much turn you do. A standard spiral turns 7/8, but a spiral 1/2, or even less, still feels like a spiral even if you don't twist your legs into a spiral shape. Second, if you step and then swivel in the same direction as the step, e.g., step left and turn left, that is like a hip twist. In this dance, a problem is deciding which way to turn. If you hear "spiral" turn away from the stepping foot, and if you hear "swivel" think hip twist and turn in the direction of the stepping foot -- maybe there will be less uncertainty.

So, we've just done a spiral half LF and then a swivel LF half and step forward. Now we dance a Fan, then start a Hockey Stick but on the third step she again spirals half. Which way? Again it is a step R and the spiral is LF to face LOD. Next, the cue is "lady step swivel twice to face." Think "hip twist." She steps toward LOD on her left foot and swivels LF 1/2 to face RLOD. She steps forward R and swivels RF 1/4 to face partner (SS). This last step really does feel like a hip twist. We end part B with an Underarm Turn.

And that's the dance. We do have an Interlude and an Ending that draw from the Introduction and are otherwise not troublesome -- a nice kitchen dance if you manage the size of your steps.