

A Waltz Whirl

by Harold & Meredith Sears



The waltz is a turning dance. Of course it can be many other things, but one thing that waltz has been for over 200 years is a turning, rotating dance. When the waltz music plays, we hold tight and whirl around the floor.

One way to produce this whirl is with the simple **Left Turn** (phase II). In closed position, we step forward left turning up to 1/4, side right turning up to 1/4, and close left. The lady dances back right turning, side left turning, close right. During the next measure, the man dances back right turning up to 1/4, side left turning up to 1/4, close right, and the lady dances forward, side, close. If we began facing line of dance, we could be facing line of dance at the end of two measures, and then we could do it again . . . and again . . . until we were dizzy. Round dance choreographers will break up such relentless flow with refreshing variety, but back in the 1800s, such steady rotation was the exciting norm.

Another way to turn is with the **Viennese Turn** (phase IV). In closed position throughout, the man steps forward L beginning the left-face turn, side R continuing to turn, cross L in front of R (lady closes R to L); back R turning, side L turning, close R to L (lady crosses R in front of L) to end in closed position facing line of dance; and, you guessed it, we *could* continue this merry-go-round again and again.



One of the problems that arises in doing these Viennese Turns on the cardinal directions (LOD; RLOD) is that we tend to separate a little from our partner in order to fit in that cross-in-front step. We stick our butts out and then hunch over our partner to compensate. Maybe worse than that, we don't quite achieve a full turn, we end the figure facing wall instead of line, and we can't then do the turns that come next.

We can keep our hips together more easily and our top lines apart, and we can get all the way around, if we dance this figure on the diagonal. Do the first turn to face reverse and center (lady line and wall) with strong right-side lead (man's right shoulder back) and with left sway. Keep your left side in to your partner, and in this strong contra-body

position, the crossing step occurs easily and in a more flowing manner. If you have turned to face dead reverse, then the left foot crosses in front of the right with more of a clunk.

Now do the second turn to face diagonal line and wall with the man's left shoulder leading and with right sway (lady's right shoulder strongly back). Again, keep your left side to your partner. Her crossing step will flow easily. You can dance any number of full Viennese Turns and never fall behind if the man throws his right shoulder down the line, and then his left, right, left . . . Focus on progressing down line with both your step and your shoulder, and the turns will happen.

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But what we really want to talk about today is *Evening Star*, a phase VI waltz by Radka Sandeman. George & Pam Hurd taught the dance at our Gala. It was tied for first place as ICBDA's "most taught" dance in November, and it is RAL runner-up for Round Of the Quarter during this first quarter, 2011. There are lots of ways to whirl left, and Radka has given us five thrilling measures: Three Fallaways into a Tumble Turn and then back to an Outside Check. It really is a roller coaster ride -- it takes your breath.

So, **Three Fallaways** (phase VI) is another figure that turns us left. These are *reverse* fallaways. In closed position facing line and center, we step forward L (lady back R) turning LF and with left sway, side R down line, and cross L in back of R (lady cross R in back of L) to semi-closed position facing reverse line of dance. A fallaway is a step back in a semi-closed position. In the second measure, we step back R turning LF to closed position (lady turns and steps forward L slipping to closed), side and forward L down line with right sway,

cross R well behind L (lady crosses L in back of R) to reverse semi-closed position facing reverse. This second measure is a Left Whisk (phase IV). In the third measure, we turn and step forward L toward line, slipping to closed position LOD (lady back R) turning left-face and with no sway, side R down line turning, cross L in back of R (lady crosses R in back of L) to semi-closed position facing reverse but with heads closed. Notice that we do have three different fallaways here: one to SCP with left sway, one to RSCP with right sway, and one to SCP with no sway. During the first fallaway, the man is on the outside of the circle. During the second, the lady slips to the outside, and during the third, the man slips to the outside again.

Let me add that normally we would make a little more use of the diagonals. The first



four steps would progress toward line and center on a straight diagonal line, steps 5 & 6 are taken straight down line, and steps 7, 8, & 9 would be taken back out toward diagonal wall. But in this dance, because of what follows, we need to straighten the Three Fallaways out and move them more down line.

Now, let's do the **Tumble Turn** (phase VI). Its name tells you that this will be exciting. The standard timing for this figure is 12&3, but George Hurd taught it as 1&23 and many others like it better that way -- putting the syncopation early gives a little more time for the ride up (step 3) and then down to the tumble (step 4).

We are in semi-closed position facing reverse line of dance, and we begin this figure as though we were going to do another fallaway. We step back R lowering and beginning to turn left-face. The lady turns strongly and slips her L forward down line. Remember, her head was already closed, and this helps her to fold to closed position, the man facing reverse and wall. If we use the 1&23 timing, we have only half a beat for this step. On the &-count, we step side and back L (lady strongly side and forward R to remain in closed position), the man now facing line and wall. On the 2-count, the man sneaks his R across to a contra-banjo position facing line of dance and rises to full stretch (lady back L crossing behind). He may use a little left sway here to open her head and let her take a peek at where he is taking her. The lead feet brush up to the trail feet as both swivel to face center, and finally he slips forward L and lowers strongly into a closed position facing reverse and center.

This last step is of course the "tumble" action, and the figure might be more accurately called a "feather finish (phase IV) to a tumble ending (phase VI)." That tumble ending is a little like a Contra Check (phase V). The actual step is shorter, but she has stepped side and back to move from tight contra banjo to closed, and he steps forward into her with right side lead (contra), lowering. Again, the pretty part of the figure is really the swiveling in contra banjo and the tumble to closed. That is why we'd like to dance the initial back and side steps quickly, so we have two full beats to do the rise and the tumble.

Finally, in our little five-measure whirl, we step back to an **Outside Check** (phase IV). Having lowered into that tumble, we are like a compressed spring, and we rebound as off a trampoline: back R (lady forward L) still turning left, side and forward L to face reverse and wall, and forward R to end in banjo position. It's a peaceful end to a wild ride, and now we're going to step back and whirl right for a while.

