



# **If You Like Jive, You'll Like West Coast Swing, Too**

**by Harold & Meredith Sears**

**Everybody likes Jive . . . don't we? It's a joyful rhythm, up on the balls of the feet, bouncy and energetic. Other rhythms are a little more serious--- Rumba is the "dance of love," Waltz is seriously romantic. Jive is a lot more like play.**

**West Coast is one of the Swing rhythms, so it is playful, too. It has many one-and-a-half- and two-measure figures, as Jive does, with triple-steps that maybe remind us a little bit of childhood skipping. We are often apart, and then we come together. We might spin or turn under an arm, and then flow apart again. If you like Jive play, you'll like West Coast play too.**

**But there are differences in the feel of West Coast Swing. It is a little more grounded and stylish than Jive is. Instead of bouncing, many of the steps are simple walking steps, with heel leads. Where many Jive figures begin with a rock apart, recover, West Coast figures tend to begin with the man backing and drawing the woman forward. He doesn't pull, certainly doesn't yank, but he draws her toward him with a toned arm. He coaxes and brings her along.**

**West Coast is a good bit slower, with tempos of 25-35 measures per minute, more easy-going, sometimes even lazy. You have time to coax and time to be coy. Jive is hot and full of a bouncy energy. West Coast is smooth and cool with a sort of elastic, sultry energy.**

**The most important difference lies in the overall shape of the dance. Jive is a circular dance in which the man and woman travel around each**

**other. West Coast is a slot dance in which the woman dances up and down a linear path. She owns that slot. It is her dance space. Sometimes she makes 1/2 turns at the ends of the slot, and other times she moves back and forth facing the same direction. The man leads the woman forward. He does step out of her way. He dances around her in various patterns, and then gets back into the slot again. Or he leads her forward, blocks her progress, and sends her back again. Men, if the figure calls for her to pass you, do get out of her way. Don't stand there and make her go around---that's a Jive thing, not West Coast.**

**West Coast Swing is similar to Jive in many ways. The music swings. Some of the figures have the same names as their Jive counterparts, and they make use of triple-steps, as in Jive. But we don't dance West Coast as we do Jive. Keep these West Coast characteristics in mind: it is slot, not circular; walking, not rocking; and it is controlled and elastic, not bouncy. It's a fun, playful rhythm.**

