



Continuous Figures in Latin

by Harold & Meredith Sears

One of the interesting things that we do in Round Dancing is take a dance figure and make it “continuous.” We create a continuous figure by adding additional steps or actions to the base figure but not in a way to change its fundamental shape or character. A Continuous Chasse is still a Chasse. The added steps sometimes make the figure dance longer – more steps extending over more measures. Sometimes, they make the figure busier – more steps per measure. And of course, sometimes our continuous figures are both busier and longer. Among many figures that have been made Continuous are the Hip Twist, Rolling Off the Arm, Spot Turn, Double Cuban Breaks, Full Natural Top, Chasse, Locking Cha, and Sand Step.

Continuous Figures That Are Longer

The Open, Closed, and Advanced **Hip Twists** have different initial steps for the man and different amounts of turn for the woman, but each is danced in Rumba in three steps over one measure – quick, quick, slow – and each ends with a sharp “hip twist” for the woman, a right-face swivel on the right foot, turned about 1/4 in the hips and somewhat less in the upper body.

The Continuous Hip Twist is danced in six steps over two measures, and the Continuous Circular Hip Twist is nine steps in three measures (qqq; qqs; qqs;), so these are not danced with faster footwork. They are each simply longer than their one-measure counterparts. The **Continuous Hip Twist** begins with an Advanced Hip Twist, and the second measure feels like a left-face Hip Twist for the woman and then a curving walk back to face the man. The **Continuous Circular Hip Twist** is one measure of Advanced Hip Twist and then two more measures with the man doing a left-face circular vine and the woman walking, swiveling, and doing three more hip twists. We wrote about these figures in *Hip Twist Figures* in January 2007.

In Cha, the **Spot Turn** is one measure – 123&4. Facing each other, both cross in front and turn away from each other, recover and complete a full turn to face again, and then step side/close, side.

The **Continuous Spot Turn** begins with a four-step Basketball-Turn-like action and takes two measures – 1234; 123&4 – so it is a longer figure than the Spot Turn, but it is not faster. In fact, with its even-tempo first measure, it feels slower and somewhat sedate. You might begin facing each other with trail feet free. Cross in front and turn 3/4 to the left (woman to the right) to face reverse, forward left, forward right turning 1/2 to the left (woman forward left turning 1/2 to the right), fwd left to face line; fwd right turning 1/2, fwd left turning to face partner, and end with a side/close, side. For example, in *Peter Gunn*, by the Gosses, there is a Cross Body with Inside Underarm Turn that puts the man facing center with lead feet free. We then do Quick New Yorkers; a regular New Yorker; Continuous Spot Turn;; to an Advanced Alemana to shadow position facing the wall (if you are not used to reading cue sheets, semi-colons here are used to mark the end of a measure or to indicate the number of measures just completed).

Continuous Figures That Are Busier –

In Cha, **Double Cuban Breaks** take two measures – 1&2&3&4; 1&2&3&4. We cross in front, recover, step side, recover, cross in front, recover, step side. Then we do the same with the other foot.

Continuous Double Cuban Breaks still take two measures. The figure is simply a Double Cuban with one additional step – 1&2&3&4&; 1&2&3&4; – note the fourth “&” at the end of the first measure. It’s a small change, but in comparison, the basic Double Cuban feels calm. In the Double Cuban, each measure ends with a step that takes a whole beat and helps us to feel that we know where we are among the measures. And if we started with the lead foot, we end with the lead foot, ready for the next figure. We feel in control. In contrast, the Continuous Double Cuban uses half-beat steps until the last one. It’s a bit frantic, and we end with the trail feet free. I don’t feel so confident. There is a good example in *La Pura* by the Gosses. Here, we do a Half Basic; Continuous Double Cubans beginning with the trail foot;; to an Alemana.



The **Full Natural Top** consists of nine steps over three measures – in Rumba, qqs; qqs; qqs. It usually begins in closed position facing diagonal reverse and wall with trail feet free. Turning to the right, the man crosses his right in back of left, and the woman steps side

left. The man then steps side left, and the woman crosses right in front of left, continuing to turn. Finally, the man crosses right in back of left, and the woman steps side left to closed position facing wall. In the second and third measures, we simply continue the rotation and the step sequence: side, cross, side; cross; side, close; to end facing wall again, lead feet free.

The **Continuous Natural Top** does not add extra steps, but it does add extra actions. It is a Full Natural Top with a woman's left-face spiral danced on the first step of the second measure and on the second step of the third measure. Usually, we dance a Half Basic, turning it a little to the right, to get into either a Full or a Continuous Natural Top.

Continuous Figures That Are Both Busier and Longer —



The **Jive Chasse** is a simple side/close, side, danced in 1/2 measure (1a2), and it is a component of most Jive figures — the triple.

The **Continuous Chasse** is seven steps in a full measure — 1a2a3a4. In a facing position, step side/close, side/close, side/close, side. In the Worlocks' *Boogie With Me*, there is an American Spin to a Continuous Chasse. We rock and recover and dance a regular Chasse (both spin), and then instead of a

second regular Chasse, we do a Continuous Chasse, extending the 1-1/2-measure figure to 2 measures.

In Cha, we are used to dancing Closed Basics, where each measure ends with a side cha or a side chasse — side/close, side. It is a tighter figure than the Open Basic, which is done forward and back, rather than side to side. We might begin in open facing position with lead feet free. The man dances forward, recover, and then back/lock, back; back, recover, forward/lock, forward. This back cha in the first measure and the forward cha in the second measure can be danced "step/close, step," but step/lock, step" is preferred, and this is our **Locking Cha**. We don't lock tightly, as we might in the Smooth rhythms, with the instep of one foot against the heel of the other. Instead, we lock with toes of the locking foot turned out and the ball of the locking foot against the heel of the forward foot, forming a "T." Generally, in waltz and foxtrot we want parallel feet, but in cha and rumba we more often strive for angled feet.



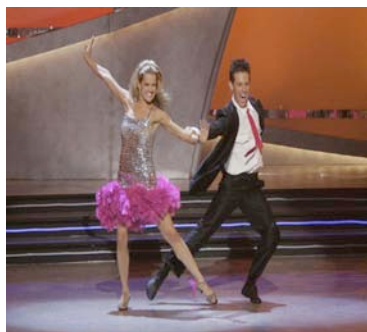
Now, the **Continuous Locking Cha** might show up in a variety of figures, but we've recently seen a Hockey Stick with Runaway Continuous Locks. Where a simple Locking Cha is three steps over 1/2 measure, our Continuous Locking Cha here is seven steps over a full measure (3&4&1&2). From fan position, the man steps forward left and leads the woman to close her right foot. He recovers as the woman steps forward left. On beats 3 and 4, he crosses left in back of right/closes right, and steps side left, and she steps forward right/ locks left in back of right, and steps forward right up to the man's shirt buttons. She just did an ordinary Locking Cha. The man raises

lead hands. In the second measure, the man steps back right and recovers left, leading the woman to step forward left and then forward right with a sharp turn to the left in a sort of half spiral. Here, the man turns her palm down to cause her to overturn and face reverse and wall. In this "runaway" position both dance three "forward/locks" with the trail feet (3&4&; 1&). On the last beat of the figure, the man steps forward right (woman forward left), so the first half of measure three is danced like a "fwd/lk, fwd." You are still in your "runaway" position, both facing reverse and wall, lead feet free, and these last seven steps are the Continuous Locking Cha. This one is also from *Peter Gunn*, by the Gosses, part A, where we begin with an Open Hip Twist; Fan; Hockey Stick with Runaway Continuous Locks - and a hitch for the man and turning cha for the woman to face.

The **Sand Step** is really a Two-Step figure. In butterfly position, lead feet free, we swivel to the right (woman left) and touch the lead toe to the floor, swivel left and touch the lead heel to the floor, and cross the left foot in front of the right and take weight (quick, quick, slow). Think digging into warm beach sand. The figure is usually done in pairs: toe, heel, cross; toe, heel, cross; and it can begin with either foot.

The **Continuous Sand Step** is used in Jive and is done with all quicks over three measures. In butterfly position, lead feet free, we use the Sand Step actions and dance four Sand Steps over three measures: toe, heel, cross, toe; heel, cross, toe, heel; cross, toe, heel, cross. As an example, you might remember dancing *Choo Choo Ch'Boogie* by the Gosses, where we do a Change Places Left To Right Rock Recover;; Continuous Sand Step;;; ending the sequence with Elvis Swivels and quick rock recover.

The **Traveling Sand Step** is also a "continuous" figure where we dance eight "quicks" over two measures: toe, step side, heel, cross; toe, side, heel, cross. You might notice that two



phase II Sand Steps carry you a little to reverse and then a little back to line (one weight change per measure), and you haven't progressed. Two measures of the Traveling Sand Step cause you to progress down line if you begin facing wall (two weight changes per measure). In the Hurds' *Fine Brown Frame*, part B begins with Traveling Sand Steps;; away kick face point; to Sailor Shuffles;;

Rolling Off the Arm is a two-measure Jive figure that is danced 123a4; 123a4. In a facing handshake position, we rock apart on our lead feet, recover, and then triple forward right/left, right turning 1/4 to the right and wrapping the woman into the man's right arm. She dances her triple turning 1/4 to the left into the man's right arm. In the second measure, he steps forward right, forward left, wheeling 1/2 to the right (woman back L, R), and then he triples in place R/L, R turning 1/4 right, and the woman triples and spins out right-face to face the man. As a couple, we make one full turn.

Continuous Rolling Off the Arm is not a standard figure, but in one form it is danced over four measures: 123a4; 123a4; 123a4; 123a4; with additional rolling actions that definitely make it a long and busy figure. In a right handshake position facing wall, rock apart on the left foot (woman apart R), recover right, chasse forward L/R, L turning 1/4 right-face (W chasse fwd R/L, R turning 1/4 to the left into man's right arm) to end both facing reverse line of dance with right hands at woman's right hip and left arms extended to the side. In the second measure, the man steps forward right releasing right hands and beginning a right-face roll across in front of the woman (the woman rocks back left pushing down on man's left arm in a Turnstile manner to lead his roll), he steps side left rolling (woman recovers right bringing left arm up underneath man's left arm and pushing his left arm up in a Turnstile manner) to end both facing reverse with the man to the right of the woman rejoining right hands at the man's right hip and left arms extended to the side, he chasses back right/left, right (woman chasses forward L/R, L) wheeling 1/4 to the right to face center. In the third measure, the man rocks back left pushing downward on the woman's left arm to lead her right-face roll (the woman steps forward right releasing right hands and commencing a right-face roll across in front of the man), he recovers right (woman steps side left rolling) while bringing his left arm up underneath the woman's left and pushing it upward to end both facing center with the woman to the right of the man and rejoining right hands at the woman's right hip and the woman's left hand resting on top of the man's left arm, chasse forward L/R, L (woman chasse back L/R, L) wheeling 1/4 to the right both facing line of dance. Finally, we wheel 1/2 to the right stepping forward

right (woman back L), forward left to face reverse, step in place R/L, R (the woman rolls out of man's right arm leaving right hands joined stepping L/R, L to face partner & line of dance). In *Been There, Done That* by the Rumbles, there is a Link to a Whip Spin;; Change Places Left To Right to a Triple Travel With Roll and Change Left To Right;;;;; Continuous Rolling Off the Arm;;;;; to a Change Left To Right.

The idea of making a figure "continuous" is intriguing and seductive. If a dance figure is fun, why not create more of it, and is there any figure that could not be made continuous? What would Continuous Crab Walks look like? Or Continuous New Yorkers? What about Continuous Three Alemanas? Well, maybe Three Alemanas is already a continuous figure. It would be nice if the term were a little more standardized. When we hear the cue Continuous, we can't intuitively know whether to add more steps or more actions, or to do it in the same amount of time or extend it over more time. Do you think that choreographers might use Continuous only if there are more steps or actions per measure and Extended if there are only more measures?

