

Dance Through the Centuries

by Harold & Meredith Sears

Long Ago---

- **Farandole**, a linear chain dance characteristic of Mediterranean countries. Dancers joined hands and walked or skipped, tracing a pattern or "figure."



- **Branle**, a circular chain dance characteristic of more northern countries. It gave us varied rhythms and the eight-beat phrase: slow, slow, quick, quick, slow.

- **Estampie**, the first couple dance, arising out of the idea of *courtly love*. One couple broke from the chain and, still side-by-side, danced a few figures while the rest of the group looked on.
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15th Century---

- **French Basse Danse**, a processional dance, couples one behind the other, progressing around the hall with elaborate, rigidly stylized steps and arm and head movements. Characterized by opposite footwork for the woman.





Italian Bassa Danza, a slow and stately court dance. Here, we see the beginnings of rise and fall, called Aiere. There was also the use of contra-body position, called Maniera ("mannerism").

16th Century---

- Galliard, an athletic dance mainly for the man with the woman in relatively quiet admiration. It was the first symmetrical dance---it led with the right foot as often as with the left.



- Volta, an athletic couple dance that involved regular lifts of the woman.

- Coranto, a chain dance with regular one-foot hops and two-foot jumps.



17th Century---

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Slow Courante, derived from the Coranto but a couple dance rather than chain, formal rather than casual, slow and stately. Steps were taken with turned-out toes. All this was a transition from an Italian Renaissance style to the French Baroque.

18th Century---

- Minuet, a formal, couple, processional, geometric-pattern dance; the last dance in which we use same footwork rather than opposite. The idea of not contra-body but contra-arm work became stylized.





- **Cotillon, a lively square dance for four couples, one on each side of a square. In the nineteenth century, it acquired game-like components (e.g., musical chairs) with winners and prizes.**

19th Century---

- **Waltz, "the greatest change in dance form and dancing manners that has happened in our history." The first appearance of closed position in polite society---not hand in hand but arm around waist; not side by side but face to face; not focused on the king, dance leader, or on fellow dancers but focused on each other. The rapid rotation was dizzying. The 3/4 music was hypnotic (think Strauss).**



- **Polka, a jolly couple dance to 4/4 music that incorporates a little jump.**

20th Century---

- **Two Step, a vivacious marching dance with interpolated skips but no rise and fall.**



- **Tango, an earthy, proud, and passionate dance with the look of a stylized duel.**

- "Animal" dances like the Turkey Trot and Bunny Hug arose out of ragtime music.



- Slow Waltz (~30 measures per minute) compared to earlier Viennese Waltz (~60 m/m).
- Slow Foxtrot, a closed-position dance in 4/4 time, with long gliding steps, especially close contact at the hips and the lower torso allowing better lead and follow, and more gradual rise and fall than in Waltz.
- Quickstep, a fast Foxtrot with some ragtime Charleston and the characteristic chasse.
- Latin American: Rumba, Paso Doble, Bolero, Samba, Mambo, Cha Cha, Merengue, & Salsa.
- Swing: Lindy, Jitterbug, Rock 'n' Roll, Jive, West Coast Swing, Hustle, Slow Two Step.



1920s---Henry Ford promotes dancing in Detroit.

1930s & 40s---Lloyd Shaw promotes dancing in Colorado Springs.

1950s---Printed "dance instructions," later to become cue sheets.

1960s---Round dances are still mostly memorized but cueing was beginning to be used.

1970s--Cueing becomes popular.

Mostly from *May I Have the Pleasure? The Story Of Popular Dancing*, by **Belinda Quirey**, 1993.