



Swing and Jive are Different



by Harold & Meredith Sears

In Round Dancing, we don't distinguish clearly between Swing and Jive. For the most part, we use International Jive figures, and we refer to the rhythm as *Jive*, but we often dance these figures to a slower Swing tempo (maybe 25–35 measures per minute), rather than to the faster Jive tempo (35–45 measures per minute). Many of these figures (think Link Rock) are written to span a measure and a half with a rock, recover, and two triples or chasses (1, 2, 3 and, 4; 1 and, 2). Another group of figures (e.g., Lindy Catch) spans two measures (1, 2, 3 and, 4; 1, 2, 3 and, 4). We don't think of Swing and Jive as different rhythms---if it's Swing, we dance more slowly, and if it's Jive we do the *same thing* faster. But there are some recognizable features that will make a dance more swingy or more jivey.

The steps in Swing travel a little more than in Jive. During the "rock, recover," you can step apart, but even in Swing, maintain a little forward poise, and in Jive don't really step back at all. Do move your foot back.



Do let the heel kiss the floor (dance ball-flat). But don't put weight into that heel---don't let your upper body come over that heel. In a Jive especially, you don't have time to move your body back and forth. Let your feet take the steps, but keep your body centered and still. The rock step is not so much a step back as a push directly into the recover step.

The timing of the chasse is a little different. In Swing, we divide the split beat more evenly and dance the



"1 and, 2" with the "1" and the "and" each taking 1/2 beat. In Jive, we let the "1" take more of that quicker beat. We describe the timing as "1 ah, 2," and we let the "1" take 3/4 of the beat and the "ah" only 1/4, a very brief step indeed.

In Jive, our steps should be smaller. In Swing, we chasse with a side/close, side (1 and, 2). In Jive, we should chasse more in place with a step/step, side (1 ah, 2). In Jive, we dance more under the body. We travel less.

Jive has more knee action than Swing has. Instead of dancing a chasse "1 ah, 2," insert another little "ah" count in front of each chasse, and in that moment, lift the free knee and point that foot straight down, parallel to the supporting leg. The chasse becomes knee/step/step, side (ah 1 ah, 2). You might get a little of the feel of peddling a bicycle---lift one knee and press with the other foot.

This knee action gives Jive a slight but somewhat sharp vertical bounce that you don't see in Swing. Where the Swing bounce has a scooping, sideways component, a *swinging* of the hips, the Jive bounce is more hoppy and in place. Again, this Jive bounce is in the knees, definitely not in the upper body and arms. Don't thrash about. As you raise one knee, straighten the supporting knee a little. As you step, soften that knee. These actions/reactions become a springiness that translates into small hops or scoots on the side steps. You might think that a bounce would demand more work, but it actually comes out of a natural body resonance that you would have to work to control if you didn't want it, so using the Jive bounce is actually less tiring.

Finally, in Swing, our steps can all be taken ball-flat, but in Jive we will be more up on the balls of our feet and we will probably take some steps ball-only. Especially the first step of each chasse will be ball only. Dance "knee/ball/ball-flat, ball-flat, (ah 1 ah, 2). Swing is easy-going and lazy. We swing apart and together, to the left and right. We travel. Jive is peppy, bouncy, and up-and-down in place.

