



The Underarm Roll

by Harold & Meredith Sears

The **Roll** is a **phase II two-step** figure, but, of course, it can be used in any rhythm. We step and turn individually, not as a couple, and the only constraint is that each step must progress down our line of progression. So, we might roll down line, to reverse, on one of the diagonals, or even toward the wall or toward center. The starting foot, the number of steps, whether we roll right or

left, and the total amount of turn all may vary and often will be specified in the cue, such as "roll 3 down line."

A few examples: In *Unknown Stuntman* (choreographer unlisted), we start in open-facing position, man facing wall, and we roll 2 down line. Here, we roll out -- the man rolls LF and the lady rolls RF. Then we walk pick up; walk 2; 2 forward two-steps. In *Bamboo Two Step* by Watanabe, we are in butterfly position, for a face to face; back to back; solo roll 4 down line to butterfly. Because of the preceding body flow, here, we roll in -- the man rolls RF and the lady LF. In *So Much Foxtrot* by Tucker, the dance begins in open-facing position with a roll 3 down line to a chair, recover, and slip to closed position LOD. Again, the roll is out. In *Cario Mio 4*, a waltz by Pinks, we are in half-open position, trail feet free, and the man rolls RF in 3 to half-open while the lady does a forward waltz; then the lady rolls RF in 3 to half-open while the man does a forward waltz; thru face close; whisk.

The **Rumba Underarm Roll** (unphased) is more of a couple figure, although the actual rolling is still done individually. In shadow position, both facing LOD, both with R feet free, step fwd R beginning an individual RF roll and raising joined left hands. Step fwd & sd L turning under raised left hands. Step bk & sd R to end in M's shadow or in tandem position, M in front, both facing COH (QQS). This is a non-standard figure and, at least once, has





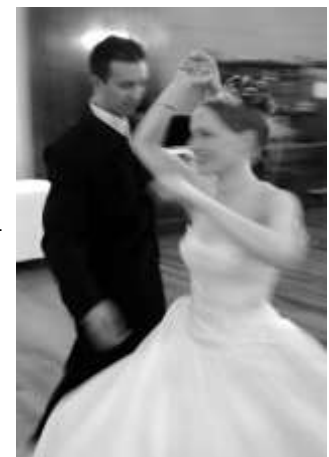
been choreographed to begin with the L feet. In shadow LOD, step fwd L trng strongly, sd & fwd R trng to face COH, cross L in front of R to tandem COH (QQS). For example, in *Los Rayos del Sol* by Moore, there is an open hip twist to shadow man touch; cucaracha cross; crab walk 3 to reverse; shadow fence line recover forward to face LOD; R-foot underarm roll to face COH; shadow fence line. *Carnival* by Rumble has the same figure. In *Jurame* by Worlock, there is an open break; underarm turn lady in 4 to shadow LOD L ft free; back break; walk 3; L-foot

underarm roll to a cross-lunge.

Any rumba figure can be danced with **Cha-Cha** timing. In *Pata Pata* by Shibata we are in shadow position facing LOD with L feet free. We cross walk 2 and forward lock cha; underarm roll to a side cha; and in tandem COH, M in front, open fence line twice. To accommodate the side cha, this underarm roll is a little sharper than in the rumba, a little overturned. We step forward R beginning to turn RF, side L turning to face COH, and then with no further turn, we dance the side cha toward LOD.

Bolero is "the other Rumba," so we should expect to see the Underarm Roll in this rhythm, too. The big difference is that rumba figures end with a slow step, and bolero figures begin with the slow. When we dance rumba figures in bolero, we can feel as though we are crossing measures with each figure. We begin with a slow, preparatory step and then begin the rumba figure that we are familiar with.

The **bolero Underarm Roll** begins in shadow position or in skaters LOD with L ft free for both. We step fwd L, fwd R turning RF, fwd & sd L trng to end in M's shadow or in tandem position, M in front, COH (SQQ). Comparing bolero to rumba, note the preparatory step forward L to the QQ roll of the rumba figure. Then slow side R of the rumba figure becomes the initial slow of the next measure in bolero. For instance,



in *La Distancia* by Moore, we are in shadow LOD R feet free. We dance samefoot walks; then L-foot underarm roll to M's shadow COH; lunge R rec swivel point R RLOD; cross point twice. In *La Barca* by Goss, part B begins with a syncopated underarm turn lady in 4; break back to skaters, L feet free; sync prog walk; to a L-foot underarm roll.

In **Slow Two Step**, the Underarm Roll looks the same as the rumba version, of course without the latin styling. In *You Needed Me* by Worlock, we also have an underturned version that they called shadow right turns. We step forward R with no turn, forward L raising left hands and turning 1/2 RF, lady passing under raised arms, back R to M's shadow RLOD. In the second measure, we step back L joining right hands behind the M's back, back R raising right hands and turning 1/2 RF, again lady passing under raised arms, and forward L to shadow LOD (QQS; QQS). Later, in the dance, we do the same, two, arm-over shadow right turns;; to a standard underarm roll right; slow cross lunge & extend. So in this one dance, we do the underturned version that turns 1/2 and then the full version that turns 3/4.



We haven't noticed the Underarm Roll in a **Waltz**, but **in the hesitation/canter waltz** *This Is Your Song* by Prow, as an option, we do two Underarm Rolls, the first underturned to face RLOD, and then a second Underarm Roll to shadow LOD (like the shadow right turns in *You Needed Me*);; shadow chair and recover.

In the **West Coast Swing** *Draggin' the Line*, also by Prow, we see a modified version that begins in shadow wall with L feet free. The cue is "right underarm roll to man's tandem and tap," and we step side L raising left hands and turning 1/2 RF to face COH, side R in M's tandem, cross L in front of R, and tap R. The Underarm Roll is an unphased figure that has been widely used in a variety of rhythms, and it feels especially good. On the one hand, we are dancing solo rolls, but the underarm or "arm-over" feature makes it feel not at all solo and every bit a cozy couple figure.