

Modern Ballroom Dancing - Standard Waltz

The standard Waltz is a graceful ballroom dance of turns and glides that was done in parts of Europe as early as the late 17th century and is thought by many to be the basis for many modern day dances. The early dances were done in the round and at the end of the dance the circle would break into couples who would then begin doing turns.

In Italy the dance was called the Volta, in France the Volte, Germans called it the Weller and in Austria the dance was known as the Landler. Although they probably all had some influence on the modern Waltz, at some point the Landler's hopping movement became more of a gliding motion, which is why the Landler more than the others, is sometimes considered the forerunner of the modern Waltz. In the early 19th century the popularity of the Waltzen rose to such a great degree that several large dance halls were opened to accommodate the crowds. The dance stabilized during the 19th century its popularity was helped along by the music of Josef and Johann Strauss.

You can find references to the Waltz that go back more than 400 years, however the popularity of the dance had started to wane until 1913 and the advent of the Hesitation Waltz which, as the name implies, slowed the dance down considerably incorporating hesitations and poses throughout the dance. Before the Hesitation, dancing the Waltz was pretty much an endurance test with the couples dancing in one direction then reversing direction when they became dizzy.

The Waltz is an easy dance to master and has a grace and elegance that makes it wonderful to watch. The one thing that does cause beginners some confusion is that with a 3 count each bar is started with the opposite foot as the last bar. The slower version of the dance is known as the English Waltz while the faster version is the Viennese Waltz. .

Waltz music is played in 3/4 time with a distinctive 1-2-3 rhythm. The dance is a simple one with just 3 steps, first step forward (backward for the woman), one step to the side and the last step to bring the feet together again. The first step is the power step, matching the accented first beat of the music. A good Waltz has a smooth rise and fall; it's a gentle dance with turns, poses and long sweeping movements. Waltz music can be found in many venues, some examples are: The Blue Danube by Johann Strauss Jr, Show Me the Way by Styx, Waltz to the Death from the Batman soundtrack by Danny Elfman. Either Waltz can be danced to any music with a three-quarter tempo regardless of whether it is classical, rock, country or anything else.

In competition ballroom Waltz there must be a clear pendulum movement, the right

balance between up and down and spatial movements. The moment when you start your up and down movement from your supporting foot is crucial to keeping the movements smooth and graceful.

Some competitions use the American Smooth style of Waltz. This means that the couples are allowed to occasionally break the hold thereby enabling more open moves and underarm turns. To this day the Waltz is still popular world wide.