

Ballroom Dancing - Slow Fox Trot

There are several different theories on the origin of this ballroom dance's name. The most often told story is that the dance was made popular by a young man named Harry Fox who was a vaudeville comedian with the Ziegfeld Follies. Another story says that the dance is so named because of the similarity to an equestrian gait that was dubbed the Foxtrot by the military. It is a gait where unlike a normal trot where the front left and rear right (or front right and rear left) legs are moved at the same time causing a somewhat jerky motion, the Foxtrot has the animal moving each leg one at a time making for a smooth trot that is easier on the animal and the rider. This trot actually led to the development of a breed of horse known as the Missouri Fox Trotter. Still a third suggestion is that the dance (in its earlier version) resembled the way a fox walks (with one foot in front of the other leaving a single track).

In the early fox trot the feet were placed in a single line one in front of the other. It wasn't until the 1950's that this ballroom dance was revised to have two different dance lines, one for each foot. Around 1922 the jerking, trotting steps of the dance were exchanged for a more relaxed movement called a Saunter. By 1927 the jumpiness was gone and the steps were smooth and gliding and the dance was now referred to as a Slow Foxtrot.

This ballroom dance is composed of walking steps and side steps. When on a crowded dance floor like in a night club short steps are used. For ballroom dancing long, smooth, easy gliding steps combine to give the Fox Trot its unhurried appearance.

The Fox Trot is danced with the same type of hold that is used in the standard waltz, with a combination of long slow steps and short lively ones. The timing of this ballroom dance is of great importance. The slower steps are done on the heels while the quick steps are done on the toes.

The Fox Trot can be danced to most any music regardless of whether it is slow or fast. In the 1920's the Fox Trot was embraced by America's youth. They loved this ballroom dance, which started out as a bouncy trot-like step that had been incorporated into the vaudeville act of Harry Fox. The Fox Trot has become one of the most loved ballroom dances to date. It is also one of the hardest to learn.

There is also what is referred to as an American Smooth style of Fox Trot that differs in as much as the hold can be broken throughout the performance so you will see more open movements and underarm turns.

Ballroom dancing has undergone many changes and one of the most significant

developments was the use of the quick and slow steps of the Fox Trot allowing the dancers more variety than the earlier one and two step dances.