

CLINICIANS' CORNER

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Editor's Note — The opinions and interpretations expressed in this column are those of the guest Clinicians and not necessarily those of the Universal Round Dance Council.

The International Waltz is among the most beautiful and most difficult to control dance forms. The following rotational moves, the body sway, and the picture figures all contribute to its beauty, but they also contribute to its difficulty.

The ability to stretch count 2 and quickly execute count 3 before lowering into count 1 is the key to some of this control. If we dance a standard 1,2,3 count, we are often closing our feet on count 3, giving us a small base on which to keep good balance. Count 2 is where the body stretch comes in, and the longer we can keep 2 stretching, the better chance for a controlled last beat. Therefore, it is best to dance Waltz in the timing 1,2...,3 rather than 1,2,3. Stretching 2, however, is a fruitless exercise if one does not dance Waltz low in the legs, and high in the upper body.

At no time in Waltz should a supporting leg be completely straight. A flexed knee acts as a shock absorber and stabilizer for the body. Even when thinking down, up, up, we must never lock the knees at the end of a move. When closing on 3 with a locked knee, there are two strikes against the dancer. A small base, and no flex in the knee, will surely cause an unbalanced figure.

The pivoting action so common in Waltz illustrates the latter principle to its utmost in a figure called Continuous Pivots. The most important aspect of the Pivot is the back, forward nature of the steps as opposed to side to side action.

In a close second in importance, is this staying low concept, both in the knees and in the shoulders and arms. When we pivot, we tend, incorrectly, to rise in the knee, and to swing the free foot around the partner, while scrunching the shoulders up and clamping the lady toward the man. We will need to remedy all of these faults before dancing the Continuous Pivots comfortably and beautifully.

A Standing Spin emphasizes the importance of the flexed knee, and balance as associated with the center of gravity of the body, as the man stands on one leg while the woman runs around him for two revolutions. Also think about refining figures such as the Running Spin, Fallaway Whisk, and Double Telemark, in terms of good body position for good figure execution. Good body stretch will maintain upper body contact and help execute turns.

We hope these notes will make your Waltz more comfortable and enjoyable.
