



Left Hinge, Right Hinge — Increasing Figure Variety

by Harold & Meredith Sears

Sometimes, round dancers seem to be insatiable in their desire for variety — for new choreography, innovative sequences, and even brand new figures. We no sooner learn to do one dance than we want another:

“That was fun. What’s next?”

One way to increase the variety in our figure repertoire is to take a standard figure that in some way goes in one direction, dance it with the other foot in the other direction, and so gain a new figure, and we are all well used to the idea. In Waltz and at phase II, we comfortably Vine to the left and then to the right — side with the lead foot, behind, side; side with the trail foot, behind, side. We Thru Twinkle right and then left — thru with the lead, side, close; thru with the trail, side, close. At phase III, we Cross Hover to banjo, turning to the left — in sidecar position, cross the left in front of right (woman cross right in back of left), step side rising and turning toward partner, and then recover to banjo position — and then we Cross Hover back to sidecar, turning to the right.

Hesitation Change—

The Hesitation Change is a phase IV figure that turns to the right. In closed position, we might be facing reverse. We step back left (woman forward right) turning right-face, step to the side with rise and continuing to turn, and then draw the lead foot toward the supporting foot with a bit of left sway (right for the woman); ending in closed position facing line and center with lead feet free. This is a Right Hesitation Change. Can we do a **Left Hesitation Change**?

It’s not a standard Roundalab figure, but in *Flying Dreams* by Chris & Terri Cantrell, a nice four-measure sequence begins with an Open Reverse Turn; Back Turn Left, Side, Draw; an Open Natural Turn; and a Hesitation Change. They don’t cue a Left Hesitation Change here, but that’s what the second measure is. Instead of back on the lead foot, we step back on the trail foot. Instead of turning right, we turn left. In both figures, we draw the non-supporting foot in with body shape toward that free foot.

Hinge—

At phase V, we have the Hinge, which can be thought of as a Left Hinge. In closed position, the man steps back on his right foot, the woman steps forward left, and we turn to the left. We both step side on the lead foot, rising, and with left-side stretch. The man

continues to rotate his hips to the left. In this up position, the woman collects her left foot and closes it behind her right foot. On beat 3, the man lowers, and the woman sits. The man has not taken a third weight change, so as he lowers into his left knee, his right leg is extended to the side, and the woman's right leg extends parallel to his. She might perch lightly on the inside of his left thigh. If this is a Left Hinge, can we do a Right Hinge? (What a question, you say — of course we can.)

In *Red River Waltz* by Jim & Bonnie Bahr, we don't have both forms of the Hinge together, but at one point we find ourselves in a Right Lunge Line, man facing center. We rise and begin to turn right. The man steps back and continues to turn to a Right Hinge Line facing line and wall. Then we dance a Wing, man transition, to sidecar position facing line and center. Where the standard Left Hinge begins with a step back on the right foot (woman forward on the left) and left-face rotation, the **Right Hinge** begins with a back left (woman forward right) and right-face rotation. Then, in both figures, we step side turning, we rise, swaying a little toward the free foot, the woman changes weight, and we then lower into our Hinge Line. In the Left Hinge, our right legs are extended to the side; in the Right Hinge, our left legs are extended.

As you lower into that Right Hinge Line, you might find yourself thinking that it sure feels like a Same Foot Lunge Line. In a Hinge, the woman is on the man's left thigh, and our right legs are extended. In a Same Foot Lunge, she is on his right thigh, and our left legs are extended. Is the Right Hinge simply another name for a Same Foot Lunge? No, that won't do. A Hinge Line is quite upright. We lower straight down, and the woman sits with good upright posture. In a Same Foot Lunge, of course, we *lunge*. Our upper bodies are inclined, not upright, but out there, to the side.

Same Foot Lunge—

Now that we have mentioned the Same Foot Lunge, we really should ask if, along with the Left and Right Hinges, there might be danceable Right and Left Same Foot Lunges. Our standard Same Foot Lunge is a phase VI figure and is danced in only one step, rather than in three steps like the Hinge. We might begin in closed position, the man facing reverse and center, with trail feet free. Since this is a "same foot" figure, we have to do a transition, just as we did in the Hinge. Often, the cue is "Prep for a Same Foot Lunge." The "prep" is a slight rise and right-face rotation causing the woman to rise to her toes and change weight to her left foot. She has rotated a little to the right but not as far as to semi-closed position—we are still in closed position. Her right knee is tucked just behind her left knee, and we both now have right feet free.

Now we can do the figure. The man lowers into his left leg, pushes, and steps side and forward right with right-side stretch and looking right. He gives her his right side. The woman steps back right turning to the left and looking well left—very like a contra-check step for the woman. The man's left leg will be extended to the side, straight and strong. The woman's left leg will be crossed in front of her right and extended on the same diagonal as the man's. Keep your hips well in to your partner. Again, in many ways, this

figure is like our Right Hinge, but we have not lowered into an upright sit position. We have lunged or inclined—our upper bodies are extended to the man's right.

Could we do a **Left Same Foot Lunge**? We have never heard of one, but we can imagine a left-turning sequence: maybe Weave to Banjo in two measures, Forward Waltz leaving the lead feet free, and then Turn Left and Prep for a Left Same Foot Lunge. Maybe. So, let's imagine ourselves in closed position, this time with the man facing reverse and wall and with lead feet free. Where the "prep" for the standard figure is a rise and right-face rotation, our "prep" here will be rise and left-face rotation. She will collect her right foot and change weight. Now we are in closed position, the woman's left knee tucked just behind her right knee, and we both have our left feet free. The man now lunges side and forward left, and she steps back left. If we don't make an effort to stay in closed position, with a little right sway and left-side lead, we'll have a bit of a broken-wing feel in our lead arms. One thing that definitely helps is for the man to step not straight side, but side and forward. This lets the woman step back, stay on balance, and end up perched a bit on the inside of the man's left thigh. Is this Left Same Foot Lunge a lot like a Hinge? Sort of, but again, we didn't lower into it; we lunged into it, and our upper bodies are inclined.

It might be a little scary to imagine choreographers, willy-nilly, taking each of the hundreds of round dance figures that we have and turning the left ones into right and the right ones into left, and so doubling the number of figures that we have to learn. But, as we've seen, many of our figures already have their mirror partners, so the Roundalab and ICBDA Manuals wouldn't really double. Looking at the right and left forms of dance figures just gives us a little more choreographic variety to look forward to.

