

CLINIC CORNER

This is a compilation of information from various personal contacts and dance history sources. - Chris & Terri Cantrell

NORTH AMERICAN DANCE RHYTHMS

Did you ever wonder where dance rhythms originated? Though many of the current Round Dancing rhythms originated in the Caribbean, South America, and Europe, several have their true origins in North America. A few "North American Originals" are below.

BOSSA NOVA: A combination of American jazz rhythms and Brazilian samba, popular in the USA in the early 1960's.

CHARLESTON: Originated in Charleston, South Carolina, where black dockworkers danced to amuse themselves. Transported to New York, it became a hit in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1923, and was quickly adopted by the flappers.

CONTRA: Contra is an American form of country-dance perfected in the late 17th century. Sets of couples faced each other, usually in a square or rectangular pattern, and exchanged positions using various figures. The name also refers to the fact that the dancers performed counter to, or opposite each other. May have originated from Court Dances.

FOXTROT: Foxtrot was originally a Ragtime dance best credited to Harry Fox, a music hall entertainer who performed a fast trotting dance that electrified the Ziegfeld Follies of 1914. Tamed by dancing teachers, it became a popular ballroom dance to ragtime. The English smoothed out its jerks and originally called it the saunter, it is now termed the Slow Foxtrot (also called English or International Foxtrot). Today Social Foxtrot (also called American Foxtrot or Rhythm Dancing) closely resembles slow quickstep due to the influence of Arthur Murray.

JITTERBUG: In the Jitterbug (another name for Lindy) athletic couples moved energetically, alone and together to a rapid beat, originally to the 1930's swing music. There are two types of basic steps, those in which the feet stayed on the ground, and the "air steps" in which the dancer left the floor entirely.

JIVE: Jive is a tamed version of the Jitterbug that came into fashion in the 1950's.

ONE-STEP: Also known as the turkey trot, the most ubiquitous ragtime dance. It was universally popular among the young during the early twentieth century. The one-step simply required a single step per beat.

RAGTIME: Dances performed to syncopated music of ragtime, popular in the late 19th century. Ragtime also includes the mimic/animal dances (i.e. bunny hug, turkey trot) popular in the first two decades of the 20th century.

ROCK'N ROLL: Solo or occasionally couple dances performed to the heavy beat of rock music originating in the 1950's.

ROUND DANCE (ancient definition): Prehistoric groups would dance around a central object or totem. In the 19th century these became country-dances in a round or circular formation (as opposed to the square), in which the couples exchanged positions. The term is also used for the 19th century couple dances such as the waltz or polka, which feature a constant turning of the partners.

SQUARE DANCE: An American form of country dancing, developed from the early 19th century contras and quadrilles. Couples face each other in a square formation, and exchange places in relation to their partners and to the other couples. Another addition is that of a caller who announces the figures or floor patterns they are to perform.

TWO-STEP: A dance requiring two steps per beat, first performed to John Philip Sousa's *Washington Post March* (1891), and rapidly applied to other dances of the period, until ousted by ragtime and the one-step.

TWIST: Solo rock dance that first appeared in 1961, performed by Chubby Checker.