



Edinburgh University Swing Dance
Society notes on:



Progressive Balboa ("Bal-trot"): 1-basics

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Unlike the other types of Balboa we teach, 'Bal-trot' did not originate in the first age of swing, but is rather a recent invention that was developed mainly by Joel and Alison Plys (www.2PlySwing.com). Faced with the problem of arriving at a vintage ball which used progressive dances such as the Peabody (a rag-time precursor to the quickstep, invented by William Frank Peabody in 1915), and not knowing any progressive dances, Joel and Alison made the Balboa basic turn and become progressive. Several other people seem to have had the same idea independently, but Joel and Alison have done most to develop the progressive dance with variations, and are therefore associated with it more than anyone else just now.

This page described the basic: other pages, on variations, will follow.

Entering the Bal-trot.

Begin by doing normal Balboa basics, facing the line of dance (conventionally an anti-clockwise orbit around the edge of the room). It is especially important that your hold has the lady offset and at an angle to the man: dancing absolutely facing each other, bad for any Balboa, makes Bal-trot very difficult.

- 1 - step back on L
- 2 - close R to L
- 3 - hold L foot (as in normal basic); let your centre move forwards along the line of dance and also start to turn body clockwise
- 4 - put left foot down, placing it more in front of the right foot than usual because you are turning and moving along the line of dance.
- 5 - step round on right, continuing the turn
- 6 - step round on left, reducing the rate of turn.
- 7 - hold on right, letting your centre move backwards (ie still along the line of dance)
- 8 - place right foot down, behind where you were holding it and a little behind the left foot so that you turn clockwise again and continue moving along the line of dance.

- 1 - step round on L foot
- 2 - step round on R foot so and reduce the rate of turn
- 3 - hold L foot, going forwards and increasing the rate of turn again.
- and continue from 4 above.

If you are well-connected, the lady will follow.

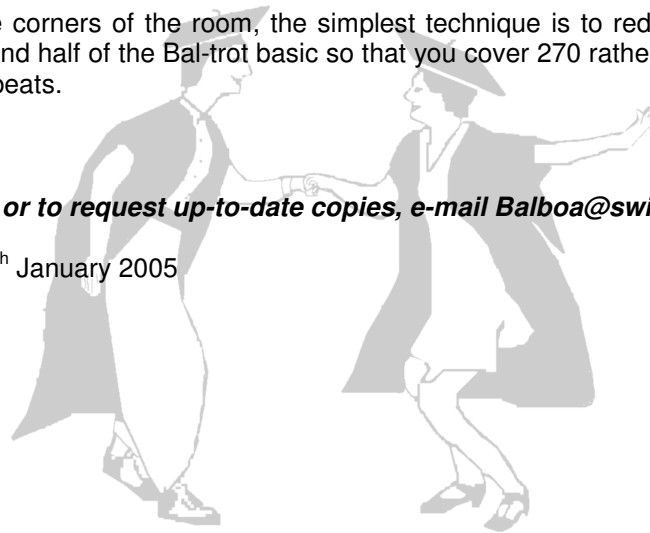
At any stage, you can do a 'normal' hold (with whatever foot will hold next) and go back to conventional Balboa. This is useful for collision avoidance.

Common problems

- Treading on each other's feet: either you are not connected properly at your chests, or (more likely) the man is stepping out ahead of his 'centre' rather than moving his body and putting his feet down underneath it. The description above centred on the feet, because they are easier to describe, but as always they are put where they are put because the body is already over that point.
- Too much circling and not enough linear motion: The description above mentioned a lot about the turn, but the progressive nature of this dance comes much more from the linear movements, mainly around the 'hold' steps. The rate of turn changes, being small during the holds and higher during the step-steps. Not reducing it for the holds results in a whirly dance that goes almost nowhere and ends up looking like a series of poorly executed closed come-arounds!
- Corners: At the corners of the room, the simplest technique is to reduce the amount of turn in the second half of the Bal-trot basic so that you cover 270 rather than 360 degrees in the whole 8 beats.

To make suggestions or to request up-to-date copies, e-mail Balboa@swingdoctors.org.uk

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