



Edinburgh University Swing Dance
Society notes on:



Laminu: 1) the basic

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History: the origins of the laminu (sometimes spelt 'lamamu') seem to be shrouded in mystery. Clearly, it arose in California in the late 1940s, and was most probably conceived by dancers who were already dancing the Balboa (given the similarities of the two dances). Theories of its name vary, but one promising lead has been provided by Ray Cunningham, an old time laminu dancer, who found an advertisement for a dance, in the correct area and era, being held by a college fraternity association called 'λν' (the Greek letters are pronounced 'lambda-nu').

The basic rhythm

The basic rhythm is step, step, triple step, step, step, triple step. This can be fitted into the music in two ways. For really slow music, you would use the 1-2-3&4-5-6-7&8 pattern familiar to Lindy Hoppers. For slow to mid-tempo music, you would 'halve the speed' to follow 1-3-5&6-1-3-5&6; ie slow-slow-quick-quick-slow; slow-slow-quick-quick-slow. In both cases, though, you can 'swing' the timing, and the triples, especially, need not be metronomic.

Hold and 'look'

Similar to Balboa. The look is intimate (not performance).

The pattern of the basic (written with the first example of timing above)

- 1 – leader steps directly back on left, drawing lady to step forwards
- 2 – leader steps forwards again on R, leading lady to step backwards
- 3- leader steps fwd with left foot, changing weight on to it
- & - leader opens to R with R, committing weight
- 4 – leader closes L to R, committing weight. The follower follows this chasse
- 5 – leader steps to R on R, turning his shoulders about 45 deg clockwise as he does so. This leads the follower to step out too, and to follow this sway of the body so that she is facing 45 deg-ish to the line she was facing before. Relax into the floor a bit.
- 6 – leader transfers weight back to left foot, and starts to remove the body turn.
- 7 – leader steps back on R
- & - leader opens with L
- 8 – leader closes R to L.

Common problems

- Big steps (keep them small)
- Delayed leads (make sure that you bring the lady with you as soon as you move on 1, not move first then bounce her into you).
- 'Blurring' directions: 1-2 is South-North; 3&4 is East; 5-6 is East (man) or a little North East (lady); 7&8 is pure West (not 'blurring' into the South of the next beat 1). When you have the basic working well, by all means rotate and change it, but get it working with perfect directions before you consciously vary them (rather than just fudge the issue all the time!).

Practice the basic a lot before throwing in variations.

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



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Swing Dance Society**