

“Calling the Tune and Leading a Merry Dance”, Part 6 - The Demonic Waltz- a forbidden indecorous dance!



Despite French claims the waltz had evolved from La Volta it is widely accepted that its direct lineage is from adaptation of the closer hold rotary stamping turns of the Germanic Country or Folk Dances (Dreher, Drehtanz, Weller and Ländler). It blossomed into the lilting circular ballroom dance sensation on the polished floors of Vienna before becoming a worldwide craze, but not withstanding some 50 to 70 years of ban in parts of Europe. Its final acceptance was in the early years of the nineteenth century.

The history of this as a dance is well enough known suffice to say we need to look at the evolution of the music to understand the connections with the various dance forms. The Ländlers are generally in 3-8 time, occasionally 3-4. I consider this a 'double form' of waltz in the same manner as other forms of music such as jigs, reels or hornpipes can exist in single and double forms.

Double forms seem to have twice as many notes in the bar and I suppose are more difficult to play. Consider a simple single jig such as 'We Won't Come Home Till Morning' (from which Jolly Good Fellow is derived) as a basic two 'crotchet-quaver' pattern (dum de dum de) in the bar compared to the pulsating 'Irish Washerwoman' (diddledee diddledee) using all 6 possible quavers to the same measure. Likewise Rakes of Mallow as a single reel (rum tum rum tum) compared to Mrs. McLeod, a real reel (lots of diddle diddles). In the case of hornpipes compare 'Off To California' (Schottische style timing) with 'Sailor's Hornpipe' (reel timing). One way of appreciating the difference is to play the single form with accompanying foot tap, then a double form with the same foot tap and observe the change of pace with the fingers and doubling of notes to the foot tap or bar.

The significant parallel with the waltz is the 'swing or whirl' from the driving form of the Ländler (often 6 quavers to the bar) into the relatively simple but lilting form of the waltz with it's 'oom pah pah' bass and basic 3 crotchets in the bar. I'd compare the two as double and single respectively.

There are two prominent tunes accredited to the arrival of the Waltz although of course there are any number of other German forerunners. One is the classical Weber's 'Invitation to the Dance' of 1811 and the other is the folk derived 'Ach Der Lieber Augustin' (from an originally composed tune in 3-4) - known later in the English speaking world as the 'Froth Blowers' Chorus' or 'The More We Are Together'. It is these tunes in particular that introduced the oom pah pah waltz bass. Likewise with the Waltz in its transition from the Deutscher or German Country Dance, the foot stamp changed to a slide and then a rotary glide.

The Waltz in its Viennese form was accepted in the ballrooms of Vienna around 1805 and of course from the 1830s the intoxicating tunes of Lanner and the Strauss family caused the waltz to eclipse anything else. Another subtle nuance in the Viennese form is a slight lengthening or anticipation of the first note or 'oom' of the bass and hence a slight shortening of the second note or first pah, thus

oomm pa pah, and to a whirling 60 to 70 bars a minute. Compare with the stately regular time of the Old Time or Circular Waltz of 48 bars a minute, or the Pride of Erin of 52.

Although the indecorous German waltz – 'the forbidden dance' - was upon Merry Old England in the first decade or so of the 19C, it was not until 1819 that it became publicly accepted, although there was still some opposition in quarters as late as 1825. I've mentioned before it had become the preoccupation of Sydney after Waterloo in 1815 (Cumes-'Their Chastity Was Not Too Rigid), although Macquarie abhorred it and the waltz found no quarter in his official circles.

'The Waltz' was the first of the new couple dances to introduce the intimate close hold, face to face, as if the couple was one person on four legs, whereas the older minuet and gavotte were hand to hand at 'arms length', side by side. Needless to say there was a specified amount of 'daylight' between the couple in the old waltz. Compare this to a century later when both the Circular Waltz (regarded as 'Old Time') and the Modern Waltz of the 1920s had full frontal contact. In this 'modern' form of ballroom dancing one was taught to dance as if holding a 78 record between oneself and partner without dropping it.

Over the course of its evolution, the waltz differs in France and again in England from the Viennese original and there were several versions of it over time such as the 'trois temps' and the 'deux temps'. The Sauteuse was also an intermediary with the introduction of the waltz. The South Australian waltz step is the English waltz consisting of 5 steps with a pivot on both feet from the 5th into the 6th beat, whereas the Victorian Old Time or 'Circular Waltz' has six distinct steps to one rotation in which the heel of one foot is placed by the instep of the other, they never come together; one foot always a little in front of the other. But this contrasts greatly with the ordinary step-close-step that most lay dancers would use.



The early form of waltz, Argyle Rooms London early 19th C.

Writing in 1829 Mr. G. Yates, the dancing master in England makes a reference to the Waltz and the earlier Allemande form, this quote extracted from Philip Richardson's 'The Social Dances of the

Nineteenth Century':-

“The Waltz, when well danced to a gentle measure, is one of the most graceful of all dances – as interesting, or nearly so, as the Allemande dance; but the fashionable scamper that has now usurped the name, is neither Waltz, Sautuese, Polonaise nor anything that can legitimately be styled a dance. It is nothing in short but an outright romp, as destitute of figure or variety as the motion of a horse in a mill.”

In this illustration the allemande form can be seen a little left of centre with the couple turning under raised arms; on the far right is the more modern closed couple rotary turn and the far left a further section showing the ‘intimacy’ that caused such an uproar when the waltz first appeared.

Ellis Rogers' wife Chris provides the following information on the use of the waltz-step in the Country Dance prior to the appearance of the waltz itself in England:-

“The waltz did not appear in England as a couple dance until about 1815 but the step (reminiscent of the ‘pas de bourree’ of earlier years – i.e. three steps forward, rising on the first beat, sinking after the third) was commonly used from about 1796 in country dances and it was in this context that Jane mentions it in Emma, chapter 26.”

This step in 3-4 measure became known as the 'pas de valse'. I presume it wasn't that unusual in the time of the Regency in that earlier dances such as Cheshire Rounds were in triple time (3-2) with the pas de bourree travelling step.

The Spanish Waltz

Significantly this precursor of the waltz with the above mentioned step worked its way into the English Country Dance at the time with allemande turns and entwined arms in the 'longways for as many as will' over the turn of the 18th/19th C. Also the older step from the pousette figure was used for the change of place in the progression of couples, but eventually as the waltz itself gained acceptance 'waltz-step circular turns' replaced the pousette in this otherwise English structured 'innovation'. It was known as the Spanish Dance or Waltz, often under the Guaracha title, but it was the music that lead to the creation of the 'dance name', i.e. the dance is English but stepped to the latest fashion for Spanish Waltz tunes. Whether the tunes were really Spanish might be another question but there are certainly 3 in that name in the early 3-8 time signature in the 1817 penned scores of music by James Goulding of Country Cork Ireland. Some of the 'Spanish Waltzes' or 'Spanish Dances' had Cuban adaptation and then further exchange via the stage and special ballets. In fact there was a range of Spanish flavoured novelties – fandangos, boleros, guarachas – linked to solo freak dances from the Iberian Peninsula and the Latin New World. These were then taken up on the stage and from there modified and transferred to the odd English Country Dance repertoire for a season or two. However the Guaracha or Spanish Dance to triple time measure in one form or another was to last over a century. In fact it survives in the Australian version of the Alberts Quadrille in a few country districts today.

This tune is known Australia wide under all sorts of names and commonly used for the 4th or 5th waltz figure of the Alberts as well as in the Waltz Cotillion. Further information linking it to a Spanish tune is given below.

The early Spanish melody - the 'Cachoucha' or 'Cachucha' was for a castanet dance in 3-4 and originally a national tune from Andalusia. The Cachoucha is most likely the antecedent of that tune known all over Australia under various names such as 'My Father is a Dutchman'. This Spanish Waltz is in 3-4 (although the original Cachoucha is in 3-8) and has the more typical oom pah pah

rhythm. However there are or could be added sufficient 'dotted quavers' to impart a mazurka bounce to the extent the tune was also frequently substituted for a Polka Mazurka. Harry McQueen of Castlemaine in fact modified it to a Varsoviana by inserting the necessary holds in the part A section and at the end of each 4 bars of the Mazurka B section. Conversely he would sometimes use it as a straight waltz in the 3-4 figures of the Alberts Quadrille. The tune by the First World War (quoting Shirley Andrews) had been popular enough to have attained a 'course' parody; 'Once She Was A Virgin, A Virgin, A Virgin, Once She Was A Virgin But Look At Her Now' (No, Shirley didn't give me the words, she wouldn't have approved, unless sufficiently dosed with Cider)

The Spanish Waltz

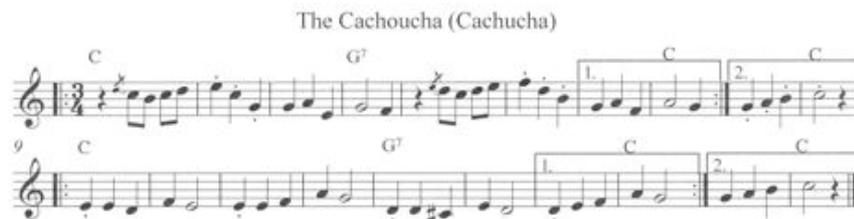


This Spanish Castanet Dance (Cachucha or Cachoucha) seems to have developed via the original Andalusian tune in Cuba (1803) but is considered to be a Spanish dance. Although known in the 1820s, Fanny Elssler (1810-1884, Vienna) was the first to make it really popular: she profiled the Cachucha in Jean Coralli's ballet *Le Diable boiteux* (1836, "the Lame Devil") during her successful American tour in 1840-42.



Fanny Elssler dancing the Spanish Castanet Dance or 'La Cachucha'

It is my suspicion, speculative as it may be, the tune was so popular it was transported out here by Californian miners during the Australian Gold-rush; nevertheless our mining settlements had canvas opera tents and all sorts of entertainment (Lola Montez) direct from Europe. In these situations extremely popular tunes of the time would be performed, so it's a two way bet on my part. Also the Cachucha finds itself in print in the Country Dance, Jigs and Reels books of the latter 19C and as a waltz figure of the Australian version of Alberts Quadrille in Sutton's Music Book. Charlie Fardon, revered MC with Con Klippel's Old Time Band identified their Albert's waltz figure as the Cachucha (Norm O'Connor Collection 1962 NLA). The band still plays it today although they've somehow now associated it with Robbie Burns 'My Heart Is In the Highland'.



Many of the other Spanish Waltz tunes which I've located such as from Carl Fischer's Concertina Tutor of 1905 and from James Goulding's 1817 collection from County Cork in Ireland have the **full drive** of the Ländler, 'double style' with quavers for every note in the bar. The nuances are different of course, the Ländler is naturally Germanic sounding and the Spanish Waltzes need I say Spanish sounding; but this 'drive' is what I suspect caused the Spanish Waltz or tunes under that name to become a fad and taken up in the early days of the Regency in England, and hence to Australia.

The Sydney Gazette of 1824 mentions the new Spanish Dance or Waltz.

Sydney Gazette 1st July 1824

THE FASHIONABLE WORLD.

*The Ball and Supper, given by Sir JOHN JAMISON on the evening of Thursday last, was of the most fascinating and splendid description. The ball-room was fancifully fitted up for the occasion. The Company flocked in from 8 to 9: the carriages were rolling rapidly down our streets between those hours. Captain PIPER, with his usual zeal in these cases, had his own Band in attendance upon the noble Host. Dancing, consisting of country dances, quadrilles, and **Spanish waltzes**, presently commenced, and was maintained with the utmost animation till midnight, when the Guests were ushered in to the supper-room, which was entitled to the palm for superior taste in the disposition of the various arrangements that were most happily executed. All the rare and choice delicacies that Australia possesses, whether natural or imported, decorated the festive board, which groaned beneath the weight of excessive luxuriance: upwards of 170 sat down to supper. The rooms were elegantly festooned, and exhibited one refulgent blaze. About one in the morning, the ball-room was re-invested by this concentration of beauty, rank, and fashion; from whence a final retreat did not take place till Sol began to eclipse the twinkling orbs of night, and thus remind the gallant remnant it was time to retire in quest of that transient repose which the imposing scene was calculated to obstruct.*

This Spanish Waltz resourced by Shirley Andrews is the **La Guaracha** and Ellis Rogers makes the point:-

“that for a short time, around 1830, any longways dance in waltz time was called ‘Spanish’ hence the Spanish waltz alternative title for ‘La Guaracha’.”

Shirley provided an interpretation of *La Guaracha* which she work-shopped at a TSDAV function, although it is possible she may also have used a collected English folk dance as a guide. Wilson provides a version of the tune for *La Guaracha* or 'Carthaginian Fandango' on p 176 of his 1816 'Companion to the Ball Room', but no dance description. It would appear Shirley's description comes from the 'Analysis of the London Ball-Room' of 1825, an anonymous publication which is assumed to be Wilson's, but Ellis Rogers believes that to be wrong. I would agree, Wilson is quite forward on referencing all his publications.

I saw a Regency dance segment in the series 'Wives and Daughters' which closely resembled Shirley's version of the Guaracha. Ellis Rogers identified that footage as 'The North Downs Waltz' from an undated and unnamed collection held by the Vaughan Williams Library, Cecil Sharp House England.

It is perhaps dangerous to pay too much attention to film reproductions of the dances of the Regency period as so much license is taken. Authenticity is also disguised with some accuracy of costume on the one hand, but needing to walk instead of dancing the hopping steps (so as to allow the actors to talk) on the other hand. Ellis Rogers makes the following comments with respect to the Wives and Daughters footage:-

“The style of dancing is however that of the better MODERN English folk dancer”.

“No I do not think the dances collected by Sharp are indicative of the earlier period. Sharp was collecting in the 1920s, and 80 years is much too long for the dances to have retained much or even anything of their original form. The Regency dances were 90% triple minor. Sharps were 10%. The style of dancing them by his time had been strongly influenced by the polka craze of the 1840s. The music was also changed by this polka craze, nearly all reels played by English bands since that time have been influenced to sound like polkas. Quite a few sources say that the ‘Ladies Chain’ was only introduced into dances after the innovation of the quadrille. This is not true. The figure is described in De La Cuisse's ‘Repertoire de Bal’ of 1762 and is used in Cotillons at that time.”

Now the earlier Spanish Dance or Guaracha was a longways form in duple minor with the men in one line facing their partners and 1st couples standing ‘improper’, i.e. on the opposite side. In the 1840s it changed to the longways form of couple facing couple in a column. Later again it developed into the familiar circular progressive Sicilian form we now know as the Waltz Country Dance as well as in other circular arrangements, particularly in figures 4 & 5 of the Australian version of d'Albert's Quadrille. The 4th figure of some Australian versions of the Alberts can be recognised as a 'Waltz Country Dance' style, and this may have been derived from a Circassian Circle derivative in waltz time.



Left. This illustration of 1902 from an Allan's Dance Music Album clearly shows the style of Spanish waltz of figure 4 of the Albert's Quadrille, still danced that way today.

The extract below (in part only) indicates the Spanish Dance of the longways Guaracha style because of the reference '*Waltzing down we moved*':-

Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser Saturday 8th February 1834

THE FAT GENTLEMAN'S COMPLAINT.

*“The Spanish dance I think 'twas called, The dance my partner lov'd,
She heel'd, I reel'd-she crawl'd, I sprawl'd As waltzing down we move'd.
As through the whirling dance we haste. Her waist t'encircle round, My precious time I did
not waste No waist on her was found.
If mirth t'excite merriment By dancing is t'excel,”*

And the following account deplores the change of the Spanish Waltz into what can be recognised as still that of today with the twirling of the ladies in the chain-on:-

Colonial Times (Hobart) Tuesday 13th May 1845.....

“The Waltz, Gallopade, And Polka.,

“Though ladies are always more graceful than men, I must here warn them against the modern style of waltzing, which is the reverse of graceful, being little more than a mere romping twirl, intended only, as far as I can perceive, to make parties giddy. The old waltz, sometimes called the Spanish waltz, was a very graceful dance; but its character is changed, and there is nothing either graceful or pleasing in seeing gentlemen pulling and hauling their partners on, seeing the pretty pairs spinning round and round, jostling against each other, to say nothing of an occasional tumble, till the few who can keep time and step feel their heads going, and 'till ladies are forced to lean panting, and with flushed cheeks, and heaving breasts, against the very walls of the room for support'.”

The Spanish Waltz survived in Australia as variants in two forms in figures 4 and 5 of the Albert's Quadrille and although these are fairly removed from the early 'Guaracha', they are reasonably close to the post 1840s versions. Also the Spanish Waltz tune known all over Australia is easily recognisable and associated with the opening section of the earlier Cachoucha.

The Spanish Waltz will be continued in Part 7 of this series, including the dance instructions and more tunes.