

New Vogue Dancing part 1

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In the last issue concluding Old Time Dancing a brief mention of the newly developing form of sequence dance was discussed and the fact the Australian term 'New Vogue' was a category name for these dances, the equivalent of that which in England is called 'Modern Sequence Dance'. Allan's Music (Melbourne, Adelaide, and Bendigo) started publishing an annual series of music for Old Time Dances. The first about 1932 was Old Time; the dances - Waltz, Schottische, Polka Mazurka, Barn Dance, Lancers, Alberts, Waltz Cotillion, Varsoviana, Two Step, Polka, Highland Schottische; all genuine old time. There was one new one in that first Album, the 'Parma Waltz'. A 4th volume around 1935 has 'Modernised Old Time' as a subtitle. In this the Gypsy Tap and Pride of Erin

have been included. The 10th edition of early 1940s is titled 'Old Time and New Vogue' and includes the Tangoette. These later albums still included a good representation of the older dances including the Fitzroy Quadrilles. These same publishers of course produced books of music for the Modern Ballroom Dances, Foxtrot, Quickstep and Modern Waltz (the Tango had largely fallen by the way).

It's probably best to summarise the various categories of social dance at this period of time before I can expand on the nuance of New Vogue dance.

Old time dances had been revived as a popular reaction to the 'modern dances' of the jazz era and these older dances (some of a century in vintage) were nevertheless generally based on the versions the older generation had danced when young in the 1880s. The revival involving some folk process occurred from the early 1920s peaking by the 30s and retained the balletic foot positions of the stage, turned out in the five positions and always danced on the 'toes'. These old time dances included the **sets**, mainly quadrilles such as First Set, Lancers, Caledonians, Alberts, Waltz Cotillion, Royal Irish, Parisian Quadrille and two Australian arrangements, the Fitzroy quadrilles and the Exion Quadrille. As well as the quadrilles there were a few surviving or revived **country dances and reels**, namely Sir Roger de Coverley or Haymaker's Jig, Highland Reel, Dashing White Sergeant and Scotch Reel, Spanish Waltz, Circassian Circle, the form now called part 1 and the Stockyards or Bullring as a final figure of the First Set which sometimes concluded with a conversion of music to waltz time to unwind with a 'waltz the hall'. There was also a revival of the *Prince Imperials Quadrille* in the 1950s. Colin and Ila Silk and Harry

McQueen were at a dance in the Ottrey's Barn at Muckleford in the mid 50s when the Prince Imperials was danced.

The other group were the **couple dances** that were originally called '*round dances*' as they travelled around the ballroom comparable to the path of horses on a racing track and in contrast to the sets dances at fixed place. Some like the Waltz, Polka and Galop had a basic step but not a fixed routine like a sequence dance and could have involved a little variation such as reversing or inclusion of some simple figures within the dance. They were the forerunners of the modern ballroom dances; it was just that improvisation was not the custom of the time. Then there were a few simple **sequence dances** such as the Polka Mazurka, Varsoviana, Schottische and Highland Schottische, Redowa Waltz, and some other polkas such as Scotch (Princess), Berlin (Kreuz) and Heel and Toe Polka (Brown Jug) as well as the new galop based Two Step. All of these above mentioned dances generally had origins in national and folk dances along with the music styled on various original European dances, but modified and dressed up to suit the ballroom and launched via the dancing masters at Paris.

From around 1900 the British Association of Teachers of Dancing of 1892 had set up competitions for **new sequence dances** and from these the Veleta Waltz, Military Two Step, Boston Two Step, Eva Three Step, St. Bernard Waltz and later the Maxina, Pride of Erin and Parma Waltz became popular although they didn't gain world-wide notoriety in the manner of the other ballroom dances; in fact they remained more isolated within Britain and perhaps Australia and New Zealand. These 'Edwardian Sequence Dances' were in the old style with the five balletic feet positions of the stage, on the toes as with all the old time dances. Please note these are 'invented dances' in contrast to the older ballroom dances derived from folk dances.

From the turn of the 19th/20C attention turned away from Paris, first to America with animal dances and **freak solo dances**, Cake Walk, Turkey Trot, Charleston and Black Bottom, but significantly to a new form of 'free-lance' ballroom dance to Jazzy and Ragtime tunes developed from mainly African American sources. Thus the One Step, Foxtrot, Tango (from Argentina), Maxixe (from Brazil), Modern Waltz and Quickstep arrived in succession over a decade or so as



'Modern Ballroom Dance'.

The One Step, early 1910s

The English took these on and refined them as well as introducing ballroom championship competitions. Attention swung from Paris and America to London. The key factor with these dances is that the 'pretty feet positions' of the stage were cast aside, instead using the natural parallel travelling steps of walking and running. The slows were taken on the flat of the foot, or even with 'heel leads' and the quicks on toes. The steps were longer than the small neat steps of the Old dances and rise and fall introduced within the routine according to running on the toes, or lowering on the slows on the heels and flat of the foot as when walking. The other very significant factor apart from a basic step is that the man as leader made up variations at whim to which the lady partner followed his improvisations. Also, compared to the old waltz hold in which some 'daylight' existed between partners, the ballroom hold was now 'cosy', full frontal contact and dancing as if one person on four legs. Dancers were told they had to dance as if holding a 78 record between them and without dropping it.



Illustration from Merry Country published Bush Dance & Music Club of Bendigo

The churches abhorred this form of dancing which was wonderful for natural and gifted dancers, but difficult for the ordinary plebe that preferred or required a set pattern of steps to learn or follow. Thus the revival of old time dancing found wide public appeal although it didn't suit the ballroom professionals, in fact it threatened their livelihood as did the American Square Dance fad of the 1950s.

As a result they introduced competitions and new sequence couple dances were choreographed - initially based on the concept of the old time dances of the English Edwardian period, but replacing to traditional stepping with the style of the Foxtrot, Quickstep and Modern Waltz with parallel foot alignment, slows on the flat and heel, quicks on the toes. These were called Modern Sequence Dances in England and it is said the Australian term New Vogue was coined at the Star Ballroom in Brisbane. Certainly the term New Vogue had become known Australia wide by the late 1930s and has had several revivals since, notably in the 1970s, but again more recently via ballroom dance on television under the cloak of 'dance sport'.

Before I really get into the nitty gritty of New Vogue dances, I need to briefly mention one other form of social dancing, and that's **Latin-American** from the Americas. These couple dances variously evolved from the 1920s and 30s into ballroom adaptations to calypso and other Latin

rhythms and tunes. The Paso Doble or Spanish One Step, represented the bullfight in which the man is the toreador and the female partner the 'cloak' and was known in the mid-1920s although I'm not sure it gained world attention until after the 50s. Most will be familiar with the other characteristic Latin dances, Rumba (Carioca) and the Conga in the 30s followed by the Samba and then the Cha Cha Cha by the 1950s. There are others such as Bossa Nova and more contemporary innovations called Salsa. There is certainly some free-lance in the routine of performance of these dances and although they can travel around the ballroom (the Paso Doble and the Samba), or at least from original position, they tend to be danced more at place. The very different musical nuances are a key to the popularity with these dances and the ballroom fraternity placed Rock n Roll as the 'Ballroom Jive' within the Latin-American category.



*Arthur Murray
instructors demonstrate
a cha-cha step, 1957.*

Whilst a large proportion of **New Vogue Sequence Dances** have been 'choreographed' to the old-time standard measures, Waltz, Schottische, Two Step (or March), it can be seen that others have been set to a Latin style as well as the ballroom Tango. Thus there is the Rumbaette, Sally Anne Cha Cha, Disco Samba, Progressive Jive or 'Rockabilly', Tangoette, Jubilee Tango, Royal Empress Tango, La Bomba and Tango Rock. Remember that the Foxtrot, Quickstep, Modern Waltz, Tango etc. are not New Vogue dances, but free-lance or improvised and of course no longer modern, so tending to be now classed as 'standard ballroom'. It is their style and steps and the music that has provided sequences within the New Vogue realm. Thus there is the Alpha and the Emmerdale with steps based on the Modern Waltz and its music. Then there is the Chicago Foxtrot, Prize Foxtrot, Balmoral Blues and Melba Blues to slow Foxtrot tunes and then the above mentioned tangos and the Cassius Quickstep to Quickstep or One Step melodies.

A quick search of the web (Google) found the following information in various links on New Vogue:-

“New Vogue dances originated in the 1930s and '40s, when some Australian dancers rebelled against the formal balletic foot work of the English Old Time dances (Boyd , 1984b; Gwynne, 1985), and started to choreograph sequence dances based on the Modern Ballroom technique. Len Hourigan of Brisbane coined the term "New Vogue" for these dances. They have many open positions, which makes them attractive to watch, like the English Old Time, and unlike Standard Ballroom dancing in which observers see only the backs of the couples.”

“Unlike Modern Ballroom and Latin-American where a beginner tends to feel incompetent because of the limited knowledge of variations they can perform, after just a very short time of learning to dance this style they feel more than adequate while dancing among people who have been enjoying this style for years.”

“All New Vogue dances are based on a sequence of dance steps which are continually repeated, usually until the music ends. The sequences are always either 16 or 32 bars long, and require music that is in turn "sequenced" (composed of verses that are either 16 or 32 bars long). Due to the nature of the dances they are much easier to pick up by beginners than, say, Latin dances (which have numerous types of steps that are combined into custom routines) and as such, beginner dancers are less likely to feel overwhelmed when learning them and can perform the dances to a respectable level within a short time of learning.”

“In the Dancesport competitions and championships held around the country, there are usually more entries in the New Vogue events than in either the Standard Modern Ballroom or the Latin & American events, and this makes Australian competitions somewhat different from those overseas, such as those of North America or Europe.”

“New Vogue dances have been choreographed to all the dance rhythms. In this article, dances are listed for the Fast Waltz, Slow Waltz, Slow Foxtrot, Quickstep, Tango, March, Bossa Nova, Samba, Rumba, Cha Cha, and Jive (Swing). Over the years, many hundreds of New Vogue dances have been choreographed (Hend, undated; Limon and Butler, undated; Badham, undated) Many are presented at regular competitions which are held to provide showcases for such new choreography. In the end though, only a limited number have actually gained wide popularity. Over the years, a number of geographical variants of many of the dances evolved, and so in 1967 the Australian Dancing Board of Control started standardising a subset of the dances for competitions and dancing championships.”



Typical New Vogue style.

It seems ladies' names have been a popular title for many of the new vogue dances. Thus, to mention a few - Dorothea Waltz , Lucille Waltz, Rosita Waltz, Margo Waltz, Tracie Leigh Waltz, Marilyn Schottische, Charmaine Schottische, Yvonne Schottische. Many of these follow the old Edwardian sequence dance pattern which end the sequence with a few waltz type turns - although there's the occasional dance that doesn't. The Carousel Schottische is one example; some of the Tangos replace the waltz style turn with a tango box-step turn at the end of sequence whilst with the Sparkle Two Step its routine concludes with a slow Foxtrot pivot.

When the Pride of Erin, Parma Waltz, Gypsy Tap, Canadian Three Step, Evening Three Step, Canadian Barn Dance (Canberra Two Step) and Progressive Barn Dance appeared in Australia, they were classed as New Vogue, in fact the ballroom fraternity still class them as such, the term Old Time strictly reserved for the sets, polkas and waltzes of the pre-modern ball-room era.

However as far as the general public is concerned these perennial favourites would be regarded as Old Time and in fact as early as the 1950s they were so popular they had replaced most of the true old time dances on programmes. It's relative to each generation anyway and there have been many good dances settle out of the New Vogue arena. Swing Waltz, Charmaine and Tangoette are further examples, now regarded as old-time.

There were some changes made by the ballroom profession owing to their bias to the smooth flowing standard ballroom style.

I have a letter from Shirley Andrews circa 1985 and dated April 15th (year not given) which highlights this aspect because, as a result of a newspaper article on Gerald Hales, (originator of the Tangoette and Rumbaette amongst others) had appeared in a Melbourne newspaper when he was aged about 92, we tried to make contact for an interview. Here is the result.

"Gerry Hales doesn't want to be interviewed but Mr.Foley talked for 1½ hours on the telephone! Very interesting details about the dance teachers and dance hall proprietors actually taking steps to destroy the American Square Dance craze. They found they were losing money as they

hadn't realised that this sort of dancing took up so much room and they couldn't fit in so many dancers.

Then they cut out what they called the boisterous dances – Polka, Highland Schottische etc. and slowed down the Gypsy Tap (no sliding). I made notes and will pass the information on next time there's an opportunity – It was much more deliberate and contrived than we realised – not just changing fashions”.

It is interesting to note above the standardisation of dances by the Australian Dancing Board of Control because a number of geographical variants of the dances had evolved (folk process?). Phil Leggett of Leggett's Ballroom Prahran Melbourne told me that most of the teachers were only versed in modern ballroom dances and when old time became popular, they wouldn't have had a clue on how to interpret the English instructions for the old Edwardian sequence dances. He quoted Gerry Hales as being one and that this is why versions totally different to the English originals appeared in Australia. Enormous variation between the states or even within districts for the Boston Two Step, Maxina and Pride of Erin in particular. And of course professionals such as these could never admit they were wrong, so having a board to standardise things was a good way out. It was related to Shirley Andrews in an interview with Mr and Mrs Albert Boal, iconic professional teachers in Melbourne, that as he was from Belfast he knew the Eva Three Step, and to get around what was obviously wrong with the Australian version, he renamed it the Evening Three Step. Albert Boal was also responsible for dressing up the Swing Waltz which he saw in Brisbane in the 50s but converting the rotary waltz at the end of sequence to a reverse Viennese waltz turn. So this was his innovation and Melbourne based, gradually percolating out into country Victoria.

I'll continue in the next chapter with some newspaper accounts that highlight the appearance of New Vogue dances at ordinary old time functions.