

Australian Social Dances and Tunes of the Victorian Era. “Trad & Fad” Part 2 - The Galop and Galopade Country Dance

Peter Ellis



A couple dance which finds little mention today but was certainly very well known in its time, was the Galop of 1829 and also titled Galopade. Any early references to Galopades will be the Galop and likewise in an 1833 advertisement of the Sydney Gazette. It is variously claimed to have come from Russia or Hungary and also extremely popular in Germany and consisted



of rapid chassés with one foot leading, round and round the ballroom and then alternating at intervals by half turning and then the other foot leading. The Galop could also include a rapid rotary waltz-type step in 2-4 and sometimes the Waltz when still considered ‘indecorous’ could be added to a programme under the guise of the Galop.

Galops were smooth and did not have the hop of the Polka although there was a subtle spring in the movement and likewise the music in 2-4 was racy with generally a more even rhythm than the characteristic 3 quaver ‘dotted’ beat and steady tempo of the Polka. The tempo for the galop is around 65 bars or more per minute whereas the Polka is 48 to 54. The Can Can and the William Tell Overture are two famous Galop tunes and Strauss composed many as well. It required plenty of room and unlikely to have been accommodated in the Shearing sheds of the Australian bush although certainly a mainstay in the city assemblies. There is one collected tune from the late Elma Ross of the Wedderburn Oldtimers (pianist), a Two Step which has the character of a galop and I've called it Elma's Two Step or the Oldtimers' Two Step. The same tune has now been discovered also from the playing of Jean Murphy at Mitta Mitta (Norm O'Connor Collection National Library of Australia)

THE GALOP.

The Galop is said to be of Hungarian origin, and not so very old, although French writers claim that, like the Waltz, it was an old dance, and often introduced into country dances, &c., as a variation on their more slow and solemn steps.

The Galop is characterised by a certain swift impetuosity. Nowadays it usually follows the Waltz, to the dreamy movements of which it forms, artistically at least, a good offset. Some dancers, however, finding it very fatiguing, would prefer that it did not always so closely follow the Waltz.

It is in 2-4 time, and, as we have said, very spirited.

The gentleman leaps towards the fourth position on the left, then he makes a short leap on right and on left, counting three, and turning half round (one bar).

He then leaps towards 2nd position on right, makes a short leap on left and on right, turning half round (one bar).

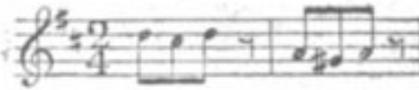
The step is the same for the lady, but reversed, as in the case of the Waltz.

The present fashion seems to be to dance pretty much the steps that one goes round with in the Waltz—1, 2, 3; 1, 2, 3; but remembering that, as the Waltz is in 3-4 time and the Galop in 2-4, there is a division in the latter, or pause intervening, which does not occur in the former.

Listen to the music; then fly through by springing lightly from the floor, first with left foot, 1, 2, 3, pause; then with the right,

1, 2, 3, pause; which may be represented rhythmically thus—

Tut-a-tat (—) Tut-a-tat (—)



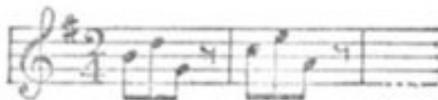
The Galop gives plenty of scope for style and execution, and beyond most dances it realises Byron's line—"To chase the glowing hours with flying feet."

THE POLKA.

The Polka came originally from Bohemia, and is said to have been invented by a servant girl about 1830. After creating quite a furore in Paris it reached this country about 1843, where it was for a time so outrageously popular that the word Polkonania was coined to express the extravagant enthusiasm of its devotees. A description of the dance as then practised was given, with woodcuts, in the "Illustrated London News":—"The gentleman holds his partner in the manner shown in the engraving; each lift first the right leg, strike twice the left heel with the right heel, and then turn as in the waltz." This step must have been a difficult one to execute, and we are not surprised to learn that it often resulted in the dancers stamping their own heels on their partners' toes. This heel-and-toe step was by and by abandoned.

and the dance gradually assumed the form in which we now know it.

The music for the Polka is in 2-4 time—4 quavers to the bar, with a special accent on the third quaver. The rhythm to the casual ear is 1, 2, 3, rest.



But there is a slight jerk at the end of each bar, leading into the next—



The crosses mark the short jerks referred to; and the rhythm may be thus represented—

Tū | rum, tum, tum—tū | rum, tum, tum—

The gentleman places his left foot behind the right, and begins by giving a slight jerk or hop on the right foot. Then he places his left foot in the 2nd position, keeping the foot well up. He places his right foot under the left and again leaps into 2nd position on left, counting 3, but making in all four movements in the time of three, and turning half round. This is performed with the right, and the whole step occupies 2 bars.

The lady's step is the same as the gentleman's, beginning with the right foot.

The Polka should be danced with abrupt steps (or staccato, as a musician would say), taking care to move round, and not from side to side with long steps.

Nonsense verses have been extemporised as a guide to dancers—

My brother John has come from France
To learn me the Polka dance;
In with your heel and out with your toe,
Lassie, can ye dance the Polka, O?
Can ye dance the Polka? Yes, I can,
Round and round with a nice young man;
First the heel and then the toe—
That's the way the Polka goes.

The Polka is a most enjoyable round dance, and is easily learned.

The European dances, Waltz, Galop, Polka, Schottische and Mazurka introduced new steps and to a smaller degree several new Country Dances and Quadrilles incorporating these steps became popular mid-nineteenth century. Waltz Country Dance or Spanish Waltz, the Polka Country Dance and Polka Quadrille and the Galopade Country Dance and Galopade and Galop Quadrilles respectively. The forward step used in the basket figures of the Lancers, the step using in 'swinging' as distinct from the old 'turn partners' and various promenades have developed via the galop-step.

The dance I've selected on this occasion is the *Galopade Country Dance*. I first found this in 'The Old Time Dancers' Handbook by F.J. Mainey' published London Herbert Jenkins 1953. This was owned by Pete Mason of the then Sydney Colonial Dancers who engaged me for workshops in 1984 and kindly provided a photocopy of the complete book. The dance in this book was called 'La Galopade' and described as being just within living memory (1953). Shirley Andrews and I revived the dance under that name, but more recently I acquired a copy of 'The People's Ballroom Guide' by James Scott Skinner circa 1907 Aberdeen Scotland from Mrs. Nette Haw of Kyneton, Victoria; see page 5. Her father was an MC and this was his copy. It gave a more definite indication the dance was longways for as many as will. It is arranged with couples in one line facing couples in the other. We had revived it as four couples facing four couples. Also in the original way the two top couples i.e. top opposite couples, slowly galop to the bottom of the set and the dance then starts again. The amount of time for the last section would vary according to how long the set was and the musicians would have to repeat the end of the tune if necessary to allow for this.

In reviving the dance, Shirley Andrews and I chose to nominate the right hand line facing the band as the 'ladies line' and the left hand line the gents' line. It was then organised that the top couple in the gents' line only galloped to the bottom, using the circular-waltz galop step (as in the Evening 3 Step or Barn Dance) and that when all had a turn in that line, it switched to the ladies line. This way the couples got to dance with a different vis-à-vis (opposite) each time.

James Scott Skinner indicated the tune for the last figure of La Pasha Quadrille is the appropriate music and that all sing the chorus '*Come, dance along with me, I will fill your hearts with glee.*' I have finally located "La Pacha Quadrille by Charles d'Albert in the National Library of Australia and the tune mentioned by James Skinner could be sourced from that.

The collected tune for the more familiar Galopade dance in England (presumably by Cecil Sharp) is known as the Yarmouth Reel, I presume from where it was located, however this tune is widely known in nineteenth century printed music as 'The Persian Dance'. Also the Australian tune for the Galopade is very different, it was a First Set tune played by Herb Gimbert of NSW and selected for the Galopade by John Meredith.

Depending on the length of the set there is a choice of means of travelling to the bottom. If it is an approximately four couples lengthwise set the waltz-type galop turn is ideal to arrive at place in time with the music, but if the set is much longer, and then the slip step type galop progression is better. So play it by ear.

GALOPADE COUNTRY DANCE.

To Follow the March in a Children's Ball.

Arrange the couples opposite each other along the sides of the hall, like a Quadrille; only all the couples dance across, with no top and bottom couples, thus—

○ † ○ † ○ † ○ † ○ † ○ †

Band

† ○ † ○ † ○ † ○ † ○ † ○

All advance and retire with promenade step (that is, all galoping, not romping). Then all advance, and each gentleman retires to his place with the opposite lady. This is repeated.

Ladies' chain, while all sing chorus—

Come, dance along with me,
Twill fill your hearts with glee.

The last figure of the La Pasha Quadrille is the appropriate music.

After the chorus, which all sing, the two top couples galop slowly down the centre and remain at the bottom. Meanwhile the player or band repeat the melody of the chorus just sung. The dance is a charming one, and very easy.

GALOPADE COUNTRY DANCE (La Galopade)

At least 8 x 32 bar single reels (2-4) or set tunes at 60-62 bars per minute. The Persian Dance (Yarmouth Reel) could be regarded as the signature tune for this dance.

This dance was popular in England from the 19th century into the early 20th

century and was also featured in the earlier American film 'North and South'. This version is more likely to be that if danced in Australia under the name Gallopade than the well-known Galopede of the bush dance revival. There is some confusion in historical references as Gallopede is also an alternative name for the Galop.

Longways formation with four couples in one line facing four couples in the other line and ladies on the right of their partners. The line of the right facing the band is nominated 'the ladies line' and that on the left 'the men's line'. The very smooth and gliding galop step (step close or chassé) is the main travelling step in this dance.

Dance

Bars

- 4 Standing side on in the waltz hold the couples **advance & retire** with the galop.
- 4 **Re-advance and ladies crossover** in a half turn across to the opposite man **and retire** with him.
- 4 **Advance & retire** again
- 4 **Re-advance & ladies cross back** to partners & retire to place.
- 8 **Ladies chain across & back** Nariel style (ladies touch right hands in crossing to the opposite man who at the same walks forward to meet her by left hand. He walks around in an anticlockwise circle at place as the lady turns clockwise once under raised hands, left to left. Ladies chain back to partners and with partners turn at place in the same format).
- 8 **Top couple** on the gentlemen's line galop **waltz to the bottom** of the set as each couple in that line move up one place.

The dance continues a further 7 times until all have galop-waltzed to the bottom on the men's line and then on the ladies' line. This dance has been arranged with eight couples but in fact can be for as many as will. In the latter case the top couple's forward galop (slip step) to the bottom of the set rather than galop-waltz. The band may need to adjust the music.

