

## Ländler from “The Sound of Music” (Austria/U.S.A.)

This dance is not a traditional folk dance. It was choreographed for the 1965 movie "*The Sound of Music*," following the traditional Austrian and Bavarian ländler. The music was written by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. The dance described in this article was arranged by mimicking the steps visible in the movie. The movie shows the ending and the beginning of the choreographed dance but a couple of sections and some parts of the footwork are not shown. In the movie, there are a group of people dancing in the dance hall. They salute to partners at the end of the dance and then restart the dance. Sixteen measures elapse before Maria and Captain von Trapp start dancing. Figure I of our version of the dance starts at the moment when they start and end when they stop dancing.

Starting June 30, 1966, late master teacher Ji Chen<sup>1</sup> watched the movie eleven times in a theater to memorize the dance steps. Then Chen documented the dance notes and published a 78-rpm record with the music on one side and the verbal descriptions on the second side of the record. He presented the dance in Jinshan, Taiwan, on September 9, 1966, at YMCA in Taipei on September 25, 1966, and in a TV program on November 21 of the same year. The dance has been popular in Taiwan ever since. These days, there are some opinions on the validity of Chen's version when compared to the dance movements as they appeared in the movie. A few movements of Chen's version are slightly different from what appears in the movie. It is unclear whether or not he intended to choreograph it as a revision of the movements shown in the movie. A version revised later by Junyu Chang<sup>2</sup>, with movements made closer to what was shown in the movie, is popular among some groups of Taiwanese dancers. Other versions with slight modifications also exist.

Detailed notes are included in this article. Another one with only basic notes for the same version of the dance is available as "*Ländler from 'The Sound of Music' - basic notations*." The descriptions of the dance steps are of no difference between those two articles. All footnotes in this article are included for detailed discussions and may be ignored for most of dancers.

Formation: Circle of cpls, ptrs facing each other at the beginning, M back to ctr of circle.

Music:  $\frac{3}{4}$  meter

(Cont.)

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<sup>1</sup> 陳驥. He was the head of Activity Group (活動組組長) in the headquarter of China Youth Corps (CYC, 中國青年救國團) when he published the dance descriptions of this dance. He invited me to be the Counselor when he was the head of Activity Group in a college student leader training camp: "Three Friends in Chilly Weather" (歲寒三友會).

<sup>2</sup> 常俊玉.

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**Position:** *Promenade position:* Ptrs facing the same direction, normally LOD, W to the R of M, with R hand to R hand, L hand to L hand, normally R arms over L arms. In this dance, W extends her L arm with ptrs holding L hands in front of M's L chest, while M extends his R arm with ptrs holding R hands a little lower right place under L arms; both M's thumbs pointing up and W's thumbs pointing down.

**Steps:** *Mazurka step:* With numerous existing steps, there is no set figures for general *mazurka step*. The following steps are used in this dance: step fwd on one ft (ct 1); glide fwd on the trailing ft to the heel of the lead ft and kick out the lead ft (ct 2); bounce on the trailing ft and bring back the lead ft in the air twd the trailing leg (ct 3). Usually done in a series, repeating the action with the same ftwk.

*Pivot turn (or Pivot) (in this dance):* R step fwd (ct 1); body rotates CW about its vertical axis without traveling (cts 2-3). The immediate next *pivot*,

*Step-touch (in this dance):* Step L to L (ct 1); touch R fwd with body turn slightly L (ct 2); hold (ct 3). Can be done with opp ftwk and direction.

*Waltz-balance (in this dance):* Step fwd or bkwd on one ft (ct 1); step on the trailing ft beside the lead ft while rising up on the balls of both ft (ct 2); step again in place on the lead ft (ct 3). Usually danced in a series, repeating the action in the opp direction, that is, bkwd or fwd, with the opp ftwk.

*Waltz step:* Step on the lead ft, with the knee bent slightly (ct 1); step with the other ft, with the heel raised slightly (ct 2); step the lead ft to the trailing ft, bringing down the heel (ct 3). Usually danced in a series, repeating the action with the opp ftwk. Most often, the waltz is danced smoothly and lightly, with ft close to the floor.

*Waltz turn:* In ball-room pos, cpl turn in *waltz steps*, normally moving in LOD. In making a CW *waltz turn*, M normally beg with backing L. In making a CCW *waltz turn*, or a reverse *waltz turn*, M steps L fwd. Usually danced in a series, repeating the action in the opp direction with the opp ftwk. In a slow waltz, it usually takes four *waltz turn steps* to make a full circle turn; in a quick waltz, it usually takes two *waltz turn steps* to do so.

Meas	Pattern
Introduction	<u>Bow and curtsy</u>
1	With M's back to ctr of circle, ptrs face each other to form a double circle. Look at ptr.
2	Honor ptr. M close feet and bows with R palm facing front body, L palm facing outside at back waist, and upper body bent slightly. W curtsies with hands holding skirt, R foot moves back, and both knees and upper body are bent slightly.
3	Straighten body.
4	Beg ML-WR, take two steps in place to turn facing LOD (cts 1,2); hold inner hands with M's L hand at back waist and W's R hand holding skirt (ct 3).

(Cont.)

## *Ländler from “The Sound of Music”*

### I. Waltz twd LOD and Mazurka twd RLOD

- 1-3 Face LOD. Beg with outside ft, move fwd in three *waltz steps*, with inner hands near shldr ht and swinging slightly fwd, bkwd, and fwd.
- 4 Step on inside ft fwd (ct 1); step on outside ft fwd and turn facing ptr (ct 2); hold both hands and prepare to move RLOD (ct 3).
- 5-6 Beg MR-WL, take two *mazurka steps* in RLOD.
- 7-8 Keep holding both hands and beg MR-WL, M takes a R turn and W takes a L turn to face each other, with M facing LOD, in five steps, with hands raised high above (cts 1-5); release L hands and hold R hands, with M's L hand on his back and W's L hand holding skirt (ct 6).

### II. Pivot turns and promenade fwd

- 1 M: takes a *waltz step* fwd (cts 1-3).  
W: takes a R pivot turn, with her R ft, for more than a circle, under the joined R hands (ct 1); shifts wt to L ft (ct 2); ends facing LOD (ct 3).
- 2-3 M takes two more *waltz steps* fwd, while W takes two<sup>3</sup> more R pivot turns for one circle each and end facing LOD. At the end of meas 3, W lifts L hand to waist level and is ready to have it caught by M.
- 4 M's L hand catches W's L hand, takes one more *waltz step* and turns W one more R pivot turn, ending both facing LOD, W at R side of M, in *Promenade position*, L hands over R hands.
- 5-6 Beg outside ft, move twd LOD in two *waltz steps*, M looks at W and W turns head to shy away from M's staring.
- 7 In three steps, M does a ¼ turns CW and, at the same time, makes W take a 1¼ turn CCW to face ptr, with M's back to the ctr of circle and holding R hands above L hands.
- 8 Have upper arms held horizontally and touch ptr's upper arms, without ftwk.

### III. Waltz balance and exchange positions

- 1 Continue holding upper arms horizontally at shoulder level. Both beg R, cross R over L, W turns to face twd L to avoid M's staring eyes (ct 1); step L in place (ct 2); bring R beside L (ct 3).
- 2 Cross L over R, while M looks at W and W turns face twd R (ct 1); step R in place (ct 2); bring L beside R (ct 3)
- 3-4 Both beg R ft, raise four hands high above and pass L shldrs, with W making an underarm half-circle turn CW, to exchange pos in two *waltz steps*. End with upper arms at shldr ht and lower arms touching ptr's lower arms, L arms over R arms. Both take only five steps and hold on the last ct in order to beg L in the next meas.
- 5 Repeat meas 2.
- 6 Repeat meas 1.
- 7 Both beg L ft, raise four hands high above and pass R shldrs, with W making an underarm half-circle turn CCW, to exchange pos in a *waltz step*. End with M's back to the ctr of circle, R hands over L hands.

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<sup>3</sup> In the movie, Maria (acted by Julie Andrews) made four pivot turns in three meas. Some dancers follow that way in our dance. Chen's dance notes specify three pivot turns in three meas. This writer believe that it is natural to do three, rather than four, pivot turns in three meas.

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- 8 M keeps on moving in CW direction with a *waltz step*, to more or less face RLOD (ct 1-3). Mean while, M leads W in a full-circle CW turn in two steps (ct 1-2), during which, the holding hands are brought higher until high overhead. W holds on ct 3 in order to beg R in the next meas (ct 3).

### IV. Ptrs waltz turns and W turns fwd

- 1 Ptrs face each other, with held hands released over head and changed to have M's L and R hands holding W's R and L hands, respectively. M's L step back and W's R step fwd (ct 1); turn CW over a quarter of circle to continue doing a *waltz step*, with held hands moving down, along a big circle-curve, from over head to the pos extending horizontally twd two sides (cts 2-3).
- 2 Make a half-circle turn with a *waltz step*, while M moving W's hands from two sides to W's waist.
- 3 Make another half-circle turn with a *waltz step*.
- 4 Make another half-circle turn with a *waltz step*, during which M's L and W's R hands are released and M uses R hand to help W make an underarm CW turn<sup>4</sup>, ending with both facing LOD, M's L hand at the back waist and W's R hand holding skirt.
- 5 Beg ML-WR, take a *step-touch step* with bodies turning slightly outward.
- 6 Take another *step-touch step* to face ptr and look at each other.
- 7-8 M: flings W fwd and releases the holding hand (ct 1); keeps eye sight at W and keeps R hand at raised pos (cts 2,3); draws R hand to near R shldr (ct 4); raises L hand to near R hand above R shldr (cts 5,6).
- W: holding skirt with two hands and, beg R, uses *waltz steps* to make two turns CW and moves fwd to stop at M's R front, without wt on the last step (cts 1-6).

### V. W Mazurka in front of M and M circle around W

- 1 W: beg L, holds skirt and moves twd ctr, in front of M, in a *mazurka step*, waving skirt slightly fwd (cts 1,2) and quickly bkwd (ct 3).  
M: looks at W and steps on L slightly L in order to keep on facing W<sup>5</sup> (ct 1); closes R to L and claps once above R shldr (ct 2); claps again (ct 3).
- 2-3 Repeat meas 1 twice. W passes in front of M and stops two to three ft (about 1 meter) away from M's L while M keeps on moving slightly L in order to continue facing W.
- 4 W: takes two steps to do a CCW turn by herself on the spot (cts 1,2); looks at M and moves L hand to L waist and R hand on top of the back of L hand (ct 3).  
M: keeps on looking at W (ct 1), claps once (ct 2), hold (ct 3).
- 5-6 W stands still on the spot with R hand on top of L hand at L waist; M uses two *waltz steps* to turn around CW from the back of W to the front of W, with hands clap above R shldr at cts 2,3 of each meas.
- 7 Both use three steps to make a full-circle CW turn by oneself. At the same time, M moves L hand to the front of abdomen and R hand to the back.
- 8 Stand in place. M flips R hand to the front of abdomen and L hand to the back while W raises R hand twd M's L shldr with palm facing down<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> In the movie, W's CW turn is extended to the early part of meas 5.

<sup>5</sup> This is how it looks for M's movements in the movie, which does not show M's steps. In Chen's dance notes, M stands still on R with R toe pointing diag R, L toe pointing diag L without wt on L (open fourth pos).

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### VI. Chase, balance, and turn

- 1-2 Beg ML-WR, both move twd LOD in two *waltz steps*, W chases after M with R hand reaching M's L shldr while M raises R hand twd L shldr and catches W's R hand at the end of meas 2.
- 3 In three steps, M's R hand pulls W's R hand such that W passes M's L side and makes a  $\frac{3}{4}$  circle turn CCW to face ctr while M makes a CCW  $\frac{1}{4}$  circle turn to face W, with R hand staying in front of the chest.
- 4 Without ftwk, ptrs hold L hands above the held R hands<sup>7</sup>.
- 5 Take *waltz balance* with M's L steps bkwd and W's R steps fwd (cts 1-3).  
Hand movements: release L hands, move them to the top (ct 1), move them lower, through a big arc at the L side (ct 2), and then hold together again at the waist area (ct 3)<sup>8</sup>.
- 6 Take *waltz balance* with M's R steps fwd and W's L steps bkwd (cts 1-3).  
Hand movements: release R hands and move them to the top (ct 1), move them lower, through a big arc at the R side (ct 2), and then hold together at the waist line (ct 3); meanwhile, L hands are raised up in between ptrs and then held together above heads in this meas<sup>9</sup>.
- 7 In three steps on the spot, M leads W to make a CCW turn, ending with L hands in low position and R hands high above, with ptrs facing each other<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Here we follow the movements shown in the movie. I personally appreciate Chen's version, in which M takes three *waltz steps* in meas 5-7 to turn around CW easily from the back of W to the front of W and then both make a full-circle CW turn in place in meas 8, during which, M moves L hand quickly to the front of abdomen and R hand to the back (ct 1); flips R hand to the front of abdomen and L hand to the back while W raises R hand twd M's L shldr with palm facing down (cts 2,3). Some people modify Chen's dance notations and have the steps in Fig VI move twd RLOD, which is what it looks like in the movie. But that would cause trouble in position M and W, which is unclear in the movie and, actually, the position of the hero and heroine is different from the dancers in the dancing hall. The majority of the dancers in the folk dance community follow Chen's original choreography and have the steps in Fig VI move twd LOD. We would also move twd LOD in Fig VI to avoid disorder and possible collisions on the dance floor.

As we have decided to have the steps in Fig VI move twd LOD, two *waltz steps* in meas 5-6 won't be enough for M to pass in back of W and end in front of W. Three *waltz steps* in meas 5-7 are used instead.

<sup>7</sup> In Chen's version, the held R hands are raised high and W extents L hand at the back to let M's L hand hold it at W's R waist.

<sup>8</sup> As explained earlier, the movements in Fig VI appears twd RLOD with M appears facing RLOD (but gentlemen in the dance hall face ctr instead to do the same movements) in the movie, while we are moving twd LOD and have M back to the ctr.

Here we follow the hand movements shown in the movie. Chen's choreography has R hands released (ct 1) and moved down to at the R side (cts 2,3), while L hands move through a big arc to the top and hold high there (cts 1-3).

<sup>9</sup> Here we follow the movements shown in the movie. Chen's choreography has ptrs moving CCW to exchange positions with R hands holding high above the heads and L hands holding at the back of W's R waist.

<sup>10</sup> Here we follow the movements in the movie. Chen's choreography has ptrs turning CCW to change positions by a waltz step, with L hands move from high to behind W's waist and R hands move from low to high.

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- 8 With L hands at held waist line, ptrs look at each other and take three steps on the spot. M uses R hand to help W take a CW turn back, ending with L shldr close to each other and W's L hand extending through backside to hold M's L hand at W's R waist<sup>11</sup>.

### VII. Circle turns CCW and CW

- 1-2 Ptrs take two *waltz steps* to make a circle turn CCW, looking at each other with L shldr close to each other.
- 3-4 Take two *waltz steps* on the spot while M raises the held L-hands and lowers the held R-hands to have W make a CCW turn, ending with R shldr close to each other and L hands high over head, W's R hand extends through backside, holding M's R hand at L waist.
- 5-8 Ptrs take four *waltz steps* to make two circle turns CW, looking at each other with R shldr close to each other<sup>12</sup>.

### VIII. Ending: Circle turn and honor ptr

- 1-4 Same as meas 1-4 in Fig VII.
- 5-6 Ptrs take two *waltz steps* to make a circle turn CW, looking at each other with R shldr close to each other.
- 7 Ptrs take three steps on the spot, with R hands released and M uses L hand to help W make a circle turn CW.
- 8 Release L hands and hold R hands, ptrs bow and curtsy to each other<sup>13</sup>.

Sequence: Repeat the whole dance (Figs 1-7) three times or just once, depending on the music<sup>14</sup>, then finish with Figs 1-6 and 8.

#### References:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Sound\\_of\\_Music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sound_of_Music)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Sound\\_of\\_Music\\_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sound_of_Music_(film))  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A4ndler>  
<http://www.streetswing.com/histmain/z3landlr.htm>

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<sup>11</sup> Here we follow the movements appear in the movie while Chen's choreography has no action in this meas.

<sup>12</sup> At this moment in the movie, Maria and Captain von Trapp make only one a half, instead of two, *waltz turns*. They look at each other, slow down, and seems to have forgotten what they are doing. Stopped dancing, Maria says "I don't remember any more" and the time seems to have been frozen. The ending of the dance appears in the dance hall before Maria and Georg start dancing. But the connection between our ending and their ending is unknown. Therefore, our dance ends at the moment they stop dancing in the movie.

<sup>13</sup> This follows Chen's choreography, in which ptrs do the bow and curtsy at the end of the dance in each repeat.

<sup>14</sup> Chen's 78-rpm record has the dance music repeated for a total of four time. Later, a short version of dancing twice only is also popular in Taiwanese folk dance community.

<sup>15</sup> 江文里.