

Nineteenth Century Waltz Variations

These steps were popular in American and European ballrooms from the 1840s to the 1860s. Dance manuals offered a variety of descriptions of these variations, often differing in minor details. The following reconstructions are the most common versions of each step.

Cassette: R. Powers - Stockton 1990 (Winner's Redowas)

3/4 meter

Waltz Hold

To take mid-century closed waltz pos, M takes W R hand in his L hand, with both palms down (as if she is holding onto his thumb, with his fingers covering hers). Ideally, the held arms form a rounded arc from M L shldr to W R shldr.

M R arm encircles W waist, with his R hand at the ctr of her lower back. W L hand rests lightly on M R shldr, or casually in front of his shldr.

The accepted waltz pos changed around 1880, and again at the turn of the century.

The Waltz

Cts 1-2-3: M faces away from the ctr of the hall. He steps around W with his L ft. Specifically, M starts turning his body CW, then steps sideways with his L ft twd the outside wall, cutting closely in front of W. Since M is turning as he steps, when his L finally takes wt, it feels like he is stepping bkwd L. On ct 2, M continues to turn and crosses his R closely behind his L with wt (small step) and rises a little higher on both toes. On ct 3, M drops wt onto the L ft, almost in place. Heels never touch the floor.

Meanwhile, W turns to the R, then steps fwd R on ct 1, twd LOD, stepping between M's ft. On ct 2, W continues to turn and takes a very short step L to the L side, rising. On ct 3, W closes R to L with wt, lowering without heels actually touching the floor.

Cts 4-5-6: M does the steps that W did on 1-2-3 and vice versa.

The Hop Waltz (Leap Waltz, Jete Waltz, Sauteuse)

Take the exact same steps as the Waltz above, but execute cts 1 and 4 with a small leap (jete) instead of a flat step. Land very softly from the leaps.

The Polka Redowa

This is similar to the Redowa, or Pas de Basque, but is shifted one ct ahead. For the skating Polka Redowa, let go of the held hands to unfold into Promenade pos. M's free L hand is akimbo (on his hip). W's R hand holds her dress down or is at her waist.

Cts 1-2-3: M starts in a slight plie and glides (skates) strongly fwd with his L. On ct 2, close R toe under the L heel. On ct 3, leap fwd onto the L, landing very softly.

W does the same steps with opp ft, sliding forward R.

Cts 4-5-6: Both continue fwd on opp (inside) ft.

The Polka Redowa may be turned by taking Waltz pos and turning halfway around, as a cpl, on cts 2 and 3 (taking most of the turn on ct 3).

The Polka Mazurka

Cts 1-2-3, a Mazurka Step: In Promenade pos, M glides fwd L and cuts R under the L heel, as in the Polka Redowa. On ct 3, he lifts his L ft 1 inch off the floor (as he hops on the supporting R ft), keeping his L ankle close to his R ankle.

W steps fwd with the opp ft.

Cts 4-5-6: Both continue fwd on opp (inside) ft.

The Polka Redowa may be turned by taking Waltz pos and turning halfway around at the end of the six cts. Repeat on opp ft.

Suggested Sequence

Introduction: 8 meas. Possibly honor ptrs.

Waltz, Hop Waltz and Polka Redowa, 8 meas each. Repeat all three, 8 meas each.

Waltz 8 meas; two pairs of skating Polka Mazurkas (8 meas); take hands to do 2 pairs of turning Polka Mazurkas (8 meas). Repeat all three, 8 meas each.

Presented by Richard Powers
Notes by Richard Powers 1990