



## History of Ballroom Dancing

The five ballroom dances: Modern Waltz, Tango, Viennese Waltz, Slow Foxtrot and Quickstep are danced the world over both socially and in Dancesport competitions. Collectively they are now referred to as 'Standard' dances.

The word 'ballroom' denotes a room where balls may be held: that is – formal social dances. Balls were important social events in the days before radio, television and internet (as in 'having a ball'). The word 'ball' derives from the Latin 'ballare' meaning 'to dance'. The figures in the Standard ballroom dances have now been standardised and categorised into various levels for teaching and competition, with internationally agreed vocabularies, techniques, rhythm and tempos.

The Viennese Waltz is a dance performed to music with three beats to the bar; at around 52 bars per minute. This means that if a step is taken on each beat, then each bars starts with the opposite foot to that of the previous bar. It gives the dance a delightful romantic tilt.

The Modern Waltz is a more sedate form of the fast Viennese Waltz danced at a leisurely 30 bars per minute. Because of the slower tempo, dancers can add more figures, some with extra syncopated beats, some with slow "picture" steps. These give the dance light and shade, and make it more interesting to perform and to watch.

The modern Tango originated from the light spirited "Flamenco". With the Spanish conquest of much of South America, this dance together with other Spanish folk dances naturally emigrated with settlers from Spain. Over the years, these dances merged with other dances imported with the Negro slaves from Africa. Slowly it gained popular acceptance by the upper class in Argentina, and by the turn of the 20th century, interest in the dance rapidly exploded first in Paris then London and New York. This dance combines the proud torso of other ballroom dances, with a staccato action, giving the visual emphasis to the torso and head.

The Slow Foxtrot is a dance performed by couples in ballroom hold to music with a 4/4 rhythm and about 30 bars per minute tempo. The name was attributed to Harry Fox in the stage show Ziegfeld Follies in New York in 1913. The Slow Foxtrot has walks and pivots; danced with smooth action presenting a smooth flowing aesthetic.

The Quickstep is a faster version of the Slow Foxtrot with the absorption of such dances like Charleston, Shimmy and Black Bottom. It is danced at a tempo of approximately 50 bars per minute. It retains the walks, runs, chasses and turns of the original Foxtrot, with some other fast figures such as locks, hops and skips added.



## HISTORY OF LATIN-AMERICAN DANCING

The International Dancesport championship "Latin-American" dances are: Samba, Rumba, Cha Cha, Jive and Paso Doble. The first three dances originated in Latin America, the Paso Doble from Europe and the Jive from North America.

The Samba has its beginning from the slaves imported into Brazil from Angola and Congo. Later a composite dance evolved combining the plait figures, the body rolls, the sways and the carnival steps.

The Rumba had its origin with the African Negro slaves imported into Cuba, whose dances emphasized the movement of the body rather than the feet. With only a transfer of weight from one foot to the other on beat 1 of each bar, and the absence of an actual step on this beat, the dance has developed a very sensual character. Together with the slow tempo of the music at 29 bars per minute makes the dance very romantic.

The Cha Cha, was first danced in Cuba, by dancing with and extra beats to Rumba. It has also strong relationship with the Mambo, the triple, which has 5 steps to a bar. The Cha Cha is danced currently at about 120 beats per minute (30 bars per minute). The steps are taken on the beats, with a strong hip movement as the knee straighten on the half beats in between.

The Jive originated with the Negroes in the South East of USA. The current version has basic steps composed of a fast syncopated chasse to the left followed by another to the right; followed by a slower back break and replace forward.

The Paso Doble is based on the bullfight. It was one of many Spanish folk dances. It portrays the "Torero" (the male dancer) and his cape (his partner); and is dance to the characteristic march music used for procession at the beginning of a corrida.



## AUSTRALIAN NEW VOGUE DANCING

New Vogue Dances originated in the 1930-40, when some Australian dancers rebelled against the formal balletic foot work of the English Old Time dances, 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 make them attractive to watch. The dances also have only the footwork, alignments and basic hold prescribed, leaving scope for the dancers to add their own shaping and styling, which makes them very expressive to dance and to watch.

The Australian New vogue dances are sequence dances for couples, each couple consisting usually of a man and a woman. In sequence dances, every couple on the dance floor performs the same steps at the same time, and at the end of the sequence, the steps are started again.

Reference and further details:

<http://www-staff.it.uts.edu.au/~don/pubs/modern.html>

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