Introduction to Viennese Waltz

**General** - Originally a continental fast waltz, the Viennese was standardized with only six basic figures for use in competition in 1953. Many other figures have been added since for social dancing which develop the use of open positions. It should have a definite lilt when danced correctly which gives it the stride for elegant look.

**Timing** - As a fast waltz the Viennese is done in 3/4 time with three beats per measure using a fairly wide variance of tempo - 50 to 60 (b.p.m.) beats per minute. Changes are made on the conventional 4th and 8th measures but certain figures transcend this rule when the so-called picture configurations are used.

**Rhythm** - The early continental version accented each beat but the modern dance utilized the down beat on 1 to the extent that time is usually taken from 3 to accomplish this. Therefore, timing would be a little longer on count 1, a normal length of time on 2, and a lesser one on 3. This, of course, does not apply to canter and broken rhythms.

**Body Mechanics** - Dancers should consciously hold the arms a little higher and wider than in the International and American waltz. The skimming action which is characteristic for the standard figures on count 1 is accomplished by a slight downswing at its inception (the lilting action is not unlike the slow foxtrot). Since turns are made with more rotary action, the amount of sway approaches zero. It is characteristic for the Natural Turn to under turn the Reverse Turn, therefore, the body mechanics for the former more closely resemble the International version, including a slight sway. There are no heel pivots in the standard figures.

**Movement** - From a body rise at the end of the normal 3 beats of music, the lowering is not made as in the International waltz but in the process of using a skimming step. The second step on turns is a fairly wide one so that the 3rd one takes advantage of body flight.

In profile standard movement and to some extent the closed changes, hesitations, and foot swings, utilize a long shallow dip configuration, where the lowest part of the profile is on step 2 (called the transition step).

As in the rest of the modern ballroom rhythms Viennese utilizes the “shaping” or *CBM on the first step of all turning actions. CBMP is not used in the standard figures other than in the Contra Check in a transitional way, or sparingly in some of the variations that are attendant to this rhythm.

**Rise and Fall** - Normally the rise and fall actions are more shallow than in conventional waltz. Accomplished dancers tend to get their lilt from a more subtle use of rise and fall where they are looking for the gliding action to accomplish the elegance of the dance, with a higher dance hold and extended head kept in a fixed position.

**Terms Used** - Some of the terms which are employed, but not necessarily exclusive in Viennese waltz, are given below:

- Attitude - bent knees (nearly always in a backward movement)
- Arabesque - straight leg (not stiff)
- Dêvelopé - unfolding of leg in a forward movement
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Hesitation - lifting and/or turning action on one foot usually associated with canter rhythm

Parallel - refers to the hold - in skaters or Varsouvienne normally, but some times side by side position

Spiral - turn on one foot allowing the other to follow body lead

Corté - in Viennese a lowering onto the supporting foot where the other is pointed to the side, often with a little twist