

## DAN AND SANDI'S

### INTRODUCTION TO QUICKSTEP

In the 1920s, with ragtime music the rage, new dances such as the Charleston, the Shimmy and the Black Bottom were in full swing. Foxtrot was new too, having come onto the dance floor out of Harry Fox's vaudeville routine. Most dancers found the fast foxtrot too fast for a night of dancing, so instructors began slowing it down. In England, the faster version was retained as the "Quickstep" and in America, it became the "Peabody," named for a New York police lieutenant popular in dancing circles.

The new quickstep moved a little like waltz, added some flourishes of Charleston and kept the speed of the old foxtrot, plus the runs, chasses, skips and hops of Harry Fox's "trot."

Today, Quickstep is spectacular to watch and dance because of its bubbly, energetic music and dynamic movement.

#### TEMPO & TIMING:

Quickstep is danced at 48 to 50 measures of music per minute, compared to the modern foxtrot at 30 measures a minute. There are four beats to each measure of music, and the basic figures are danced SQQ, meaning the "slow" will use two of the four beats of music and each "quick" will use one beat of music.

Hardly any figure in quickstep is basic, however, and you will find combinations of SSS, SQQS, QQS and even QQSSQQ. Fortunately, most of the figures used in quickstep are borrowed from waltz and foxtrot—such as impetus turns, open and closed telemarks, quick open reverse, spin turn, and chasses and locks—so it becomes a matter of learning to apply quickstep timing to known patterns. Some figures, however, are strictly quickstep figures, such as fishtail, woodpecker, V6 and tipsy.

#### DANCE POSITION:

Quickstep is identified as one of the International style dance rhythms. It is danced in closed position, like waltz and foxtrot. The dancer's four blocks of weight (hips, torso, shoulders, head) need to be in balance. Partners maintain a body connection (your "sticky spot"). Poise is slightly forward so that body weight is balanced over the front part of the foot. Maintaining the speed of quickstep is possible through the inter-related components of position relative to partner, body poise and distribution of weight.

#### MOVEMENT:

To achieve that energetic movement of quickstep, you need "flight" or forward impulsion. It also has to have a light springy feel but not a bobbing up and down motion. This means your knees and ankles will work like shock absorbers.

Don't dance flat-footed.

In our classes, we often talk about using a "sliced position" or being in position with "shoulder leading," instead of having the bodies square to each other. (See "Popular Quickstep Steps" below.) This makes it possible to move through turning figures faster to accommodate the speed of the rhythm. This "sliced" position is more formally identified as CBM (Contrary Body Position) or CBMP (Contrary Body Movement Position).

#### RISE & FALL:

Rise & fall in quickstep is used with figures generally as they would be danced in waltz or foxtrot, except there is less rise (and therefore less fall) because there is less bending and straightening of the knees and more forward motion due to the speed of the music. Forward steps usually begin with a heel lead, followed by two or more forward steps on the balls of the feet. Rise begins at the end of step one as you roll through the foot onto the ball.

Chasses, for example, start with a through step on a heel lead (for the forward moving partner) with rise beginning at the end of step one, continuing onto steps two and three, fully up on step four, and lowering at the end of step four.

#### POPULAR QUICKSTEP STEPS:

##### Quick Open Reverse **SQQ**

Starting in CP, (1) Man forward left with heel lead and rise, (2) side and forward right on toe turning, (3) back left in sliced position (banjo), lowering to the heel. For Lady, (1) back right (no foot rise), (2) side and forward left on toe, turning so the foot points toward LOD, (3) forward right in banjo. Step two for Lady is typical of “inside of turn” movement in that the foot will turn more than the body, and the body catches up on the next step.

##### Spin Turn **SSS**

Often overturned with Man ending backing DLC in sliced position, it is danced like in the other smooth dances but with quickstep timing.

##### V6 **QQSSQQ**

Often follows a spin turn, Man backs (Lady forward) DLC on all steps (right shoulder leading) except step 6, which establishes a new line of direction toward DLW, creating a “V” on the floor.

##### Running Finish **QQS (or SQQ)**

Starts in CP Man facing RLOD, Lady moving down line of dance, sliced with left shoulder leading. (1) Man steps back left, Lady forward right with heel lead. (2) Man begins a right face turn on the inside with a back right. Lady’s second step is forward left turning right face with the foot landing to the side. It is important for the Lady to think of going forward, not bending around the man, when the step is initiated. (3) Man steps forward on left foot, Lady finishes the turn and steps back on right foot toward line of dance.

#### CLASSIC QUICKSTEPS:

I Wanna QS (Palmquist, 1967, phase III)  
St. Michel’s QS (Casey, 1984, phase VI)  
Cheek to Cheek (Palmquist, 1969, phase V)  
Let’s Dance (Stone, classic)  
Fortuosity (Rother, 1980, phase VI)

URDC Hall of Fame 2002  
URDC Hall of Fame 1996  
URDC Hall of Fame 1979  
URDC Hall of Fame 1993