

Exercises in Technique - Jig Time (6/8)

by William J. Ireland.

Ordinary step practice is often found dull, particularly by those most in need of it. Special exercises will make the acquisition of good technique more interesting.

Care should be taken not to prolong the practice of these exercises to excess, but at the same time it really is necessary to see a class dancing occasionally for 32 bars or even 64 bars so that some general pattern of movement - and indeed feeling for movement can be evolved.

In these exercises the Teacher should aim at ease and fluidity of movement. If emphasis of thought can be directed to the transfer of weight from supporting foot to working foot, which then becomes supporting foot, and to the necessity of keeping body weight above the base of support, these aims can be achieved more quickly.)

SLIP STEPS

All join hands in a circle, facing inwards.

1. Dance 16 slip steps (8 bars) or more to the left.
2. The same to the right. (This is to check the positions of the feet, e.g. heels meeting, equal outward pointing.)
3. Dance 8 slip steps to L, 8 to R, 4 to L, 4 to R, 2 to L, 2 to R, 2 to L, 2 to R. (This is to increase awareness of transference of body weight.)
4. Dance 8 slip steps to L, travelling clockwise. Turn right about and dance 8 to R, still travelling clockwise.
5. Repeat with the other foot in the opposite direction.

SKIP CHANGE OF STEP

EXERCISE 1 - HOPS (Practice at attaining the correct position of the working foot - Precision)

(a) Face round the room. Point left foot forward (in 4th position in front of 3rd, with the nail of the little toe on the floor) and, to 4 bars of music, hop 8 times on right foot.

Then change feet and hop 8 times with R.F. pointed forward. Then 4 hops - 2 bars - with each foot pointed forward. Then 2 hops. Then hop for 16 bars - 8 L, 8 R, 4 L, 4 R, 2 L, 2 R, 2 L, 2 R.

(b) Starting with L.F. pointed forward, hop 2 L, 2 R, 2 L, 2 R. Leave R.F. in position and dance 4 skip change of step forward, R L R L. Repeat.

EXERCISE 2 - TRAVEL AND TURN PARTNER (Pattern of movement - Variation of length of step Ability to control a one-handed turn and link to the next movement.)

(a) Couples face round the room counter-clockwise. Dance forward for 4 bars (near hands joined). Face partner, and turn by the right hand for 4 bars. On the 4th bar the

man progresses forward (counter-clockwise) to meet the next woman, who travels clockwise to meet him. Repeat with this new partner and continue as long as necessary.

(b) Repeat the above movement, but start facing clockwise (woman on man's left). Turn by the left hand to progress in directions opposite to those in (a).

EXERCISE 3 - SERPENTINE (Objects as in Exercise 2.)

(a) Couples face each other round the room, the woman on the man's right, with hands crossed in front, promenade hold. Skip change round the room. In each four bars couples pass right shoulder, woman to woman, on 1-2 and left shoulder, man to man, on 3-4. The length of step varies: for men, long on 1-2 and short on 3-4; for women, vice versa.

(b) Dance the serpentine course for 8 bars. Turn opposite man or woman by the right hand for

4 bars and then by the left hand for 4 bars. Taking promenade hold with the person just turned, the men dance round the way they were going, i.e women continue with their new partners.

EXERCISE 4 - TRAVEL WITH TURNS (Control of weight transference - fluidity.)

(a) Skip change round the room for 16 bars. On the third bar in every four, when the right foot is leading, turn 360° to the left. During the turn the body continues travelling in the same direction. Skip change round the room for 16 bars. On the fourth bar in every four, when the left foot is leading, turn 360° to the right.

Skip change round the room. In each 8 bars, on bar 3 turn 360° to the left and on bar 8 turn 360° to the right.

EXERCISE 5 - SWING AND TRAVEL (Objects as in Exercise 4. This exercise, in particular is a good 'loosener').

Take hands in a circle facing inwards. Point R.F. back and swing it forward, hopping twice on L.F. (1 bar). Dance one skip change forward, R.F. leading (1 bar). Hop twice again, pointing L.F. forward and swinging it back, and dance one skip change backwards. After, say, 16 bars of this do the same starting with the other foot.

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