

Can Social Dancers Be Enticed to Try Round Dancing?

By Kaye West

Most teachers are interested in finding new students for their round dance program. My belief is that there are numerous people who would love to dance but they have never heard of round dancing. What can be done to find those folks and introduce them to our activity?

When at Arizona State University as the Director of the Ballroom Dance Program, Larry Caves had students ask a certain number of folks at a public venue, such as the mall, if they danced or have ever wanted to learn how. The vast majority who didn't dance reported that they would like to learn to dance but did not have the opportunity to do so! When he and I taught a series of social dance classes, which we advertised widely, one hundred sixty-five people showed up! Since then we have collaborated to put the lessons (and other articles) in writing and post them on a website, available at <https://home.csulb.edu/~kwest/wido/wi-do.html>, so they are accessible to anyone with internet access (My dancers, years ago, insisted *written information* was essential for them to readily study and review information taught).

In addition to the lessons at this site there is abundant information about round dancing, including Paul and Jean Zimmer's 30-second video describing round dancing, links to Roundalab and ICBDA, and many other items for round dancers, including information for those who wish to improve their techniques and know more about specific rhythms. And there are articles such as comparing round dancing to social and ballroom dancing as well as the benefits of partnership dancing.

The lessons themselves are sequential and are designed to help those who know absolutely nothing about dancing learn to dance. Since timing is often problematic for new dancers, as is beginning figures with different feet, the first four lessons of Social Foxtrot and Single Swing use the consistent pattern of Slow Slow Quick Quick (SSQQ) which consistently alternate feet, just as walking does. Larry calls the lessons "Walk In, Dance Out" for that reason. There is also a tutorial on learning the timing pattern for those who need that assistance.

How might others use this information?

- Encourage round dancers to identify one other person or couple (neighbors, children, grandchildren, etc.) and use the information on this site to teach someone else to dance and share information about round dancing. Learning a few patterns to use in social dancing can convince them that they indeed *can* learn to dance and that it is an enjoyable activity! (Some apparently believe they can't dance simply because they have never been taught!)
- Teach some of the patterns, especially the thirteen with the SSQQ timing (a limited number at a time) and hash cue them as new patterns are introduced. After introducing just two patterns, provide a few minutes for them to choose patterns themselves (dance freestyle) so they realize

what to do in social dancing. This SSQQ rhythm can be danced interchangeably about eight-five percent of the time in most social dance situations. Such a segment could be added to a round dance program (perhaps fifteen minutes before or after the regular class) so dancers know what to do when no one is there to cue them (the reason round dancers say they don't do social dancing).

- Encourage round dancers to attend social dance sessions as exemplars who can tell others that they learned what they know via round dancing.
- Many community/local newspapers are eager for folks to submit articles since they are often limited in resources and have few traditional reporters. For example, my community of nearly 3,000 homes has been publishing articles and the lessons I have posted on the website. Anyone can write articles themselves or request permission to publish articles on this website to submit (text me at 480-390-1554). We are happy to share the information and would just like to know where else the information is shared.
- Suggest dancers put links to round dance information (such as local round dance information) on their personal business cards to distribute (a sample is at the bottom of the above-referenced web page).

Word of mouth is a powerful advertising tool and ***all dancers*** can be encouraged to help spread the word!