

LA CONTRADANZA

(From Monterey)

Early California Dance

This description is taken from the book Dances of Early California Days, by Lucile K. Czarnowski, published by Pacific Books, Palo Alto, California, copyright 1950. Permission to use this description in the December, 1960 issue of "Let's Dance" magazine has been granted by the author.

Music: Record: Bowmar Records Dances of Early California Days, No. 1114 La Contradanza (Monterey) 10".

Formation: An even number of couples are arranged in a large double circle with two couples facing each other. Odd numbered couples face ccw. and even numbered couples face cw. The woman is on the right of the partner. The man's free arm or arms hang naturally at his side. The woman holds her skirts at the side with one or both hands when they are not otherwise employed. During the formation of the figures all dancers take waltz balance in place when not moving into other positions. The two couples facing each other, odds and evens, form a little unit, or minor set. Each figure is performed by each minor set at the same time, and in the same manner.

Steps: A slow waltz balance step is used for the figures. It is danced as follows:
step forward with the L ft. (ct. 1), bring ball of R ft. to instep of L raising both heels and transferring weight to R ft. (ct. 2), step with L (ct. 3).
The waltz step is used for the chorus.

Music 3/4

PATTERN

In an informal manner, couples take their position on the floor in the formation described. Partners bow to each other and the dance begins.

Note: For the sake of brevity, the action will be described for one minor set; couples identified as number one and two. All minor sets perform the same action at the same time.

Measures Figure I: Ring with linked arms.
Both number one and number two M link R elbows with the opposite woman. In doing this, the M offers his arm which the W accepts. This brings the M elbow above that of the W. Elbows are about halfway between shoulder and waist height, hands are pointed downward. With 4 waltz balance steps starting R ft., the joined couples circle in place cw, until the M are back to back. L elbows are then linked with the W on the L (own partner), and the little circle is formed with M facing outward, W facing inward.

A: 1-4

A: 5-8 4 waltz balance steps are taken. Start in the direction of M number one for the first waltz balance step, and in the reverse direction for the second waltz balance step. Steps three and four are a repetition of steps one and two. (To accomplish this, M number one will take one waltz balance step forward, while opposite M takes one waltz balance step backward toward number one M, and the W move sideward toward M number one. Second step is in reverse direction.)

A variant of this part of Figure I is as follows: all balance to the M R, then to their L, repeating the waltz balance step to R and L.

Repetition
A: 1-4 Dropping R arm which was linked with opposite W and keeping L arm linked with own partner, circle ccw. in place with 4 waltz balance steps until W are back to back. R elbows are then linked with opposite W on the R, forming a little circle with M facing inward, W facing outward.

A: 5-8 Repeat action of measures 5-8 starting the waltz balance steps in direction of W number one.

B: 1-8 Chorus.
Partners take closed dance position and waltz one and a half times around the opposite couple progressing in a ccw. direction. 4 waltz steps are taken to make one circle of the opposite couple, and 4 waltz steps to progress to meet another couple. At the completion of the Chorus, couples number one and two originally facing each other now have their backs to each other. Each couple is facing a new couple with whom to dance the next figure.

All odd numbered couples have progressed one place in a ccw. direction around the large circle, and even numbered couples have progressed one place cw. around the large circle.

Figure II. La Gloria

A: 1-4 Couples number one and number two join hands in a circle (R palms are up, L palms are down). The M of couple number one with one waltz balance step, moves to the center of the circle making one-half turn L under his R arm. On the second waltz balance step, he brings the opposite W to his R side, circling her with his R arm, and on the third waltz balance step, he brings his partner to his L side, encircling her with his L arm. All take one waltz balance step forward on the fourth measure.

A: 5-8 All return to original positions with number one W (his partner) bowing out on the fifth waltz balance step, number two W (the opposite W) bowing out on the sixth waltz balance step, and the number one M turning R into his place on the seventh waltz balance step. All take one waltz balance step toward the center of the circle on the eighth measure.

Repetition Repeat action of Figure II with number two M leading.
A: 1-8

Chorus

B: 1-8 The chorus is repeated, with couples progressing as previously described.
Figure III El Molinete.

A: 1-4 Couples one and two join hands in a circle. W of couple number one followed by her partner, leads under the arch formed by the joined hands of couple number two with 2 waltz balance steps. Couple number two follows, turning under the arch bringing all four dancers into a back to back position in the circle with two additional waltz balance steps. The circle has been turned inside out.

A: 5-8 Lift arms high and turn L to face center (2 waltz balance steps). Lower crossed arms and balance forward and backward (2 waltz balance steps).

Repetition All lift arms high and turn R returning to back to back position, and balance backward toward the center of the circle, and balance forward away from the center (4 waltz balance steps).
A: 1-4

A: 5-8 The W of couple number one leads backward under the arch formed by the opposite couple while the number two couple moves back to original position, W turning R, M turning L to bring all facing the center of the circle (4 waltz balance steps).

Chorus

B: 1-8 The chorus is repeated, with couples progressing as previously described.

Figure IV. Woman Circles Man.

(This is a variant not recently used in this dance. It is found on p. 107 of the above book.)

Music The M of couple number one with the W of couple number two grasp hands, R in R. L in L, with L hand uppermost. They remain facing each other. The W turns to her L under her L arm, and circles around number one M from his L, to his R side, and back to her place. 4 waltz balance steps are used. Number one M drops hands with number two W and takes the same grasp with his own partner. She circles around him in the same direction (ccw.) and returns to her place. 4 waltz balance steps are used. Throughout the figure both M, and W when not circling the M, balance in place with waltz balance steps starting backward, then forward, backward and forward.
A: 1-4
A: 5-8

Repetition The same action is repeated with number two M and number one W joining hands. Number one W circle M ccw. Number two M drops hands with number one W, and joins hands with his own partner, who circles him in a similar manner. The other dances in place as described.
A: 1-8