

Maxixe

(United States-Brazil)

The Maxixe (mahk-SHEESH) was one of the most popular ballroom dances of 1914. It was sometimes called the "Brazilian Tango" or "Tango Brésilienne". There was no agreement on how to pronounce it. Besides the above, it was sometimes called mah-SHEESH, mah-CHEE-chee, along with other pronunciations. Vernon Castle claims the "mah-SHEESH" pronunciation is from the Brazilians themselves. The dance is basically a Two-Step, with body bends and many different arm positions. This arrangement was presented by Richard and Melanie Powers at the 1989 University of the Pacific Folk Dance Camp.

CASSETTE: R. Powers special cassette (S) "Buenos Dias Maxixe" Side A/10 (with intro.);
R. Powers special cassette #3 "Down in Zanzibar" Side A/11 (no intro.).
2/4 meter

FORMATION: Cpls, in Ballroom pos, M facing LOD.

STEPS: Two-Step (L): Step on L to L side (ct 1); step on R beside L (ct &); step on L to L side (ct 2); hold (ct &). Step alternates.

Maxixe Two-Step (turning): While starting to rotate CW (as a cpl), step on L very slightly to L side (almost in place) and begin to bend body to R (ct 1); step on ball of R ft slightly behind L ft, continuing turn and bend (ct &); step on L to L side (ct 2); hold, completing turn and ending with body bent as far to R side as possible, M L (and W R) hands fairly high in air and arched over head (ct &). Repeat to R side, continuing rotation CW, but bending to L side with hands coming down. (Description for M; W beg with R ft and bend body to L side.)

Heel-and-Toe Singles (also called Les à Côte): Semi-open pos, facing and moving in LOD: step fwd on L heel and slightly to R (ct 1); bring R ft up to L, taking wt (ct &); step on ball of L ft fwd and slightly to L (ct 2); bring R ft up to L, taking wt (ct &). R ft moves in a straight line, while L ft points from side to side. W step on ball of R ft fwd/R and on R heel fwd/L, doing the counterpart of the M step.

Sliding Step: Step on one ft to the side (ct 1); bring other ft up to it, taking wt (ct &). Two per meas.

Long Singles with Stamps: Step diag/fwd on heel of one ft (ct 1); bring other ft up to the heel of the first, taking wt (ct &); repeat cts 1, & (cts 2, &). Step diag/fwd on first ft (meas 2, ct 1); stamp twice (no wt) with the other ft near the first ft (cts &, 2); hold (ct &). Can be done with either ft, moving diag/L when starting with the L ft and diag/R when starting with R ft.

Short Singles with Stamp: Step diag/fwd on heel of one ft (ct 1); bring other ft up to the heel of the first, taking wt (ct &); step diag/fwd on first ft (ct 2); brushing stamp (fwd) with other ft (ct &). Can be done with either ft, moving diag/L when starting with L ft and diag/R when starting with R ft.

POSITIONS: Ballroom: "Dancers stand directly in front of each other, the lady's right hand in the gentleman's left. The elbows should be slightly bent. The

gentleman's right hand should be a little above the lady's waist-line, more or less over her left shldr-blade. The lady's left hand should rest lightly on the gentleman's right shldr."*

Semi-open: Stand with arms as in Ballroom pos, but ptrs turn about 1/4 away from each other to face fwd in LOD.

Skating: Ptrs stand side by side, W to R of M, slightly in front. L hands are joined out to L side, R hands joined at W R waist.

Back-to-Front: W stands in front of M with her back to him, holding her hands in front of her chest, palms down with fingertips touching, elbows out to side. M stands behind her and holds his hands under hers, palms down.

STYLING: Dance is somewhat on heels, as much as is comfortable. The body should be very flexible and the bending as much as can be done gracefully. The Castles recommend being very conservative at first. "Get the steps and figures so that you do not have to think about them, and acquaint yourself with the music and rhythm of the dance; after this you may sway the body and try to be graceful. If you feel easy and graceful, you probably are; but if you feel stiff or awkward, go back to the way you first learned and do the dance simply and plainly. For, let me assure you, this dance, with all its bends and swaying, will make a woman appear very attractive or very ridiculous."*

*Modern Dancing by Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1914.

MUSIC	2/4 meter	PATTERN
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Measures

INTRODUCTION (May vary according to music.)

1-4 No action.

5-8 Walk 8 steps in LOD in Ballroom pos. M start L ft moving fwd, W start Rft moving bkwd. On meas 8, lower clasped hands and start to turn CW so that M ends with his back to ctr.

PART I (Steps described for M; W opposite)

I. MAXIXE TWO-STEPS IN LOD, TURNING

1-4 Starting L, 4 Maxixe Two-Steps; start by raising joined hands on meas 1 and bending to M R. Rotate 2 complete times (turning CW and moving in LOD), ending with M back to ctr.

5-7 Starting L and moving LOD, Heel-and-Toe Singles, three times.

8 Step on L to L (ct 1); keeping wt on L, touch R heel in RLOD while bringing joined hands arched over head and leaning to the R, facing RLOD in Scorpian pose (pictured at R)(ct 2).



II. MAXIXE TWO-STEPS IN RLOD, TURNING

- 1-4 Four Maxixe Two-Steps moving in RLOD, rotating 2 complete times, turning CW. Start M R and W L ft, lowering joined hands on meas 1. End with M back to ctr.
- 5-7 Six Sliding Steps to M R. M brings W R hand slowly behind her back and takes it in his R. Then both bring free L hands out and above heads, to join in an arch.
- 8 M: One more Sliding Step to R (ct 1); turn to face LOD while stepping back on R (ct 2).
W: Step L in place, turning to face LOD (ct 1); step back on R (ct 2).
Cpls end in Skating pos, facing in LOD.

PART II (Same ftwk for M and W.)

III. SINGLES WITH STAMPS IN SKATING POSITION

- 1-4 Beg L ft, Long Singles with Stamps, to diag/L and diag/R.
- 5-6 Beg L ft, Short Singles with Stamp, to diag/L and diag/R.
- 7 One Two-Step to L side.
- 8 M: One Two-Step to R side. At same time, release R hands and turn W once around CW, placing her directly in front in Back-to-Front pos.
W: Turn CW once around, stepping R,L,R (cts 1,&,2) to Back-to-Front pos.

IV. TWO-STEPS IN BACK-TO-FRONT POSITION

- 1-7 Seven Two-Steps, rotating CW in place, both starting L. These should be done leaning to L side when starting L and to the R side when starting R.
- 8 M: With R hands joined, step L,R,L in place (cts 1,&,2) and help W to turn CW. End in Ballroom pos with back to ctr.
W: With 2 steps (R,L) turn 1/2 CW to face ptr and take Ballroom pos (cts 1,2).
- Simple Version: Meas 1-6: Dance 6 Two-Steps rotating CW, ending M back to ctr. Meas 7-8: M step L,R,L,R (cts 1,2,1,2). W step L,R,L, touch R ft. (cts 1,2,1,2) while turning 1/2 CW into Ballroom pos.
- 32 meas Repeat PART I and PART II.

Optional Ending: On repeat of dance, end Fig IV, meas 6 with M facing LOD.

- (31-32) M: Take W L hand in R, step L on L ft (ct 1); step R on R ft (ct 2); step L on L ft (meas 32, ct 1); place R heel on floor pointing twd W, bending sdwd and looking twd ptr. End in pose with L hand on hips or L arm diag/up to L.
- W: Step L on L ft (ct 1); turn 1 full CW turn with 2 steps (R,L), moving to M R side (ct 2; meas 32, ct 1); step on R to R side, leaving L heel out twd M and looking at him (ct 2). End in pose looking at ptr, R hand on hips or R arm diag/up to R, matching ptr.

THE MAXIXE _____ by Stan Isaacs

The Maxixe was the fad dance of 1914. In the advertisements for dance schools in the New York Times, Maxixe had the biggest type fonts (followed closely by the Tango, still popular after two years of "fad-dom".) The Maxixe seems to have originated around the 1870's, in Brazil, as a combination of the polka with some hip movements. As is so often the case, what eventually got to the American ballrooms (via Paris, of course) was a much refined and changed version of the Brazilian dance.

In the "Dicionario do folclore Brasileiro" (Vol 2, 1962), Luis de Camara Cascudo says (in rough translation):

"It (Maxixe) resulted from a fusion of hapanera for rhythm, polca for footwork, with the adaptation of African syncopation. It was a dance of the ballroom of a united couple, demanding extreme agility for rapid figures and steps. The maxixe danced by professionals, in the cabarets, was almost a gymnastic dance. It appeared in the second half of the 19th century.

"People spoke of "to bend the Maxixe", instead of "to dance the Maxixe."

David P. Appleby says in "The Music of Brazil" (1983):

"The term "lundu" in the nineteenth century was applied not only to songs and dances but also to poems and by the mid-century to instrumental compositions. As an instrumental form, it can be considered the parent of the "batuque", "maxixe", "samba", and other forms of urban popular music.

"The "lundu" (sometimes "londu", or "lundum") has been defined as an African song and dance of Angolan origin, brought to Brazil by Bantu slaves.

"The polka was first introduced into Brazil in 1845 and its popularity there soon equaled its popularity in Europe.

"In addition to musical and stylistic changes in European dances, a choreographic change consisted of a characteristic suggestive hip movement called a "jeitinho". A polka danced with a "jeitinho" was called a "polca-maxixe" (pronounced mah-she'-she), a polka danced in the manner of a "maxixe."

"The most frequent subtitle to Nazareth piano music is "tango" or "tango brasileiro." The most frequently used rhythmic patterns of Nazareth's tangos relate to the habanera, but historically Nazareth's tangos relate to a popular Brazilian dance, the "maxixe." Behague states that "Nazareth's tangos can be considered authentic "maxixes."

"Nazareth preferred the designation tango to "maxixe", which he considered a vulgar dance. The tangos of Nazareth were a salon dance, whereas the "maxixe" was danced in various popular festivities and differed in choreographic representation. The Nazareth tangos also bore a historical relationship to the polka. The fusion of various styles is expressed in the double designation "polca-tango," first used in a piece called "Rayon d'Or" in 1889."

In ballroom dancing, the successor to the Maxixe was the Samba (which still has a Maxixe step in it.) And today's new dance fad, the Lambada, seems still to have movements suggestive of the Maxixe (as well as other suggestive movements.)

In Folk Dancing, we have seen two related dances. The first is a dance called Maxina which was invented for a competition for new dances in Britain, in 1917, and won first prize. It has movements based on the Maxixe (mostly some heel-and-toe steps, with some body bending) but the music was completely different.

Another version of the Maxixe was introduced several years ago, researched by E. W. Bischoff and adapted by Glenn Stubblefield, of San Francisco. This version comes from the book "Dances of Today", by Albert W. Newman, published in 1914. Newman, in turn, credits the dance to Mr. Fred W. Sutor, Instructor at the Newman Studio, Philadelphia, Pa. The original Sutor version used a popular Maxixe tune called "Dengozo"; the Folk Dance version used a tune called "Chicken Reel".