

The Principles of Modern Ballroom Dances

In the course of her series of talks on modern ballroom dancing Miss Phyllis Bates outlined the principles underlying various modern dances. These principles give an understanding of the trend of modern developments in this field.

BY modern dances," explained Miss Bates, "I mean those of the non-sequence type which have made their appearance during the last ten years, as distinct from what are termed 'old-time' dances, which include the old waltz, 'square dances,' such as the Lanciers and those of the sequence type such as the two-step and the schottische. These are never seen in the cities now except at the one or two 'old-time' assemblies which still survive.

"The modern waltz and fox-trot, which, as we know them now, are entirely British are the two standard British dances of to-day. They represent the ideal in our ballrooms, and, performed correctly, are really graceful and beautiful. While we have been developing these two dances, America has launched several of an eccentric character on the world. We have had the 'Chicago,' the 'Blues,' the 'Charleston,' the 'Blackbottom,' and, if rumour is correct, we are to have the 'Heebie Jeebies' very soon!

MODIFIED FOR BRITISH TASTE.

"While these dances in their original American form find considerable favour in Australia and a little in New Zealand, before being accepted by the best English teachers, they are invariably modified, sometimes out of all recognition. This is a fact which is not generally appreciated, as witness the case of the Charleston. We were continually reading condemnatory newspaper reports which really referred to either the American or the stage Charleston, and were not applicable at all to the flat English ballroom version. Nevertheless we seem content to draw our inspirations from America, and these American dances, which usually have some points to recommend them, having been 'Anglicised,' serve their purpose for a period. It seems that nowadays we must have variety, and, if these dances tend to keep the general interest alive, it is something in their favour. Unfortunately there are too many people who want to know 'the latest' to the exclusion of all else, and too many teachers ready to regard the 'latest' as a good money-maker, and who accordingly advertise it practically to the exclusion of the more worthy fox-trot and waltz. As a result there are many who get a distorted idea of the comparative values of the various dances—for instance, they place the Blackbottom or the Charleston on a level with the fox-trot or waltz. I do not discountenance innovations, but I would never sacrifice good style to novelty, and I know of nothing which will develop a dancer's discrimination and judgment so much as a knowledge of the principles governing the different dances.

THE FOX-TROT.

"The fox-trot, which made its appearance in England about ten years ago, was of American origin. It was at first performed almost as a sequence dance, most people having their own particular sequences, and consequently find-

ing it an advantage to have their particular partners as well. This is quite unnecessary now that we have developed a technique which makes it easy for the girl to follow the man's lead without knowing beforehand what he means to do. After the inception of the fox-trot teachers were soon at work on it, and changed it from a side-to-side chassée movement on the toes to a flowing walk and a three-step, taken directly forward or backward, or on turns, making use of the heels. To-day the dance consists mainly of the passing three-step, in which the feet are not brought together, and the natural and reverse open turns.

The waltz was actually changing before the advent of the fox-trot—the old operatic technique was gradually being dropped. The introduction of the fox-trot gave an impetus to this change, and thenceforward with both dances the development of the natural movement technique which prevails to-day was contemporaneous. The waltz now consists of a three-step in which the feet pass slightly on the third movement. For turns, the same three-step movement is used, but the feet make an exact close.

"In the evolution of these two dances no doubt practice at first preceded theory, but now that the theory has been fully developed we realise that they are both expressions of natural movement, and that the principles governing them are the same as those governing such simple movements of our everyday life, as the walk and the run. For instance, the fox-trot walk, except that the feet slide instead of being lifted, is similar to the normal walk, the balance travelling forward continually with the forward foot, and the three-step, which consists of a long step followed by two shorter and quicker steps, embodies the principle of the run, the weight travelling ahead of the forward moving foot.



The "Millar Cross" of the Fox Trot.

"The rhythm and tempo of the music necessarily dictate what a dance shall be, and the slow fox-trots and the waltz are both smooth and flowing rhythms. The fox-trot is in 4/4 time, which lends itself to the expression of a variation of slow and quick move-



The Walk of the Quick Step.

Photographs (left and right) posed by Miss Wilma Rathner and Mr. Colin Shorter, pupils of Miss Phyllis Bates, and winners of the Adelphi Ballroom Championship.

The Quick Step photograph was posed by Miss Wilma Spiller, who partnered the runner-up in the same event.

All photographs by—
S. P. Andrew.

ments. The first and third beats are the accented ones. The waltz is in 3/4 time, and can be perfectly expressed only in an undulating three-step. The first beat is well accented.

THE ONE-STEP.

The one-step is really an older dance than the fox-trot. It experienced a great wave of popularity in New Zealand about six years ago. In place of the one-step, Paso Doble music in 6/8 time is occasionally played. "Valencia" is an example of this music. Most people one-step to it, but the Paso Doble is actually a Continental dance, the steps of which are short and lifting and quite unlike the one-step.

"The quick-step is danced to fox-trot music but at a much quicker tempo than that suitable for the slow fox-trot dance. Also, the beats of the music are more equally accented. The steps of the dance are short and lifting. The feet are kept almost flat and the weight is slightly behind the moving foot. When going forward the backward knee bends. When going backward the forward knee bends. It is the bending and straightening of alternate knees which gives the up and down movement characteristic of the dance. The American "Chicago" and the Schottische Espagrole were the forerunners of the English quick-step.

"The flat Charleston is a popular variation of the quick-step. There is a difference in the principle of the two dances, however, as in the flat Charleston the two knees are simultaneously bent and then straightened.

"BLUES" MAY BE REVIVED.

The "Blues" are danced to slow 4/4 time, the beats being equally accented. The dance originated in America, but was modified in England. The principle is actually similar to that of the Quick-step, but "Blues" music being not much more than half the speed, the steps are longer and the lifting movement so slurred that the similarity is not apparent. We have heard very little of the "Blues" for some seasons, but a revival is anticipated and is likely to be assisted by a new type of music called "hot music" now being played in America and England.

The "Blackbottom" is decidedly an eccentric movement. Its principle is: Knee of the unweighted leg bent; knee of the weighted leg straight; tip of the weighted leg out. The bend of the knees is the opposite of the action of the quick-step. No amount of modification will ever make this dance graceful,



The Walk of the Black Bottom.

but the sinuosity of its movement and the rhythm of the music make it attractive to dance. The music is in 4/4 time, but is distinguished from fox-trot by an extra accent on the sixth half-beat, which must be indicated by the dancer in his movement.

The tango has never become really popular in England, although there has always been some demand for it. It is "most attractive dance, but does not seem to appeal to the temperament of the Englishman. It is danced to slow 2/4 time, but it needs an experienced tango band to get the proper atmosphere. The dance is based on the natural movement of a stealthy walk. The feet do not slide but are lifted slightly, the weight travels forward well over the moving foot, and the knees are flexed more than is the case in the fox-trot.

THE PRINCIPLES OF MOVEMENT.

"Fundamentally it is movement and not steps which make one dance different from another. Each dance has its distinctive rhythm and a distinctive movement to express that rhythm, and any steps introduced must, to be correct, express both the movement and the rhythm. It is possible to make a logical analysis of every dance in this way, and this analysis should form the basis for all instruction. If everybody would realise that to learn a lot of steps is not the alpha and omega of dancing, and were to insist that their teachers give them principles first and steps afterwards, all teachers would be compelled to study the logical construction of the dances they teach, and dancing would show an immediate all-round improvement in style.

Another point to note is that the more a dance adheres to the principles of natural movement, the more graceful it is—the more it departs from these principles the more eccentric it becomes.

The waltz, the fox-trot, and the tango are all based on natural movement, which is the explanation of their grace and their permanency. At present the blackbottom exhibits the greatest departure from natural movement. For this reason it is the most eccentric of our dances and will probably prove the most fleeting.

The outstanding teachers in any part of the world are those who can analyse for themselves. Mere copying can lead one into so many pitfalls that it is always wise to take the trouble to study.

CURVES IN DANCING.

Some people may consider dancing a dull subject. Possibly they prefer to think about the Einstein theory, and, if so, they may be interested to discover that all progressive dance movements have their distinctive curves. The fox-trot walk is a long low curve, the three-step of the waltz is a long high curve, the curves of the quick-step are short, like little waves, and the short curves of the Charleston are separated by little "bumps." No doubt if Mr. Einstein took up ballroom dancing he would formulate a theory so complicated that only he could understand it, and dancing might become a pastime solely for university professors. I do hope nothing so serious comes to pass.

For Prospects and Recruits

By M.I.R.E.

This column is conducted by a member of the Institute of Radio Engineers, with the purpose of giving prospective buyers information of value.

Sensitiveness of reception represents efficiency of reception naturally, but this is more readily appreciated when it is understood that distant reception merely amounts to an equation having two factors, and may be represented as follows. Successful reception equals the signal strength subtracted by the interfering effects. If there were no interfering effects, then given the requisite number of valves, any station in the world could be tuned in, and in those localities where reception was not up to standard, more valves would have to be used than in a locality where reception was normal, or above normal. The number of valves used does not alter the equation mentioned because both signals and interference receive amplification while passing through the valve system, and the relation of signals to noises remains unaltered. (Actually noises usually receive slightly more amplification for technical reasons.)

The modern general-purpose valve has an energy amplification of a certain value when used in an orthodox design or receiver. There are many brands of valves, and many more brands and designs of receivers. There are all classes of performances put up by combinations of valves and receivers. A poor design of receiver giving a hopeless performance with poor valves, may perform in a more cheerful fashion when good valves are used, and an excellent design of receiver may be quite ruined by poor valves. In spite of such a statement it is possible to state that given a receiver of recognised make fitted with valves also of a recognised make, a standard of reception may be arrived at for any style of receiver carrying so many valves. There are a dozen different designs in receivers on the New Zealand market which, if lined up together under identical battery power, would give a performance which would be practically equal so far as picking-up propensities are concerned. It can be stated quite de-

finately that any style of receiver having the same number of valves which showed a greater signal strength could only do it at the expense of sacrifice of tone or simplicity of control.

FOUNDATIONS MUST BE RIGHT.

These remarks have been made with the object of showing that there is a foundation for the statement that, given normal receiving conditions, a medium aerial of thirty or forty feet high, a six-valve set can be expected to give a performance which should include all the year round reception of Australian and New Zealand stations anywhere in New Zealand and should also bring in American and Japanese stations under good conditions of static interference.

That sentence "good conditions of static interference" is the usual fly in the ointment.

These remarks are being purposely made pessimistic, so far as real distant reception is concerned, in order to try and dispel some of the illusions existing in the minds of many people to-day.

The prospective buyer of a multi-valve set who has had his fancy tickled by the idea of sitting back with his feet on the mantelpiece every night and being entertained by the subjects of Uncle Sam and the Mikado of Japan must alter his perspective vastly or be grievously disappointed even after he has purchased the most expensive outfit obtainable in the country.

Admittedly there are hundreds of sets in New Zealand to-day which are regularly getting American programmes, but there are hundreds more which don't and never will until they shift to a more receptive locality. There are dealers who guarantee all sorts of performances for their equipments in their advertisements. If taxed with the palpable impossibility of their equipments coming up to such a standard they will cheerfully tell the same

story that Adam did about Eve and the apple—the other fellow started it. If John Citizen goes to number one dealer and is told that his set will get America, and dealer number two hesitates, many John Citizens who don't know better get suspicious of number two dealer's goods. The writer of this article would advise John Citizen to give dealer number one a wide berth in future. Unless his statement of American reception is well qualified by a warning that the occasions on which he will actually get such results are more seldom than numerous, and are dependent on conditions.

MODEST CLAIMS BEST.

Take notice of the dealer who is modest in his claims regarding distance performance, but who lays himself out to give all the information he possibly can to assist towards a realisation of the factors determining successful distance getting, and who, if necessary, is prepared to refer you to individuals owning equipments of his design, and who are likely to have receiving conditions comparable with your own, in order that you may get first-hand and unbiased information.

In passing, it is worth while mentioning that when dealing with the radio trade, always look for frankness. Treat with immediate suspicion any apparently extravagant claims.

As has been said before in these columns, trust nobody but the manufacturer, distributor, or authorised agent for information or advice regarding any particular make of machine. Extravagant claims do not live up with the guarantee of satisfaction which should always be forthcoming as one of the terms of sale.

Now, to view the distance-getter from the point of view of the dealer, it is best to take the analogy of that very useful vehicle, the motor-car. The

radio distance-getter is akin to the speed fiend. The maker of a car will tune it up and demonstrate its performance at eighty miles per hour. He picks his track, however, naturally, and he doesn't attempt the test after there has been a week's heavy rain and the track is dangerous. Furthermore, he doesn't guarantee to keep the car tuned up to the necessary pitch to enable the driver to get such a speed every time the accelerator is pushed hard down. Of course, if the purchaser of the car is prepared to pay for tuning periodical-ly it is a different matter. However, this is more or less beside the point, the main consideration being the fact that a car which has a reserve speed of eighty miles per hour is only of real use to the owner on a race track or on special roads, so far as its reaching-out propensities are concerned. The power which is able to push the car to such a speed is, nevertheless, immensely valuable in hill-climbing, etc., at reasonable speeds.

So to return to the multi-valve radio set. Given clear conditions it can be pushed to the limit, but if there is static interference or if there is a nearby broadcast station transmitting on a wavelength near to that of the distant station it is required to receive, so inevitably will the "distance range be closed in, just as the driver of the car is compelled to slow up because of cross roads or pot-holes. As was stated at the beginning of this article, the multi-valve set will give great reliability when receiving nearby and will give what is most important of all, permanent satisfaction because of adjustability to all conditions.

In conclusion, the writer cannot resist repeating another previous remark, and that is that New Zealand listeners have learned to run before they attempted to crawl, because of the almost universal rush after the distance, which does not always cause the enchantment to materialise, when enchantment is to be had right at home, by listening to the local N.Z. stations, and thus dodging the bughbears of radio in the shape of static and fading, etc.

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Following on the remarks made in these columns in our last week's issue concerning interfering electrical noises experienced in the reception of broadcast signals, it is desired to deal with some aspects of the situation with respect to the reception of signals from distant stations. The electrical noises referred to were stated to originate either in the earth's crust or atmosphere due to the flow of electrical currents consequent on natural causes, and generally known as "static," or were caused by man in the reticulation of energy in the form of power for lighting, heating, and other purposes.

"Distant" is naturally purely a relative term. A medium-powered transmitter 400 miles away is distant for a two-valve set—very distant, as a matter of fact. On the other hand, to the possession of a six-valve set the same station is normal loudspeaker reception. From the point of view of interfering noises, the owner of the six-valve set is going to bring more trouble than the owner of the two-valve set, because he has four more valves to bring up the interfering noises to an annoying strength. Of course, for normal reception of relatively close-by stations, the six-valver is on a level, because he merely goes and switches on his set, gives a dial or two a casual twirl, and then sits back to reliable clear-cut results, whereas our two-valve friend probably starts off with 'phones, and after careful adjustment and holding of breath in spasms, transfers more or less satisfactory signals to his speaker, and at the least sign of fading is forced to again plug in his 'phones.

THE FACTOR OF CONDITIONS.

When chasing stations reckoned as distant to a multi-valve set carrying as many as, say, six valves, the same conditions commence to apply. Providing interfering noises are not too great, 'phones may be used to search for signs of the desired station, and then the speaker plugged in after the receiver has been adjusted satisfactorily.

As has been explained previously, in these columns the sensitiveness of receiving conditions vary very greatly, according to the locality. Sensitiveness of reception is invariably found to apply to stations whose signals come from all directions, but in some instances it is found that a locality is ultra-receptive to signals coming from one or two directions, and is normal, or even sub-normal, with respect to other directions.