

1840s Parisian Cancan Quadrille

(France)

As polite society in Europe and America enjoyed the sublime pleasures of the dancing salon, with its carefully prescribed rules of etiquette, the students of the Latin Quarter of Paris took the opposite approach to dancing. In the 1830s, they took the outmoded steps and figures that they had learned as children in dancing school, and exploded them. With liberated spirits, and more casual attire, they turned the chassés, jetés, and assemblés into bounds, kicks, and extravagant capers. Quadrilles done in this manner were called "Danse Libre"... free, liberated dancing, and was also known at that time as the "Cancan," although this was still two generations before the well-known Moulon Rouge exhibition Cancan portrayed by Toulouse-Lautrec. This version is from the 1840s, when the Polka was king.

Cassette: "The Plunger Galop" on R. Powers Stockton 1992 cassette. 2/4 meter

Formation: Quadrille of 4 cpls.

Steps: Chassé (a polka step): Sink down with ft closed (prep ct 4); rise with ft closed (prep ct &); step R fwd (ct 1); close L to R (ct &); step R fwd (ct 2); close L to R w/o weight, rising (ct &); step L fwd (ct 3); close R to L (ct &); step L fwd (ct 4).

Jeté (leap): Throw the L ft to the L side, sweeping in an arc fwd, landing on L fwd and immediately closing R to L w/o weight (ct 1).

Assemblé: Throw the R ft to the R side, sweeping in an arc fwd, as if to Jeté R fwd, then close L to R just as R lands fwd, weight on both ft (ct 1).

Traveling Sequence: Travel fwd with 3 Chassés, beg R; Jeté L fwd; Jeté R fwd (4 meas).
Concluding Sequence: Then travel fwd with 3 Chassés; Jeté fwd; assemblé onto both ft (4 meas). All travelling uses these sequences ad lib.

Heel-Toe Balance: Place L heel to L, toe up (ct 1); bounce on R and close L to R, placing L toe to supporting R heel (ct 2). Repeat to either side.

Sissone Balance (scissors): Step L to L, simultaneously crossing R tightly behind L w/o weight (ct 1); bounce on L while kicking R leg straight to R side (ct 2). Repeat opp.

Styling: All steps, leaps, and gestures are kicked as high and as far as possible. A free hand or two may be thrown in the air, palm fwd. Dancers are encouraged to invent new balance steps, drawing from any step vocabulary that a traveler could have brought to Paris in the 19th century.

Meas Ct

Pattern

4 meas

INTRODUCTION. Honor ptrs.

FIGURE I

1-4 Head cpls Right and Left Through, taking opp R hand, crossing over, turning ptr by L hand, in opp place, to face ctr of set.

5-8 Head cpls Right and Left Through to return to places.

9-12 Heads face ptr and Balance with any steps for 8 cts.

Cancan Quadrille—continued

- 13-16 Heads Turn Partner with Left hand, 360° turn.
- 17-20 Heads Ladies Chain with W taking opp W R hand, crossing over, turning opp M by L hand, to face ctr of set.
- 21-24 Heads Ladies Chain to return to places.
- 25-32 Heads Balance and Turn Partner with L hand as before.

CHORUS

- 1-2 All take ptr in closed Ballroom pos and Sissone Balance to ctr of set.
- 3-4 All Polka (turning) to next corner place to the R (1 full turn).
- 5-16 Repeat the Sissone Balance and Polka 3 more times, to regain places.

FIGURE II

- 1-2 Heads cpls face side cpls to their R diag (sides look to L diag) and arch both hands high with ptrs (sides take hands low with ptrs). Slide 4 steps toward these cpls, arching over/under to change places.
- 3-4 Keeping hands (at chest level), Heel-Toe Balance with a pair of heel-toes, twd diag cpl.
- 5-6 Reverse arches and Slide 4 steps to return to places.
- 7-8 Heel-Toe Balance twd diag cpl.
- 9-16 All drop hands and Balance Partners in place and Turn by the L hand, as above.
- 17-20 All W execute Right Hand Star by taking opp W by R hand and traveling halfway around.
- 21-24 All W execute Left Hand Star to return to places.
- 25-28 All W Turn Partners by R hand, turning M 1 1/2 in place. All M end in ctr, facing in, taking each neighbor's hand in a high arch overhead.
- 29-32 All W Polka individually fwd under ptr's R arm, in front of corner M, turn R to go out the next arch, behind the back of the opp M.
- 33-36 Repeat the path around to places, behind ptr's back, into ctr of set, and face ptr, W back to ctr.
- 37-40 W place both palms on ptr's shldr and all Long Chassé (L to L, close R to L, repeat); in the Grand Arbor, CW to places.
- 41-44 All take closed Ballroom pos and Polka, turning into places.

Honor ptrs, then Side Couples execute Figure I.

Chorus and Figure II exactly as above.

Honor ptrs, then All Couples execute Figure I on the diagonal.

Chorus.

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