

**NEEDED – TWO LEFT FEET  
(Turning in Tandem)  
By Jim and Barbara German**

This article continues responding to the question of turning and addresses Turning in Tandem. The answer appears to be straightforward: two people facing the same direction and executing a figure as one. But, as always, a closer look at body position and the concept or picture the couple wants to achieve on the dance floor is prudent. In reviewing material on the execution of dance figures, little is presented on the concept or picture that a figure should develop. In Round Dancing, these concepts are sometimes addressed in the development and presentation of a routine. In Waltz, for example, a choreographer may have a Left Turn from closed dance position repeated several times in one part of a dance. So as not to make the dance appear repetitive and to add some spice and interest, the choreographer could include a Left Turn from Skaters Position instead of Closed Position in another part of the dance. While the look of the Left Turn has changed from viewing a couple dancing to viewing the same couple dancing as a single person, the floor trace of the figure pattern is the same. Of course, a transition in footwork will be required so that both the man and lady will have the same foot free.

The question presented was “Turning in Tandem”. The couple cannot really turn in strict tandem position since one person will be directly in front of and in the space of the other dancer. Skater’s position incorporates the characteristics of tandem where one person will be in front of the other both facing the same direction and still provides space for each person. The important difference is the position of the person in front. In tandem, the person in front is in line with the person in back, while in skaters the person in front is offset to the person in back. Looking at our couple in Skaters Position and remembering they will move as one person, we notice the “one” person is really wider (about half a person wider) and has four feet. This will change the center of balance for the couple and will change how the turn is executed.

Today, our couple will have the lady in front of the man and slightly to his right side. The feet will be offset slightly to achieve a foot position of man’s left, lady’s left, man’s right, lady’s right. The man’s right arm will be behind the lady and his hand will rest on the front of the lady’s right hip, fingers pointing down. This creates a snug cuddle type of position and helps keep the couple together as they dance a turning figure. The left hands may be joined or overlapped and the lady may tilt her head slightly left and back toward the man’s body. Both will have the same foot free and both will be looking slightly toward their left. The lady has taken the same position as the man and the two bodies will move as one using the man’s footwork and technique. (I guess you can say this is a position where the man has two left feet.)

Starting in Skaters Position facing DC with the left foot free for both, let’s begin the two measure Left Turn in Waltz. On step 1, the lady will follow the man’s lead and step forward with contra action commencing a left face turn with her left foot as the man steps forward with his left foot in contra commencing a left face turn. This first step does commence the left face turn a little sooner than when the same turn is executed in closed dance position. The man’s first step will be smaller than the lady’s first step. Step 2 continues the turn to the left with the right “feet” starting forward and ending side toward RLOD. (This action incorporates a swivel on the weighted foot or left foot for both.) The man’s second step will be larger than the lady’s second step. Step 3 finished the turn with a closing of the feet to end facing RLOD. (Now is a good time to check and confirm good skaters dance position.)

In the second Waltz measure the couple will back down the LOD from facing RLOD to end facing diagonal wall and LOD. If the couple had been in closed dance position, the man would step back with his right foot. However, in skaters’ position, stepping back on step 4 would cause a problem with step 5. By taking step 4 straight back, the man would actually move into the lady’s way and block her turn on step 5. An adjustment by the man in the placement of his right foot back on step 4 is needed. The man achieves this by using contra action. As he takes step 4 back with the right foot he will turn the toe in creating a contra movement (right foot back and left shoulder back). This places the man a little more behind the lady and get out of her way for step 5 while retaining good skaters dance position. Remember that both people are moving as one or the man is moving with two “right” feet. Therefore, the adjustment of toe turned in does commence the left turn earlier than would occur in closed position. Step 5 continues the left turn with the left “feet” moving sideways to end pointing DW; the body has turned less. Step 6 finished the turn with a closing of the right “feet” to left “feet” in good Skaters Position to end facing DW and LOD.

Now let's take quick look at the two measure Right Turn in Waltz from skater's position. Our couple has completed the Left Turn in Waltz and is facing DW with the left foot free for both. Continuing a pattern, the couple will need to

complete one Forward Waltz to end in Skaters Position facing DW with the right foot free for both ready to commence the Right Turn. The Right Turn is a little different since the lady is on the man's right side and the turn is to the right. Therefore, as step 1 of the Right Turn is taken forward with the right "feet", the man will turn his body toward the right (This is contra action with right foot and left shoulder moving forward) keeping pressure on the lady's right hip with his right hand. These actions will cause the lady to feel two leads: the turning of the body toward the right and a little resistance on her right hip from the man's hand. These leads will indicate to the lady that she is on the inside of a turning figure and should keep her steps small. Also, by using the contra action, the man will create space between the lady's feet for his forward step. Step 2 continues the right face turn with the left "feet" forward ending side with the couple facing toward RLOD. Right foot swivel for both is desired on step 2 to achieve the ending position for the feet of sideways to each other. Step 3 finished the turn with a closing of the right foot to the left foot for both to end facing RLOD. On step 4 the man needs to take his left foot back and toe turned in. The action of turning the toe in toward the body will create a contra action and will cause the man to commence the right turn earlier than in closed position. The contra action will have created space for the lady to take her right foot back between the man's feet. (By keeping a firm right arm, the man will prevent the lady from taking a very long back step and landing on his foot.) Step 5 continues the Right Face Turn with the right "feet" to the side pointing DC and body turning less. Step 6 finishes the turn with a closing of the left foot to the right foot for both to end facing DC and LOD. This pattern may be repeated after the couple takes a Forward Waltz step to free the left foot for the Left Turn in Skaters Position.

In summary, turning in skater's position has created changes to turning in closed dance position. In skater's position our couple has changed from two people dancing in opposition to "one" person dancing with two left feet and two right feet. This change will require the increased use of contra movement to initiate the turning actions earlier and to provide space for the placement of a foot between the other person's feet. Also, a snug cuddle position is very useful in leading and maintaining skater's position throughout the turn. Although not discussed, the man will exercise the same Waltz rise and fall in skater's position as he does in closed dance position. The lady will change her normal rise and fall pattern to parallel the man's.

Happy dancing and remember - **Good Dance Position is the first step to a happy partner** -