

SO SHE IS ON HER HEELS, NOW WHAT

By Jim and Barbara German

In this article we will examine the placement of the man's foot for the second step of some foxtrot turning figures. The lady's second step in most foxtrot turning figures is the same – the famous "heel turn". The lady's feet are together and the man is moving around her. The man's second step will end in a facing position to the lady. His body alignment and foot placement in relationship to the lady is important for the lead and ease in completing the figure.

For our purposes, the figures discussed will commence in closed dance position facing diagonal center for reverse figures or diagonal wall for natural figures. No specific discussion will be made regarding footwork (heels and toes, rise and fall) or the amount of turn or when the turn occurs. We are only going to examine the placement of the man's second step and how this placement will ease the continuation of the figure.

In each figure discussed, the first step for the man will be in a forward direction. The lady's first step will be in the normal opposite direction – backwards. The man will be leading the lady to complete a heel turn by end of step two. Therefore, on step two the lady has her feet together waiting for the man to complete step two and commence step three. This is an important point since this position for the lady is the same for most foxtrot turning figures danced today. However, the body rotation and placement of the man's foot on step two is not the same for all figures. Lets look at some reverse turning figures:

Reverse Turn: The Reverse Turn is a left turning figure where the man will want to place his second step "between" the lady's feet. (Between is in quotes because it refers to a point in front of the lady where her feet come together.) This placement is achieved by the man's body rotation and he will retain a facing position. By placing his second step "between" the lady's feet, the man's facing position will resemble dance position. This position allows for ease in continuing the figure with a back step for the man. Should the man's second step arrive outside of the lady's feet on his right side, the lady will be in front of the man and not slightly offset to his right. Now, when the man steps back to continue the Reverse turn, the lady will be out of dance position.

Telemark: A reverse or left turning figure where the placement of the man's second step is "between" the lady's feet. This placement will retain the facing position where the lady is offset slightly to the man's right. This is a desired position for achieving a good semi-closed dance position on step three. If the man's second step arrives outside the lady on his right side, the lady's alignment is not offset to the man's right side and the third step will result in having the lady's hips in advance of the man's instead of behind the man. The man's foot placement on step two is important for achieving a desired semi-closed dance position.

Double reverse: Let's take a look at the double reverse action figures. Our discussion of step two will be the same for both the Double Reverse Spin and the Double Reverse Wing. These figures were named because of the characteristic that both dancers are moving around each other in the same measure of music, but not at the same time. The man moves around the lady first then the lady moves around the man. With this characteristic of turning around each other, let's see if a change in the man's step two will occur.

On the double reverse figures, the man wants to achieve two goals. First, to communicate a lead for the lady to move around him. Second, to insure the lady's path for moving around the man is free. These goals are achieved when the man's second step is taken outside of the lady's feet on his right side. This placement and his extra body rotation identifies to the lady that she will start her movement around the man. Equally important, by stepping outside of the lady, the man has opened the path for the lady's movement. Should the man step between the lady's feet, he has established a facing position where the lady is offset to his right side. As he continues his rotation left face, he is placing himself in front of the lady and blocking her path. Failure to open the lady's path is a common error with the double reverse figures.

The proper placement of the man's second step can reduce the difficulty in executing both natural and reverse foxtrot turning figures. Let's apply our understanding to another group of foxtrot figures – the telespin, teleweave, or telefeather. On step two, the lady is in a heel turn position. Where should the placement of the man's second step be in relationship to the lady's feet? (Remember, these are reverse or left turning figures where the lady has continued movement around the man.) Naturally you said "outside of the lady's feet on the man's right side". This placement is important to let the lady know a different ending is expected and for the man to clear the lady's path so she can continue her movement around the man.

Looking at the natural turning figures, which are right turning figures starting with the man's right and the lady's left, the man's second step will be with his left foot. Let's look at some figures and see how the placement of the man's second step will affect the figure.

Natural Turn: On natural turning figures the lady will be achieving a heel turn (feet together) as the man completes step two and commences step three. He still needs to achieve a facing position with the lady on step two. If the man's left foot arrives "between" the lady's feet, her body alignment will be in front of him – not offset to his right side - not desirable for the completion of a natural turning figure. In order for the man to achieve a facing position where the lady is offset to his right side, his second step must arrive outside of the lady's feet on his left side (or his left foot must be to the left of the lady's feet). Now continuation of the figure will be in dance position.

Natural Telemark: Another right turning figure where the man's second step is outside of the lady's feet on his left side. The couple may then continue the figure to end in sidecar or reverse semi-closed position. If the man places his second step "between" the lady's feet, he will have the lady offset to his left side and continuation of the right turning figure will place the man in the lady's path. It is probable that the man will overturn the lady and end in a hip-to-hip position with the lady under his left arm instead of in sidecar position. Or, he will end the figure in reverse semi-closed position with the lady's hip behind him instead of in front. It is desired that the lady's hip be in front of the man when ending the natural telemark in reverse semi-closed position.

Double natural figures: The Double Natural Spin and Double Natural Telemark are two examples. They are both right turning figures where the man moves around the lady then the lady moves around the man to complete the ending position. (The ending position is different for each figure.) As discussed with the Natural Turn and the Natural Telemark, it is very important for the man's second step to be outside of the lady's feet on his left side when he achieves facing position. This foot placement will open the lady's path or direction of movement around the man as the figure continues. If the man's foot placement is outside of the lady's feet on his left, he will be blocking the lady's path as the right turning action of the figure continues.

Since the lady has been executing beautiful heel turns through out this article, we have looked specifically at the placement of the man's second step. This step (right foot) was "between" the lady's feet for the Reverse Turn and Telemark and was outside of the lady's feet on his right side for the Double Reverse Spin and Tele-action figures. For the natural turning figures, the man's second step (left foot) was outside of the lady's feet on his left side. When the foot is properly placed, the lady's desired action is communicated and the figure becomes easier to complete. So she is on her heels, now what? Where will you place your second step?

See you on the dance floor.