

The ICBDA Hall of Fame – A Collection of Interesting Facts

By Janet Williams, ICBDA Historian, with Roy Williams, Chairman of the Roundalab Index of Rounds

If the vast collection of our round dance choreography were a library, the Hall of Fame (HOF) choices might be a book club, with 103 selections picked out for us as exceptional works; they are “popular dances that have remained popular over time” according to the ICBDA website. They certainly are not the only exceptional works, nor are they all dances that have remained popular till now, nor are they the only popular dances that have remained popular over time. Phase 6 choreography and dances in less commonly done rhythms, even when very popular with those who can dance them, are not usually known to the entire voting membership. Therefore, even when they stay on the ballot year after year, they don’t get chosen. Hall of Fame dances, however, are dances the entire membership has liked over an extended period.



The chairman of Roundalab’s Index of Rounds has compiled a detailed spreadsheet of the Hall of Fame dances, "Hall of Fame data", which can be sorted and resorted by many different attributes, such as the date written, the year when added to the HOF, and the title, choreographer, phase, and rhythm. You can easily sort the data to learn, for example, which choreographer has the most dances on the HOF. The answer is Eddie Palmquist and includes six dances written with Audrey and one dance, Mardi Gras, written with his first wife, Helen. In fact, there are 54 different choreographers represented, 3 with more than one partner, and 1 dance, Warm and Willing, written by two couples.

In 1977, at the convention where the Universal Round Dance Council came into existence, 15 popular dances were chosen as worthy of Hall of Fame status. Surprisingly, not all were old. Maria Elena and A Continental Good Night had only been danced for 5 years; Tango Bongo, however, was already 17 years old. The 15 dances chosen are by fifteen different choreographers; so perhaps part of the thought was to honor choreographers as well as choreography.

I Wanta Quickstep (Palmquist) has the distinction of being the oldest dance, at 35 years, when voted in. In the early years, dances were sometimes voted in when still relatively new, for example, Dancing in the Dark (Roberts) was just three years old and Sugarfoot Stomp (Easterday) was just four years old when they were honored.

Certainly, the HOF dances are not the only older choreographies worth dancing, or the only older choreographies still being danced. On the 2023 program for Winter Colossal, for example, were Black Tie Tango (Moore, phase 4, 2011), Senorita Tango (Rumble, phase 4, 2007), and Where or When (Worlock, Foxtrot, phase 6, 2003), all of which would seem to be eligible for HOF status. Unusual rhythms, however, are less likely to be familiar to the entire voting body, especially as they age. The last time a Tango was added to the HOF was Tango Capriccioso (Ward, Phase 5) in 1981. Quickstep seems particularly unlikely to win these days as the dance most recently designated as a HOF is I Wanta Quickstep, phase 3, written in 1967 and designated in 2002. The most recently written HOF Quickstep is St. Michel’s Quickstep, written in 1984 and designated in 1996.

A phase 6 dance is even less likely to be honored. Many phase 6 dances are – or were – popular with advanced dancers, and even if they make it to the ballot, are unable to garner enough votes to place. There are only 20 phase 6 dances honored, out of 103 HOF dances. Perhaps Phase 6 deserves a HOF of its own for phase 6 choreographies popular with phase 6 dancers over an extended period. It’s difficult to learn phase 6 dances and retain them over time due to summer breaks and limited time to dance them. Fortunately, phase 6 dancers tend to have retentive memories and can continue getting up at weekends and conventions for My Confession, (Rumble, 2005); Hallelujah Waltz, (Read, 2011); or That Man (Worlock, 2012).

At this point, it’s difficult to learn many of the earlier Hall of Fame dances. Cue sheets were far less standardized in the early days, and it’s difficult to find videos of these older routines. Some dances are only of historical interest, written at a time when new rhythms besides Two Step and Waltz were being introduced. Foxtrot, in particular, was resisted by many dancers accustomed to QQS. This might be reflected in the rhythms assigned to some of these earlier dances, many of which are inconsistent with modern usage. Fox trot and two-step are sometimes confused.

Continued to page 10

Some Thoughts on the Hall of Fame dances (HOFs) By Janet Williams

Continued

Three AM (Moss) successfully blends Foxtrot sensibility with a general mood welcoming to two-step dancers. Unfortunately, that puts Foxtrot figures across measures making it more difficult to cue today. When it was written, advanced dances were commonly danced without cues, so cuing across measures was only a problem when teaching the dance, or it could be taught as a Two Step. Mr. Sandman (Roberts), with great music, balances uneasily between Foxtrot and Two Step. Quickstep and Two Step are also confused. Several high-level two steps are labeled “quickstep” in the index. Although they are fun to dance, and have similar tricky footwork, higher level Two Steps do not have the lift and flow of Quickstep. Round dancing gained by adding Quickstep to its repertoire but it’s a different experience. We would think of Gypsy Eyes now as a rather non-standard Jive, but it’s labeled Jive/Two Step. Two Tangos are listed: Tango Bongo and Tango Capriccioso. The underlying rhythm pattern of Autumn Leaves (Moss) is a Tango with the S S QQ S timing. The five-count Vines, the moment in Varsouvian, the slow Ochos in the ending, and the Tango Draw are all distinctly Tango. The Roundalab Index lists Autumn Leaves as One Step/Two Step.

Because older cue sheets are difficult to interpret, perhaps members or teachers who remember those older dances should make an effort to record videos. Tom Hicks is currently supplying some on YouTube under “Dance Demos with Tom Hicks.” There you can find cued videos of Symphony, Tango Capriccioso, Papillon, Sam’s Song, Sugarfoot Stomp, Wonderland by Night, and Fascination. Hopefully, there are more to come. He and Dawn Mee have also recorded I Love the Nightlife, Jive, (D’Aloiso), which would have been grandfathered in as a HOF in 2015 if it had not missed one year on the ballot. Surely in all those years, it has received many more votes than some that made it onto the list in only five years.

Other videos of older HOFs are available in the folder “Early Days of Round Dancing” on Glen and Helen Arceneaux’s video site. These have been contributed from dancers’ collections and in many cases are demos by the original choreographer. I looked for the three Handy advanced two step dances, Charlie My Boy, Smile, and The Gang, but didn’t find them. Although demos are extremely helpful in learning choreography, the unique feature of round dance, as opposed to other art forms, is that the dance is written to be experienced by dancing the steps to the music, from inside, as it were, and not watched from the outside. Although some HOF dances are showy, one really can’t tell from a demo how it will feel to experience the dance. What can be observed, however, is which foot to put where, whereas that information cannot always be determined from an older cue sheet.

Here are some statistics on the 103 dances currently on the Hall of Fame list: 19 are phase 3, 20 are phase 4, 39 are phase 5, and 22 are phase 6. Although some older rhythm labels are dubious because of their age, there are 24 Waltzes, 6 Two Steps, 10 Rumbas, 17 Foxtrots, and 4 Boleros. Three dances are characterized as “Rhythm” and three as “Mixed.” Lisbon Antigua, Butterfly, and Hawaiian Wedding Song are all called Foxtrot/Two Step although the first two were almost certainly taught as Two Step with an occasional SQQ. Two Step can be a difficult rhythm because of its changing rhythm patterns. Hawaiian Wedding Song music has a rhythm pattern unique in round dancing, rather like a very slow Samba. Till is listed as “Mixed,” although arguably one could call it American Foxtrot.

The new Hall of Fame spreadsheet, “Hall of Fame Data,” also indicates when a HOF dance is also a Roundalab Current or Golden Classic, and the date the Golden classification was awarded. The two lists are not the same, although there is a great deal of overlap in the higher phases. Each year, Roundalab publishes a list of current classic dances which are suggested to be taught or reviewed for each quarter.

For phase 6, the Roundalab Classic List for 2022/2023 lists My First My Last My Everything (Preskitt, 2007), On Days Like These by (Preskitt, 2007), and Valentine (Worlock, 2007). In the coming year, the first two of these dances will become Golden Classics. None of these, although popular with phase six dancers, are HOF dances at this time. Phase 6 Golden Classics that are not HOF dances as of 2023 include Just Another Woman in Love (Anderson, 2002), Picardy Foxtrot (Slater, 1992), and Perfidia Rumba (Slater, 1996).

Note: The “Hall of Fame data” spreadsheet is currently available from Roy Williams, by emailing RoyJanetW@comcast.net. The full Index can be consulted by anyone, even on your cell phone, by searching for the “Roundalab Index of Rounds.” (Side note: Isn’t it absolutely amazing to pull up and consult a cue sheet on one’s cell phone.)