

Harold & Meredith Sears

Make A Picture



Dancing is more than locomotion and tracing out patterns as we go, an open vine here and an open telemark there. As we travel, we pause, we pose, we create little works of art. A dance figure that contains one of these poses is often called a *picture figure*, to emphasize its purpose, but almost all dance figures can contain some little display — some kind of picture.



The Promenade Sway is a good example of a picture figure. "Promenade" means semi-closed position and "Sway" means inclination of the body — in this case to the left. So a Promenade Sway is left sway in semi-closed position. We step side and forward on our lead feet blending to semi-closed position. We stretch up and look up and over our extended lead wrists. During a second beat, we relax the lead knee just a bit and so emphasize the sway. We keep the unweighted legs straight and strong. In dancing a picture, we stop our progression — we pause. We're not dancing so much with our feet. We're dancing with all the rest of our body.

Second, consider a Drag Hesitation to a Back, Back, Lock, Back. These aren't usually thought of as picture figures because we are certainly progressing, but there are opportunities for pictures in almost any sequence. The Drag Hesitation begins in closed position facing diagonal line and center. The man steps forward on his left foot turning left-face. He steps side right continuing to turn and then draws left to right, ending in contra-banjo position facing reverse line of dance. The woman dances the natural opposite: back right, turning left-face, side left, and draw right to left. In the second measure, we dance Back, Back/Lock, Back (woman fwd, fwd/lk, fwd), ending in contra-banjo position still facing reverse. We could dance this figure in a waltz as a simple forward, side, draw; back, back/lock, back (123; 12&3); but the Drag especially gives us an opportunity to create a little picture. As we turn and take the

second step, we can use left sway and a strong left leg to create a good looking and good feeling body line. The woman will have right sway and a strong right leg. Her head will be open (turned to her right), although our bodies will remain in closed position. We have only one beat of music, but the line is a graceful curve. Furthermore, we are using body sway at the same time that we are turning left. The left sway complements the left turn. Then lose your sway as you step back to the lock, sway a bit right with right side back during the lock, and you have a second little picture with quite a rolling, breaking-wave feeling in between.



In general, we create pictures by thinking about more than our feet and the steps they are taking. We form dance pictures by being aware of our entire body — legs, torso, head, arms, left and right sides, even hands and fingers. We use a toned frame to stay together as partners. We use sway to create a graceful body line, a strong free leg and even pointing the toes to extend that line, arms up and a balanced head, and an extended free arm to continue the line upward. We use side lead and contra-body motion to facilitate and complement body turn. In short, we go beyond simply standing up straight and walking. We shape our bodies in ways that look and feel good.

