



A Few Rondes In Slow Two- Step

by Harold & Meredith Sears

We “ronde” in almost all of the round dance rhythms, but there have been some especially nice examples in three of our recent Slow Two-Steps—Kay & Joy Read’s *You Raise Me Up* (2005), Ron & Ree Rumble’s *A Whole New World* (2006), and Read’s *Stranger On the Shore* (2006).

Ronde—

A Ronde is an action (not really a figure) in which you flex the supporting knee, extend the free foot, point that toe, and move the free foot forward or back in an arc on or above the floor. An "aerial" Ronde is done off the floor. You might do it “low,” maybe level with the ankle; “medium,” level with the calf; “high,” level with the knee; or you can raise the foot as far off the floor as conditions allow. As with kicks and developes, show off whatever line pleases you.



In *You Raise Me Up*, there is a sequence where the woman recovers from a Hinge and turns to the left about 1/2 to a butterfly position in a one-step Reverse Underarm Turn. She then steps through on her left foot toward line of dance, swivels left face with a small Ronde, a small arc with a bent knee, for a kick to reverse, then a swivel right face and a larger Ronde clockwise to a Circle Vine, woman face the wall. One feature that makes these rondes so graceful here is the complementary sway that

accompanies each. The man leads the “forward, Ronde, kick” with a step side left and right sway. The woman steps forward left and swivels left changing to left sway—she sways toward the kick. He leads the “slow Ronde” clockwise with a side right with left sway. She changes to right sway toward her sweeping right leg. So in each case, her body (and his) is gesturing toward and enhancing her “leg work.”

Fallaway Ronde—



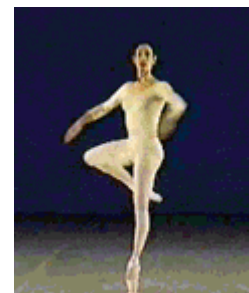
Another action that is widely used is the Fallaway Ronde, a Ronde to “fallaway” or semi-closed position. Starting in closed position facing the wall, we step side right (woman side left) turning to semi-closed position both facing line of dance. At the same time, we ronde the lead feet away from our partner (the man counter-clockwise and the woman clockwise) beginning to cross the lead foot behind the trail foot. The next step will be back on the lead foot, and this will be the actual fallaway position. The rest of

the measure has to be cued. In *Stranger On the Shore*, we do a Fallaway Ronde, behind, and forward to left open position facing reverse; and then a slow through with the lead feet, close and face partner (slow); and a “big” explosion that uses a full measure and a half.

The lead for the Fallaway Ronde can be quite a bit more intricate than what we do in the simple rondes described above. The man's actions all happen at about the same time, but if there is a sequence, it might be the left sway that comes first. This opens the woman's head and causes her to think about opening out or turning a little right face. At the same time, he begins to turn his hips to the left and bumps her with his right hip. Now, this might sound a little crude. In dancing, we don't want to push, shove, or bump our partners—we “lead” them. But as I step side, I turn my hips to the left to begin my Ronde, and it feels like I'm bumping Meredith with my right hip, and she says she feels a bump. She has just taken her side step, so her weight is on her left foot. The part of her body that is free is her right side, so the “bump” causes her right hip and right leg to swing out turning right face. I am turning my hips left and rondeing my left leg left, so we ronde together.

It is interesting to compare a Fallaway Ronde, behind, side; to a simple side right, close left, side right. During a “side close side,” there is no sway change and no hip bump. Try them both yourself, and you can clearly feel the lead for the Fallaway Ronde. It almost “just happens.”

For his third lead, the man uses right-face upper body rotation to continue to propel her Ronde. Don't push with your left hand, but rotate the whole frame to lead her right leg around in its arc. You will notice that you are turning your upper body to the right but your lower body to the left, in



its Ronde, producing something of a twist. This is the man's lot, to get some of his body to dance his part and the rest of his body to dance the lead for his partner.

Fourth, you can use a little pressure with your right hand on her back to reinforce her Ronde. Tighten up a little on the left side of her back, and that will leave the right side freer, by comparison, to do its Ronde and behind.

Rudolph Ronde—

In the Rudolph Ronde, we have a standard phase-VI Roundalab figure, rather than an action that must be step-cued, and the man's lead feels still more assertive. Was "Rudolph" an aggressive, Prussian, military man?



In closed position, the man lowers into his left leg and steps forward on his right between the woman's feet. For his part, it feels rather like dancing a chair. She lowers with him and steps back left. As a part of this step, he taps the inside of her right knee with his right knee, leading her to lift her right leg from the hip and ronde it clockwise. The lady's head should follow her foot and so move from closed position to strongly right.

Of course, this is the "assertive" part of the lead. Usually, we think of a man's lead as being a "suggestion" or an "invitation" to the woman, but this Rudolph lead is unusually clear. She has little choice but to raise and ronde that leg. As a matter of fact, the man does need to be careful. He mustn't tap her right leg until she has taken that back step, otherwise her right leg will still be weighted, it won't move, and he will leave a bruise. A football fan might get an image of the quarterback getting sacked from the side :-)

The rest of the lead for a Rudolph is not as insistent. We use the same hip tap that we saw in the Fallaway Ronde above. After her back step, her right leg and right hip are free, and his right hip helps to propel that Ronde. Third, the man leaves his left leg to the side and back and his right leg soft, but he lifts and rotates his upper body to the right to suggest something about the height of her Ronde. With lift and right sway on his part, he can lead quite an aerial Ronde. And fourth, the rate and amount of follow-thru leads the speed of the Ronde. Sometimes a Rudolph is danced in one slow count, sometimes over a whole measure or more.

Double Ronde—

You might well think that the Fallaway Ronde is a "double" Ronde, since we both do the action. I guess all we can say is that the Fallaway Ronde is a mirror figure in which

partners ronde in opposite directions, and in the Double Ronde we both ronde clockwise. So, in closed position, the man takes a small step forward on his right foot (woman back left) turning right face. We ronde the lead foot to the right and end in closed position with lead feet free.

The Double Ronde is not a standard Roundalab figure, and cue sheet descriptions do vary. Sometimes, the woman is asked to step forward, but we don't want to collide. She doesn't want to get up into his armpit, and we don't want our toplines to collapse. She could step to the side, but this causes us to get out of position, to open into a sort-of semi-closed position. In the end, she should take weight on her left foot pretty much wherever he puts her, and this a good example of a figure where lead and follow are important to comfort. If she steps on her own and takes weight before he does, there will certainly be a sense of collision, separation, or tugging.

Double Double Ronde—

Finally, just for fun, there is a “double” Double Ronde, or as some have named it, the Rumble Double Ronde, since it comes from their *A Whole New World*. This is a three-measure figure, and the timing is “sqq; s--; sqq;” for the man and “sqq; sqq; sqq;” for the woman.

We begin in a side-by-side position, with the man facing the wall, the woman facing center, and right/right hands joined. The man steps forward on his right foot and rondes his left clockwise. The woman steps side and forward left turning 1/2 to the right to face the wall, and she rondes her right leg clockwise, keeping right hands joined in front and extending her left hand behind the man. We end this first step in woman's left shadow. On the “quick, quick,” he crosses his left in front of his right and steps side right, and she crosses her right in back of her left and steps side left to end woman's right shadow both facing the wall with right hands joined behind man's back and joining left hands in front of the woman.



The second measure is a man's twist turn. He steps back on his left foot (woman forward right turning right face and releasing right hands). On the first “quick,” he hooks his right behind his left with no weight, and the woman steps forward left toward reverse and spirals right face under left hands to end facing almost reverse in front of man. On the second “quick,” he turns right face on his left foot to face line and center, and the woman steps forward right turning 1/2 to the right and taking joined L hands over the woman's head and bringing them down and joining right hands again, to end both facing line and center with the man in front of the woman and left/left and right/right hands joined low. In this measure, it is important to let the woman do her spiral before the man turns.

In the third measure, we do the second set of double rondes. He turns right face to face the wall and steps forward right and rondes his left leg clockwise, and the woman steps side and forward left turning right face to face wall and rondes her right leg clockwise to an open position both facing wall with right hands joined in front of the woman and left hands joined behind the man. On the “quick, quick” of this last measure, he crosses his left in front of his right and steps side right, and she crosses her right in back of her left crossing behind the man and steps side left. We end a left open position facing the wall with right hands joined behind man and left hands joined in front of woman. In *A Whole New World*, this sequence is followed by a woman’s Outside Spin to face man and center and a Basic Ending to closed position facing wall.

At first thought, the Ronde might seem to be a simple movement, but there is a lot of richness and variety to enjoy. That’s Round Dancing for you.

