



What Is A Top Spin?

by Harold & Meredith Sears

The Top Spin is a phase V figure that is standard in foxtrot, quickstep, and waltz, but it isn't a "killer" figure. In lots of foxtrots, we have run across a Natural Hover Cross overturned to reverse and center, Top Spin to face line again, another Top Spin to face reverse, and then maybe an Impetus to Semi.

In *Gone With the Wind*, a foxtrot by the Worlocks, we begin in left open facing position, man facing center, with a Roll 3 to reverse, Feather to face reverse and center, checked to a Top Spin, into a Reverse Wave Check and Weave moving down line.

In *J'ai Deux Amours* by the Woodruffs, there is a Reverse Wave, Back Feather, Feather Finish to face line and wall, checking to a Top Spin to face reverse and center, checking again to a Hesitation Change to face line and center, for a Double Reverse Spin.

In *Secret Love* by the Cantrells, we do an Open Telemark, a Natural Telemark to sidecar position facing line of dance, Hover Cross Ending to face line and center, checking to a Top Spin all the way around to face line and wall, into a Three Step down line. Usually, we turn the foxtrot Top Spin 1/2, so this example that turns 3/4 gives us a little more of a challenge.

Usually there is a checking action just before the Top Spin, so we are dancing in one direction, and the Top Spin takes us off in another direction, but it doesn't have to be that way. In *Call Me* by the Collipis, we dance a Drag Hesitation to face reverse and center, back and back lock back down line of dance, Top Spin continuing to move down line, into a Diamond Turn.

Foxtrot Top Spin —

Maybe we should have described the figure earlier, but we'll do it here. In banjo position with the lead feet free, we use upper body rotation to spin on the trail foot 1/8 left face and step back left. The woman steps forward right outside partner. Both the spin and the step are done on the first quick. Then the man steps back right continuing to turn. With left side stretch, he steps forward left turning, and then forward right to banjo position, for a total rotation left-face of 1/4 to 1/2.

In some descriptions, the "spin" of the Top Spin is the 1/8 left-face rotation on the last step of the previous figure, preceding the initial step back for the man. In this view, the figure could be thought of as a spin and step back to a





Feather Finish or a spin to a Weave Ending. In other descriptions, the spin occurs on the second step. So, the man steps back left taking out his shoulder lead, back right spinning 1/8 to 1/4 left face (this is a spiral-like action), side and forward left turning, and finally forward right to banjo position. In either view, the spin does occur on the trail foot.

We've noticed above that the Top Spin is usually preceded by forward motion that is checked. We might do a Weave and check it to a Top Spin or a Feather Finish and check it to a Top Spin or a Natural Hover Cross, overturn the ending, and check that to a Top Spin. To make this figure flow smoothly, we really need to anticipate that checking action (and the cuer needs to give the cue early so you can do this). The "anticipation" is a little extra rise on the step before the checked step and then a little shorter step than usual on the checked

step. For instance, you might be dancing a Natural Weave checked to a Top Spin. On the sixth step of the Natural Weave, rise a little more than you normally would. Then on the seventh step of that Weave, step forward only a small step. In so doing, you are beginning the checking action early (with the rise and the smaller step), and the actual check is then not a surprise.

Waltz Top Spin —

Roundalab recognizes a Top Spin in waltz, too, but it is a little different figure. We do begin in banjo position, but our trail feet are free. The man steps back right turning left-face and with left-side stretch (woman forward left). He steps side and forward left continuing to turn, forward right outside partner spinning left, and finally back left in banjo position, having made up to one full turn. In waltz, the figure is danced 12&3.

For instance, in *Boulavogue* by Richard Lamberty, we do a Left Turn to closed position facing reverse, back to a Top Spin full around, a Hover Corte, to a Back Whisk facing line and wall.

In *Romeo & Juliet* by Brent & Mickey Moore, we do an Open Natural to banjo position facing reverse and center, an Outside Spin to closed position facing reverse and wall, back to a Top Spin to banjo position facing center (a 5/8 turn), and back to a Hinge man facing reverse and wall.

A Foxtrot Top Spin in a Waltz—

One of the special features of round dancing is that choreographers feel free to draw figures for any given dance not just from that rhythm but from almost any rhythm at all. In *Are You Lonesome Tonight*, a waltz by the Slaters, the dance begins in left open facing position, diagonal line and center. We step together on the lead foot and hold, step back turn left and close to banjo position facing reverse and center, back to a Top Spin to closed position facing line, and Open Reverse Turn. The dance is a waltz, but the Top Spin is the foxtrot version: the man steps back left turning left, back



right, side and forward left, and then forward right to banjo — 12&3.

And a Waltz Top Spin in a Foxtrot —

In *All of You* by the Cantrells, we do a Reverse Turn 1/2 to closed position facing reverse, back to a Top Spin to banjo position facing reverse, back Tipple Chasse Pivot to closed position facing reverse and center, finish a Reverse Wave to closed position reverse, into a Heel Pull to closed position line and center. We whirl fully 2 1/2 turns to the left, and then pause in the right-face Heel Pull, before we take off again — it's an exhilarating sequence. But the interesting point is that it is a Waltz Top Spin. The man steps back right turning, side left, forward right spinning, and back right — sq&q.

So, what is a Top Spin? We can be sure that we will take four steps, that we will turn left, and that we will spin left on the trail foot. But we might start with either the lead foot (back, back, side, forward for the man) or the trail foot (back, side, forward, back). The timing might be syncopated or not. The amount of turn might range from 1/4 to a full turn, and the spin might occur on the last step of the previous figure, on step 2, or on step 3. The Top Spin is one of those figures where we have to learn the choreography in each particular dance.

