

THE CELLARIUS MAZURKA WALTZ

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In the middle of the 19th century, mazurka waltzes were various mazurka steps performed by one couple and turned like a waltz. These were essentially morphs of the waltz and mazurka steps.

Henri Cellarius, an especially influential dance master at the time, is given credit for inventing these variations. He gave two different reasons for creating the mazurka waltzes.



1) He combined these dances simply because he could. It was creative. He wrote, "It appeared to me that... it would be possible to compose a waltz of a perfectly novel kind."

2) If a couple wanted to dance the mazurka, but couldn't find three more couples who knew how to do this rather difficult dance, they could dance the mazurka steps solo. To quote Cellarius, "it might be executed at times when the company was not numerous enough to form a complete mazurka."

He wrote, "My pupils would have this waltz called after me, and have named it the Cellarius. I had no choice but with all humility to accept this honor."

Reconstructing the Cellarius Mazurka Waltz presents three difficulties: • There are several different dance steps with this name, some containing one, or three, or four different parts. • Descriptions of each of these versions differ from other descriptions of the same version. • And descriptions are often confusing or incomplete. Therefore dance historians have reconstructed a wide variety of interpretations.

The earliest complete description is in *Rock's Ballroom Hand Book, Quadrille Preceptor, Cellarius Instructor and Polka Companion*, by George Saunders, London, 1845 (pp. 46-47), two years before Cellarius himself published a description. To paraphrase,

The Mazurka or Cellarius Valse is danced to the same music and time as the mazurka. The steps are of four kinds, and are distinguished by the following names, *The Mazurka*, *The Cachuca*, *The Arab*, and *The Moresca*.

This early version didn't become popular, perhaps because of its difficulty.

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Soon after this early version, Cellarius seems to have simplified his Mazurka Valse, splitting #1 *The Mazurka* into two separate steps, and modifying #2 *The Cachuca* into a third step. #3 *The Arab* seems to have disappeared. And #4 *The Moresca* can be interpreted as the Redowa, which became its own mazurka waltz:

"THE MORESCA. The left foot is raised and the right hopped upon; the left is then put down and the right closed behind. The above is repeated with the right foot." The lady commences with the right foot. "Although in the above steps the word *hop* is used, it is not intended for the dancer actually to hop off the ground, but merely to make a graceful rise from the instep." [i.e., bounce.]

A possible interpretation:

- 1) Raise L forward to 4th position, with a bounce.
- 2) Step forward onto the L.
- 3) Close R foot to the L with weight.
- 4) Switch onto the L foot, raising the R forward to 4th position, with a bounce.
- 5) Step forward onto the R.
- 6) Close L foot to the R with weight

This is the Pas de Basque Polonaise. If this is turned as a waltz, as mazurka waltzes do, it's the popular Redowa. It is thus *possible* that Cellarius invented the Redowa, (that is, the mazurka waltz that is a turning pas de basque, not the original slow 1830s Bohemian Redowa that didn't rotate). ¹

In 1847, Cellarius published *La Danse Des Salons* in Paris, which was translated into English in two different publications, *Fashionable Dancing* and *The Drawing Room Dances*. His Chapter XV described "The waltz-mazurka, called the Cellarius."

Charles Durang wrote a somewhat clearer description of "The Cellarius (sic) Valse" in his 1856 dance manual *The Fashionable Dancer's Casket*.

The following reconstruction is only one of several possible interpretations.

Steps are described for the gent. The lady steps opposite

I. Valse Simple

Rotating version:

In closed waltz position,

- 1) Hop R, closing the L foot to 3rd position without weight.
- 2) Step side L (2nd position) toward LOD, turning one-quarter.
- 3) Hop L, closing R to 3rd position without weight, turning another quarter (finishing a 180° turn).
- 4-5-6) Repeat opposite.

Note: Even though count 2 is sometimes described as 2nd position, the rotation causes the gent to back in front of the lady at this time, as she steps R somewhat between his feet, as in a pivot.

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Linear version:

In half-open waltz position, side-by-side,

- 1) Hop R, closing the L foot to 3rd position in front, without weight.
- 2) Glissade (glide) forward L (4th position) toward LOD, leaving the R leg extended behind.
- 3) Hop L, closing R to 3rd position behind.
- 4-5-6) Repeat opposite, closing the free R to 3rd position in front on count 4.

An alternate interpretation:

Brush the R foot forward into the air on count 3.

II. Coup de Talon

Linear version:

- 1) Throw the L into aerial 2nd position then click the heels together, landing in the R foot.
- 2) Step L to the left side (2nd position).
- 3) Close R to L foot taking weight.
- 4) Throw the L into aerial 2nd position then click the heels together, landing in the R foot.
- 5) Step L to the left side (2nd position).
- 6) Close R to L foot without weight.

Repeat in the opposite direction with the opposite feet, returning back to place.

Rotating version:

It's the same footwork, but turn as a couple halfway CW on counts 5-6, to continue to travel LOD instead of returning back to place.

III. Valse Double

Rotating version:

In closed waltz position,

- 1) Hop R, closing the L foot to 3rd position without weight.
- 2) Step side L (2nd position) toward LOD, turning one-quarter.
- 3) Hop L, closing R to 3rd position without weight, turning one-quarter (finishing a 180° turn).
- 4) Hop L again, L foot closed to 3rd position without weight.
- 5) Step side R (2nd position) toward LOD, without turning.
- 6) Cut L under R, ended with R extended to aerial 2nd position, without turning.

Repeat opposite. Thus this step only turns, halfway, on count 2.

Linear version:

In half-open waltz position, side-by-side, it's the same weight changes except counts 2 and 5 are forward, 4th position, toward LOD.

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The later version

In the late 19th century, a new simplified Cellarius Mazurka Waltz replaced the three-part version.

In closed waltz position,

- 1) Glissade L sideways (or forward) toward LOD.
- 2) Hop on the L, rotating as a couple CW.
- 3) Hop again on the L, rotating as a couple CW.
- 4-5-6) Repeat opposite, skating R toward LOD then hopping twice on the R.

¹ Footnote about the 1845 Moresca being an early description of the Redowa.

The reconstruction of the Moresca depends on the third step being interpreted as closing the R foot to the L *with weight*. Saunder's description doesn't specify whether the R foot is closed with or without weight.

Note: In 19th century dance manuals, the word "hop" was occasionally used to simply mean a rise of the body, not necessarily hopping on one foot, as the term is used today. In this instance Saunders is clear, exactly what he means by "hop" – a rise on the instep, a bounce, not necessarily hopping off the ground.

Here are the two reasons that I interpret the Moresca as closing *with* weight on count 3:

- If it closed *without* weight, it would be hop-step-hop again, no different than his first variation, The Mazurka. But if it closed with weight, it would be new, and worthy of a new name.
- At about this same time Cellarius described the Mazurka Quadrille, with only four basic steps. His first mazurka quadrille step is *pas glissé, or pas de mazurka*. It's a hop-glide-hop. He wrote, "This step is called the mazurka step because it is the most usual one." Thus it makes sense that this is his *first* Mazurka Waltz, in both the 1845 and 1847 versions. This fact is taken into account when interpreting both the 1845 and 1847 versions as a hop-glide-hop.

His second mazurka quadrille step is the *pas de basque*.

The third is *pas boiteux*, hop-glide-couppé, cutting the R foot under the L on count 3.

The fourth is *coup de talon*.

It makes complete sense that if Cellarius were combining the waltz with mazurka quadrille steps, to create the mazurka waltz, that he would use all four of these mazurka quadrille steps. Did he?

His "I. Valse Simple," ("The Mazurka" in 1845) is the *pas glissé, or pas de mazurka*.

His "II. Coup de Talon" is the *coup de talon*.

His "III. Valse Double" is exactly a *pas glissé* followed by a *pas boiteux*.

That leaves the *pas de basque*. Where is it? Would he leave it out? I don't think he would do that. He was too thorough to omit one of the four. I think the *pas de basque* is the Moresca in the earlier 1845 version, which was so enjoyably satisfying that it spun off into its own popular step, soon to be re-named Redowa because the old Bohemian Redova reminded the French dance masters of a *pas de basque*.