

THE QUEEN'S WALTZ QUADRILLE

Reconstruction / choreography by Richard Powers

In 2019, the Buckingham Palace Royal Collection asked me to choreograph this for the 200th Anniversary of Queen Victoria (1819-1901). The specific request was for a three-minute waltz quadrille, to music from *La Traviata*, to be performed in the Buckingham Palace ballroom. This was to commemorate and recreate the first ball ever held in the Buckingham Palace ballroom, in 1856, as illustrated by Louis Haghe in this watercolor:



This is a choreography modified for performance, viewed by a modern audience. Our ideal is authentic audience response, with the viewers today feeling the same as 19th century viewers would have felt in 1856. But today's audiences aren't from the 19th century. They are accustomed to changes at a faster pace, and will lose interest if a figure is repeated by each of four couples—something that the original viewers were accustomed to. In order to elicit a more authentic response, that is similar to that of a 19th century viewer, repeats of the same figure are skipped. And to retain the audience's attention, interesting figures from two waltz quadrilles have been combined into one choreography. All of these figures were known in London by the mid-19th century, and are performed in the original manner.

Formation: 4 couples facing inward in a square formation, ladies at the right side of the gents.

Footwork is usually smooth, light running steps, three per measure.

bars

- 4 All honor partners.
- 4 Turn to face opposites on the next two bars, honor opposites on 3, turn to face partner on the 4th bar.

Figure 1: Everyone - Progressing Two-Hand Turns

- 2 All give partners open two-hands and set to partner with a waltz balancé, stepping forward, then backward, on each count 1 of the bar.
- 2 Open two-hand Turn partner half round with 6 waltz walks, turning singly 1/2 to the right on counts 5-6.
- 4 Repeat with second corner.
- 4 Repeat with opposite.
- 4 Repeat with first corner.
- 8 Grand Chain without taking hands, around the set. Face partner and pass by, right-shoulder-to-right-shoulder, face the next person around the set, passing by left shoulders, continuing to places.
- 4 All face partner, offer R to R hand, and turn clockwise 3/4 of a turn, changing hands on the 4th bar.
- 4 All offer partner L to L hand and return to places.

Figure 2: Head Couples - Ladies Chain and La Poule

- 2 Two head ladies advance with a waltz balancé R forward, then balancé L back.
- 6 Half Ladies Chain to cross over. 2 ladies give R hands to cross over, L hand to opposite gent, turn by the L hand 3/4 of a turn and end facing in, lady at the right side of the gent.

- 2 Two head ladies advance with a waltz balancé.
- 6 Half Ladies Chain to return to places.
- 4 First gent and opposite lady advance to give R hands, to change places, and release, falling back to the opposite side, facing into the set.
- 4 Those two give left hands to cross back, without releasing hands, and offer R hands to partner's R hand.
- 2 Four in line waltz balancé.
- 4 Turn partner by the right hand to places.
- 2 Slight bow to partner when in places, then face into the set.

Figure 3: All Ladies - Progressing Moulinets

- 2 Beginning L foot, all 4 ladies cross right hands ("star") and advance to the next gent toward their left.
- 2 All take left hands with this next person and waltz balancé forward L and R back, while ladies keep the right hand star in the center.
- 4 Full turn around by the left hand, until ladies are heading into the center again.
- 24 Repeat this three more times, finishing in place, falling slightly back away from partner.

Figure 4: Everyone - Balance and Waltz

- 2 All offer partners both hands, open, and waltz balancé, forward then back.
- 2 Turn partners halfway, clockwise, beginning gent's L and ladies R foot.
- 12 All fold into waltz position, continuing the rotation, and Valse à Trois Temps around the set, to places.

Figure 5: Everyone - Progressing Rond and Double Ladies Chain

- 4 All take hands-8 and circle 3/8 of the way around to the left (almost halfway).
- 2 All 2-hand corners half of a clockwise turn, to change places with them. Flow from large to small circling.
- 2 2-hand balancé forward to corner, then face into the set, taking hands-8 (with gents crossed over).
- 8 Repeat this, once more, ending with gents back home and ladies crossed over, all facing into the set.
- 2 All 4 ladies advance with a waltz balancé, forward then back.
- 5 All 4 Ladies Chain to cross over, giving R hands in a "star", as in Figure 3, crossing over to original places, then give L hand to original partner, turning by the L hand half of a turn, ending with gents facing out.
- 1 Take waltz position with partner.
- 7 Waltz anywhere and disperse.
- 1 With gents facing into the center, step side-close toward, looking back RLOD.

Notes:

- Figure 1 begins with the unmodified opening of the earliest known waltz quadrille, the Royal Spanish Quadrilles.
- Figure 2 would have then been repeated, commencing with Couple 2, then again with Couple 3, then Couple 4. But when performing this for an audience, they won't want to see the same figure four times, or you'll lose their attention.
- My first draft of Figure 5 danced the opening figure four times, as in the original. But we found that our test audience felt that the movement was completely understood, and they were wishing for something different, after twice through. The Double Ladies Chain, from another waltz quadrille, maintained audience interest, for a better finale for this choreography.