

# THE 1825 ECOSSAISE

From ПРАВИЛА ДЛЯ БЛАГОРОДНЫХ ОБЩЕСТВЕННЫХ ТАНЦЕВ  
(Rules For Noble Social Dances), by Louis Petrovsky, Kharkov, 1825

Richard Powers, from a translation from the Russian by Susan McDonald,  
with thanks to Dmitry Filimonov's primary research and reconstructions from Moscow.

This is the Russian version of the Ecosaise from the First Empire/Regency Era. Petrovsky wrote, "It seems that Ecosaise, as the name implies, had its origin in Scotland," but by the time it reached Germany and Russia, it had lost its Scottish character. It was a popular dance at the time. Petrovsky wrote, "There is no one who has not seen this dance."

This is a **Russian** version of the **German** way of dancing the late 18th century **English** version of the Ecosaise, which was a **French** version of a **Scottish** country dance. Petrovsky wrote, "It seems that Ecosaise, as the name implies, had its origin in Scotland," but by the time it reached Germany and Russia, it had lost its Scottish character.

This is my *interpretation* of Petrovsky's description. He said that the head couple of the set chooses the figure, and that the dancers below observe the figure, then dance what they saw, when the head couple progresses down to them. He did *not* say that each couple reaching the top then invents their own new figure, but the Ecosaise figures are very short—only a quarter the length of a typical contradance—short enough to be easily observed then danced by the third couple. And the third couple is truly inactive in the Ecosaise, without anything to do while standing inactive, so they are free to observe a new figure that is approaching them, then dance it. The idea each top couple choosing new figures is easy, and obvious, so I'm assuming that this must have occurred to them, especially Russian dancers, who were **improvising the Mazurka at that time**, with each set having their own leader, spontaneously inventing the figures.

**Formation:** Proper longways set, with ladies on the right side as you face up. Triple minor sets were most common at this time, with spacer couples between the two dancing couples. "1" is the active couple, "2" is the inactive couple, "3" is the spacer couple:

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

As inactives progress up the set, they alternate between being spacers 3, inactives 2, spacers 3, inactives 2, etc., until they reach the top. Wait out two rounds then become an active couple 1.

Actives remain active until they reach the bottom, wait out twice, and become inactive.

**Part 1:** The top couple invents a short 8-bar figure and dances it with the second couple.

**Part 2:** The top couple promenades down the set for 4 bars, turns singly, promenades up the set for 4 bars as the second couple walks up one space, ending with the head couple one place below where they began.

The head couple then dances the same figure with the next couple below them, who has now seen the figure and knows what to expect (that's the beauty of spacer couples).

As the head couple progresses to the fourth couple down the set, the new top couple can start with the same figure (that the top couple had invented) with the second couple.

But if the new top couple invents their own new figure, it is even more interesting, with spacer couples continually watching for new figures as they come up the set.

When the head couple reaches the bottom of the set, they wait out two rounds, then start back up the set as an inactive or spacer couple. Note, when a head couple is almost to the bottom, and there is only one couple left, dance the figure with them. You don't need a third spacer couple. Then after dancing with the last couple, heads will progress to the very bottom of the set. Then as they are progressing up the hall, the head gent (or lady) is planning what the next figure will be when they reach the top.

The **footwork** is primarily 3 chassés, jeté and assemblé, beginning with the right foot. But Petrovski also wrote, "Others who free themselves from working too hard, saunter around safely in the first figure, and in the second," implying that some dancers just walked the figures, as mainstream polite society began to do five years later, around 1830.

#### Possible figures for Part 1

- 1) Moulinet (star) R-hands over, then circle 4-hands to the right on the return.
- 2) Taking hands-4, 2 gents advance and dive under arches arms formed by the 2 ladies, casting away to places; 2 ladies then dive under the men's arch.
- 3) Taking hands-4, circle left all the way around; 2 ladies dive under the men's arch.
- 4) Head gent and inactive lady dos-a-dos by the right shoulder, back to places. Head lady and inactive gent do the same.
- 5) Head gent and inactive lady advance to each other with 2 balancé steps, then quickly turn by both hands (or by the right hand). Head lady and inactive gent do the same.
- 6) Take hands-4 and do 4 balancé steps (possibly pulling in, pushing back, pulling in, pushing back), then chassé a full circle to the left.
- 7) Do a Petit Chain (a Grand Chain for 4 people in a square). R hands to partner to cross over, L hands up and down the set with the next, repeat to finish the square.
- 8) Invent your own.

#### Possible Progressions for Part 2

- 1) Promenade down the center of the set, turn alone, and come back up the center.  
3 chassés, jeté and assemblé each way.
- 2) Promenade down the center of the set, cast away, come back up the outside of the set.

- 3) Cast down the outsides and come up the center.
- 4) Parallel tracks: lady promenades down the center as the gent casts down behind the men, then gent up the center as she comes up behind the ladies, to places. Or vice versa.
- 5) Cross over and cast down the outsides, then come up the center.
- 6) Figure-8. Head couple goes down the center past couple 2, goes "out the windows" behind couple 3, circles toward the center to meet and promenade up two couples, casts around couple 2, circling around into final position.
- 7) Promenade down the center of the set, turn alone, chassé or galop up the center with longer steps and cast around the couple you had danced with, to finish one place below.
- 8) Pousette down the center backing the woman; pousette up the center backing the man.
- 9) Same, with lady turning under gent's raised arm. Reverse the turn coming back up.
- 10) Invent your own.