

The Mid 19th Century SCHOTTISCHE and Variations

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Following the great popularity of the Polka, the "Schottische Valse" (also spelled Schottisch) was introduced into polite society around 1850, reportedly by Prof. Markowski at his salons in Paris. "This new and elegant dance ... is now danced regularly at all the principal balls, with the greatest success, completely outrivalling both the Waltz and Polka; combining as it does the gracefulness of the one with the novelty and vivacity of the other."

Before the popularity of the Schottische became widespread, this dance was previously known as the Rheinlander in Germany. However, the appellation "Schottische", which is German for "Scottish", puzzled some 19th century dance masters. One theory is that the Rheinlander was danced to Scottish Strathspey airs that were popular throughout Europe in the early 19th century. Thus the name likely refers to the music, even though the dance itself is German.

The Schottische that is danced today is similar to the later "Military Schottische" or "Barn Dance" from the 1880s. The original mid-century Schottische was of a slightly different nature, with fewer variations. Descriptions collected from 52 early dance manuals are given below.

The BASIC SCHOTTISCHE, as found in most mid-century dance manuals:

Take waltz position, "the lady allowing the gentleman's right arm to encircle her waist."

BALANCÉ STEP: Take a slow polka step to the side without turning (step to the side, his L & her R; close to 3rd position; step to the side again; hop on this foot, pointing the free toe to the floor, closed to the supporting foot); then take a slow polka the other way back, without turning. One description has the free foot crossed behind the supporting foot on count 4 of the Balancé.

VOLTE or CIRCULAR STEP or PAS SAUTEUSE: 4 step-hops on alternating feet, turning as a couple. Turn halfway around on each step-hop, to make 2 complete turns. On each hop, close the free foot to the supporting foot with the toe pointed down as before. Some sources described these steps as leap-hop, jeté-hop or spring-hop.

VARIATIONS

Note: these are not necessarily permutations added for variety, meaning a couple stringing together each of these variations, but are sometimes the only Schottische step described in a particular source.

- 1 Turn at the end of each Balancé Step, i.e. do a SLOW TURNING POLKA.
- 2 Similar to the Basic Step, but Balancé IN & OUT of the room, or on the DIAGONAL.

- 3 In ballroom position, PROMENADE FORWARD on both Balancé Steps. The second step forward is a closing to 3rd position, unlike the later Military Schottische.
- 4 Back the lady or gent in PURSUIT on the first part.
- 5 A similar Promenade, but TRAVEL FORWARD THEN BACK on the Balancé Steps. This was an early variation that was discarded for its inherent dangers.
- 6 Replace the Volte with a WALTZ A DEUX TEMPS (a Two-Step or fast Polka without a hop, smoothly turning as a couple twice around).
- 7 REVERSE TURN on the Voltes or Deux Temps, turning counterclockwise.
- 8 DOUBLE (repeat) either the Balancé Step or Voltes, so that one phrase is entirely Balancé or Voltes. The lead may be verbal: "Double" or "That again."
- 9 Turn only ONCE AROUND on the Volte, with 4 quarter-turns.
- 10 Begin with 4 slow GALOP CHASSÉS instead of the Balance Step, as in the Danish Dance, then continue with the Voltes or Deux Temps.