

# **INTRODUCTION TO RISE AND FALL**

**Roundalab 2002 Convention, St. Paul, MN**

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- I. What is RISE and FALL?
- II. Why should I use RISE and FALL?
- III. Where is RISE and FALL used?
- IV. How do we teach it?

## **WHAT IS 'RISE AND FALL'?**

Rise in a dance figure is an upward stretch of your body starting at your feet and moving up to the top of your head. Once you are in a "rise" position you can't just stay there, so you will next lower. This action is the "fall." In falling, the knees and ankles are considerably flexed or bent, ready to rise again using the power generated by the compression of the muscles in the leg and foot.

Rise is first mentioned as an action in the RAL Phase III standards, although it can—and should—be applied in the steps at all phases.

The RAL/URDC glossary of round dance terms defines "rise and fall" as:

*"Continuous changing of body elevation through use of the feet, ankles and legs."*

Think of "rise" as a ride up in an escalator and "fall" as a descent on an elevator.

## **WHY SHOULD I USE 'RISE AND FALL'?**

Students may ask: "Why should we do that?" Do we do it to feel good? Yes! Do we do it to better feel the music we're listening to? Yes! Do we do it to improve the quality and look of our dancing? Absolutely!

Beginning students can shuffle flat-footed through the early phases of round dancing. Rise and fall becomes important as the dancer progresses because of the mechanics of the more advanced figures, the body movement required and shaping necessary to complete a step in partnership.

Even at the lowest levels, "rise and fall" assists in maintaining proper timing to the music.

## **WHERE IS RISE AND FALL USED?**

### **1. Characteristics of Rhythms:**

Each rhythm has its own characteristics. If you were looking into a ballroom from outside and could not hear the music, you should still be able to tell what rhythm is being danced. "Rise and fall" sets

smooth dances apart from Latins. With most of the Latin rhythms, you would not see “rise and fall” as a rule because the steps are taken on the ball of the foot and the leg and hip are involved to create horizontal motion (hip rotation as in rumba).

Even in smooth/standard dances, the amount and type of “rise and fall” will vary. It is most pronounced in waltz, which is typically made up of figures that rotate and rise and fall. The “rise” in waltz will usually bring your feet together so that it looks like you are rising in place. “Rise” generally begins at the end of the first step and continues throughout the figure, ending with a lowering (“fall”) at the end of the last count.

In foxtrot the music is faster, and the figures are danced more linearly. Most foxtrot steps are passing steps, and because the feet are apart, the “rise” appears to be less than in waltz. “Rise” here is often called “quick” rise because it occurs on the first step and is maintained at that level through the movement.

Quickstep, made up of three- and four-step figures, is a blend of waltz and foxtrot and uses rise and fall as appropriate. As you can guess, the rise and fall of the three-step figures is like that of waltz (i.e., those where the feet are drawn together) and in the four-step figures, it is like that of foxtrot (i.e., moving along a line with passing feet).

Tango does not rely on rise and fall for its movement or image, being more compact, danced with the weight mostly over the central part of the foot and with the knees flexed.

“Rise and fall” occurs in Viennese waltz, but is much more subtle than in the English waltz because the rise occurs only through the feet and ankles, not in the body. The figures rotate aggressively with just enough rise to propel the dancer forward.

## **2. The Different Kinds of Rise:**

There are two kinds of rise: 1) foot or ankle rise, and 2) body rise. Foot rise starts with your weight squarely over your feet and begins as you shift your weight forward to the ball of the foot, then to the toe. As this is done, the ankle joint opens up. This can be done independently of any “rise” occurring in the body.

Body rise comes from straightening the knees and may include a lengthening (stretch) through the torso and even the neck.

A figure can be danced with foot rise or body rise only or—more typically—with foot and body rise together.

## **3. The Formula:**

In waltz, the formula for “rise and fall” is this:

1. *Commence rise at the end of step 1*
2. *Continue rise on step 2*
3. *Continue rise onto step 3*

#### 4. *Lower at end of step 3*

In foxtrot, the formula is much the same, except the rise occurs at the end of step 1, is maintained throughout the figure, with the lowering at the end of step 3 (or the last step of a syncopated figure).

### **HOW DO WE TEACH IT?**

Because “rise and fall” is introduced in the phase manual at Phase III, it is appropriate to begin introducing the concept at that level.

### **Waltz**

Phase III dancers will be learning the maneuver, spin turn, impetus to semi, chasse, and hover, to name a few that will carry on into the higher phases. Begin by showing how “rise and fall” is used in the *basic waltz box*. Students can do this individually, or in pairs. If couples are dancing together, have them use a practice hold so that body position does not yet become an issue.

As students master “rise and fall” in the box step, try an amalgamation of figures that require “rise and fall” but that are still within the Phase III syllabus. A typical grouping would be:

*Preparation step to maneuver; spin turn with box finish (back side close).*

As those figures appear to be mastered, try:

*Maneuver, open impetus, thru chasse.*

This grouping introduces syncopated timing in waltz (with the chasse danced 12&3) so you can show how the rise still begins on the first step and the “fall” still occurs at the end of the last step of the figure.

### **Foxtrot**

Figures using “rise and fall” in foxtrot generally begin in Phase IV, where you find the feather, natural turn, open natural, reverse turn, three step and weave.

In a foxtrot feather, you start on the heel of your foot and move your body forward over your toes before a step is taken. This is a little like leaning out over a diving board before taking the plunge. You are moving through your feet, rolling from the heel to ball to toe. This helps slow down the dancer taking the first step, which is a “slow” (the 1-2 beats of the four beats in a foxtrot measure).

You have risen the same amount as you rose in waltz, but in waltz, you rose almost straight up, and in foxtrot you moved down the line.

Have students try a *feather*, dancing as a couple in closed position but with a practice hold, again so body position does not complicate the exercise.

Next, try “*feather, three step.*” Use the same principle of “rise and fall,” moving from the heel to the ball to the toe of foot and rising through the knees, lowering at the end of the last count of the figure to do it all again for the next figure. This can be practiced as a series of:

*Feather, three step, feather, three step, feather, three step.*

We like to have students do these exercises several times before correcting them. They need a feel for what they're doing, which only comes from trying it a few times. At that point, we make suggestions based on what we have seen. Let them practice each suggestion before introducing another suggestion.

We have learned over the years in our own coaching sessions that it is hard to think of more than one concept at a time.

After months or even years of two-step and shuffling across the floor, “rise and fall” is a major deviation from what many of your dancers feel is natural. They may not think they will ever want to dance at the advanced level, but if this is introduced as part of the basics, it will give them a good foundation for progressing through the phases when they are ready. In the meantime, it will make their Phase III and IV dancing more enjoyable.