

Waltzing Through the U.S.

by *Marilyn Chartrand, Alameda, CA

In the past ten years, there has been a proliferation of Waltz groups and Waltz events across the country in Maryland, Colorado, California, Washington, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Oregon, Kentucky, Alaska, Ohio, Missouri, and Tennessee, among others.

Colorado Waltz groups include the CFOOTMAD **Waltz Night**, founded in 1997 by Viki Lawrence; **Wednesday Waltz Etcetera** at Avalon, led by Jim X. Borzým and Frank Vernon since 2006; and Kimball Edell's **Westminster Waltz Night**.

Waltz groups have formed to provide opportunities for dancers at all levels to learn and enjoy the Waltz and other partner dances, and in many cases to provide opportunities for Waltz bands to play. Waltz groups around the country share their visions:

“To offer a chance to dance that may not be the biggest or fanciest, but that is as humane, kind, welcoming, forgiving, and warm as we can possibly make it.” (Waltz etcetera, Seattle)

“Creating and maintaining a thriving dance community, which provides opportunities for dancers at all levels to learn and enjoy the Waltz and other partner dances.” (Portland Waltz Eclectic)

“An eclectic mix of dances and dance music to bring smiles to the faces of people from different dance communities.” (Elm City Waltz, New Haven, CT)

“Aside from the simple pleasure of dancing, this program brings together dancers of all age groups, is affordable for whole families, provides an afternoon activity that fits the schedule of many working families, and has encouraged the growth of many talented Waltz bands.” (Waltz Time, Glen Echo, MD.) Begun in 1995 as one of the earliest Waltz series in the country, this group has donated all its net proceeds to the renovation of the Spanish Ballroom and the Bumper Car Pavilion, and helps to support the Glen Echo Park programs.

Most groups play an eclectic mix of 50-60% Waltz, mixing Waltzes with other couple dances, like swing, Latin, tango, schottische, polka, foxtrot, and one-step. Some groups have live music; others, recorded music. Most are held once or twice a month, many of them on Sunday afternoons. Notable exceptions are the weekly dances held in Seattle and the Bay Area. Admissions among groups vary from \$3-\$11 and most include a lesson ahead of the dance.

Besides local interest generating the rise of more Waltzing around the country, traveling teachers have influenced the movement through full weekends and week-long Waltz workshops. Richard Powers began his series of Waltz Weekends in 1997 at Split Tree Participatory Arts, sponsored by Sid Hetzler in NW Georgia, and has taught a total of 14 Waltz Weekends in this Georgia venue. He has also presented them in Palo Alto, Seattle, Portland, Toronto, Anchorage, Pasadena, Juneau, and, of course, Denver and Boulder.

Joan Walton has also been a carrier of the Waltz message by teaching Vintage Dance weekends with Waltz emphasis in Denver, Seattle, Dayton, Silverton, Hartford, Toronto, Portland, and Cape May, NJ. Joan and Richard are both teachers at the annual Stanford Waltz Week and have both provided prominent leadership to the Friday Night Waltz series in the Bay Area.

The Cross-step Waltz, popular in France since the 1920s, was introduced widely at various Waltz weekends as well as Stanford Waltz Week, and later adopted and taught locally in many communities. Danced to slower tempos, it is a rather different type of Waltz, providing in many venues more variety within the Waltz genre itself, and thus necessitating fewer non-Waltz dances to provide an evening of variety for the dancers. It is a Waltz to teach to beginners because it has such a high success rate on the first attempt.

Joan says “The thing I like about teaching Waltz to beginners is that once they get into the 1-2-3 timing of it, they usually love it because it is completely different from every other type of movement we do. Most other dances (Swing, Cha cha, Foxtrot, etc.) are in duple meters. Even our walking has a 1-2, 1-2 beat to it. So the Waltz movement, swaying like a boat on a gentle sea in that 1-2-3, 1-2-3 rhythm, is hypnotic, restful and relaxing, even for beginners.

Richard observes that the mushrooming of Waltz groups has happened entirely without media buzz. Most dance booms, like Salsa and the 1990’s Lindy revival, were greatly assisted by media coverage. But not Waltz! As Richard says,” I think that’s just as well. We don’t want Waltz to become the latest fad, because then next year it would be ‘last year’s fad’, the kiss of death. Think macarena and disco. I’d rather it percolate at a simmer for a longer time.”

For details and to register for the “One Hundred Years of Social Dance: 1907-2007”, Avalon Ballroom, Boulder Oct. 5-7, featuring simultaneous teaching by Bay Area teachers Richard Powers and Joan Walton, go to www.mchartrand.com/dance2007. Waltzes will be included!!

To find Waltz outside of Colorado...

Elm City Waltz, New Haven, CT <http://www.lse.org/waltz/>

Friday Night Waltz, Palo Alto and Oakland, CA <http://www.fridaynightwaltz.com/>

Lexington Vintage Dance Society, KY http://www.lexingtonvintagedance.org/dance_opp.shtml

Mostly Waltz for Boston, MA <http://www.geocities.com/bostonwaltz/>

Mostly Waltz Night, Anchorage, AK <http://www.akswing.com/>

Mostly Waltz, West Hartford, CT <http://www.hcdance.org/waltz.htm>

Portland Waltz Eclectic, OR, <http://www.waltzelectic.org/>

Split Tree Participatory Arts Center, Chickamauga, GA <http://www.splittree.org/>

The Waltz Party, St. Louis, MO <http://www.westendweb.com/waltz/>

Two Dog Waltz, Blacksburg, VA <http://www.twodogwaltz.com/waltz.html>

Waltz etcetera, Seattle, WA <http://www.waltzetc.com/>

Waltz Time, Glen Echo MD, www.waltztimedances.org/index.html

Waltz! First Sunday, Cleveland, OH <http://home.att.net/~NEOhioContra/>

***Marilyn Chartrand both danced and provided leadership to the folk and vintage dance communities for nearly three decades in the Denver/Boulder area before moving to the Bay Area several years ago. She first presented a Denver Richard Powers Waltz Weekend in 1998 while still residing in Colorado. It gives her great pleasure to maintain her long-time support of the Colorado dance community by continuing to present annual dance weekends with Richard Powers and Joan Walton in Denver/Boulder.**