

A *Terpsicourante* Variation

Terpsicourante, like many other four-couple dances, has the property that you and your partner meet and dance with only two of the other three couples in the set. The third couple is there someplace, but you do not seem to encounter them. The problem—if it is a problem—is especially acute in *Terpsicourante* because the couple you do not meet is the one you do the backward circle with in the middle of the serpentine progression, so that you literally do not *see* them.

I have been asked many times if there is a way to “fix” *Terpsicourante* so that every couple dances with every other couple. I rather like the dance as it is, but since this is an interesting question, I decided to see what was possible.

The original *Terpsicourante* was written to have to several basic design properties (these are generally assumed to be the ones a four-couple dance *should* have):

1. The dance is done four times through.
2. Exactly the same set of figures is done all four times.
3. All four couples get to all four places.
4. Everyone is home again after the last time through (but not sooner).

After a little experimentation and analysis, it has become clear to me that it is not possible in a four-couple dance to satisfy to all four of these properties and also have

5. Couples do the set of figures with all the other couples in the set.

There are, however, ways to satisfy this fifth property if some of the first four requirements are relaxed. Attached is one alternative version that does the trick. I think it is reasonably consistent with the “feel” of the original, without being too weird or hard to remember.

The alternative has the following characteristics:

1. The dance is done *six* times through and each couple dances with each of the other couples *twice* (in the same order both times).
2. There are *two sets of figures for the C Part* which alternate through the dance. The 1st, 3rd, 5th times the original serpentine progression is used; the 2nd, 4th, and 6th times, an alternative serpentine progression is used. (All the other figures – A1, A2, and B – are the same as before.)
3. No couple stays in the same place twice in a row.
4. Each couple dances from outside places (ends of the set) three times and inside places three times.
5. Three of the four couples (2nd, 3rd, and 4th) succeed in getting to all of the other places in the set at least once, but one couple (1st) alternates only between places 1 and 2 the whole time.
6. Everyone is home after the last time through (but not sooner).

TERPSÍCOURANTE ALTERNATIVE

A Longways for Four Couples

*Duple Minor **Improper***

Historical English Style

⇒ Done 6 Times Through ⇐

A1 1-4 Working in sets of two couples, side-by-side right with neighbor and fall back.
5-6 Set right and left.
7-8 Turn single.
9-10 Gypsy halfway with neighbor.

A2 1-4 With partner, side-by-side right and fall back.
5-8 Set right and left, and turn single.
9-10 Gypsy halfway with partner.

[Everyone is now diagonally across from where they began.]

B 1-4 With partner, right-hand turn once around.
5-8 Men change places; then women change places.

1st, 3rd, 5th Times

2nd, 4th, 6th Times

C	1-2	SERPENTINE PROGRESSION 1: Working in sets of two couples, circle halfway and, for an instant, continue facing the couple you circled with. . .	SERPENTINE PROGRESSION 2: Top two couples draw poussette around each other, W going forward, M backing up (4 beats out to the side, 4 beats back in).
	3-4	Couples 1 and 4 (who are standing back to back in the middle of the set) change places <i>while keeping their backs to each other</i> , M1 and M4 drawing their partners out and around the other couple (couple 1 moving down the set, couple 4 up) to face end couples.	
	5-6	With the couple you are facing, circle halfway until Couples 2 and 3 are standing back to back in the middle.	Middle two couples draw poussette around each other, again W forward, M backing up.
	7-8	Couples 2 and 3 do the serpentine progression in the middle.	
	9-10	With the couple you are now facing, circle halfway.	Bottom two couples draw poussette around each other, again W forward, M backing up (<i>top two couples stand still</i>).
	11-12	Couples 1 and 4 do the serpentine progression in the middle.	