

Saint Louis Shag *Updating the Count*

by H. Leon Raper, Camp Verde, Arizona

Whatta ya mean, "updating the <beepin'> count?" First, I gotta explain some technical garbage about the annotation of all forms of dance. Hopefully, it ain't goin' to hurt real bad.

The first and most fundamental concept is that all forms of dance can be represented by Rhythm Units. In 4/4 time you have a 2-Beat Rhythm Unit. In 3/4 time you have a 3-Beat Rhythm Unit. Several of these Rhythm Units can be linked together to form Step Patterns. Secondly, Rhythm Units have only two forms, Even or Odd. Gee whiz, we are done. Ain't that a hoot?

Oh, you wanna know what Even and Odd Rhythm Units are? From here on, let's talk only about the 2-Beat Rhythm Units used in 4/4 time – like we use in all forms of swing dancing. Also assume that a Rhythm Unit indicates the number of weight changes (steps) taken within 2-Beats of music. Even Rhythm Units have an even number of weight changes (0,2,...). Odd Rhythm Units have an odd number of weight changes (1,3,...). We will annotate these as [EVEN] or [ODD]. Now we are ready to get on to the good stuff.

For many years, the 6-Beat step patterns

of east coast and west coast swing were represented as [ODD] [ODD] [EVEN]. That is, [1&2] [3&4] [5 6]. Some instructors are still using that counting technique today. However, the majority of dance instructors have changed over to a different representation, which is [EVEN]. [ODD] [ODD] or [1 2] [3&4] [5&6] – same exact dance steps, just different count. Using the new count, the 8-Beat step patterns such as the whip would now be [EVEN] [ODD] [EVEN] [ODD] or [1 2] [3&4] [5 6] [7&8]. Now let's get on to why we need to update the count for the St. Louis Shag.

For many years, St. Louis Shag has been taught as [ODD] [EVEN] [ODD] [EVEN] or [1&2] [3 4] [5&6] [7 8]. This doesn't integrate as well with Lindy Hop, West Coast Swing and Balboa as it would if we changed the count. Let's change St. Louis Shag counts [1&2] to [3&4], [3 4] to [5 6], [5&6] to [7&8], and [7 8] to [1 2]. The result is the new count which is [1 2] [3&4] [5 6] [7&8]. The dance has not changed – only the count has been changed. We can now integrate St. Louis Shag step patterns directly into our Lindy Hop, West Coast Swing and Balboa without having to do any mental gymnastics.

To summarize, we have changed St. Louis Shag Rhythm Units to [EVEN] [ODD] [EVEN] [ODD] and are still doing the same dance. The new count is [1 2] [3&4] [5 6] [7&8]. Now it fits very nicely with Lindy Hop, West Coast Swing or Balboa. There is no change to the dance. It is just updating the way we count it – like we did when we updated the method of counting for other swing dances.

I first saw St. Louis Shag at the 1973 World Swing Dance Championships held at the Palladium in Hollywood, California – my partner and I also danced at that competition. St. Louis Shag was the most exciting form of swing dance I had ever seen. Mike Faille and his partner Cooke Giamo burned up the floor doing St. Louis Shag. Later, Kenny Wetzel also showed his mastery of the dance. I knew that Kenny executed a great Flying Lindy, but had no idea he was also a master of St. Louis Shag. Once I saw what he could do, I talked him into giving my partner and me lessons in St. Louis Shag. It was great and we started doing it in our competition dancing. You want a feel-good pill? Take St. Louis Shag and don't call anyone in the morning – sleep in. □

More swing info can be found on the Internet at Raper's Dance Corner.
www.dancecorner.com/dance/

Dance Stamps the Century

by Lucy McGillicuddy

Some of the most intriguing stamps ever issued have arrived courtesy of the US Postal Service. Indeed, the USPS is determined to revive the deteriorating army of stamp collectors. Of course, when you buy a stamp and don't use it, *all* of the money (not just the profit) goes to the post office. This is not so bad, especially since they're issuing a wonderful series entitled Celebrate the Century—the largest commemorative series ever produced.

Each decade, from the aughts (00s) through the nineties, is recalled by a group of fifteen stamps representing areas such as government, sports, art, music and dance. The 1920s series is beautifully packaged and features 1926 dancers striking Charleston poses. A cartoon couple fox trots across the back of the package. Is dance important or what? The Charleston stamp celebrates flappers, as drawn by John Held, Jr. Other fun images include Art Deco style architecture (shown by the top of New York's fabulous Chrysler Building), Jazz with Louis Armstrong, and even

(for Lindy Hop fans) one of Charles Lindbergh looking heroic before his Spirit of St. Louis plane.

Every three months another decade will thus be philately honored. However, exactly what will be pictured has not yet been decided. Here's where you come in. The Post Office wants your vote on which images to portray. Of course, I think we all agree that more stamps devoted to swing dancing and the like is preferable. The USPS is allowing us to vote in hopes of selling us many stamps that we will love and not use. They figured, why should all the obscure Caribbean countries have all the neat stamps? They make a lot of \$\$\$\$ that way and so can we! It worked for the Elvis stamp (which sold a LOT) and it was fun to choose between the young and old Elvis. (I voted for the old, large Elvis, just to be contrary.) Whether you decide to collect and keep stamps (which is wonderful) or just use them to post your bills, it's *always* a good idea to vote for more dance images. □

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