

Reel of Three

by Duncan MacLeod

This formation is found in Reels, Jigs and Strathspeys and may be danced across the dance or on the sides.

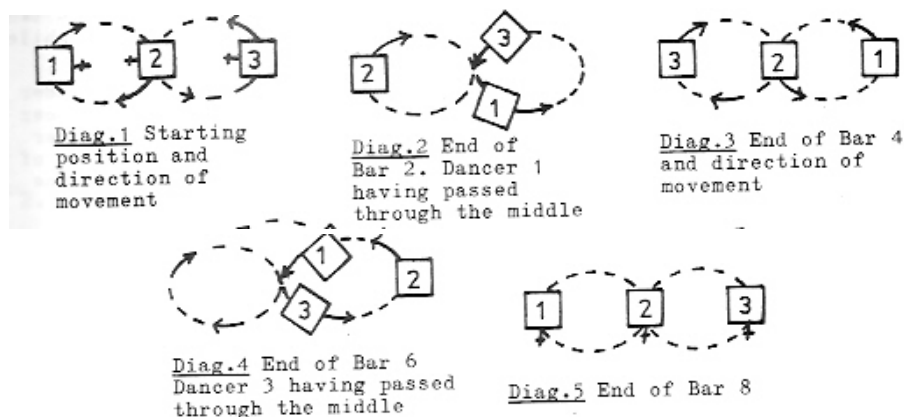
There are several varieties of Reel of Three but basically all of them if drawn on the floor would describe the perfect figure "8". It is danced by three dancers, each one dancing the pattern of a figure "8"; all start at the same time, but from different starting positions; one dancer always cutting between the other two until the figure has been completed. It may be danced by three men; three women; two men and one woman; or two women and one man. In some dances eight travelling steps are required to complete the figure - two steps being used for each curve of the figure "8", - while in other dances only six travelling steps are required, the remaining two steps being used by the first couple to cross over to the other side of the dance or perhaps cast off.

Ordinary Reel of Three (8 bars)

This form of Reel of Three requires eight travelling steps. The formation starts with three dancers in line two of them facing the same direction, while the third faces the opposite direction (diag. 1)

To begin the Reel of Three, dancers 1 and 2 pass each other with right shoulders, while dancer 3 dances out to the right; dancer 1 then dances between 2 and 3 passing 3 with the left shoulder to follow the pattern of the figure "8" by curving to the left (diag. 2), dancer 3 then dances through the middle and follows the figure "8" passing dancer 2 with right shoulder then curving to the right; dancer 2 then passes through the middle and the formation continues with each dancer going through the middle in turn until all are back in their original places.

It is perhaps more easily learned and understood if each dancer walks round his/her own path separately before putting all three parts together.



NOTES:

1. Two steps are required for each curve of the figure "8".
2. Each dancer passes through the middle of the figure in turn, in the example used the order is 1,3,2.
3. Each dancer dances round the ball of the figure "8" in the direction of the shoulder which was passed as they came through the middle.
4. At the end of the Reel of Three dancers face the centre of the set. This should be done without adding a loop at the top or bottom. In the example given 1st lady turns to her left and 3rd lady to her right.

Dances suitable for teaching this type of reel:

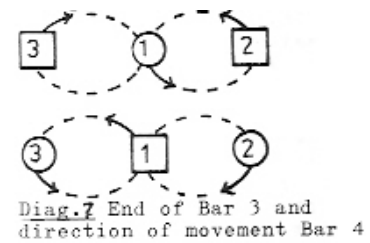
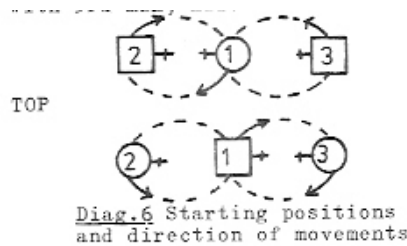
The Rakish Highlandman
Dumbarton Drums
New Rigged Ship (bars 9 16)
Miss Mary Douglas (bars 1-8)

Ordinary Reel of Three (6 bars)

This form of the Reel of Three is the same as the Ordinary Reel of Three just described, except that only 6 travelling steps are used for the figure "8". It is therefore a little more difficult to phrase. When learning dancers should be advised to check their position at the halfway stage,

viz. dancers who started at the ends will have changed places while the centre dancer will be back in the middle ready to move in a new direction (diag. 7).

In the diagrams below the Reel of Three is shown being danced on both sides of the dance with the number 1 dancers between the other two, who are of the opposite sex from the centre dancers. In this particular form to start the Reel, 1st woman dances down to pass right shoulder with 3rd man, while 2nd man dances out to the right and down.



NOTES:

1. Although the positions or numbers of the dancers have been altered from those used when describing Ordinary Reel of Three (8 bars), the pattern remains the same and the Reel still starts with the two dancers who pass each other to begin passing right shoulders, while the third dancer in the line dances out to the right.
2. The order of going through the middle is the same, i.e. the dancer at the end of the line of three who is passed by the centre dancer to begin must go through the middle first, followed by the dancer who started at the opposite end. In the example given the order of going through the middle on the ladies' side is 2;3;1; and on the men's side 3; 2; 1.
3. At the end of 6 bars dancers face the centre of the set as in Ordinary Reel of Three (8 bars); top and bottom dancers in the Reels stand still, the centre dancer in each Reel will normally have a further two bars of music to allow them to cross over to their own side of the dance.

Dances suitable for teaching this type of reel:

Monymusk

The Montgomeries Rant (Bars 25 - 30)

New Rigged Ship (Bars 41 - 46)

Madge Wildfire's Strathspey (Bars 25 - 30)

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