

Escape from the Lesson Planet

A medley of 32 bars strathspey and 32 bars reel for three couples in a longwise set.

A demonstration dance, in the form of two lesson plans, to celebrate reaching the end of the RSCDS Teaching Certificate course. I sometimes felt I was trying to emulate an alien creature which could do all kinds of unnatural things with hips, ankles and toes. There is plenty of homework and preparation of many detailed lesson plans. The lessons must follow a very prescriptive format: practising all the steps in a dance; doing a skills exercise for the main formation which is then practised thoroughly; revising a second formation and putting the whole dance together. If this dance seems a bit rushed in places it is an accurate reflection of the experience!

Bars Description

Lesson 1: Strathspey

- 1-8 **Main Step Practice:** All chase round anticlockwise to their original places, using two long, two short, two long and two short travelling steps. All end facing diagonally to their left.
- 9-12 **Second Step Revision:** All couples set right diagonally to the centre line, 1st and 2nd men just above 2nd and 3rd women, ending with a quarter turn on the hop, pulling back right shoulder. All then set left to the opposite sides with another quarter turn on the hop. All repeat this pattern to their own sides. The top two couples join nearer hands.
- 13-16 **Skills Exercise:** 1st and 2nd couples cross over, the women passing under an arch made by the men, then turn towards each other and join nearer hands again on opposite sides. On bars 15-16 they cross back, the men making the arch again, but end turning away and taking nearer hands with their partner, 1st couple facing down, 2nd couple facing up.
- 17-24 **Main Formation:** 1st and 2nd couples dance the Rondel, ending on the sides.
- 25-32 **Second Formation:** 1st and 3rd couples dance a Poussette. The order is now 2,1,3.

Lesson 2: Reel

- 1-8 **Main Step Practice:** All chase round anticlockwise using two long, two short, two long and two short steps. All end in the centre joining both hands with their partner.
- 9-12 **Second Step Revision:** All set retiring together towards the men's side then advancing to the centre line, one bar each way. Men start left foot, women right foot. All release hands. Then 2nd and 3rd couples set retiring to their own sides while 1st couple set pulling right shoulder back a quarter each time to end facing their own sides.
- 13-16 **Skills Exercise:** 1st couple turn their 3rd corner right hand once round to face their 4th corner. They then turn their 4th corner left hand to end back to back on the diagonal facing their 1st corner.
- 17-24 **Main Formation:** 1st couple turn their 1st corner right hand, turn their partner left hand to face their 2nd corner, turn their 2nd corner right hand and end crossing left hand, but stay in the centre and take both hands as 3rd couple step in on the last bar.
- 25-32 **Second Formation:** 1st and 3rd couples dance a Poussette. The final order is 2,3,1.

Music

- Suggested tunes: To be decided.
- Suitable recording: Dusty Bluebells (Jim Lindsey and his SDB: Formation Foundations Green CD).

Diagrams (music at the bottom)

Strathspey Bar 9	Bar 10	Bar 11	Bar 12	Bar 13	Bar 15	Bar 17
Reel Bar 9	Bar 10	Bar 11	Bar 12	Bar 13	Bar 15	Bar 17

Notes

- The alien planet title came to me after invoking the polar constellations that Americans call the Big and Little Dippers (Ursa Major and Ursa Minor) when practising arches for the Rondel.
- Using long and short steps is a common requirement in step practice so it seemed very appropriate to suggest it here.
- The setting practice with quarter turns is also a common skills exercise for the strathspey pousette and just advancing and retiring together for the quicktime pousette.
- Skills exercises should normally involve all dancers but here that was not quite possible.
- The idea of using strathspey and quicktime pousettes for different progressions in a medley comes from A Dance to Say Thank You by Florence Burgy.

With Many Thanks To...

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