

Italian Danza

Records available: Folkdancer 1045, Imperial 1053, Olive 202. None of these are the "best possible"; I prefer the Olive record if live music is not available, although the step-hop sequence is a bit too fast and ragged. This is one dance that could stand a new recording.

General notes: I don't really know where this dance is derived from; international folk dance groups in the New York area have been dancing it for years . . . they sort of make their own rules regarding form, etc. In an effort to establish some sort of background to the dance for our Italian dance group (I Contadini Danzanti) I did a great deal of searching through old Italian dance manuals. I found no dance called "danza" with the routine as danced in the New York folk groups; however many of the old court minuets in these manuals have similar figures (except for the hopsa part).

Formation: Partners side by side, facing the line of dance; hands joined in skating position; right hands underneath. Both start on same foot.

- (A) Glide right foot diagonally forward, bring left foot up to the right; Repeat. Glide right foot diagonally forward again; bring left foot forward and touch left toe forward (leg well pointed, knee turned slightly out). Pause, raising left foot slightly off floor, toe still pointed Bars 1-2
- (B) Repeat all of (A) starting with the left foot Bars 3-4
- (C) Step back on the right foot, touch left toe lightly forward to floor (this is a light tap with the toe well pointed, knee turned slightly out; the toe is immediately raised with a slight pause in this raised position). Step back on left foot, touching right toe forward; raise as in preceding movement Bars 5-6
- (D) Repeat all of (C) Bars 7-8
 Repeat (A) - (B) - (C) - (D) (Bars 1-8 repeated)
- (E) Face partners, raising joined hands; without releasing hands the lady turns once around counterclockwise under the raised hands, the man remaining in place with heels together. Without releasing hands the man bows with a slight inclination from the hips, while the lady, heels together, does a small curtsy (just a slight dip of the knees and inclination of the head Bars 9-10
- (F) Raise joined hands again; the lady turns clockwise under the raised hands while the man, walking toward his left, changes places with lady. Heels together, they honor as in (E) Bars 11-12
- (G) Join right hands only; the lady turns counterclockwise under the raised hands while the man, with 3 walking steps, keeping left, changes places with the lady. Man's left hand is on hip; lady's left hand holds her skirt. Honor, with a deeper bow and curtsy than the preceding movement; man's feet in 2nd position (as the walking steps started with left foot, this is with the right foot at right angles behind the left, with the left heel in the right instep.) Lady's feet for the curtsy are in the same relative position, but farther apart and not such an acute angle. Do not release joined hands Bars 13-14
- (H) Repeat (G) with left hands joined, man starts walking on right foot keeping to his right Bars 15-16

- (I) Release hands; man places his left hand behind back, palm out. Lady holds skirt with left hand. With three slow walking steps, the couple hook right elbows and exchange places. As they release elbows, stepping back, the honor is performed in this manner: (a) **The man.** As he steps back away from lady the right hand is brought around behind his back palm out (as was the left hand at the start), the left hand is brought forward in a sweeping motion across in front of the body, palm up; the forearm should be parallel with the floor, close to the body at about the waistline. At the same time the right foot is placed flat (both sole and heel flat on the floor) a good 15 to 18 inches behind the left foot and at right angles to it. Bending the right knee and keeping the left leg straight and pointed forward, the man bows with an acute inclination over the extended left leg. (b) **The lady.** As she steps back, turning, the right foot is brought back behind the left (and a bit farther; the right foot is really behind and to the left of the left foot) with the forepart of the ball of the foot resting on the ground. The left foot is flat on the floor with the inner side turned somewhat forward toward partner. Extending her skirt (held by both hands) to either side the lady performs a deep curtsy by bending both knees in this position. (To aid steadiness she may rest the right knee of the calf of the left leg at the bottom of the curtsy.) Bars 9-10
(Repeated)
- (J) Repeat all of (I) starting with left elbows hooked. (The reverse feet are of course used in the bow and curtsy also.) Bars 11-12
- (K) With a shoulder-waist grasp (man's hands on lady's wrist; lady's hands on man's shoulders), the couples turn with 8 step-hops (clockwise) progressing around the room in the line of dance Bars 13-16

The major difference between this description and others in print is in the turning and bowing section (E) to (J) inclusive. The details given here are taken from a description of a dance performed by a guild or association of some sort at a festa in Rome sometime in the 1890's (I think this is about right from the other text). The description is in "Trattato sulla Danza" by Alessio Pacelli. To ease confusion I have allowed the direction of the turns to remain as most New York folk dancers do them; the directions are reversed in the dance described by Pacelli.

