

Old Batchelor

The Dancing Master, 1695

Duple minor longways

As reconstructed by Christine Helwig, 1995

- A1** 1-4 Ones cross and cast down and around into the center of a line-of-4 facing up
5-8 Up a double and back, neighbors face
- A2** 1-4 Neighbors swirly siding once, ones finish by turning over right shoulder to face each other in the center
5-8 Ones 2-hand turn $1\frac{1}{4}$ (*lady 1 is facing down and gent up*)
- B** 1-2 Ones join hands with lady 2, circle left until lady 2 is above, then ladies drop joined hand to bring in gent 2
3-6 All four circle left until ones are home (*twos are improper*)
7-8 All turn single left, face partner across
9-10 Two quick changes of a circular hey
11-12 Ones do one change more

Original Text:

The I. cu. crofs over below the 2. cu. then all four lead up hands a-breaft, the I. man fide with the 2. wo. and the I. wo. fide with the 2. man at the fame time, then the I. man turn his own Partner with both hands round till he come to the lower fide, then the I. cu. take the 2. wo. and all three hands half round, then the 2. man take hands between the two we. and go hands half round, then all four turn S. then right and left with their Partners till the I. cu. comes into the 2. cu. place.

The tune is by Henry Purcell. It is a song from a play called, "The Old Batchelor."

Most of the variation in interpretation is about how the B part works. "Hands half round" (circle half) happens twice. The first circle is fairly unambiguous. The first couple and second lady are specified, and it is "all three hands half round." But what exactly do the words, "then the 2. man take hands between the two we. and go hands half round" mean? In other interpretations it means a new circle of three with the two ladies and second gent. Here, though, Christine Helwig has found a different but ingenious possibility, which is that gent 2 joins the others in a circle of 4. This happens also to fit beautifully to the tune. Other interpretations add another turn single between the two circles to fill out the phrase.

Come Let's Be Merry

The Dancing Master 1728

Three-couple longways

As reconstructed by Tom Cook, 1982

- A1** 1-2 Ones facing up, wheel counterclockwise as a couple to face the twos, lady going forward (*ones are improper*)
3-4 Honor the twos, then change hands to face up again
Repeat 1-4
5-6 Ones wheel counterclockwise to face down, gent forward (*now ones are proper*)
7-8 Honor the twos, then change hands to face up again
- A2** 1-4 Ones cast down 1 place *while* twos lead up
5-8 Ones cast to the bottom *while* threes lead up
- B** 1-4 Ones lead (or waltz) up the center to the top
5-8 Ones cast down 1 place *while* threes move down
9-10 In a ring-of-6, balance in and out, simultaneously moving one place to the left
11-14 Repeat twice, ending all improper
15-16 Partners 2-hand turn halfway

Ends in 3-1-2 order. Repeat twice more to place.

Although this extremely sweet set dance is fairly straightforward, it does contain a few challenges that are worth noting.

1. Ones sometimes find A1 disorienting. Cues that might help:
 - Always begin the phrase facing up
 - Wheeling is always counterclockwise, that is, right-hand person forward
2. It takes planning ahead to use all the music in A2, and the dance is most satisfying if you do not arrive early. To accomplish this, either use a lot of space, or (if space is not available) use smaller steps.
3. Something about the tune seems to encourage what I call “wafty” dancing, meaning dancing with flourishes and courtesies exaggerated until they look like parodies. I recommend instead striving for a feeling of comfortable and natural movement.

One last note: Notice that the twos have already moved up to the top place in A2 (1-4). They may be tempted to move up again in B (5-8), just because it is so common for the couple below to move up as ones cast down. But, they should resist this temptation and stand their ground. Instead, let the threes move down to make space for the ones in middle place. This prevents the sets from migrating up the hall.