



# THE LAMBETH WALK

As reconstructed by Richard Powers

The Lambeth Walk became a huge dance fad in England in 1938, following its premiere in the 1937 musical *Me and My Girl*. The fad spread to the U.S. in 1938-39.

The original was a five-minute stage extravaganza, not a sequence dance. There have been many different ways of shortening the Lambeth Walk into a social dance routine, through 75 years of the folk process, and many revivals of *Me and My Girl*. This version is based on first-generation 1938 and 1939 British descriptions and films of the Lambeth Walk.

Music: The Lambeth Walk played by Michael Flome and His Orchestra, 1938.

Couples begin side-by-side, woman on right, facing LOD, not touching.

## A The Lambeth Walk Step and Elbow Turn

- Take 8 long walking steps LOD, woman beginning R and man beginning L. Swing the arms in opposition to walking, slightly lifting elbows as the arm swings forward, slightly leaning away from the lifted elbow. (This means you slightly lean away from your partner on the first step.) Then the man turns halfway to his right on the 7th and 8th steps.
- Facing partner, hook L elbows and walk forward around each other 8 steps, turning as a couple CCW. The man turns halfway to his left on the 7th and 8th steps, to face LOD, and offers his R arm.

## B Chorus: Rock Step, Cast Away and Cockney Salute

- Couples hook inside elbows and walk forward LOD 3 long steps.  
Rock Step: He rocks back on his R, then rocks forward L. She steps opposite.  
S-S-QQ-S timing.
- Repeat this pattern LOD on opposite feet.
- Release elbows and cast off away from partners, walking in 3/4 of a circle in 3 walking steps, ending facing partner. Jump onto both feet, feet apart in a slight crouch, knees bent, on the 4th count. Then do the Cockney Salute.

## The Cockney Salute:

There are many versions of the Cockney Salute. This is the basic one, from the original 1939 film:

Slap L palm onto above the L knee, slap the R palm above the R knee, repeat both, slap L palm onto above the L knee (5 slaps). Clap hands together. Raise R hand, led by the R thumb sticking out, over R shoulder, leaning back. The timing is cakewalk timing, in the same cadence as saying, "DO-ing the LAM-beth WALK, OY!"

Other versions involve crossing hands over to slap the opposite knee, or slapping palms to the opposite elbow, rolling the crossed arms over each other, and more.

### **C** Do-Si-Do and Elbow Turn

- Face partners and advance to Do-Si-Do around each other, passing R shoulders and backing to place, in Lambeth Walk strutting style, for 8 steps.
- Advance again to hook L elbows and walk forward around each other 8 steps, turning as a couple CCW.

### **D** Chorus

- Couples hook inside elbows to repeat the Chorus B from above.

### **E** Tag: Do-Si-Do

- Face partners and Do-Si-Do around each other, passing R shoulders, in Lambeth Walk style for 8 steps. (Don't continue with L-elbow turn this time.)

Repeat the entire dance twice more—three times in all. End on the final "OY!", without continuing on to the do-si-do.

## **About this reconstruction**

Parts A and B are true to Maxwell Stewart's 1938 version of the Lambeth Walk, shown on the next page. Maxwell Stewart was one of the most famous English ballroom dance instructors at the time. Then the following year the Cockney Salute was invented for the 1939 film version of *Me and My Girl*, which was re-titled *The Lambeth Walk* because of the popularity of the dance. The inclusion of the Cockney Salute makes this a 1939 version.

Here is Maxwell Stewart's version, with The Promenade instead of the Cockney Salute.

## THE LAMBETH WALK

4/4 Tempo—40 bars per minute

This is another novelty dance with a lilting air. The dance consists of a lilting walk with exaggerated swing of the shoulders, hips and arms. Use a strong contrary body movement on every walk, with thumbs raised.

There are 4 figures, consisting of a 16 bar sequence.

### The Walk

(4 bars)

Both dancers facing the line of dance. Boy commences with L. F., girl with R. F. Now dance 8 Lambeth Walks as described above, swinging the arms with thumbs raised. Allow the shoulder to dip in the direction of the foot stepped.

### The Circle

(4 bars)

Link the left arms together. Boy commences with L. F., girl with R. F. Boy dances 8 Lambeth Walks around partner, turning on 7 and 8 to face line of dance. Girl walks for 6 walks, pausing on 7 and 8 while the boy turns.

### The Rocks

(4 bars)

Girl links left arm in boy's right. Boy commences with L. F., girl with R. F. Dance 3 Lambeth Walks along line of dance, counting 1, 2, 3, now rock back on R. F. (girl on L. F.), counting "and," rock forward on L. F. (girl on R. F.) counting 4.

Dance 3 Lambeth Walks along line of dance, boy commences with R. F., girl with L. F., counting 1, 2, 3. Rock again back on L. F. (girl on R. F.) counting "and." Rock forward on R. F. (girl on L. F.) counting 4.

### The Promenade

(4 bars)

Boy steps to the side with L. F. facing line of dance. Cross R. F. over L. F. still facing line of dance. Step to side with L. F. still facing line of dance. Close R. F. up to L. F., turning to face partner, and tap the knees. Now he takes 3 Lambeth Walks towards partner, counting 1, 2, 3, boy commencing with L. F. Now close R. F. up to L. F. at the same time wave the right arm and cry, "Oi," count 4. The girl's steps are the opposite to the boy's. She commences by stepping to the side with her R. F. facing line of dance, and so on with opposite feet to her partner's.