

There was a time in history, a long time ago, when the bounce and sway of a woman's hips was considered so beautiful that they set it to music and made a dance out of it....

AMERICAN TRIBAL STYLE CLASSIC





FatChanceBellyDance, Inc., presents

AMERICAN TRIBAL STYLE CLASSIC

Volume 1

By Carolena Nericcio-Bohlman and Kristine L. Adams

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Design and production by Suzanne Scott.

Design and production by Suzanne Scott. Edited by Mary Blackford.

Models: Kristine L. Adams, Wendy Allen, Sandra Ball, Suzanne Elliott, Stefanie Jeanne Kelly, Anita Lalwani, Kae Montgomery, Carolena Nericcio-Bohlman, Marsha Poulin

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ISBN: 978-1-4834-0707-4 (sc) ISBN: 978-1-4834-1035-7 (e)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014900815

FatChanceBellyDance, Inc. 670 South Van Ness San Francisco, California 94110 www.fcbd.com

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Lulu Publishing Services rev. date: 3/11/2014

Table of Contents

Introduction

Posture

Moving Meditation

The Basic Slow Movements

Taxeem

Arm Undulation

Bodywave

The (Not-So-Basic) Bellyroll

Ribcage Rotation

Torso Rotation (Torso Twist)

The Basic Fast Movements

Egyptian Basic

Pivot Bump and Choo-Choo

Shimmy

Arabic Step

Introduction

American Tribal Style® Belly Dance is an elegant system for group improvisation using specific steps and formations. What started in San Francisco as a simple belly dance class in the late '80s has flourished and is now a worldwide phenomenon.

I didn't have a plan when I started that Thursday night class; I thought it would be fun to get a group of people together to enjoy the dance and maybe make a little extra cash. Almost instantly, the class was so full that I had to add another, and then another. Soon I had two beginning classes, along with an intermediate and advanced class each week, and a full-fledged dance troupe excited about performing. That troupe was named FatChanceBellyDance®.

Next came requests to teach workshops, which I was unable to do because I had my hands full in San Francisco. When an application landed in my hands for a grant from the California Arts Council, I leaped at the chance to create instructional videos to satisfy the appetite of what was becoming a large community of dancers outside of the Bay Area. The success of that first VHS, *Tribal Basics Dance Fundamentals Volume 1*, led to a series of eighteen more instructional and performance videos.

Kristine Adams and I had the idea to create this book after teaching a workshop (yes, I did eventually travel!). We realized we were presenting so much information that it would be helpful for the students to have a visual and written reference so they weren't overwhelmed at the end of the day.

This book is the first in a series of companion books to the video collection. It offers full-color photos of professional dancers, with written instruction and visual body maps, as well as action and visualization segments. No matter what your learning style, we've got you covered.

If you love to belly dance, want to learn to ATS® belly dance, or already teach belly dance and want a go-to source when you don't have time to cue up a DVD, this book is for you. We hope you enjoy using this book as much as we did writing it.

Carolena Nericcio-Bohlman, Director FatChanceBellyDance, Inc.



This is for all the teachers out there who wish they were perfect but know they are human. We all suffer from that experience; standing in front of thirty pairs of wondering eyes as you're passing on the guidelines of ATS° and suddenly finding yourself drawing a blank.

Where am I?

What's my name?

More importantly, where exactly does the Egyptian basic halfturn, turn?

This book is for you, and all of those short-term memory loss moments.

I've worked with Carolena for years now. All of our projects have been great fun as well as great creative challenges, and this book feels like a culmination of our efforts. We both poured a lot of time, love, sweat, and tears into the making of this gem, so you better appreciate it!

Kristine L. Adams, Photographer



Kristine and Carolena after completion of the final draft.

Posture



The spine is designed to support the weight of the body without putting any additional strain on the muscles. Your everyday posture favors the upper body, relying on a slight curve at your lower back for stability. For American Tribal Style®, we want to shift that stability to the ribcage, leaving the lower body free to move.

This ribcage lift is sometimes mistaken for an arch in the lower back. This is not the case! By lifting the ribcage and releasing the lower back, we are trying to spare the lower back by taking the tension out of it. This dance posture may feel awkward at first, but the more you

use it, the better your back will feel, and the more freedom of movement you will have.

With your feet flat, bring your heels as close together as comfortable (LEFT). Soften your knees by flexing gently at the knee. Let your lower back release by slightly contracting the lower abdominals. This should take any pressure out of the lower back. It will feel as if your weight is in your heels. Lift the front of your ribcage by rolling your shoulders back and down, pulling the shoulder blades straight down. Now, contract the muscles in the middle of your back just below your bra strap. You should feel support from behind and an openness in the front. You are, in effect, standing behind your center.



No matter the location of the arm, its shape is always a soft curve. This is accomplished by holding the shoulder down as you roll the elbow up. When the arm is resting at the hip, the shoulder is down and the elbow is forward (LEFT).



When the arm is lifted to the side, the shoulder is down and the elbow is up.



When the arm is overhead, the shoulder is down and the elbow is back.

If correct posture eludes you, try this exercise: Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat. Reach under your lower back. You will feel a gap between your back and the floor. Some people can slide their hand into the gap; others might have only enough room for a finger tip.

To feel the lower abdominal contraction that creates dance posture, pull your lower back to the floor without pressing your feet into the floor or contracting your glutes. You might have to relax and try several times because the big muscle groups want to do the heavy lifting for you, but you have to let the subtle abdominal muscle group do the work. Eventually you will be able to isolate your lower abdominals and pull your lower back flat.

Stand up and repeat this exercise, but this time as if you were pulling the lower back towards the wall. Don't tuck your hips by contracting the glutes or tightening the thighs. The effect you are after is not a flat lower back, but a released lower back.

Moving Meditation



As an homage to Indian Classical Dance, we use a Moving Meditation to get grounded before dancing. It is sometimes called *Puja* or *Pranam*, but it's not a prayer or religious in meaning. It's a way of acknowledging the elements that we need to dance. From our hearts we are thanking the space that we dance in, the surface that we dance on, the music we dance to, the teachers who taught us, and the ancestors who came before us.

The space can be the place you are dancing in at the moment, the entire universe, or anywhere that has meaning for you. Likewise, the surface that you dance on can be where you are standing, the earth, or any surface that has meaning to you. We need music and musicians who play the music that we dance to. Everyone has a teacher; you can acknowledge one or all of them (can I be one of them, please?) Finally, the ancestors

can be your family who gave you life, the dancers who came before you, or all of the above.

Before you go from standing to sitting, you trace the daily movement of the Lotus Blossom. The lotus lives with its roots beneath the surface of the water, in the watery muck of the pond, where it's dark and scary. Every day it reaches for the sky by extending its stalk and blooming a brilliant, pristine flower. The meaning of the lotus hand gesture is that we touch the dark, mucky, scary places, but we always bloom into the brilliant day. In other words, don't worry if you make mistakes because it's all part of the process of learning to dance.



Start with your hands in front of your heart, fingertips touching, palms facing the floor, elbows lifted (OPPOSITE PAGE). Flip your right hand palm up to face the ceiling. Keeping your elbow stationary, sweep the right arm out and back to the center, palm facing the floor. Repeat with the left hand and arm. This gesture acknowledges the space that you dance in (FIGURES 1-6, BELOW).











Now bring both hands up through the center by sliding the sides of the wrists together, right over left. Draw the hands up as the insides of the wrists turn towards each other. Bring the hands back down by turning the left in front of the right and letting the backs of the wrists touch (FIGURES 7–11).





Bend your knees and sit on one heel as you gaze at the floor. Touch the floor with your fingertips; this gesture is for the surface that you dance on. Touch your fingertips to your ears; this is for the music that you dance to. Touch the floor again and bring your hands together to touch your forehead; this is for your teacher. Look up and touch your center; this is for your ancestors. Repeat the sweeping gestures to the right and left; this is for the people you dance with and the people you dance for (FIGURES 12-23).





Stand up, bringing all of the elements together (ABOVE LEFT). End in the posture you started with (ABOVE RIGHT).

The Basic Slow Movements

The slow movements flow through the body with the feeling of the music. They are not rhythmic. These include the Taxeem (a hip figure 8), Arm Undulation, Bodywave, Bellyroll, Ribcage Rotation, and Torso Rotation. What all these movements share is the sensuous curve of the female form. These basic slow movements will set the tone for much of the belly dance you do.



Taxeem

The Taxeem is the most basic slow movement. It is a lateral figure 8 that travels through the hips via a continuous weight shift from right to left—it's like walking in place. The key to the Taxeem is the exaggeration of the weight shift paired with a simultaneous contraction of the oblique muscles on that same side. Easy for me to say! But how do you do it?

The simplest way to approach the Taxeem is to shift your weight from side to side as if walking in place—the only difference is that you will keep both feet flat on the floor. The weight shift is the focus—there is no actual step with the feet (BELOW).



TENSION AND BALANCE: From your body's point of view, top on the list of importance is keeping the body upright. In terms of movement, tension is often your body's way of regaining balance. What does this have to do with belly dance? A lot, actually. As you learn new movements, you often challenge your balance. Your body's way of telling you that you've pushed it too far is tension. Your muscles fight to pull you back to center. Think of how it feels when the bus takes off while you are standing—the body automatically tenses as it attempts to stay upright. Putting weight on a bent leg will cause the same response.

So, if you feel tense when trying some of these movements, consider whether you are pushing too far. Relax and try again, but listen to your body.



Visualize Another way to visualize the Taxeem is to envision pouring something from one hip to the other. Think of each hip as a bowl. Now fill one of the bowls with a thick liquid, such as honey. As you shift your weight, pour the honey from the lifted hip into the dropping hip. The smooth, slow-moving nature of the honey illustrates how deliberate and intense the movement should be.

Action Stand in dance posture, with the tailbone released, feet flat on the floor. Gradually shift your weight into one leg, releasing all the pressure from the other leg. Let the knee of the released leg bend and the hip drop (FIGURE 1). Resist the urge to raise either heel! Now shift to the other side; let the knee bend and the hip drop (FIGURE 2). It's simpler than it sounds. If you feel tension anywhere, you're trying too hard!



To create the dramatic loops of the figure 8, engage the obliques as you begin to lift the dropped hip. By contracting the obliques without dropping the ribcage, you can create a smooth loop as you lift the hip (FIGURES 3 AND 4).

The ribcage remains lifted and level; this is a key point. As you shift side to side, it's your body's natural inclination to seek balance, so let the ribcage shift to the side of the body of the weighted leg as you drop the opposite hip. A strong diagonal line will form as the ribcage goes in one direction and the hip in the other (Figure 3). Just be sure that you aren't pulling the ribcage from side to side. Let it "float" on its own.

Arm Undulation

Arm movements can make or break a presentation. Strong, graceful arms are like a frame for a work of art; you are showcasing whatever is inside of them. Arm Undulations take place at shoulder height or higher and never drop below the level of the ribcage. With both arms lifted to shoulder height, rotate your arm at the shoulder as if you were turning your palm to face the back wall (BELOW).



This arm movement will seem tiring until you condition the muscles. However, we do have a little trick for fatigue! The key is in depressing the shoulder blade. As you start to drop the arm, squeeze the shoulder blade and press it into the back. This will make the shoulder respond by flattening out. The resulting contraction will travel along the arm and off the fingertips.

Lift your arm as if you were sliding your palm up the back wall, keeping the elbow lifted. When your arm is fully raised, turn the palm to face the side wall and let the arm drop gracefully, elbow lifted. Now, let your other arm take over the undulation: As one finishes, the other starts (BELOW).

Visualize To keep your arms from dropping too low, imagine a table top at ribcage level. As the arm makes its descent, you want to avoid slapping the table top, so you'll rotate the arm in enough time so the fingertips just brush the table top.

It is the follow-through that makes this arm movement so elegant. Visualize rolling a marble from the fingertips of one hand, along the arm across the shoulders and neck, to rest on the fingertips of the opposite

hand. Give the marble enough time to travel this pathway at an even pace.



Variations: Arms Overhead and Split Arms

You can float the arms overhead. At this stage, you won't be able to undulate the entire arm because the shoulder is as rotated as it can get, but you will feel the follow-through of rotation from the elbow to the wrist (ABOVE). (This is also a great way to rest your shoulders if they feel tired because you are not carrying the weight of the arm while it is overhead.)

You can also alternate the arms, one overhead and one horizontal (BELOW).







Bodywave and Bellyroll

The Bodywave and Bellyroll are companion movements. Both are undulations, but the Bodywave uses the spine to make a large movement that starts at the shoulders and rolls down through the hips, while the Bellyroll uses only the muscles in the front of the abdomen.

Bodywave

Visualize A Bodywave looks like smoke rising into the air. You can also visualize it as standing with your back to a wall and sequentially touching first the shoulders, then the ribcage, then the waist, and finally the hips, to the wall.



Action While keeping the head level, shift the ribcage and shoulders forward, off the center. The hips will begin to shift back, but don't let the low back curl up. Keep your tailbone pointing toward the floor (TOP RIGHT).

Lift the ribcage and shift upper body through the center and back, as if you were trying to touch the wall with your shoulders (LEFT).

Bring the ribcage back to center as you release the tension in the hips. Imagine reaching back to the wall with your waist, then finally the hips, before letting the body return to the center position (BOTTOM RIGHT).

The Bodywave is shown here at profile for illustration purposes; this is not performance angle.





Arm Placement: The Bodywave can be done with the left arm lifted to shoulder height while the right sits at the hip, or left arm at shoulder height and the right overhead. The latter makes the best frame for the Bodywave.

Foot Placement: It's important to note that the feet are not involved in the Bodywave. The movement is isolated from the shoulders to the knees, meaning you do not push into the floor to create the lift in the ribcage: You use the muscles in the mid-back. For that reason, the foot placement is not specific. Feet can be flat and side-by-side (FIGURE 1), left foot flat with the right heel lifted (FIGURE 2), or with the right foot placed perpendicular to the left foot (FIGURE 3).



The (Not-So-Basic) Bellyroll

The Bellyroll is also an undulation. It is isolated in the muscles of the belly, and there is no use of the spine or rocking of the hips. It's a contraction that moves vertically, either down or up.

The Bellyroll is the result of sequentially contracting the pairs of the rectus abdominus muscle that run along either side of the front center of the abdomen. These contractions are aided by the obliques, which work like the strings of a corset, pulling from the sides to flatten the working section. While this is happening, the ribs also expand and contract, which cause the diaphragm to engage and release. The combination of these contractions gives the Bellyroll its 3-D quality.

Preparation Exercise



To isolate the top and bottom sections of the abdominals, contract the top third and squeeze the ribcage in, letting the bottom part of the abdomen relax (FIGURE 1).

You can also feel this by exhaling all of the air from your lungs, but remember that this is just an exercise; don't manipulate your breath during the actual bellyroll.

Then contract the bottom part of the abdomen, as if you were pulling your

bellybutton in towards your spine. Now, let the top of the abdomen relax and release (FIGURE 2).

You can also feel this by inhaling and filling your lungs, but remember that this is just an exercise; don't manipulate your breath during the actual bellyroll.

Bellyrolls can travel from the top to the bottom or from the bottom to the top. Most people have a direction that comes naturally, so work on that first before adding the second direction.

Rolling from Top to Bottom



Contract the muscles at the top of the abdominals, squeeze the ribcage (FIGURE 3), and release the sections that are not part of the contraction as it rolls through the middle (FIGURE 4). When you get all the way down, pull the bellybutton towards the spine (FIGURE 5). Create the undulation by starting again at the top and rolling down.



Rolling from Bottom to Top

Start with the ribs and diaphragm expanded and pull the bellybutton towards the spine (FIGURE 6). Release the sections that are not part of the contraction as it rolls through the middle (FIGURE 7). As you move the contraction up, squeeze the ribs and contract the diaphragm as you release the lower abdomen (FIGURE 8). Create the undulation by starting again at the bottom and rolling up.

Ribcage Rotation

This movement is very subtle. It is an excellent exercise to condition the oblique and back muscles and for developing identity, expression, and range of motion for the ribcage.

Visualize The Ribcage Rotation looks like a vertical circle that you are drawing on the wall, starting with the base of the circle in your sternum and drawing the shape from right to left as you lift the ribcage up to the right, over to the left and release back down to where you started.



Action The movement occurs as the obliques surrounding the ribcage take turns contracting and releasing to tip the ribcage.



Lift your ribcage as far as you can to the front right by contracting the left front obliques (ABOVE).



Now extend the ribcage to the center front by contracting the muscles in the mid-back (ABOVE).



Finally, shift to the left front by contracting the right obliques (ABOVE).



Gravity will smooth out the bottom of the circle without your contracting anything. Keep your chest and



Torso Rotation (Torso Twist)

The Torso Rotation includes the ribcage, head, shoulders, and arms in one unified movement while the head remains level. In contrast with the subtlety of the Ribcage Rotation, the Torso Rotation is very dramatic. This movement draws a horizontal heart shape that moves counterclockwise; it starts and ends in the front. The shift to the back, which can be quite deep, is supported by the muscles that lift the ribcage in the back and stabilized by the abdominal muscles in the front. Please don't put any strain on your lower back!

You can break this movement down into four sections of a heart shape, shown in the insets of Figures 1–4 on the following pages. For the torso, divide the heart so that the front to the left is 1, the left to the back is 2, the back to the right is 3, and the right to the front is 4.

Visualize You are a flower in a pot, sitting outside where there is a bit of a breeze. Your lower body is the pot, which is grounded and supports the upper body; it doesn't move in the breeze. Your torso is the stem of the plant, and your arms are the leaves.

Action Rotate your torso around your center, starting at the indentation of the heart shape in front. Slide slightly forward on the dent, fall to the left while looking towards the center (FIGURE 1). Continue to rotate through the back of the heart, making sure to stay in posture: Ribcage lifted and shoulders back (FIGURE 2).





Shift to the right (mirror left side gesture of looking at the center) (FIGURE 3), then back onto the center through the dent (FIGURE 4).

Complete the move by adding the arms. Starting on the left, layer one arm undulation over one circuit of the torso. Look at the arms as 1-2-3-4 as well. Starting at shoulder height, the left arm lifts on 1, and drops on 2; the right arm lifts on 3, and drops on 4.

Drop the arm sections onto the torso sections and they will fit together to give a seamless movement.

Like a plant being pushed by the breeze, feel how the stem moves and how the leaves act as balance.

It is critical that the right elbow stays lifted *until the torso makes it way back onto the center*. If the right elbow collapses before the circuit is complete, the upper body will feel and look like it is running out of steam.



The Basic Fast Movements



Just as there are several families of slow movements, there are four families of fast movements: Egyptian, Pivot Bump/Choo-Choo, Shimmy, and Arabic.

While there are lots of variations within each family, they all share three families of foot position. The easiest and most used foot position is with 90% of the weight on the flat left foot and the ball of the right foot propped next to it. Add the arms overhead, and you have "Showgirl Posture." This posture will get you easily into any of the fast steps.

For the Egyptian and Pivot Bump/Choo-Choo, 90% of your weight rests on the flat left foot, and 10% rests on the ball of the right foot propped next to it.

For the Shimmy, your weight is distributed evenly while you stand on the balls of both feet, which are parallel.

In the Arabic, you also stand with your weight distributed evenly on the balls of both feet, but with the right foot leading.

Egyptian Basic



Visualize The Egyptian Basic is a lovely step. In four counts, even on both sides, it emphasizes the bounce and sway of the hips as the arms frame the face and chest.

Action Start with 90% of your weight on the flat left foot and 10% on the ball of the right foot (TOP RIGHT). On the count of *one*, the ball of the right foot pushes into the floor with a little twist inward (BOTTOM RIGHT), sending the right hip up to the left front diagonally as the right arm reaches to the right back, diagonally (BELOW).



The right foot steps flat on the count of *two* as the arms rest overhead (ABOVE).

The ball of the left foot gestures forward and pushes into the floor with a little twist on *three*, sending the hip up to the right front diagonal at the same time that the left arm reaches to the left back diagonal (BELOW).



On four, the left foot steps flat as the arms rest overhead (BELOW).

The weight switch from side to side on *two* and *four* produces a bouncing, swaying effect that can be played up or down depending on the tempo of the music. To get a really dramatic hip, keep the shoulders square to the front plane as you twist the leg and hip. Don't twist just the foot—use the whole leg. You will feel a connection from the hip through the back and up along the arm.

Fully extend the upper arm behind the head toward the back diagonal to frame the face instead of block it. The lower arm drops no further than the ribcage. Draw the arms apart with deliberation; depressing the shoulder blade will add drama to the shoulder and arm. The motion will feel like an elastic band stretching and releasing.

To travel forward or back: Push the weight off the flat foot as you step with the ball of the opposite foot. The arm motions in relation to the hip movement remain the same whether you are moving forward or backward.





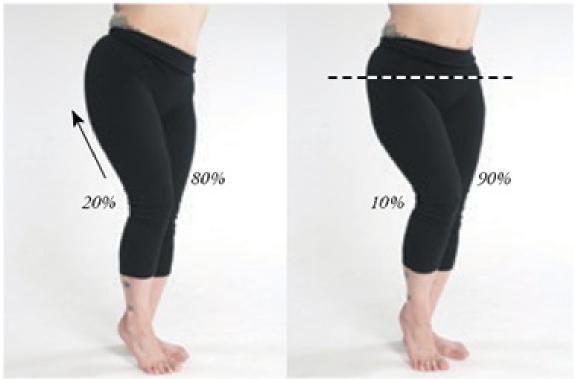
Pivot Bump and Choo-Choo

The Pivot Bump and Choo-Choo are actually the same step. The difference is that the Pivot Bump turns you in place while the Choo-Choo travels to the front. Both versions display a playful, bouncing right hip. Start with "Showgirl Posture." Place 90% of your weight on your flat left foot, and keep the ball of the right foot propped next to the instep. Leave the left arm overhead and drop the right to the side at shoulder height, elbow lifted. We'll call this **Arm Position 1** (BELOW).

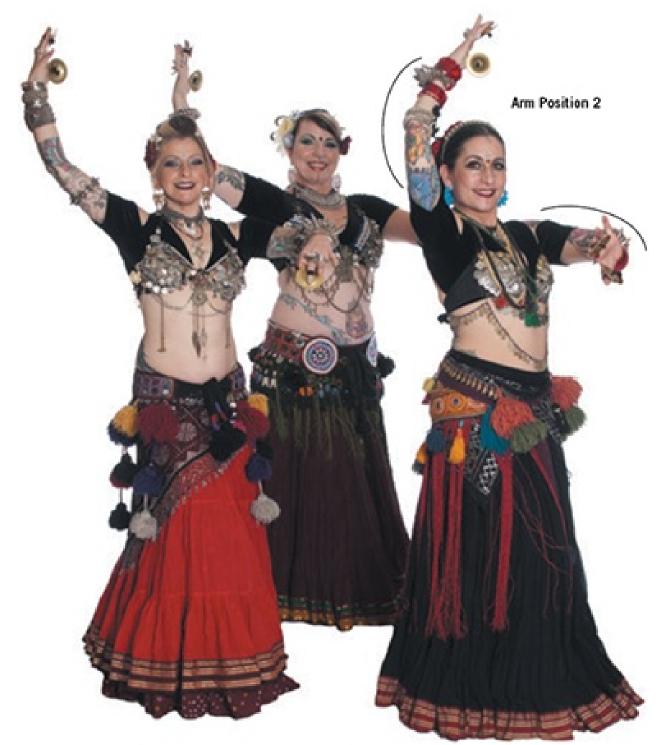




Bounce your right hip by transferring just a little bit of weight into the ball of the right foot, pressing into the floor, and then allowing the hip to drop (BELOW). Your hip bounces up on the downbeat (ABOVE).



Percentage of weight per leg for up and down movements of Pivot Bump.



A nice variation for the arms places the right arm overhead, held slightly behind the head, with the left arm wrapped loosely around the front of the body, elbow lifted. We'll call this Arm Position 2 (ABOVE).

As the Pivot Bump, this step turns counterclockwise. Push with the right foot as you bounce the hip up, and pivot on the left. There is no specific count to complete this turn. It depends on the tempo of the music and the length of your step. You decide how many "bumps" take you around. Remember, though: You will always be bouncing and pivoting on the downbeat *one* and pausing on the upbeat *and* (FIGURES 1-4, RIGHT).







Like the Choo-Choo, the step pulls you continuously forward (LEFT). On the upbeat, your right foot steps forward (BELOW LEFT), and on the downbeat the left foot comes to meet it as the right hip bounces up (BELOW RIGHT). Since you always want to travel in the direction of open space, only Arm Position 1 is used in the Choo-Choo.





Shimmy

Just as the Taxeem is the basic slow movement, the Shimmy is the basic fast movement. It's tricky to learn, but it's really just like walking. It can take you forward, backward, sideways, or in a circle. The goal of this step is to display the round, bouncy nature of a woman's hips. The Shimmy is a two-count step, and each count is made up of four quarter beats.

Begin the Shimmy by walking to the beat, right foot on one, left foot on two. If you were to analyze your movement as you walk, you would find that your weight is carried on the leg that supports your body as the other leg steps forward. The Shimmy follows this simple locomotion, but adds an exaggerated bounce to the step, like a *skip*. When the Shimmy is moving fast, it can have the appearance of a random jiggle, but on closer inspection you can see it as up-down-up from the knees and hip flexors.

Note that there is a bit of optical illusion with this step. The up-down-up takes place as the supporting leg *skips* the weight into the other leg, on the *and* between one *and* two *and* one *and* two. You can do a Shimmy on flat feet or on the balls of the feet. Flat feet will feel more stable at first, but as you pick up speed, you'll want to be up on the balls of the feet.

You can "sweeten" the Shimmy by crossing one foot in front of the other, as if you were walking on a tightrope. This criss-cross step leaves the hip suspended just a bit longer, and the result is more sway for the hip. Remember that the Shimmy is just like walking or skipping. Maintain your posture, with lifted ribcage and released hips. If your ribcage collapses or your lower back contracts, you will lock the body and no Shimmy will happen!



Action Let's start with a "training shimmy," at half speed and with the weight on both feet:

Begin with flat feet, weight even, feet parallel and close together. Arms are held out to the side at shoulder level, with elbows lifted (ABOVE).

Take a step with the right foot, and put it down on the floor. With your weight now in the right leg, let it straighten, lifting the right hip (FIGURE 1), then bend it slightly, dropping the right hip (FIGURE 2), then straighten it again, lifting the right hip (FIGURE 3).



Repeat this with the left foot and leg (FIGURES 4-6). Keep stepping until you feel balanced and even.

Getting up to full speed is like taking the training wheels off a bike; you need momentum to keep it going. It's just like walking. You will only have your weight on one foot at a time. Stride quickly and evenly and get up onto the balls of the feet.



To Shimmy backwards, you need not change anything except the direction you are traveling. The lead foot still carries the weight and the hip moves up-down-up before switching to the opposite side. The formal Shimmy is done on the balls of the feet.

Practice the Shimmy to "Baladi Unplugged," Track 7 on the CD *Itneen*. I designed this piece of music to speed up gradually for just this kind of exercise. The rhythm is a four-count, with the zils playing quarter notes for each whole beat. Each step of the Shimmy contains four quarter-beats. It appears we are missing

the fourth beat; however, it is made up in the weight shift as you switch from one foot to the other.



Arabic Step

The Arabic Step uses the undulation of the Bodywave, but this time stepping rhythmically and using the feet. The Arabic Step is fluid and graceful, emphasizing the length of the torso. The Arabic Step can walk forward or backward or turn in place in either direction.

The Arabic Step is a two-count step, performed on the balls of the feet with the right foot leading.

Action The weight of the body rocks continuously from the front right foot to the back left foot (INSET BELOW). As you rock your weight onto the ball of the right foot on *one*, lift the chest, using the muscles in the mid-back (BELOW).



As you rock back onto the ball of the left foot on two, the hips release (BELOW).

Keep the knees soft and the head level. Although your body is rocking from one foot to the other, your head remains on the same, steady plane. Once again, posture, posture, posture! Resist the urge to collapse the chest or contract the low back. The chest lift and hip release are exaggerations of the basic posture covered earlier. The muscles of the abdomen work to smooth the transition from front to back.



Congratulations!

Thanks for joining us for *American Tribal Style® Classic Volume 1*—you are now ready to dance! Put on a piece of music and try a little improvisation. Just remember that the slow movements follow the melody and the fast steps follow the rhythm. Oh, and remember to smile... you are bringing the steps and the music to life.

American Tribal Style® is a style of Belly Dance that is both elegant and earthy. It is a system of steps and formations that you can learn and use improvisationally with a group of dancers. I like to imagine ATS® as a pyramid shape, like an A-frame house, with the music as a bridge that leads to the garden where the audience is sitting.

At the very top of the house is gratitude; we are thankful for the time to dance and acknowledge all of the elements that make our dance possible. Next level is the structure; your personal posture and the group formations of duet, trio, and quartet. The biggest level of the house is where all of the steps live; it's a big family! Finally, in front of the house are the fantastic costumes and lots of jewelry. The music is the bridge that connects the dancer to the audience.

The audience sees the house in reverse. Through the bridge of the music they first see the costume and jewelry, then the steps and formations. They probably don't see the posture and gratitude but they infer it via the attitude of the dancer's body. As a dancer, be sure to look at the dance from the top of the house all the way down to the garden: gratitude, posture, formations, steps and music, costume and jewelry.

If you'd like to see the material in this book in video form, you can find it on the *Tribal Basics Dance Fundamentals Volume 1* DVD, available at our shop in San Francisco, California, and at www.fcbd.com.

We have some great music as well, created especially for ATS®: *Tribal Dance Tribal Drums, Itneen, Spice Box, Muse Melodic*, and *Tribal Spirit* are our favorites.

Next up, look for *American Tribal Style® Classic Volume 2*, highlighting the following steps from *Tribal Basics Embellishments and Variations Volume 4 DVD*: Hand Floreos, Flutter, Head Slides, Levels, Reverse Taxeem, Deep Bodywave, Turkish Shimmy, Shoulder Shimmy, Egyptian Half Turn, Arabic 1-2-3, Arabic Hip Twist, Up2 Down3, Reach and Sit, Single Bump, Double Bump, Arc Arms, Layering, Camelwalk, Circle Step, Torso Twist, Propeller Turn, Corkscrew Turn.