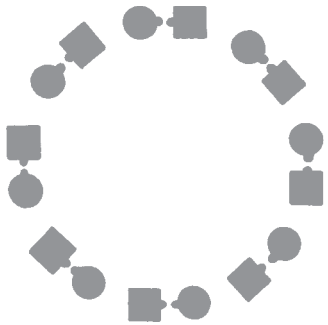
Kinderpolka

I first learned this dance, under the name Children's Polka, from the collection for elementary schools produced by the Lloyd Shaw Foundation. Since then I've found it in many sources and, of course, have taken considerable liberties with it. With care, it can be successfully taught to a kindergarten class, although it's probably most effective with grades one through four. Lots of fun at a community dance, too — everybody loves the scolding that happens in part C.



Suitable for: Kindergarten to Grade Four

Formation: Single circle, facing partner and holding both hands

Music: Kinderpolka (Step Lively #2)

A Holding hands with partner, take two sideways steps (step-close, step-close) towards the centre of the circle, then stamp three times.
One step, two step, stamp-stamp-stamp

In the same manner, take two sideways steps away from the centre of the circle.
One step, two step, stamp-stamp-stamp

Repeat all of the above.

B Clap your own knees twice, clap your own hands twice, then clap both of your partner's hands three times. Repeat.
Knees knees, clap clap, one-two-three
Knees knees, clap clap, one-two-three

C Placing your left hand on your right elbow, shake right finger at partner three times, then change hands and shake your left finger three times, saying:
Nya! nya! nya!
Nya! nya! nya!

D Level One: Individually turn once around on the spot, hold hands with same partner and stamp stamp stamp.

Level Two:Take a step or two forward, passing partner by the right shoulder and join hands with new partner.

Kinderpolka

Germany

♩=144 Introduction

G

One step and two step and

D7 G

stamp stamp stamp - One step and two step and stamp stamp stamp -

D7

One step and two step and stamp stamp stamp - One step and two step and

G G D7

stamp stamp stamp - Knees knees and clap clap one two three and

G

Knees knees and clap clap one two three - Nya! Nya! Nya! -

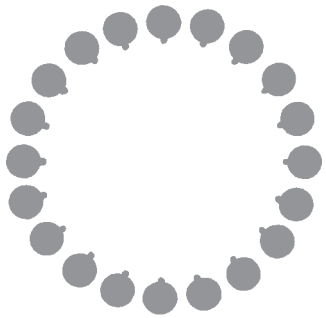
D7 G

Nya! Nya! Nya! (except last time)

Figure 2: Nya! Nya! Nya!

Can't Jump Josie

I learned this dance at that heaven of heavens, the Lady of the Lake Family Dance week, the day we returned from a lovely long float trip down the St. Joe River. So even though the singer of this song originally floated down the Ohio, we couldn't resist changing it to "old St. Joe". In fact, every town I travel to gets its own verse: in Prince George it's the Nechako, in Port McNeill we float like a fish down the Nimpkish, and in Surrey we float all the week down Old Sawmill Creek.



Suitable for: Kindergarten to Grade Four

Formation: Circle, no partners, hands joined

Music: River Song/Can't Jump Josie (Step Lively #3)

A Join hands in one large circle and walk slowly to the left.
We're floating down the river, we're floating down below
We're floating down the river, down the old St. Joe

B Two chosen people hold hands and jump up and down in the centre of the circle.
Two in the middle and you can't jump Josie
Two in the middle and you can't jump Josie
Two in the middle and you can't jump Josie
Oh, Susie Brown!

Repeat.

C The jumpers in the middle form their own circle.

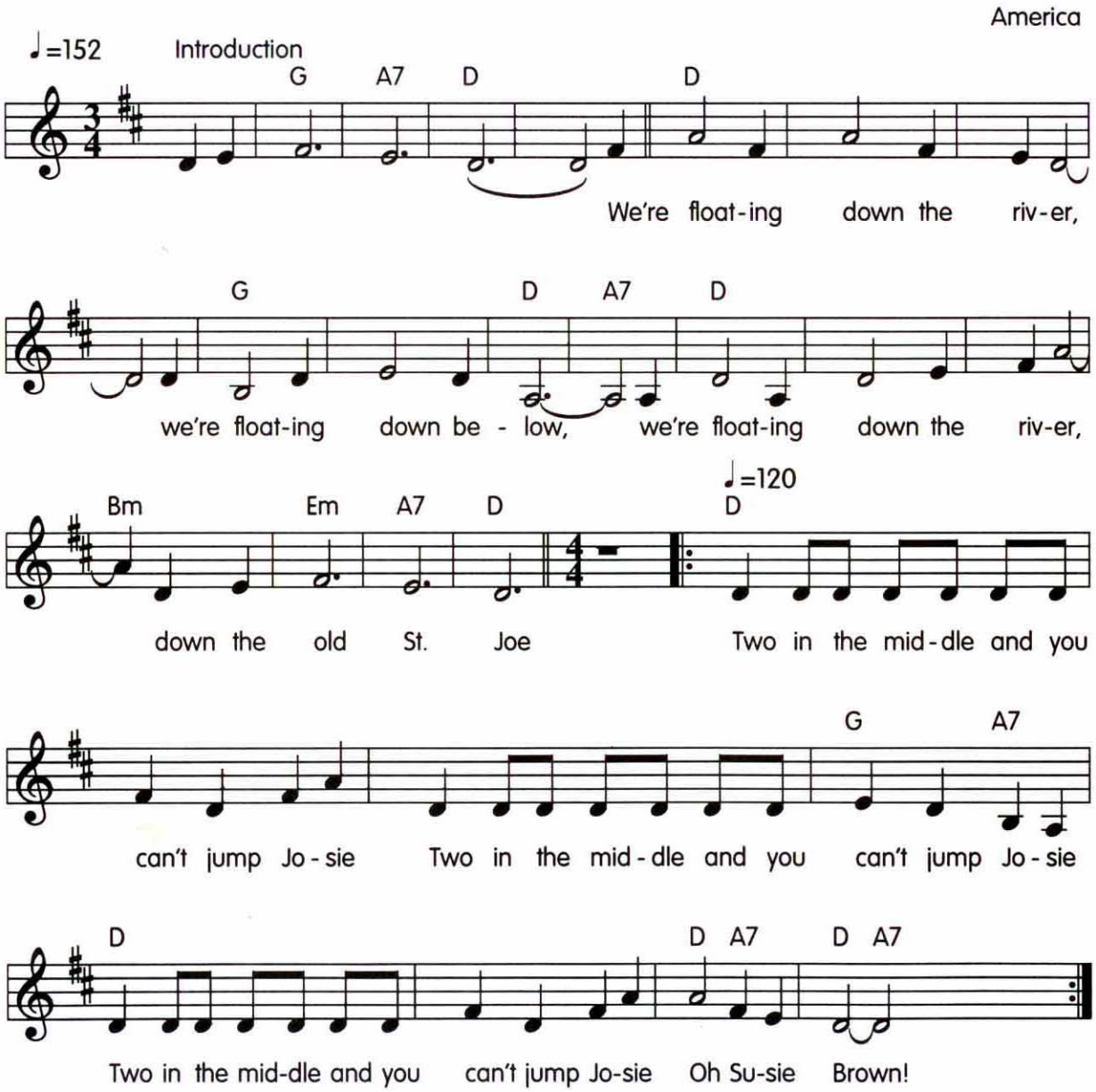
For the next and subsequent verses, the inner circle walks to the right while the outer circle walks to the left, everyone singing the River Song.

Then each person in the centre chooses someone from the outer circle to jump with them. For each round, the number in the centre will (should) double, quickly using up the outside circle. Each time you modify the words in B accordingly. (four in the middle, eight in the middle, etc.) After 16, we usually sing "lots in the middle", instead of trying to say 32 or 64. For the final verse, sing "all in the middle".

After a certain point, the centre circle becomes much larger than the outside one, in which case you can either operate as an arc on the outside, or force the inside circle to squish in so that the few people on the outside can join their hands around them. Cozy!

If you do this dance using your own voices as music, you can take as much time as needed to find new partners and reform the circles. However, the music on the Step Lively *CD allows very little time, so you have to choose quickly!*

Can't Jump Josie



Grand March

I first remember doing the Grand March at wedding dances when I was a very young child, and always found it very magical. The dancers would line up in couples beginning with the bridal couple, followed by their attendants (there were lots of them in those days), then their parents, family and the rest of the guests. When the dance was finished, there would be a line of sixteen at the front consisting of the entire wedding party with the bride and groom in the middle. Very impressive!

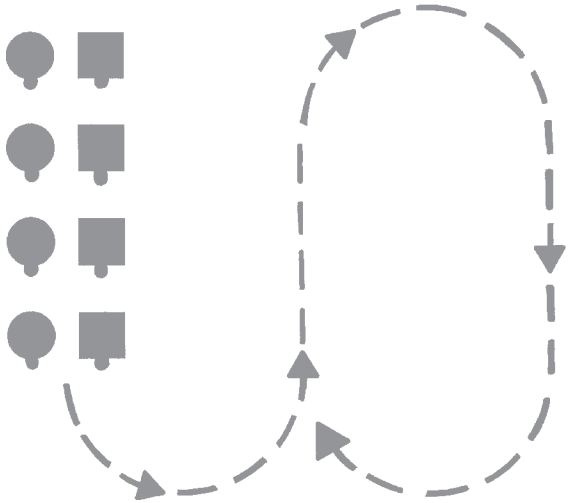
Suitable for: Grade One and up

Formation: Couples in **promenade position** in a line down the centre of the room

Music: Any march, polka, jig or reel

The form of this dance is ultimately up to the leaders, who may choose to execute any of the following figures:

1. Promenade: Lead the dancers down one side of the room, up the centre, down the other side, and once more up the centre.



2. Cast off: The lead couple marches up the centre, separates from each other with all others following, and march individually down the sides. When they meet at the end, they rejoin promenade position and once more dance up the centre.

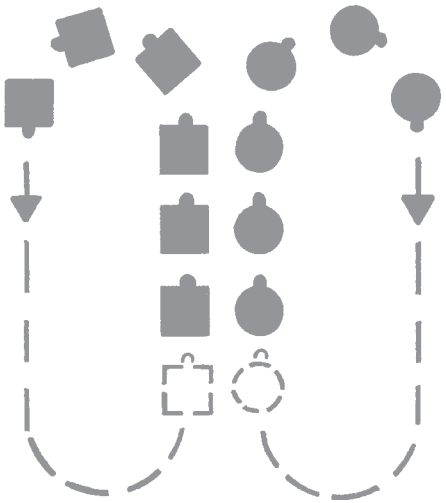
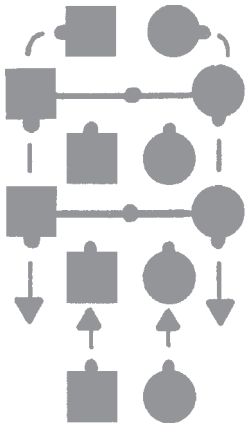


Figure 11: Promenade position



3. Turn the snake inside out: The lead couple, followed by the rest, turn around and make a simple (one hand each) arch which they then walk over the heads of the others in line. When they reach the end of the line, they tunnel through back up to the top.

This move is a lesson in cooperation: heads must be kept low and the arches held as high as possible to keep the flow happening. For this reason I discourage two toddlers from pairing up and tell them that it is okay to let go of your arch if you and your partner are too short.

4. Cast off twos, fours, eights, sixteens: Lead couple marches up the centre of the room and when they reach the top, they promenade together to the left. The second couple goes right, the third couple left, and so on, each couple going the opposite direction from the couple in front of them.

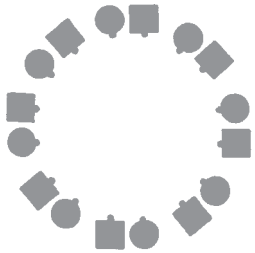
When the first and second couples meet at the back of the hall, they join hands in a line of four and promenade together up the hall. Now the alternating happens with four people going each direction, who then meet at the back to make eight, and then one last time for lines of sixteen.

Notes to Leaders: This dance requires very little instruction and teaches many things: the promenade position, following the couple in front, a sense of the possibilities of shape on the dance floor. A great deal of cooperation is needed for the more advanced moves, and everyone has to be on their toes to make the casting off work well.

It is also useful for getting a large group into the formation you want. For instance, if you finish in one long line of couples, they have only to face their partners and take a step away to be in formation for a longways set. To form two longways sets, cast off to fours, have the two couples drop hands in the middle, take a sideways step away from the other couple then face their partner. And so on.

Goin' to Alberta

You probably already know a version of this fun dance—I've seen half a dozen permutations over the years. I concocted this variation to introduce the youngest dancers to ballroom position and the delights of the polka.



Formation: Circle, partners facing centre

Music: CD #1

Several couples stand in the centre of the circle in **ballroom position**. Those on the outside join hands and circle to the left, singing:

I was goin' to Alberta, a-goin' to the fair

To dance a little polka with all the people there

Now the dancers in the outside circle also take ballroom position and everyone **polka** in place:

Oh polka in the city, polka in the town

Go on out to the country and polka all around

All point their joined hands toward the floor, then toward the ceiling:

Oh polka to the bottom, polka to the top

All remain in ballroom position and:

Turn around and turn around until you make a stop.

Each of the couples in the centre will now be pointing at a couple in the outside ring. These two couples trade places, and the game begins with new couples in the centre. There's not much time in the music to make this exchange, so you may need to use the pause button until the dancers can trade places quickly.

I don't go into much detail when teaching youngsters to polka. I simply show them the position and what the movement looks like, then encourage them to turn around a bit. The rhythm of the polka music is pretty powerful, and it's amazing how quickly they can approximate a real polka! If you'd like information on how to teach the polka step, see the first dance in "Step Lively 2: Canadian Dance Favourites".

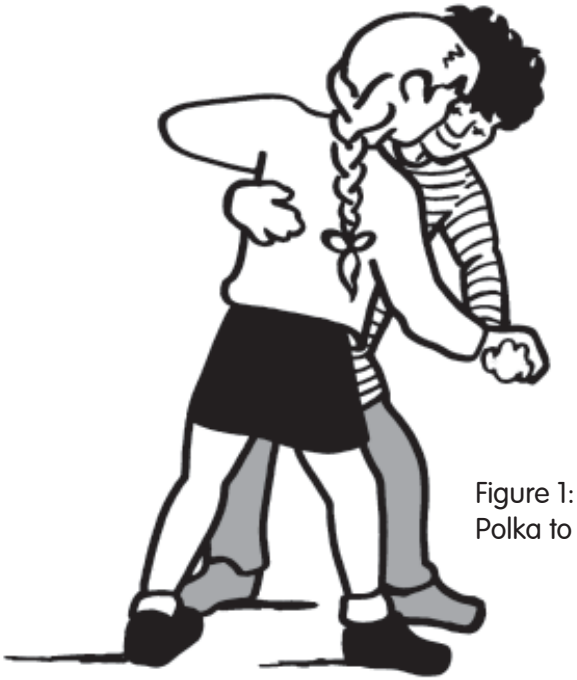


Figure 1:
Polka to the bottom

Goin' to Alberta

F G C7

I was go - in' to Al - ber - ta a - go - in' to the fair to dance a lit - tle

F C7 F G

pol - ka with all the peo - ple there Oh! Pol - ka in the cit - y pol - ka in the
Pol - ka in the eve - ning on the par - ty side of
Pol - ka with my unc - le and then with Aunt - ie

C7 F C7

town_____ Go on out to the coun - try and pol - ka all a - round. Oh!
town Where the guys and gals all___ grab their pals and pol - ka all a - round.
Sue If_____ you will be my___ part - ner___ I'll pol - ka down with you!

F G

Pol - ka to the bot - tom_____ pol - ka to the top, and

C7 F

turn a - round and turn a - round un - til you make a stop!

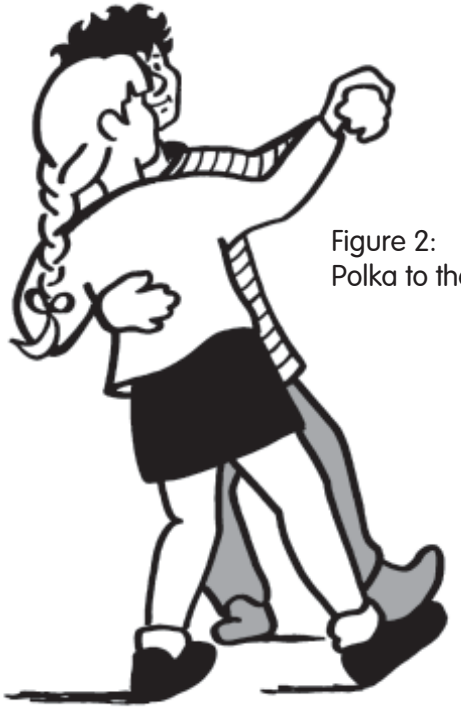


Figure 2:
Polka to the top

I See You

This popular Swedish singing game is to be found in dozens of collections produced in the 20th century, the earliest that I've found being "Folk Dance and Singing Games" by Elizabeth Burchenal from 1909.

Formation: Scattered foursomes:
Two dancers facing each other, each with their partner behind them.

Music: CD #9

I usually get the kids into formation and tell them that the two dancers facing each other in the centre are the trees, and the two behind them are squirrels. Trees stand still, and squirrels put their hands on their partner's shoulders.

A In time with the song, the squirrels peek at each other.

I see you, I see you, tra-la-la La-la-la La-la-la-la

I see you, I see you, tra-la-la La-la-la La

B The squirrels then meet in between the trees, join both hands (paws?), and skip around each other while the trees clap their hands (branches?).

Tra la la la la la la la, Tra la la la la la la

Tra la la la la la la la, Tra la la la la!

As the tralala's come to an end, the squirrels plant themselves in front of their partner to become the new trees.

For the big operatic finale, everyone raises their hands in the air and bows forward toward the other two dancers.

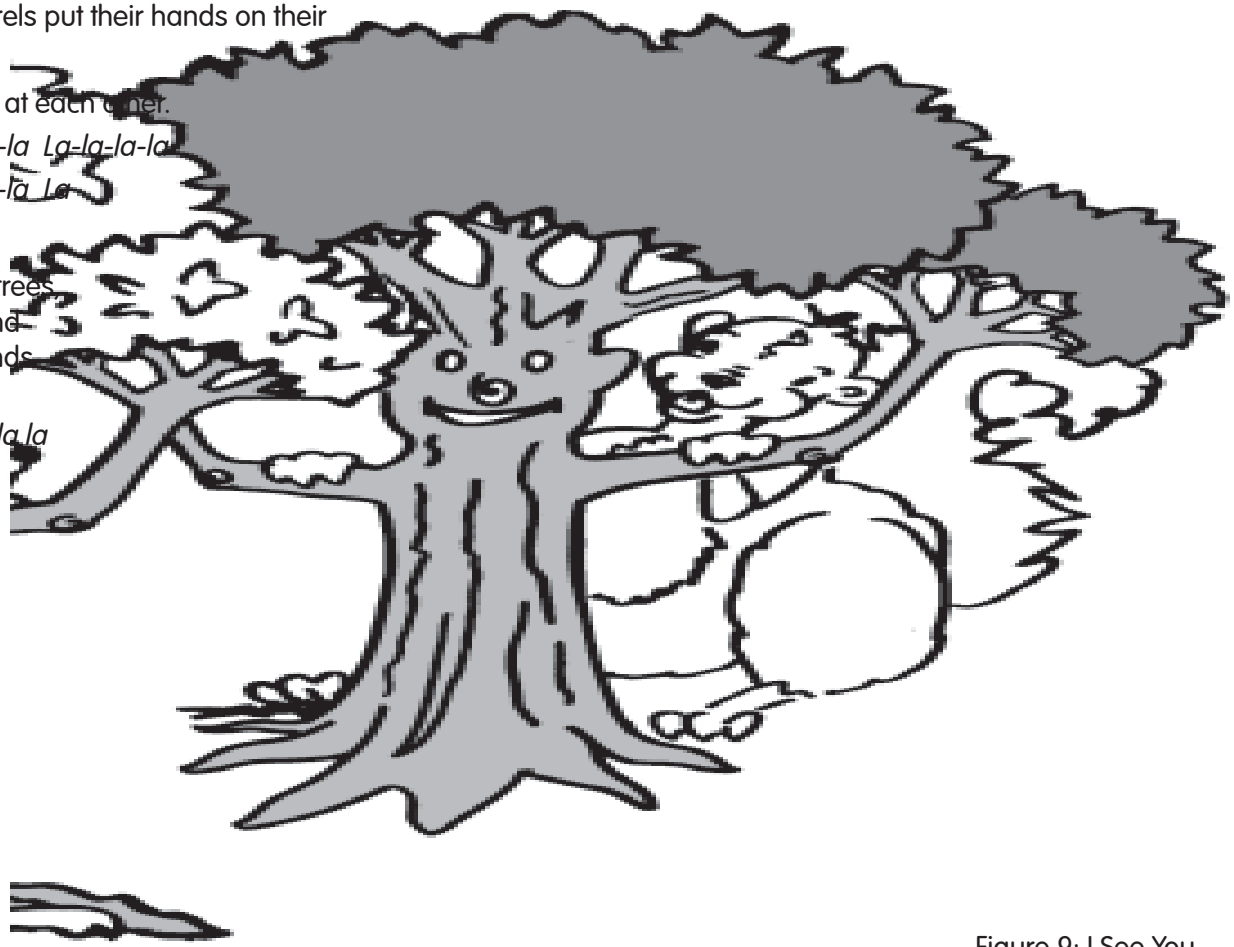
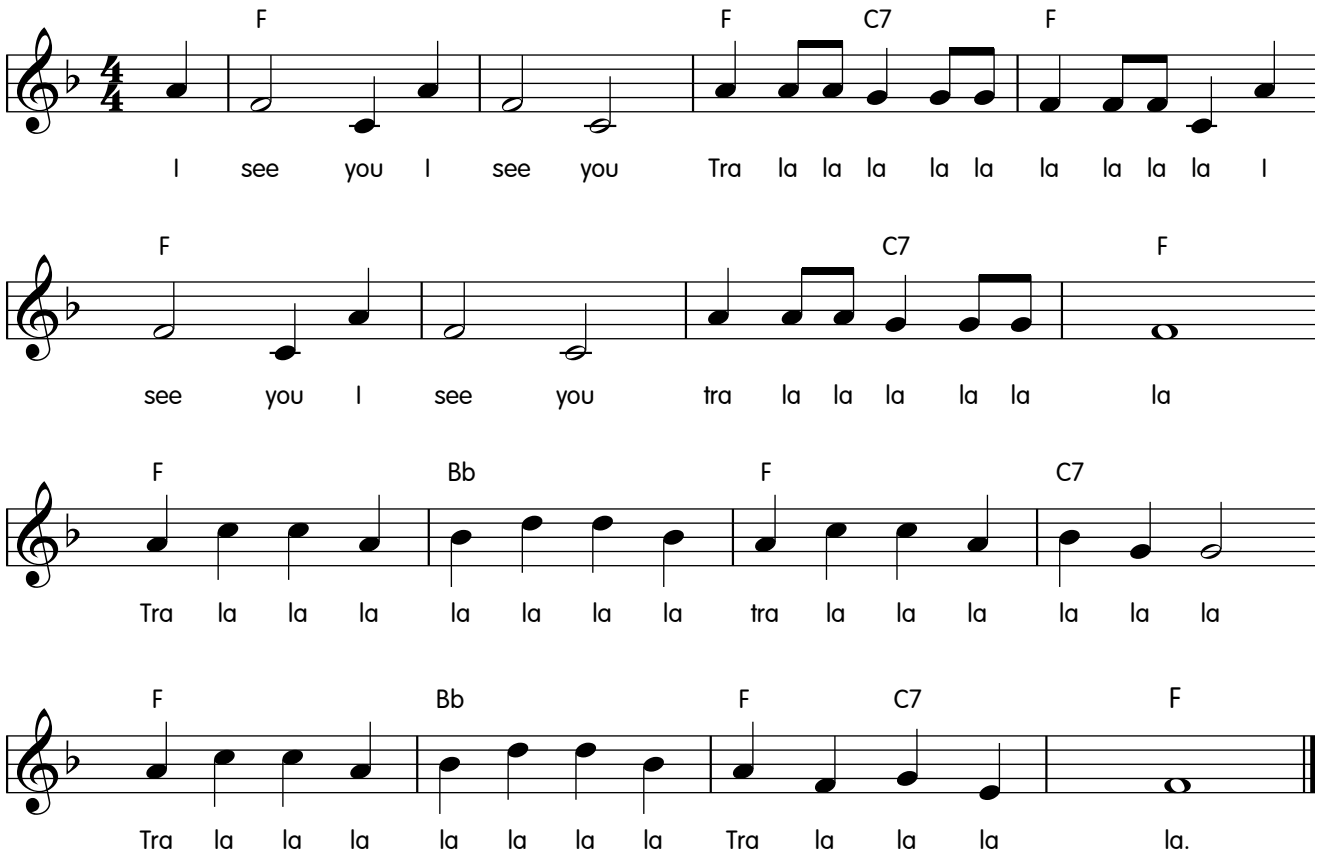


Figure 9: I See You

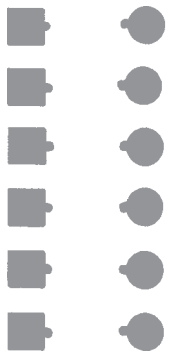
I See You

When it came time to record this tune for the CD, a problem presented itself: We wanted to record the finale the way I do it in my residencies, but the fact is that I am demonstrably unable to hit that high note! But we decided to try it anyway, just for fun. In order to get the big vibrato, I shook my head so violently that the headphones went flying, and I just about ended up on the floor. Unfortunately, the tape was rolling, and the recording engineer made me keep that cut!



Down the River

I love this one for its wonderfully singable tune and boisterous energy. I learned it from Melanie Luedders at the Lady of the Lake Family Dance Camp, and have taught as often as possible since then.



Formation: Longways set for as many couples as you like.

Music: CD #11

Take three marching steps forward, and clap both hands with partner on the word 'wide'.
Oh the river is deep and the channel is wide

Three steps back to original spot and two quick claps after the word 'strong'.
The winds are steady and strong (clap-clap)

Repeat the same actions for the next two lines.
Note that this time the partner clap happens on the word 'time'.
Won't we have a jolly good time
As we go sailing along (clap-clap)

Top couple join both hands, **sashay** down the centre and remain at the **bottom of the set**.
Down the river, oh down the river, oh down the river we go-o-o

Next top couple sashays down to the bottom of the set.
Down the river, oh down the river, oh down the Ohio!

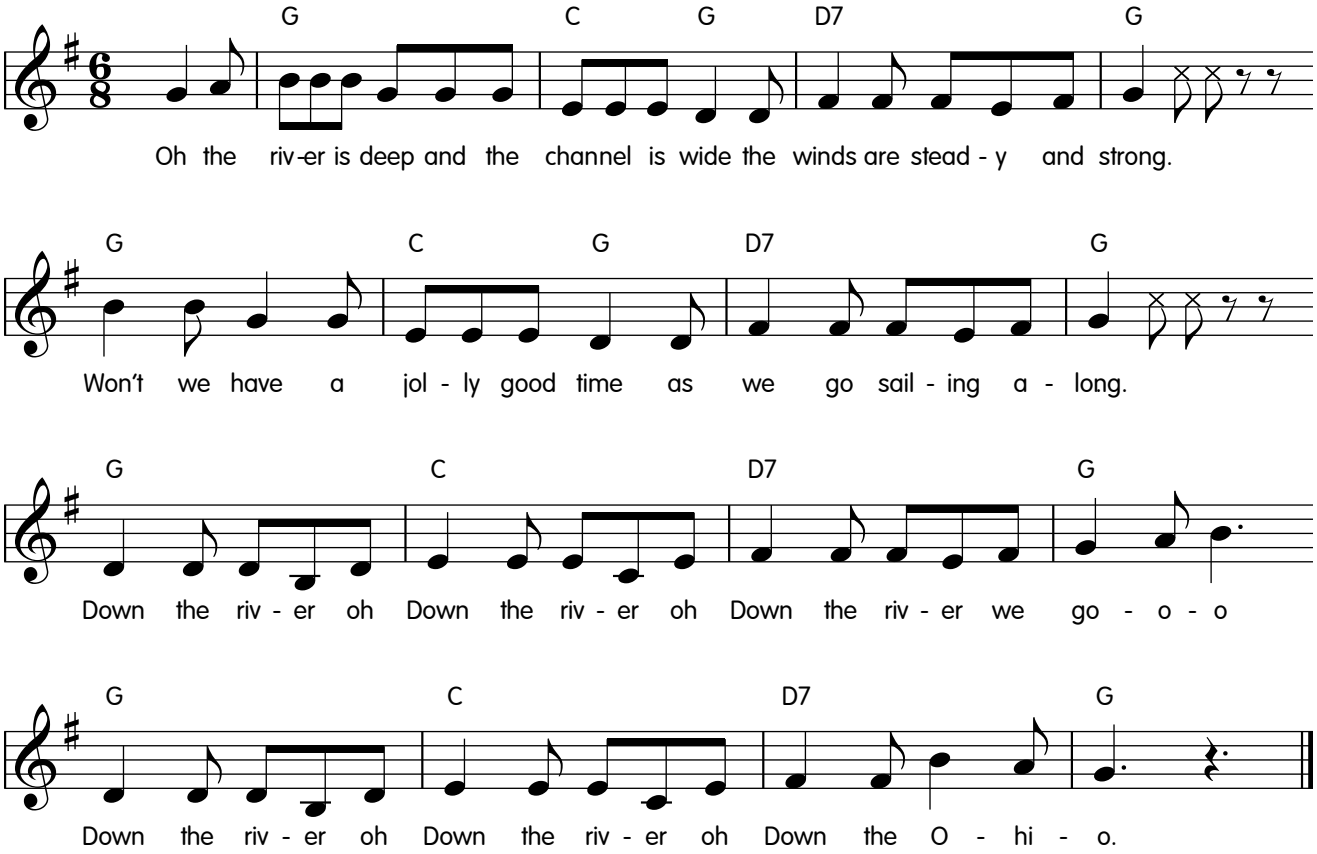
Everyone must remember to move over toward the **top of the set** as each couple sashays down the middle.

The temptation for young dancers is to rush forward and clap their partner's hands as quickly as possible. It takes great restraint to take three steps forward in time with the music and then clap your partner's hands precisely on the word 'wide'. It will serve you well to thoroughly learn the melody and words, and then to practice the clapping in a sitting position before attempting the whole dance.

Another Big Ending

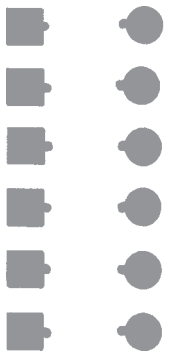
You'll hear the music change during the sashays on the final time through the music. This is the signal for ALL the couples to take a turn to sashay down, one at a time. It's now more important than ever for the standing couples to move over toward the top of the set.

Down the River



Sweets o' May

A longways variation of Sweets o' May first appeared in the journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society in 1977. By the time Dudley Laufman learned it a few years later, the form had changed to what you see here. It's one of my all-time favourite dances to use both in schools and at adult dance parties. If you're up for more of a challenge, there is a very common and more complex version of this dance done in square formation.



Formation: Longways set of 5 or 6 couples

Music: CD #20

When this dance is done by adults, convention would have the men's line on the right and the women's line on the left, from the caller's perspective. However, I don't recommend boy/girl partners for dancers in the primary grades, and usually opt for designating the lines as Lions/Tigers or Stars/Moons or Manitoba/Saskatchewan.

For ease of description, I will use girls and boys.

A1 All the girls join hands and with a sliding step, they gallop toward the **top** and around the line of standing boys. (16 beats)

A2 The boys then join hands and gallop around the girls' line. (16 beats)

B1, B2 All face towards the top and **cast off** to the right and the left, away from your partner, following the person in front of you. When the first couple reaches the foot of the set, they make a two-handed arch. The next and subsequent couples take their partner by the hand, go through the arch, and dance back up to the top of the set. Those who make the arch remain at the **bottom** of the set. (32 beats) See figure 17.

C All clap twice, stamp twice, clap twice, stamp twice. (8 beats)
Two hand turn with partner once around. (8 beats)

All clap twice, stamp twice, clap twice, stamp twice (8 beats)
All turn single, and rejoin hands to start over. (8 beats)

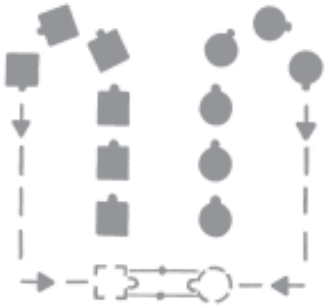
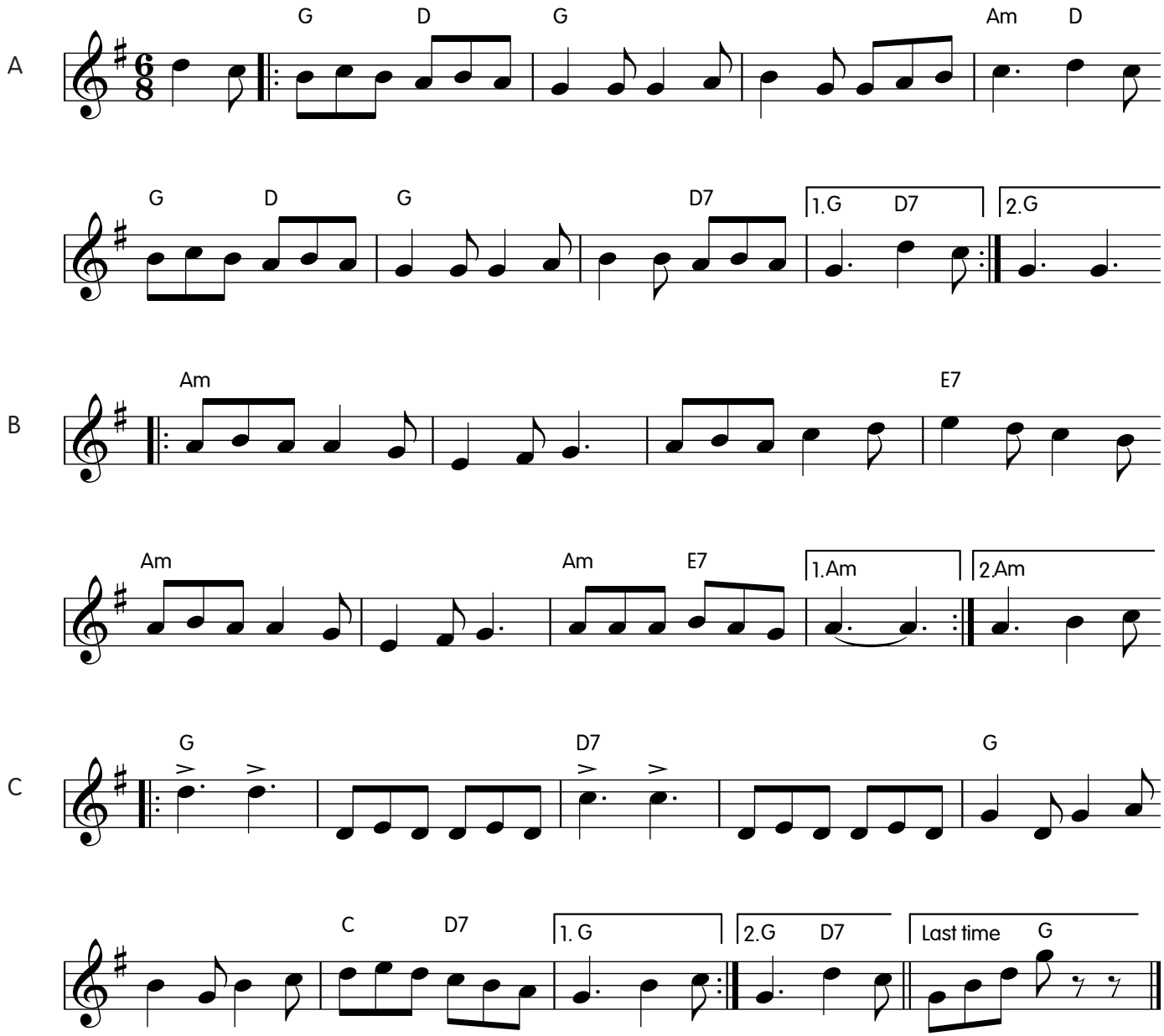


Figure 17: Cast off and form an arch

Sweets o' May


A
G D G Am D
G D G D7 1.G D7 2.G
B
Am E7
Am Am E7 1.Am 2.Am
C
G D7 G
C D7 1. G 2.G D7 Last time G

Fjaskern

This is a well-known, fun dance from Sweden that starts slow and speeds up, and for this reason is sometimes called Hurry Skurry. It is both a physical and mental challenge, as it requires a stout heart and precise timing. It was also quite a challenge in the recording—not every fiddler can play at 196 beats per minute in the key of E flat!

Formation: Double circle, partners facing counterclockwise.

Music: CD #24

A1 Take your partner by the hand and walk 16 steps counterclockwise.

A2 Turn toward your partner, take new inside hands, and walk back in the opposite direction (clockwise).

B1 Face your partner with hands on hips. Hop and place your left heel on the ground in front, then hop and place the right heel in front, then the left, then the right. All this takes 4 beats.

On the fifth beat, clap your hands and trade places with your partner. (4 beats)

Then hop left, right, left, right, clap and return to original position. (8 beats)

B2 Repeat B1.

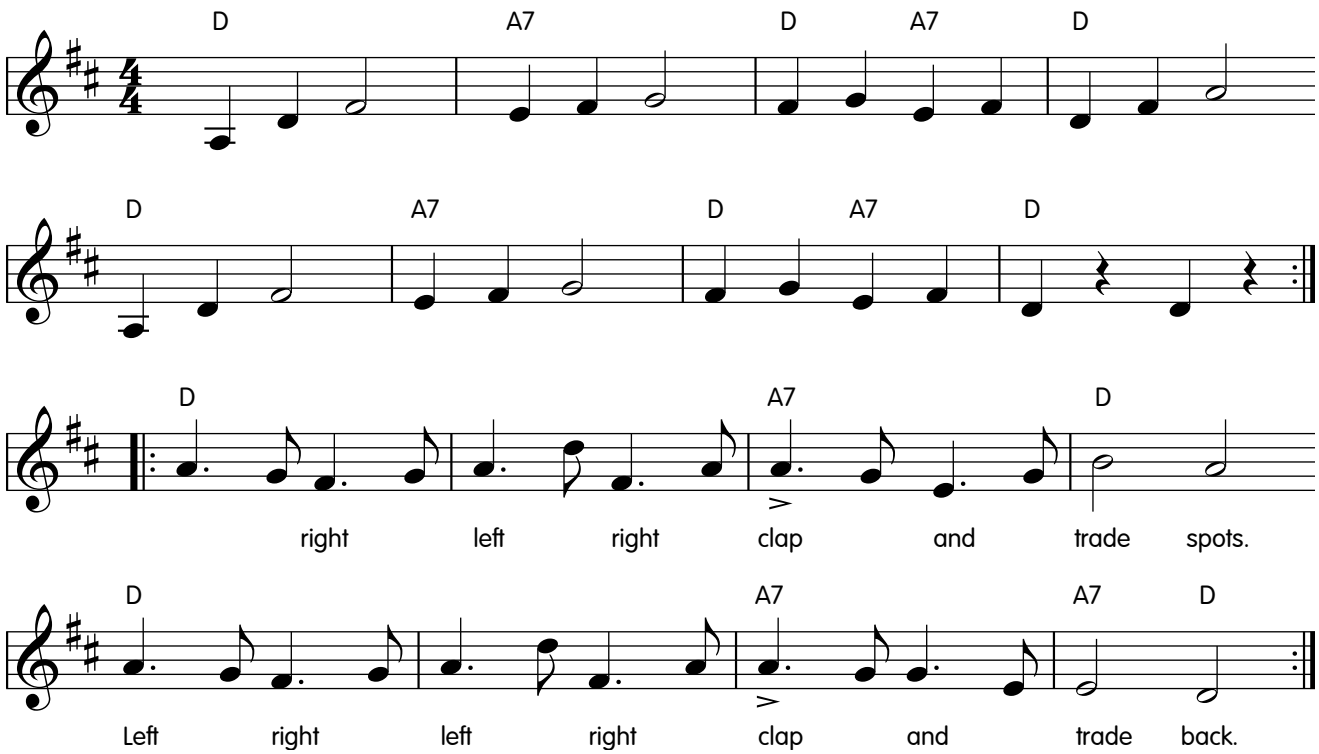
As the music speeds up there is a tendency to sprint on the A parts and flail about on the B's. I usually insist (with varying degrees of compliance) that the dancers step exactly in time with the music. Practice walking in time with a slow drum beat, then gradually speed up and slow down until all are able to connect their feet to the beat.

To practice part B, have the children sit and listen to the music and practice clapping accurately with the cymbal crashes on the 5th beat. This will increase the chances of success when they are up and kicking.

When dancing part B, it may help to chant "left, right, left, right, clap and trade spots", with one beat per word.

Figure 22: Left, right, left, right

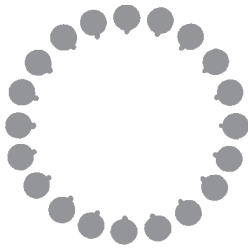
Fjaskern



If your musicians are up to it, it's fun to play this in six different keys, going up a fourth each time.

On the CD we've done it in D G C F Bb and Eb, but you could also try E A D G C and F, or anything else that makes sense for your instrumentation. Have fun with it!

Old King Glory



If there were a Grade Two People's Choice Award, this one would win hands down. It can be taught easily, but has challenging nuances that introduce concepts of spatial awareness. Dancers must adjust to the changing shapes and remember to keep holding hands throughout. The melody is a variation of the gospel song "Go Tell it on the Mountain", and can also be found under the title "All Sing Glory" The tunnel ending came to me on an impulse one day, and was an instant keeper.

Formation: Circle, no partners, hands joined

Music: Singing, CD #4

As you sing the song, the circle moves to the left while the leader walks around the outside in the opposite direction. On the words "First one, the second one, the third follow me", the leader touches three consecutive dancers on the shoulder, who then leave the circle and hold hands in a line following the leader. With each repetition three more dancers are added to the end of the leader's line and the original circle shrinks by three.

As the number of dancers in the line becomes greater than those in the circle, a spiral develops, and the three chosen must follow the spiral around to find the end of the line. They sometimes want to cut through the line, but I ask them to keep walking and trust that they will find the end.

When the inside circle is almost dissolved, the remaining few (2-4) lift their joined hands to form a 'mountain', and the line tunnels through their arches.

Having tunnelled through the 'mountain', the leader now has to undo the spiral. Upon emerging from the arch, turn sharply to the right and follow the open path. (See figure 6.) When the end of the line passes, make a wide arc to the left, and when the last dancers go through the arch, reform the circle and bow to the mountain.

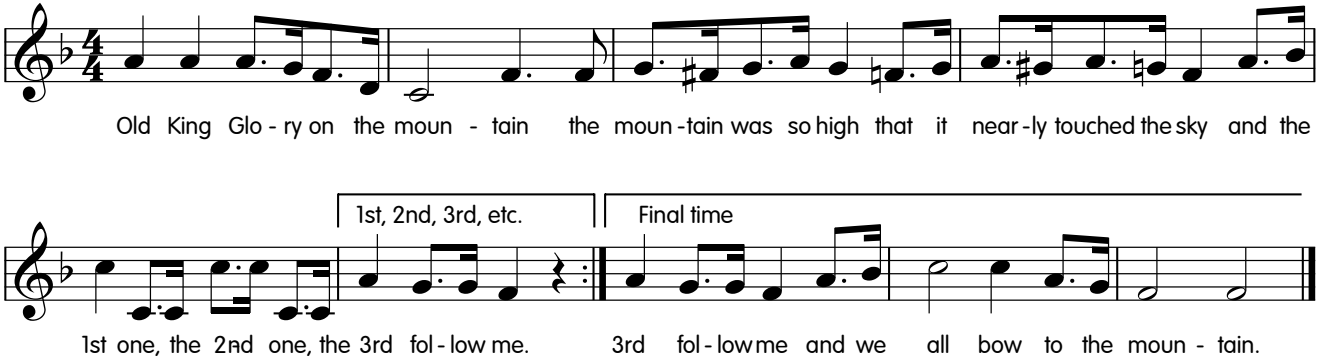



Figure 6: Unwinding the spiral