



JOAN SAWYER'S PERSIAN GARDEN TANGO

Reconstruction by Richard Powers

Joan Sawyer was famous on four fronts – as a Broadway stage dancer, as a nightclub manager (running her New York dance club The Persian Garden), as a composer (she wrote "Persian Garden Tango") and as a noted feminist and Suffragette who traveled across the country for the cause of women's rights. This latter focus may explain why the tango steps she described were especially enjoyable for women. Unlike most 1913 tango steps, which could only be done if the woman learned and practiced them in a class, Joan Sawyer's steps could all be followed easily in freestyle dancing, and therefore were more fun for the woman.

These are tango steps described by Joan Sawyer in a series of 1913 and 1914 newspaper articles. The articles described individual steps. This choreography threads together Joan Sawyer's tango steps into a typical pattern of the time, following the impetus of the music.

Steps described are for man unless specified otherwise. Lady dances opposite steps.

Part 1 Backing the Lady

The Plain Walk

In closed dance position, walk forward LOD 4 slow steps, beginning L. (She walks backward beginning R).

The Major Luna (sic)

Step fwd L, stopping, replace R back, step back L.

Step back R, replace L, step fwd R. Both are QQ-S timing.

Note: this is easier to lead and follow than the box step Media Luna.

The Plain Walk

Repeat The Plain Walk above.

The Cortez

Step fwd L, stopping, replace R back, step back L. QQ-S.

He steps back R and hold.

Repeat Part 1 and twist into Tango Promenade Position at the end of this 2nd time.

continued

Part 2 Tango Promenade

The Nip-Up (like a Tango Chassé)

In Closed Promenade Position, walk fwd LOD 2 slow steps L,R then step fwd L stopping and rock back R. S-S-QQ.

Repeat. S-S-QQ

Walk fwd LOD 2 slow steps L,R.

The Major Scissors

Man:

Same steps as the Major Luna, facing LOD, except he leads her to dance at his right side.

Lady:

Face partner and step side R, replace L while pulling it back, cross R over L. QQ-S.

Repeat opposite, crossing L over R for the slow step. QQ-S.

The Feather Stitch

Man:

Step fwd L, stopping, replace R back, step back L.

Hold as she does a solo step at his side, then step fwd R. 2 slow counts.

Lady:

Face partner and step side R, replace L while pulling it back, cross R over L. QQ-S.

Sweep L toe to the floor, at the left side, in a CW ronde-de-jambe circle. Cross L over R. S-S.

Repeat all of Part 2. On the last step of the repeat, face partner in closed waltz position.

Part 3 Steps in Place

The Scissors

Gent:

Face partner and step side L, replace R while pulling it back, cross L over R. QQ-S.

Repeat opposite, crossing R over L for the slow step. Repeat both.

Lady dances opposite, crossing in front, like her Major Scissors.

The Nip-Up

In Closed Promenade Position, walk fwd LOD 2 slow steps LR, step fwd L and rock back R, walk fwd L. SS-QQ-S.

Pivot Tap (like a Rueda)

The gent crosses R tightly over L, rises on toes and unwinds CCW one full turn

While lady may just walk forward around him with 7 slow steps, beginning L foot, holding the seventh step, or she may choose to go around him this way:

Facing partner, cross L tightly over R and step side R, in quick steps. Repeat for seven times. On the eighth time, cross L over R and hold.

The woman has her choice of which version to do. He doesn't decide for her.

The Cortez

Step side toward LOD, replace R. Step fwd L backing the lady, replace R. 4 slow steps.

Part 4 Conclusion

Figure Eight

In Closed Promenade Position walk 2 slow steps LOD. Face partner to step side L and close R to L. Face Counter Promenade Position and step side (or back) L. SS-QQ-S.

Repeat opposite, changing into Promenade Position at the end.

Repeat both while slowly rotating this step CCW, to promenade in toward center of hall and out.

The Throw-Away (with gent facing LOD)

Walk fwd LOD 2 slow steps (woman backing).

Step fwd L and replace back R, step back L, replace fwd R (QQ-S-S), as the woman pulls her R shoulder back to open back away from him while rocking back R, replace fwd L, step fwd R toward man, replace back L (QQ-S-S).

Another style is for the man to only take the first two walking steps, then stop, keeping his feet in place, leading her merely by shifting his weight forward and back with her.

Repeat this QQ-S-S.

Repeat the entire Persian Garden Tango from the beginning.

