**LESSON 1**

**CAROLINA SHAG DANCE DESCRIPTION:**

Carolina Shag is a type of swing dance with the same roots as Lindy Hop, jitter bug, East Coast Swing, West Coast Swing, etc. Specifically, It developed after WWII along the eastern seaboard, especially South Carolina in places like Myrtle Beach. It is now the official state dance of South Carolina, and is most popular in North & South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky, New Jersey, Pennsylvania (including Pittsburgh), Alabama, Missouri, Arkansas.

It is characterized by keeping a relatively steady top line and upper body, while emphasizing precise footwork, and what's known as "together" steps or mirror patterns. Initially it was very much a male oriented dance, but now it has evolved to be a much more balanced danced.

I highly recommend watching Carolina Shag both on the internet and via instructional DVDs, and at swing dance weekends and especially at SOS (a twice a year, Baby Boomer 10 day blow out party in North Myrtle Beach). BTW: If you can't enjoy yourself at SOS, you might as well pack it in!!! By the way, an excellent Shag website is www.Shagtour.com

I say that because up 'til now, you just don't see it done very much at all here in Northeast Ohio. But a few of us Shag enthusiasts in this club would like to change that. I first saw it while on golf vacations in North Carolina. There isn't a real compelling reason to learn something if you don't see it. Kind of like the chicken or the egg. Similar to how West Coast swing got popular here. It started with a few couples learning it and sharing it, giving lessons both formal and informal, and it spread.

I firmly believe that if you observe it a lot, you'll want to do it and YOU CAN DO IT!
The dance is a lot of fun, the music is a lot of fun, the people and places associated with it are a lot of fun.

A little personal background: Primarily, I began learning Shag about 6 years ago when I began dancing by watching instructional DVDs by champion Shag dancers: Sam West and by the couple: Charlie & Jackie. Secondarily, I've attended Shag dance workshops on dance weekends and at SOS in North Myrtle Beach. Additionally, I've also picked a few things up off the internet. So I will simply be sharing what I've learned along the way.

NOTE: Carolina "Shag" has nothing to do with another old time dance known as "Collegiate Shag". So if you look up "Shag" dancing on the internet to view and learn, make sure it's "Carolina", not "Collegiate" shag.

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Comparing Carolina Shag to both East Coast Swing and West Coast swing, you'll find similarities and differences.
**SIMILARITIES:** A.
 Like West Coast Swing, Carolina Shag is performed in a slot (imagine dancing in an area the size and shape of a bedroom door lying ON THE FLOOR).
 B.
 Like East Coast Swing, it has the same basic timing as East Coast Swing (triple step, triple step, rock step) Over 6 beats of music counted as 1&2, 3&4, 5-6.
 C.
 Some moves will be similar to East and West coast swing, but they'll have subtle differences, like the spacing between you and your partner.
 D. Same hand "placement" or "coupling", I personally don't like to use the words "grip" or "hold" because they connote "grabbing".

**DIFFERENCES:** A.
 The footwork and body positioning/spacing. For instance, much of the time you'll be closer to your partner than in East Coast and West Coast Swing.

**IN GENERAL:**

Other than the pivot step, which takes (8 beats) and verbalized "together steps"
or "mirror patterns", Shag patterns take 6 beats. This means that the man could do one 6 beat "pattern" while the lady does either the same or a different 6 beat pattern, including the Basic step, because you'll both start and end at the same time.
 **FIRST PATTERN:**

**BASIC STEP.**

**NOTE:** ALTHOUGH IT'S CALLED BASIC, THAT DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN IT'S THE EASIEST STEP IN SHAG. It wasn't for me at least. One part was counter-intuitive to me, which I'll explain shortly. So don't get frustrated-----put in the repetitions and you WILL get it. HOWEVER: THIS LESSON IS NOT THE TIME OR PLACE TO PUT IN ALL THOSE REPETITONS. HOPEFULLY YOU WILL LEAVE THIS LESSON KNOWING WHAT YOU NEED TO PRACTICE AT HOME ON YOUR OWN.

PLAY MUSIC and DEMONSTRATE WHILE TALKING, INDICATING THE 3 POSITIONS AND THE LEAD HAND ON AN INVISIBLE POST.

From a side view, notice the "accordion" effect.

The Basic step and some other moves (I.e., lady and male turn has 3 positions:

**CLOSE** (1st 2 beats: 1&2), **MIDDLE** (2nd 2 beats: 3&4) and **BACK** (last 2 beats: 5,6)
The 3 positions are achieved via:

1. Proper footwork

2. Hands on an invisible, hydraulic post. OR laser beam to a spot on the floor.
PRACTICE WITH A CHAIR, BANISTER OR WALKER.

**BASIC STEP**

**CADENCE:** TRIPLE STEP, TRIPLE STEP, ROCK STEP

**COUNT:** 1&2, 3&4, 5-6

**FOOTWORK:**
**FEMALE:**

1&2= FORWARD/TOGETHER/ BACK= RIGHT/LEFT/RIGHT=COASTER STEP. THIS IS KNOWN AS A "COASTER" STEP. SPECIFICALLY IT'S A FORWARD COASTER STEP. PERSONAL NOTE: THIS "BACK" IS WHAT I FOUND COUNTER-INTUITIVE AT FIRST

3&4= "BACK IN PLACE" AKA "ANCHOR" STEP = LEFT/RIGHT/LEFT. SIMILAR TO WEST COAST SWING. THE "IN PLACE" IS TWO SUBTLE, BUT DEFINITE "FORWARD/ BACK" WEIGHT SHIFTS ON YOUR FEET RIGHT WHERE THEY'RE ALREADY AT. YOU DON'T MOVE YOUR FEET PER SE, YOU SIMPLY SHIFT YOUR WEIGHT
ONTO THEM "IN PLACE"

5-6=ROCK STEP=BACK/FORWARD=RIGHT/LEFT. WORD OF CAUTION HERE: DON'T BEND YOUR HEAD AND SPINE BACK ON 5. THINK MORE OF DOING A SIMPLE "BACK/REPLACE STEP."

**MALE:**

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NOW FOR THE GLUE THAT KEEPS IT ALL TOGETHER: THE EQUALLY IMPORTANT, YET UNDER-EMPHASIZED HAND POSITION:

LEAD HAND ON AN INVISIBLE, HYDRAULIC POST.:

SINCE HAND IS ON A POST:

1. IN THE **"CLOSE"** POSITION (ON 1&2), YOUR ARM WILL NEED TO COLLAPSE OR BEND AT THE ELBOW.

2. IN THE **"MIDDLE"** POSITION (ON 3&4), YOUR ARM WILL BE NEUTRAL.

3. IN THE **"BACK"** POSITION (ON 5-6), YOUR ARM WILL NEED TO EXTEND AT THE ELBOW.

THE BEST WAY TO PRACTICE THIS IS WITH A CHAIR, OR WALKER, OR BANISTER /RAILING, DOOR HANDLE, ETC. SIMPLY DO THE BASIC STEP WHILE KEEPING YOUR HAND ON THE CHAIR, ETC. YOU WILL SOON GET ACCUSTOMED TO THE CHANGES IN THE ARM AT THE ELBOW, AND YOU WILL FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE PROPER SPACING IN THE THREE POSITIONS.

4. KEEPS THE HAND STEADY. NO FALSE OR QUESTIONABLE LEADS. REMEMBER FELLAS, YOU'RE HOLDING THE LADY'S STEERING WHEEL, SO DON'T MOVE IT UNLESS YOU WANT HER TO GO SOMEWHERE.

5. KEEPS US IN THE PROPER, RELATIVE POSITION AND SPACE TO EACH OTHER.

6. IT IS EACH PERSON'S RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP THEIR OWN HANDS ON THE POST, UNLESS MOVED VIA A LEAD.

7. HYDRAULIC BECAUSE IN SOME MOVES LIKE THE FEMALE AND MALE TURN, YOU WILL LIFT THE HAND WHILE KEEPING IT OVER THE SAME SPACE ON THE FLOOR (LASER BEAM)

8. OTHER HAND: KEEP OTHER ARM BENT, FOREARM APPROXIMATELY PARALLEL TO FLOOR WITH HAND HOLDING AN IMAGINARY WINE GLASS STEM (LADY) OR BEER CAN OR SNAPPING FINGERS TO THE BEAT. DO NOT KEEP YOUR ARM HANGING BY YOUR SIDE, POINTING TO THE FLOOR.
a. Bad for balance
b. Bad for appearance
c. Easier to get into different positions. Don't have as far to move your arm. I.e., Closed position (lady trace left elbow in a reverse "C" from bottom to top.

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**SECOND PATTERN:**

**FEMALE UNDER ARM TURN.**

**CADENCE:** TRIPLE STEP, TRIPLE STEP, ROCK STEP

**COUNT:** 1&2, 3&4, 5-6

**FOOTWORK:**
**FEMALE:** 1&2=CHASER STEP=STEP/TOGETHER/STEP=RIGHT/LEFT/RIGHT
WHILE DOING A QUARTER TURN TO THE LEFT. YOU ARE BOTH FACING THE SAME DIRECTION. WHERE YOUR RIGHT FOOT LANDS ON 2, IMAGINE IT'S ON A LAZY SUSAN, WHERE YOU WILL BEGIN PIVOTING ANOTHER QUARTER TURN TO THE LEFT SQUARING BACK UP TO THE MAN BY 3, BUT NOT BEFORE.

3&4= "BACK IN PLACE" AKA "ANCHOR" STEP = LEFT/RIGHT/LEFT. THIS IS THE SAME "BACK IN PLACE" AS IN THE BASIC STEP. DO NOT TRAVEL FURTHER DOWN THE SLOT ON "&" WITH YOUR RIGHT FOOT. THUS YOU WILL BE IN YOUR SAME MIDDLE POSITION AS IN A BASIC. ELIMINATING BEING TOO FAR AWAY. ALSO BY 3, YOUR HAND IS BACK DOWN ON THE POST.

5-6=ROCK STEP=BACK/FORWARD=RIGHT/LEFT. WORD OF CAUTION HERE: DON'T BEND YOUR HEAD AND SPINE BACK ON 5. THINK MORE OF DOING A SIMPLE "BACK/REPLACE STEP."

**MALE:**

**FOOTWORK:**

**NOTE:** ON THE 5-6 PRECEDING THIS TURN, REPLACE THE NORMAL ROCK STEP WITH A ROCK(5)/CROSSOVER STEP(6)CROSSING YOUR RIGHT FOOT OVER AND IN FRONT OF YOUR LEFT FOOT.

**THE LEAD**: ON 6, LIFT YOUR LEFT HAND AS IF LOOKING AT YOUR WATCH AND BEGIN BRINGING IT OVER THE LADY'S HEAD SO SHE'LL TURN UNDER IT COUNTER-CLOCKWISE DURING 1&2. BY 3, YOUR HAND IS BACK DOWN ON THE POST.

**THEN,**1&2=CHASER STEP=STEP/TOGETHER/STEP=LEFT/RIGHT/LEFT
WHILE DOING A QUARTER TURN TO THE RIGHT. YOU ARE BOTH FACING THE SAME DIRECTION. WHERE YOUR LEFT FOOT LANDS ON 2, IMAGINE IT'S ON A LAZY SUSAN, WHERE YOU WILL BEGIN PIVOTING ANOTHER QUARTER TURN TO THE RIGHT SQUARING BACK UP TO THE LADY BY 3, BUT NOT BEFORE.

3&4=BACK IN PLACE=RIGHT/LEFT/RIGHT. THIS IS THE SAME "BACK IN PLACE" AS IN THE BASIC STEP. DO NOT TRAVEL FURTHER DOWN THE SLOT ON "&" WITH YOUR LEFT FOOT. THUS YOU WILL BE IN YOUR SAME MIDDLE POSITION AS IN A BASIC. ELIMINATING BEING TOO FAR AWAY. ALSO BY 3, YOUR HAND IS BACK DOWN ON THE POST.

5-6=ROCK STEP=BACK/FORWARD=LEFT/RIGHT. WORD OF CAUTION HERE: DON'T BEND YOUR HEAD AND SPINE BACK ON 5. THINK MORE OF DOING A SIMPLE "BACK/REPLACE STEP."
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