

The Cakewalk

Origins

Although not exactly certain, some research suggests the following:

- ☆ The Cakewalk originated in the cotton plantations in the deep South of the United States of America during the days of slavery. The slaves would get together on their days off (probably on a Sunday) to sing and dance. The dance mimicked the lifestyle and manners of the grand plantation owners and gradually the performances developed into competitions where couples would compete to be the best. The plantation owner offered a cake as a prize for the winning couple. Thus the dance got its name.
- ☆ The dance then spread all over the US and was performed in the dance halls in Louisiana and Georgia and eventually in New York.
- ☆ We know that early in the 20th Century the Cakewalk was danced in the dance halls in London and movements from the Cakewalk may be found in the Charleston and the Quickstep.
- ☆ The link with the North East of Scotland is unclear but the dance has always been popular there and is still performed at many of the Highland Games.
- ☆ In Scotland, the dance belonged in rural communities and each locale had its own steps and version of the dance. There are therefore many different versions of the Cakewalk.
- ☆ The dance tells the age old story of boy meeting girl, lots of flirting and strutting, the couple 'falling out' when he oversteps the mark by trying to hold her hand or steal a kiss, they make up and live happily ever after.

Dress

To reflect the story of the dance (the mimicking of high society), it is suggested that dancers wear 'formal' dress:

- ☆ *Boy*: top hat, tail/waist coat, carrying a cane
- ☆ *Girl*: dress (to the knee or just below), often frilled with wide skirt to allow for movements, underskirts, gloves, perhaps ribbons or a hat/bonnet

Deviation from formal dress is not considered appropriate.

The only scripted version of the Cakewalk is in the SDTA textbook, which suggests "*Girl in dress with full skirt; Boy in tail coat, tile hat and carrying a cane.*" (page 45).

