

Rythm's the Word for the Rhumba

If You've Got It You Can Dance

By ELEANOR NANGLE

THE RHUMBA, originally a symbolic dance vital to the tribal rites of the Nanigo slaves on Cuban sugar and tobacco plantations, has achieved respectability—plus the accolade of chic. It is the most fashionable dance in America today. Instructors are besieged with requests to teach it.

Only the uninitiated would attempt to do the rhumba to fox-trot tunes. "The Peanut Vendor" is a favorite, with music that ripples a lot and wails a little. The best ballroom rhumba is like the "Son," the dance choice of Cuban aristocrats, done with the body erect, feet flat on the floor, the steps short rather than long, and the hip swing easy and natural. Only in its vulgar exhibition versions is the rhumba suggestive.

To learn the rhumba it is necessary to have a competent instructor. It is not "picked up," as more casual dances are. Once the dancer has learned to keep time—and in this it is important to remember that the dip, or the "hold," is on the third count of the measure—it is fairly simple even in its most complicated versions.

The rhumba is a favorite with the mature as well as the very young. It is a dance for the men and women who wish to perfect posture and grace. And besides that it is wonderful fun to step off to the rattle of maracas—gourds to you!



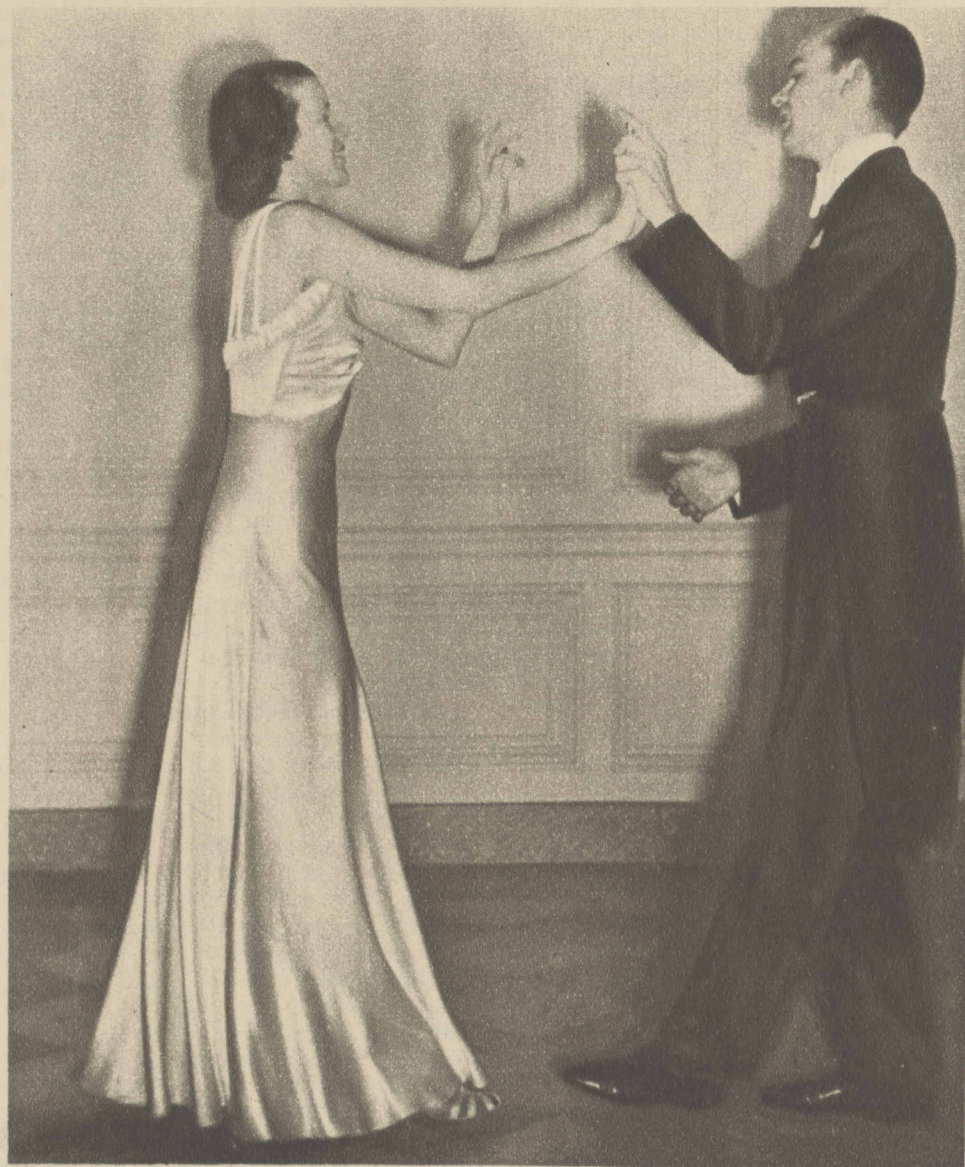
1 The ballroom rhumba as done by experts has no consistent sequence to speak of. The best dancers do rhumba routines as they choose. This is "La Cucaracha," a step that is a graceful break.



2 Technically this is an "open side run," a graceful running step, executed in short steps with the dip held on the third count of the measure.



3 After a side point, the dancers about to go into an open break. 4 An animated moment at the beginning of the "run-around" step. 5 A continuation, which calls for complicated footwork by both dancers. 6 A flirtatious step in which partners break, turn, and end back to back.



7 The beginning of a step in which the man twirls his partner, who then dances completely around in back of him.



8 The finish of another such step, with dancers face to face.



9 A flashy rhumba step, used more in exhibition than in ballroom dancing, and a catchy windup to a dance that stays popular despite the crop of Big Apples.

(Action photos by Frank Marshall Moore—posed by Ruth Hurley and Frank McGill.)