

The Shim Sham

Count: 0

Wall: 1

Level: Intermediate

Choreographer: Willie Bryant & Leonard Reed

Music: Stompin' At The Savoy



This is a popular swing line dance that originated as a tap dance back in the 1930s. It is still being enjoyed by people all around the world. It is done in ten (10) phrases of thirty-two (32) counts. The song by the Bill Elliot Swing Orchestra is the best for people new to the dance, because it calls out the dance moves before you do them.

PART 0: THE BREAK

The Break is a common 8-count step that is used in other swing line dances, like the Jitterbug Stroll. Since it is repeated throughout the Shim Sham, we are putting it first. The most important thing to keep in mind about the break is that it starts on the "eight" (in fact, most of the Shim Sham sections start on the "eight")

RIGHT, TOUCH, LEFT, TOUCH, STEP, STEP, STEP, STEP

- 8 Leaning slightly forward and to the right, step down with your right foot
- 1 Tap your left foot behind your right
- 2 Step back down on your left
- 3 Tap the right behind the left
- 4 Step your right foot down behind the left
- 5-6-7 Take three more small steps back (left, right, left)

PART 1: THE SHIM SHAM

This is the first phrase of the dance (which is probably why the dance is named Shim Sham. Or, it could be the other way around). Just like the break, the Shim Sham starts on the "eight."

STOMP, DRAG 4 TIMES (RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT, RIGHT)

- 8-1 Stomp your right foot out diagonally forward to the right, drag the right foot back next to the left taking weight on the right
- 2-3 Stomp your left foot out diagonally forward to the left, drag the left foot back next to the right taking weight on the left
- 4-5 Stomp your right foot out diagonally forward to the right, drag the right foot back next to the left
- 6-7 Stomp your right foot out diagonally forward to the right, drag the right foot back next to the left taking weight on the right

STOMP, DRAG 4 TIMES (LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, LEFT)

- 8-1 Stomp your left foot out diagonally forward to the left, drag the left foot back next to the right taking weight on the left
- 2-3 Stomp your right foot out diagonally forward to the right, drag the right foot back next to the left taking weight on the right
- 4-5 Stomp your left foot out diagonally forward to the left, drag the left foot back next to the right
- 6-7 Stomp your left foot out diagonally forward to the left, drag the left foot back next to the right taking weight on the left

STOMP, DRAG 4 TIMES (RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT, RIGHT)

- 8-1 Stomp your right foot out diagonally forward to the right, drag the right foot back next to the left taking weight on the right
- 2-3 Stomp your left foot out diagonally forward to the left, drag the left foot back next to the right taking weight on the left
- 4-5 Stomp your right foot out diagonally forward to the right, drag the right foot back next to the left
- 6-7 Stomp your right foot out diagonally forward to the right, drag the right foot back next to the left

BREAK

8-7 (See above)

PART 2: THE CROSS OVER

This is the one part of the Shim Sham that starts on the count of 1. To fill in the remaining count 8 from the previous Break, you need to add the following single count before starting the Cross Over:

8 Clap

(RIGHT SIDE) BUMP, BACK, BUMP, BACK, BUMP, HITCH, CROSS, STEP

- 1 Angle your body to the right and push slightly in that direction, placing a little weight on your right foot and pushing through your hips
- 2 Pull your hips back
- 3-4 Repeat 1-2
- 5 Repeat 1
- 6 Swing your left foot forward and up
- 7 Step the left foot across in front of the right foot
- 8 Step your right foot to the right so that your feet are shoulder width apart

(LEFT SIDE) BUMP, BACK, BUMP, BACK, BUMP, HITCH, CROSS, STEP

- 1 Angle your body to the left and push slightly in that direction, placing a little weight on your left foot and pushing through your hips
- 2 Pull your hips back
- 3-4 Repeat 1-2
- 5 Repeat 1
- 6 Swing your right foot forward and up
- 7 Step the right foot across in front of the left foot
- 8 Step your left foot to the left so that your feet are shoulder width apart

(RIGHT SIDE) BUMP, BACK, BUMP, BACK, BUMP, HITCH, CROSS, STEP

- 1 Angle your body to the right and push slightly in that direction, placing a little weight on your right foot and pushing through your hips
- 2 Pull your hips back
- 3-4 Repeat 1-2
- 5 Repeat 1
- 6 Swing your left foot forward and up
- 7 Step the left foot across in front of the right foot
- 8 Step your right foot to the right so that your feet are shoulder width apart

This is one of the phrases that does not end in the break

(RIGHT THEN LEFT) BUMP, HITCH, CROSS, STEP, BUMP, HITCH, CROSS

- 1 Angle your body to the left and push slightly in that direction, placing a little weight on your left foot and pushing through your hips
- 2 Swing your right foot forward and up
- 3 Step the right foot across in front of the left foot
- 4 Step your left foot to the left so that your feet are shoulder width apart
- 5 Angle your body to the right and push slightly in that direction, placing a little weight on your right foot and pushing through your hips
- 6 Swing your left foot forward and up
- 7 Step the left foot across in front of the right foot

PART 3: TACKY ANNIE

STOMP OFF, TAP-STEP, TAP-STEP, TAP-STEP, TAP

- &8 Stomp right foot behind left foot, stomp left foot next to the right foot
- 1-2 Tap the right foot behind the left, step back down on the right foot
- 3-4 Tap the left foot behind the right, step back down with the left foot
- 5-6 Tap the right foot behind the left, step back down on the right foot

7 Tap the left foot behind the right, putting weight slightly onto the left foot for the next "stomp-off"

STOMP OFF, TAP-STEP, TAP-STEP, TAP-STEP, TAP

&8-7 Repeat the previous 8 counts exactly

STOMP OFF, TAP-STEP, TAP-STEP, TAP-STEP, TAP

&8-7 Repeat the previous 8 counts exactly, ending with full weight on left foot on the last tap so you can go into the break with the right foot

BREAK

8-7 (See above)

PART 4: HALF-BREAK

HOP, HOP, KICK BALL CHANGE (TWICE)

8 Hop lightly forward onto your right foot

1 Hop lightly back to your left foot

2 Kick your right foot out (or you can shuffle the ball like a tap move)

&3 Step your right foot down behind you, shift your weight to your left foot

4-7 Repeat the previous 4 counts exactly

BREAK

8-7 (See above)

HOP, HOP, KICK, AND STEP (TWICE), BREAK

8-7 Repeat the previous 16 counts exactly

PARTS 5 THROUGH 8: REPEAT 1-4 WITH FREEZE

At this point, you will have completed the first full chorus of the Shim Sham (comprised of the first four phrases of the dance). For the next chorus (four phrases, or 128 counts) do everything the same, except, wherever you previously did the break, freeze for 8 counts. (By freeze, we mean stop moving completely. Stand like a statue. Don't move a muscle. We do not mean do a grapevine as the term "freeze" is used in some places.) You will then have completed 8 of the 10 phrases of the dance. And so we move on to the ninth phrase; Boogie Back And Forward

PART 9: BOOGIE BACK AND FORWARD

The Boogie Back is a common swing move that is often used as a way to "play" with your partner in the middle of a dance. You'll often see Lindy Hoppers on the dance floor, facing each other as they boogie back away from one another, then boogie forward towards each other

KICK BALL CHANGES MOVING BACK

8 Kick out with your right foot and clap at the same time

&1 Step back with your right foot, step left foot next to right

2&3 Repeat 8&1

4&5 Repeat 8&1

6&7 Repeat 8&1

BOOGIE FORWARD

8 Brush your right foot forward to the left (raise your hands and snap your fingers on the beat)

1 Twist slightly and step down on the right side

2 Brush your left foot forward to the right (snap)

3 Twist slightly and step down on the left side

4-7 Repeat the previous 4 counts exactly

KICK BALL CHANGES MOVING BACK; BOOGIE FORWARD

8-7 Repeat the previous 16 counts exactly

And the tenth and final phrase; Boogie Back And Shorty George

PART 10: BOOGIE BACK AND SHORTY GEORGE

KICK BALL CHANGES MOVING BACK

- 8 Kick out with your right foot and clap at the same time
- &1 Step back with your right foot, step left foot next to right
- 2&3 Repeat 8&1
- 4&5 Repeat 8&1
- 6&7 Repeat 8&1

SHORTY GEORGE

- 8 Kick right foot out to right side, shifting hips to right, raising left heel up so that you are up on the ball of the left foot
- & Step together with right foot
- 1 Step forward on ball of left foot. You are now on the balls of both feet. Bend both knees and shift both knees to the left side, hips are shifted left also. This is a "boogie walk" or "Shorty George" from the vaudeville days
- 2 Step forward on ball of right foot (on balls of both feet, keep knees bent, shift both knees & hips right)
- 3 Step forward on ball of left foot (on balls of both feet, keep knees bent, shift both knees and hips left)
- 4-7 2-3 two more times

KICK BALL CHANGES MOVING BACK, SHORTY GEORGE

- 8-7 Repeat the previous 16 counts exactly

While doing the Shorty George, make sure your index fingers are pointed down and keep your toes and hips pointed forward. Do not twist your knees and hips. If you know Jo Thompson's dance "Shakin' The Shack", and you learned it from Jo, then you've already seen the correct form for the Shorty George steps. The steps here are exactly the same as in Jo's dance

REPEAT

It is common at Lindy Hop dances for the dancers, instead of repeating the dance, to grab the nearest partner and do a couples Lindy Hop for the rest of the song. Line dancers may just repeat the whole 10-phrase Shim Sham as a solo dance until the music ends

This version of the Shim Sham is based on the original dance created back in the early thirties. Another common version taught in the swing world is one where there is no clap after the Shim Sham break, and the cross overs start on the (8) immediately following the break. When doing it this way, just shift every move back by one. For example, the first push is on the (8), the second on the (2), the third on the (4), the kick up on the (5), you step down on (6), step out on (7), then start the process again in the opposite direction, starting with the (8). The most significant difference you'll notice with this version is that when you have finished the whole phrase and completed the two quick cross overs at the end, your legs will not be crossed when you start the transition to the Tacky Annie. They will be about shoulder length apart. Since the Tacky Annie starts with a "right-left" stomp off, you'll have to push up slightly on your left foot so that you can do the first stomp on the right. This can be a little tricky since you would have just stepped down with your right foot and most of your weight will be on the right. In the "clap" version, since the last step ends on the (7) with your legs crossed (left in front of right) and your weight on the left foot, stepping down on the right to do the Tacky Annie stomp off is a little easier. As far as we're concerned, both ways are enjoyable. You should try it both ways so that no matter where you go, you'll be prepared. Here's a hint as to when you should be prepared to do the clap version and when you shouldn't. The world renowned Pasadena Ballroom Dance Association (sponsors of Swing Camp Catalina and the Harvest Moon Ball) do the Shim Sham without the "clap." If you're in southern California and you visit the Satin Ballroom dance or Camp Hollywood, be prepared to "bring back the clap!"

Because this dance is so old, it has seen many, many hundreds of variations. Tap dancers have their own version that can be danced alongside Lindy Hoppers and line dancers, and they have all sorts of extra fancy stuff they throw in, including something called the BS Ending, where BS stands for pretty much what BS stands for anywhere. The history and lore of Shim Sham is fascinating and deep. Feel free to make some history of your own
