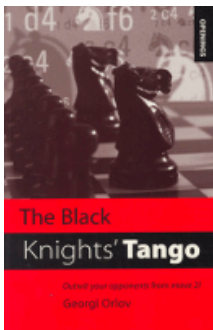




BOOK REVIEWS

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From the Archives...

Since it came online many years ago, ChessCafe.com has presented literally thousands of articles, reviews, columns and the like for the enjoyment of its worldwide readership. The good news is that almost all of this high quality material remains available in the [Archives](#). The bad news is that this great collection of chess literature is now so large and extensive – and growing each week – that it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate it effectively. We decided that the occasional selection from the archives posted publicly online might be a welcomed addition to the regular fare.

Watch for an item to be posted online periodically throughout each month. We will update the ChessCafe.com home page whenever there has been a “new” item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives*...

May We Have This Dance?

The Black Knights' Tango, by Georgi Orlov, 1998 Batsford Ltd., Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 128pp., \$19.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$9.95)

There can be little doubt that opening books are the most popular chess books in the market today. Chess book publishers know that readers will generally beat a path to acquire the latest on the Najdorf, King's Indian, Spanish or most other mainstream openings. Marketability becomes a little less clear, however, when the opening is offbeat or irregular. As a result, promotion of the book often entails hype and exaggeration designed to attract the recalcitrant reader/buyer. Sometimes this hype is justified, sometimes not.

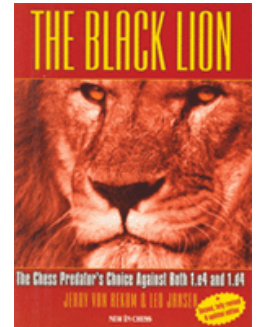
About six years ago, IM Georgi Orlov had a monograph released by *Inside Chess* on a little known Black defense that arose after 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 Nc6. This defense had been occasionally employed by the Mexican grandmaster Carlos Torre and had therefore been occasionally dubbed the Mexican Defense. Orlov, a regular contributor to *Inside Chess* and a regular fixture at tournaments in the American northwest for the last decade, has become probably the main advocate of this defense, although it gained additional credibility when adopted by Alex Yermolinsky, most notably in 1996 against Garry Kasparov.

The first edition used a large newsprint format (similar to the way the monthly magazine *Inside Chess* is produced) and was relatively inexpensive. In this second Batsford edition, Orlov has combined his practical experience with the defense with his re-working and re-evaluation of many lines to produce a greatly enlarged edition that is better in every respect. Of course, it does suffer from the publisher's hype noted above...

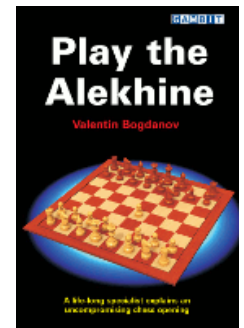
The front cover states that you will "Outwit your opponents from move 2!" while emblazoned across the top of the back cover is "A new opening which enables Black to call the tune!". It is further described as "a complete repertoire for Black in those variations which transpose to other openings."

A brief introduction where a short history of the opening is presented is followed by four chapters, categorized by White's replies on the third move. Thus, after 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 Nc6, Chapter One discusses the aggressive 3 d5, Chapter Two the Fianchetto Variation 3 g3, Chapter Three the so-called 'Queen Knight's Variation', 3 Nc3, while the fourth and final chapter, comprising more than half of the entire book, is about the most difficult move for Black to handle, 3 Nf3.

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It is not uncommon for authors who are discussing favorite lines or who are attempting to shape a repertoire system to overlook inferior variations, seeking to direct the reader's attention only to the "best" lines. To his credit, Orlov's presentation is even-handed for both sides. Inferior lines for both sides are discussed, alternatives explained and, most importantly, the ideas behind the moves are usually clearly laid out.

A case in point: After the moves 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 Nc6 3 Nf3 e6 4 g3, Orlov goes into the following explanation for the reader...



"The kingside fianchetto is always a solid choice. Now the game will often transpose into the Bogo-Indian Defence or sometimes even the Catalan Opening. The play is mostly quiet, both sides trying to out-manoeuvre one another. It is important to understand the underlying plans well, so I will try to offer some ideas in the theoretical lines.

4...Bb4+

"I believe that 4...Bb4+ is the best continuation, but 4...d5 was tried once in Appleberry-Orlov, Seattle 1991. 4...d5 5 cxd5?! White releases the tension, which is clearly to the benefit of his opponent, who now has scope for his light-squared bishop. Instead 5 Bg2 is better, keeping Black wondering as to what to do with his light-squared bishop. After 5 Bg2 dxc4 6 0-0 the game transposes into the Catalan Opening. 5...exd5 6 Bg2 Bb4+ 7 Bd2 a5. I like this move, which is very often played in the Black Knights' Tango.

"There are several reasons why this move is good. First, it gives a solid protection to the bishop and if White plays Bxb4 then after ...a5xb4 the queen's rook gets an open file without having had to move once. The a2-pawn will be under some pressure in such a case. Another important point is that if White plays a2-a3, Black's bishop can retreat or capture on d2 and then Black can often play ...a5-a4, fixing White's queenside pawns and making the a5-square available for his queen's knight, from where it could occupy c4 and b3..."

When this opening transposes into another, Orlov usually (but not always) offers the reader enough analysis to give one some sense how proceed. Thus, for example, there are several points where Black may elect to fianchetto the king's bishop, leading to positions that directly transpose into the King's Indian Defense. These are treated, if not in depth, at least adequately, so that the student has some idea what to do.

Of course, when an irregular opening, or at least one that is not held in high regard, is used at the level of IM and GM play with satisfactory results, it is often difficult to tell whether the result achieved is due to the surprise value of the opening or the talent of the player venturing it. So when Anand essayed The Center Counter (a/k/a The Scandinavian) Defense against World Champion Garry Kasparov in their title match, obtaining a good position therefrom, was that because Kasparov was surprised or because Anand was a world class player? In that instance, probably a combination of both. Likewise, when Orlov faces lesser opposition with this opening with good results, it is hard to attribute the success entirely to the opening.

We recently pointed out in the [review](#) of Dunnington's *Easy Guide to the Reti*

that otherwise very good repertoire books are occasionally marred by simple omissions. In that case, we criticized the failure of the author to deal with 1...c5 as a possible response to 1 Nf3. In all other respects, it was a fairly comprehensive treatment of this opening. *The Black Knights' Tango* has a similar omission; it is not unusual, even at the club level, after 1 d4 Nf6 to find White playing 2 Nf3. (Of course, the same position is also often reached after 1 Nf3 Nf6 2 d4.) What's a player to do? Certainly 2...Nc6 does not appear playable, as the prematurely aggressive - at least in the main line - 3 d5 now appears to become a formidable thrust. Should 2...e6 or 2...d6 be played? It would appear in those instances that Black runs the risk of transposing into completely different openings, such as the French or the Pirc.

Be that as it may, in the "normal" move order 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 Nc6, there is no doubt that the most difficult line for Black to face is 3 Nf3. In this regard, Orlov makes no false promises. He states that Black "...is more than likely to achieve an equal game." This does not mean Black always equalizes; it means there are lines where Black may come out of the opening with a slight disadvantage.

All things considered, however, players seeking to reach relatively lesser known positions out of the opening with real counter-punching opportunities may find this opening to their liking. Orlov has done a good job combining the lure of the unexplored with sound analytical theory to produce a viable, fully playable defensive system that may well be on its way to gaining a foothold on many players' dance cards.

[Order](#) *The Black Knights' Tango*
by Georgi Orlov

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