

Larry's Corner

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Do you have any likes or dislikes, stories, or helpful hints for dancing? If so, write it down and give to Larry Ablin or Barb Johnson. We will add it to one of the future News letters.

If you would like to tell us how you became interested in dancing, write it down and give to Larry or Barb, we will add your picture with it and put it in one of the future Newsletters

Notes From Barb

Skip and Diane had the Social Party of the year, food was great, Music was good, and they even provided a dance floor, what more could you ask for? A bon fire, and they had that. I've never seen so many people at one party, dancers, friends, neighbors, family etc. Everyone danced the night away. We got there at 4, left at 630pm to go teach at TGIS. Came back at 1130pm, left after 230am and they were still going strong. Thanks again Skip and Diane, Larry and I had a great time. Please note: During the making of there party Skips mother passed away that week. Our sympathy goes out to you and your family.

Last week was National Ballroom week— Thanks to all of you who supported our Ballrooms, without you, we have no place to dance.

All the lessons in the world won't help, if you don't go out and practice, lets see all of you out on the dance floor.

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Basics Of Turning And Spinning

Leaders, if you only remember one thing from this whole story, this should be it: Lead Direction Before Rotation. This means that if it's a traveling spin, you must lead her to travel before leading her to spin. If it's a stationary spin, you must lead her to stay in place before leading the spin.

Leaders: In general, lead the turn with the connection that is closest to her center.

The way two dancer's bodies connect through the arms has a lot to do with how turns and spins come out. If you have a good connection with your partner and he is reasonably good at leading turns will be less of a problem.

Tips for good turning technique?

Practice

Keep knees slightly bent and relaxed - don't lock your knees!

Keep spine, neck, head on a vertical axis. Maintain good posture - remember "Keep nose over toes".

Keep the body square - head straight over shoulders over hips,- not to one side or the other. A person's head accounts for about 10% of his/her body weight - thus head placement and orientation have a huge effect on balance. Looking at your feet is as sabotaging as oscillating your head from side to side. But so is the placement and orientation of every other body part. Dance posture is terribly important.

Don't arch your back.

Keep eyes looking forward, not down!

Don't go up high on your toes.

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Spot on your partner in a turn.

Use your arms for momentum.

Keep feet together, turn on the balls of your feet, not heels.

Stop in a definite pose.

First learn the paddle turn and hook turns instead of trying to spin on the ball of one foot. Once you get the paddle turns perfected, you can gradually switch to spins.

There are so many types of spins, spins on one foot, spins on both feet, spins shifting weight during the spin, singles, doubles, triples, hook behind and spin which brings up the question: Are you learning how to turn or are you learning how to spin? A typical underarm turn example is in the Chacha coming from a cross-over. The turn is actually begun with a step by the lady with her left foot forward and turning to the right under mans arm and completed thereafter with the use of a ChaChaCha finish for the second half of the turn. This is a good place for the lady to start spotting on her partner to help her return to a position facing her partner after the underarm turn. Next, start exactly as above but add a second complete underarm turn. When this is done properly the "turn" is transformed into a "spin" and it will again be helpful for her to spot her partner.

When you look at Ballet vs. Jazz turns, the concepts of body alignment hold for both.

The answer is that these are like two tools in your spinning toolbox. Many dancers learn how to step through turns first and then learn spinning techniques much later. Stepping is still

easier for a wider variety of leads. You are able to support your weight even if you get slightly off balance. Stepping seems easier to teach beginning spinners because it can be broken down, done step by step, gradually increasing the speed. Spinning is much harder to break down. Breaking it down means starting with a quarter spin, then a half, then a whole, etc.

But in a dance, you can't do just a quarter spin. You can step around a full spin, even if it's slower or less smooth than it will be eventually. Spinning relies on the objective of becoming a pencil so if the lead is a large circle or if the follower is not perfectly balanced it's not at all a safe bet for me. This kind of spinning also relies on very strong inner thigh muscles to keep one's legs, from shoe to torso, stuck together under one's center of balance. This is much harder than it seems, especially if the lead is not so strong or the floor is not so smooth. If the lead is good and strong, and if the floor is smooth and clean, however, stepping seems to actually



remove some of the momentum, slowing the spin down. This may or may not be desirable, but feel like you have the choice to either spin or step.

When doing spins, keep your feet as close together as possible. You want weight on the ball of only one foot, and you can change from one foot to the other during the spin, but the non-weighted foot should be right beside the other and should be just skimming the floor.



Again the point is to keep your center of gravity. as close as possible to the axis of rotation.

"Many turns require the follower to turn in place. Try not to drift away from your partner when turning. That is, maintain your balance during the turn and stay atop of your feet. This is essential to staying in a slot during West Coast Swing."

Many dancers/teachers preach that anytime a man gets hit during a woman's spin it's his fault. It's his responsibility to adjust to her, even if she's off balance and out-of-control. After all, he's the one watching her spin and can see where she's headed while, if she's off kilter, she's watching the room blur by.

"The leader can turn too. Don't feel hesitant to turn to unravel out of an awkward position."

Your weight should be on the ball of your foot when turning. Ballet dancers get the nasty habit of turning up on their toes. This makes you become three inches taller when turning (not good!). Ankle rise used to lift the heel must be absorbed in the knees and hips. Also, stylistically, it can be a detriment to look like a

ballerina and tip-toe around the dance floor on straight legs. When we want to insult another swing dancer, one of the most scathing words we can evoke is ballerina! Ballet dancers switching to ballroom find that one of the most difficult habits to correct is coming down in their knees instead of standing tall and straight like a ballerina. The character of WCS is to dig into the floor - to keep your upper body gliding but low, so that your legs can bend, point, and do generally fancy footwork beneath you. You can sometimes spot brand new ballroom dancers who came from a ballet background; you see a great top line and posture, but then you look down and notice that they spend a lot of

time with straight legs, way up on their toes and that they show turn-out in unexpected places. Ballet and ballroom technique are different. For smooth dancing, heel leads, lowering, body swing and parallel feet are usually not instinctive. And in the Latin, as one of my student said "No ballerina likes to do that with her hips".

While we're calling names, let's mention the derisive term Foot Dancer which used to be applied by Latinos and Swing dancers to studio trained types who moved their feet to the right places, but did nothing (musical, interesting or otherwise) with their bodies, sometimes not even changing weight fully.

Swing Clubs

East Meets West; 952-949-3016; 1st and 3rd Friday
Dance at Dancesport in Hopkins 816 1/2 Main St.

Minnesota West Coast Swing; 651-731-9768; 2nd and
4th Friday Dance at B-Dale Club South of the Dale
and Cty. B in St. Paul.

TC Rebels Swing club; Hotline number 952-941-0906;
Dances are at Twin City Ballroom

When dancing West Coast Swing be sure to line your
slot with the boards on the floor. If no boards then
line up with length of room

Singles all Together has Ballroom lessons on Monday
night 8 pm at the Lenox Center in St Louis Park.
Singles all Together West Coast Swing on Tuesday night

Larry L Ablin
Help's at Singles All Together dance class on Monday night, at Lenox center on
Minnetonka Blvd in St Louis Park.

Teach at Singles All Together Niteclub 2 Step on Tuesday night 8pm at Medina.
Starting West Coast Swing Basics again on 10/28/2003

Teach Ballroom at Jefferson Community Ed on Wednesday at 26th and Hennepin 612-
668-2740 Next class starts 10/9/2003 630-830 8 weeks

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Dance Etiquette

Line of Dance is counter clockwise
around the room for dances
that move, like Foxtrot, and
Waltz.

People who aren't moving like Rock
and roll, Rumba, or Swing
Dance in the middle of the
room.

If you bump into someone, say
sorry.

If you step on partner, say your
sorry, then forget it. (Don't rag
on it.)

Finish the song you started dancing
to, before excusing yourself.

Don't do a step that requires kick-

Dance etiquette offenders

Bulldog: One who does step or kick, no matter who is in the way.

Chatter box: One who is always talking. (Social talk ok but not constantly)

Crooner: One who sings or hums with music.

Debater: One who talks politics or religion while dancing.

Iceberg: One with no smile (At least look like your having fun.)

Jolly Extrovert: One who is cheerful with surrounding people, but forgets his
own partner.

Lead foot: One who can't seem to lift one's feet from the floor.

Octopus: One who holds the partner everywhere but the correct dance
position.

Quitter: Suddenly tired 1/2 way through song. (Finish Song)

Sherman tank: The Leader leads her, but she isn't moving.

Truck driver: One who steers the partner like he drives.

Wrong way charlie: Clockwise traveler. (Against line of dance)