# Latin Dance Study Guide

Martin Blais

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# **Contents**

Pr	Preface		xix
Ι	Intr	oductory Material	1
1	Intro	oduction	3
	1.1	A Note About Terminology	4
	1.2	Skill Sets	4
	1.3	Organization of this Book	4
2	Brie	History	7
	2.1	Evolution of Salsa Music	7
	2.2	Evolution of Salsa Dancing	8
3	Gen	eral Considerations	9
	3.1	Starting the dance	9
		3.1.1 Starting directly into casino step	10
	3.2	Leading and Following	10
		3.2.1 Comments for Leaders	10
		3.2.2 Comments for Followers	10
		3.2.3 How much force should be used between partners?	11
		3.2.4 Dance is a relation	12
	3.3	Terminology	12
		3.3.1 To "break"	13
		3.3.2 Abbreviations	13
		3.3.3 Vocabulary for the Feet	13
	3.4	Body parts that move	14
	3.5	Warm-up exercises	15
		3.5.1 Exercise for arm and shoulder flexibility	16
		3.5.2 Independent movement of shoulders	16
	3.6	Golden tricks	17
	3.7	A Sense of Measure	18
		3.7.1 Size of steps	18

	3.8	Social Advice for Beginning Dancers	19
4	Rhyt		21
	4.1	Introduction	21
		4.1.1 Notation	22
		4.1.2 Learning to Count	22
	4.2	The Clave and the Tumbao	23
		4.2.1 Clave Son	24
		4.2.2 Clave Rumba	24
		4.2.3 Tumbao	
	4.3	Rhythm: "A Tiempo"	
	4.4	Rhythm: "A Contratiempo" (Son Style)	
	4.5	Rhythm: on-2, New-York style	
	1.5	4.5.1 Counting Variation	
	4.6	Rhythm: Anticipated A-Tiempo	
	4.7	Blending the Rhythms	
	4.8	Clave Awareness	
	4.9	Emphasizing the Tumbao	
	4.10		
		Rhythm: Cha-Cha-Chá	
		Assymetrical step: Cuban Casino step	
	4.13	Subtle Timing Issues: Tensed And Laidback	
		4.13.1 Precision issues	
		4.13.2 Analogy with Music	
		4.13.3 Losing the Beat	
		Indications For Each Music	
	4.15	Independence Exercises	
		4.15.1 Exercise to Develop the Feel of the Clave	
		4.15.2 Exercises with the Clave	35
		4.15.3 Maracas hands	37
	4.16	Notes About Perception	38
	4.17	Marking the Beat vs. Improvising	40
	~		
II	Cu	ban Salsa	41
5	Són		43
	5.1	Rhythm	43
	5.2	Hold	44
	5.3	Steps	44
	-	5.3.1 Són step	44
		5.3.2 Saludo	45
		5.3.3 Side-to-side walk	46
		5.3.4 Basic step	46

			Sacude el agua al pozo, adelante-atras	
		5.3.6 F	Rotation	7
		5.3.7	Cajón, quadrado	
			Girón	
		(	Girón CW (a la derecha)	)
		(	Girón CCW (a la izquierda)	)
		(	Changing direction	)
	5.4	Hecho /	Vuelta 50	)
	5.5	Pasea .	50	)
	5.6	Tornillos		l
		5.6.1	Cornillo of FO	l
		5.6.2	Cornillo of LE	1
6	Holo	ls	53	3
•	6.1		hands	
	6.2		at are not busy	
	6.3			
	0.0		Closed hold	
			Single open hold and reverse single open hold	
			Double open hold	
			Single) crossed hold and reverse single crossed hold (x-hold)	
		`	Double crossed hold and reverse double crossed hold (x-hold)	
			Ooubly-crossed hold and reverse doubly-crossed hold	
			Back-to-back Hold	
			Oouble backcrossed hold and reverse double backcrossed hold	
			FO/LE Wrapped hold (FO or LE is wrapped)	
			Front-to-back crossed hold and reverse front-to-back crossed hold	
	6.4		mmon holds	
	0.1		Sombrero holds	
			Cero siete hold (07)	
			Setenta hold (70)	
	6.5		cking FO	
	0.5	Stop ene	CKING 1 O	_
7	Cub	an Salsa (		
	7.1	Introduct	tory Notes	3
		7.1.1	General attitude	3
		7.1.2 I	Oress Fashions	1
		7.1.3 I	nfluence of Folkloric Dancing	1
	7.2	Rhythm		5
		7.2.1 S	Switching rhythms	5
		S	Switching rhythms, solo steps	5
			Switching rhythms, with partner	5
	7.3	Basic Ste		5
		7.3.1 U	Jpper body rotations	5

		7.3.2	Rocking step	67	7
		7.3.3	Back-Break Step	68	3
		7.3.4	Casino Step	69	9
			Hands for Push-Off	70	)
		7.3.5	Side-to-side step	71	1
		7.3.6	Musician's step (Paso del musico)	71	1
		7.3.7	Adornos (kicks)	71	1
			Standard adorno	72	2
			Caballo adorno	72	2
			Post adorno	73	3
	7.4	Displac	cements	73	3
		7.4.1	Salsa walk	73	3
			Changing directions	74	4
		7.4.2	Displacement in closed hold	74	4
		7.4.3	Displacement in open hold	74	4
	7.5	Paseo o	de olas	76	5
		7.5.1	Variants within paseo de olas	77	7
		7.5.2	Dancing freely		7
		7.5.3	Direction of rotations	78	3
	7.6	Exercis	ses for Turns	78	3
		7.6.1	Sencillo Turn	78	3
		7.6.2	Sencillo with 3/4 turn	79	9
		7.6.3	Lateral-with-pivots and spin turn	79	9
		7.6.4	Back breaks with full turn		)
		7.6.5	Combined full turns		)
		7.6.6	Sencillo with 5/4 turn	80	)
		7.6.7	Variations on These Exercises	80	)
8	Esse	ntial M	loves in Cuban Salsa	83	
	8.1		Turn		3
	8.2	Hecho	(Cuban Right Turn)	83	3
		8.2.1	Fake on hecho	84	4
	8.3	Deshec	cho / Enchufla	85	5
		8.3.1	Fake on deshecho	85	5
	8.4	Inside '			
	8.5	Leader	r's Right Turn		
		8.5.1	Underarm turns	85	5
			Underarm right turn	85	5
			Underarm left turn	86	5
	8.6	Dile qu	ue no	86	5
	8.7	Pasea /	Promenade		
		8.7.1	Paseala abajo	87	7
		8.7.2	Paseala arriba	87	7
		8.7.3	Paseala with inside turn	88	3

	8.8	Engaño	o Motion	8
		8.8.1	Foot variations	0
			Exhibala 9	0
			Engaño with two hands	1
			Engaño and alarde	1
	8.9	Girón,	Papillon, Tight Turn	1
		8.9.1	Prima	1
	8.10	Bayam	10	1
	8.11	Simple	practice combinations and exercises	3
		_		7
			Notes on Style	7
			Dancing with Kicks	7
			The "3"-effect	7
			The "pull" style	7
			Apoyo	7
			The "mop"	8
			Tembleque	
		8.12.2	Notes on Improvising	
			Independence of the feet and music	
			The hesitation game	
			Engañala	
			Engañala arriba	
			Engañala abajo	
		8.12.3	Strange Exercises To Improve Lead And Follow	
			Integrating Columbia into salsa	
			Exercises to practice stops	
			Cool, crazy cuban stuff	
			Wall support	
			The discussion	
			Hold me I'm fainting!	
			Supernatural equilibrium	
			Double foot slide	
			Dollar	
9	Vari	ous Cul	ban Salsa Combinations 11	1
	9.1	Basic c	combinations	1
		9.1.1	Prima con la hermana	1
		9.1.2	Setenta (70)	1
		9.1.3	Cero-siete (07)	2
		9.1.4	70 complicado	
			Variations of 70 complicado	3
		9.1.5	Trompo	
	9.2	Various	s Other Combinations	

10	Rued	la de Ca	asino – Basics	123
	10.1	Rueda	basics	123
		10.1.1	Timing	123
		10.1.2	Basic steps	124
		10.1.3	General principle for which step to use	125
	10.2	Genera	l notes	126
		10.2.1	Hand signs	126
		10.2.2	Miami-style taps	126
			How to XBL a new FO (dame)	
			Some useful spanish	
			Move modifiers	
			Notable differences in rueda styles	
	10.3		the rueda	
		_	Timing	
	10.4		configurations	
			Forward Configuration	
			Reverse Configuration	
			In-And-Out Walk Configuration	
			Carrusel Configuration	
		10	Inversion	
				102
11	Rued	la de Ca	asino – Moves	135
	11.1	Moves	in the forward configuration	135
		11.1.1	Essential Moves	135
		11.1.2	Move Descriptions	136
			Al centro, centro, al medio	136
			Dile que no	136
			Vamos arriba/abajo, Sube/Baja la loma	
			Vamos arriba/abajo con vuelta	
			Dame arriba/abajo, Dame un coco, Tarrito de mentira (miami)	
			Enredala	
			Tarrito hasta la tuya	138
			Pa'abajo	
			Exhibela (miami), Una vuelta de la mujer (cuban)	
			Una vuelta del hombre	
			Una vuelta de los dos	
			Exhibela doble (miami)	
			Exhibila dos con una	
			Una bulla, una bullita	
			con patiqua	
			Una bulla con patiqua	
			Virela, se vira, el contrario	
	11 2	Moves	in the reverse configuration	
	11.2		Essential Moves	

11.2.2	Variations of Dame	. 141
	Dame, dame una, dame la, dame otra, bota, bota la, etc	. 141
	Dame dos or sometimes simply "dos", Bikini	. 142
	Dos con dos, actually means Dame dos con dos	. 143
	Dame y una vuelta	. 143
	Dame tres, tres!	. 143
	Cruza (crossed exchange)	. 143
	Dame doble	. 144
11.2.3	Variations of Adios/La prima	. 144
	La prima (cuban) Adios (miami)	. 144
	Adios (2)	. 144
	Adios con la hermana, La prima con la hermana, or simply "la hermana"	. 145
	Adios con la prima	. 145
	Adios por arriba, La prima pa'tra/pa'arriba	. 145
	Adios con Roberto	. 146
	Adios con Roberto doble	. 146
	Prima por de 'tras	. 146
11.2.4	Variations of Enchufla	. 147
	Enchufla, enchufa, enchufle, enchufla	. 147
	Enchufla doble	. 147
	Patiqua	. 147
	Pegale el pescao	. 148
	Castiga la	. 148
	Castiga lo tuyo y lo ajeno	. 148
	Castigala por atras	. 148
	Castigala por atras y venga te	. 149
	Pelota uno (young-cuban), pelota dos, pelota tres Enchufla y palmada (old-cuban).	. 149
	Policia	. 149
	Robin Hood	. 150
	Sacude la mata	. 150
	Enchufla con chocolate	. 150
	Tocale la rodilla de la otra	. 151
	Enchufla con tres besos	. 151
	Cerveza	. 151
	Principe bueno	. 151
	Dos saltos al centro	. 152
	Enchufla con bikini al centro	. 152
	Cuidado	. 152
	El señorito malta	. 153
	El dollar	. 153
11.2.5	Variations of Siete	. 153
	Panqué (cuban), Siete (miami)	. 153
	Siete doble	. 154
	Siete con coca-cola	. 154

	Siete moderno	154
	Panqué doble	154
	Panqué y sientala	155
	Panqué y complicala	
11.2.6	Variations of Vacila	
	Vacila, vacila la	
	Vacilense, Vacila de las dos, Vacila de la mujer y el hombre	
	Vacila y sientala	
	Vacila y respira la	
11 2 7	Variations of Pasea	
11.2.,	Pasea abajo, pasea la	
	Pasea arriba	
	Pasea doble	
11 2 8	Variations of Setenta	
11.2.0	Setenta	
	Setenta complicado (miami), setenta y complicate (cuban)	
	Setenta doble	
	Setenta y queda te	
11 2 0	• 1	
11.2.9	Variations of Enredate	
	Enredate	
11 2 10	Enredate uno	
11.2.10	Other numbered moves	
	Uno	
	La uno	
	El dos	
	La dos	
	Ocho	
	Cero siete	
	Ochenta	
	Seis	
11.2.11	Other moves, miami-style	
	Suena (miami), mata la cucaracha (cuban)	
	Suena doble	
	Media	165
	Sombrero	166
	Exhibela	167
	Abanico	167
	Montaña	168
	Besito	168
	Abrazala	169
	Balsero	169
	Kentucky	170
	Evelyn	
	Dedo	

11.2.12 Other moves, cuban-style
Caramelo
Caramelo complicado
Caramelo y sientala
Estrella
Avion, hangar por arriba, hangar por abajo
Casa te, arrivar el marido, se fué el marido
Complicado
Candela y quemala
Hollandaise
Biscocho
Trompo
Torturala
Doble enchufla y complicala
Una/dos vueltas sitas
Pinchala como la vieja
A Bayamo
Dedo nuevo
Punta talon
Tocala
11.2.13 Other moves, cuban-style
A guarachar
Que no se mueva
Cochero, bota
Doble play
Momia individuale
Chocolate
Salsea
Salsean los hombres y salsean la mujeres
Tiene el blumer roto
Una por arriba, una por abajo
Una por arriba, dos por abajo
Pañuelo
Por abajo
Enredala
Que no te toque
Sunday
Engañala
Mambo
Lusete
Sacudete
Pa'lante
Caracol
Lagartija
Layanna

		Guaperia
		Baila con las dos
		Dale carinito
		Que no se vaya
11.3	Moves	in the in-and-out walk configuration
		Essential Moves
	11.3.2	Move Descriptions
		Al centro (when called in the reversed step), or enchufla y al centro, or Enchufla y
		dos palmas al centro
		Hombre/mujer/(hombre y mujer) a la derecha, a la izquierda
		Tres a la derecha
		La rosa (cuban), la flor (miami)
		Hombres tranquen
		Sombrilla
		Paragua
		Carga la
11 /	Moves	in carrusel configuration
11.4		Essential Moves
		Move Descriptions
	11.4.2	Carrusel
		Carrusel invertido
		(holding hands)
		A la derecha, a la izquierda
		Tarrito
		Se fué
		Quemala, quemala y tu tambien
		Se vira, called from carrusel position
		1-2-3-4, called from carrusel position
		Se queda, called from carrusel position
		Con dos (palmadas), called from carrusel position
		Gusano, or Lombriz
		Casa té por dentro, se vira
		Dame de adelante
		Desengrana
11.5	•	oves
		Essential Moves
	11.5.2	Move Descriptions
		Yoghurt
		Yoghurt doble, yoghurt con las dos, yoghurt con pincha
		Yoghurt azucar, yoghurt cocino
		La momia, la pesta que se mueva, la madre que se mueva, la foto
		Amaga
		Pipi como la mujer / A horinar como una viejita / caca como el hombre 199
		Virala con

	11.6	Show e	entries and exits	99
			Entrada #1	200
			Retirada #1	200
			Retirada #2	200
Ш	In	ternati	onal Salsa 2	201
12	Inter	nationa	al-Style – General Notes	203
			action	203
			Differences in Analysis	
	12.2		nces with Cuban style	
			Upper body rotations	
			Spin turns	
			Weight change	
			Back break variation	
	12.3		l notes	
	12.0		Comments	
			Rev-Time Turns	
			An Attempt at Categorization	
	12.4		Moves	
			Follower's outside turn (right turn, FO'OT)	
			Leader's right turn (LE'RT)	
			Follower's inside turn (left turn, FO'IT)	
			Leader's left turn (LE'LT)	
			Cross-body lead (XBL, in spanish <i>dile que no</i> )	
13	Inter	nationa	al-Style – Steps	215
	13.1	Generi	c Step	215
	13.2	Steps.		216
		13.2.1	Basic step	216
		13.2.2	Side-to-side step	217
		13.2.3	Turning left or right (a quarter turn)	217
		13.2.4	Notes on transitions	218
		13.2.5	Forward walk step, backward walk step, transitions	218
		13.2.6	Crossed walk (marcha crusada)	219
		13.2.7	Walk with "plier"	219
			Right (pivot) turn step	
		13.2.9	Left (pivot) turn step	220
			Right spin turn step (rev-time)	
			Left spin turn step (rev-time)	
			2 Double right turn step	
			B Double left turn step	
		13.2.14	Lateral step	221

		13.2.15 Parallel #1 step
		13.2.16 Parallel #2 step
		13.2.17 Extension #1 step
		13.2.18 Extension #2 step
		13.2.19 Left-LF half-turn step
		13.2.20 Left-RF half-turn step
		13.2.21 Right-LF half-turn step
		13.2.22 Right-RF half-turn step
		13.2.23 Punta talon LF step
		13.2.24 Punta talon RF step
		13.2.25 Kick LF step
		13.2.26 Hotpoint step (LF and RF)
		13.2.27 Hairbrush step
		13.2.28 Forward breaks step
		13.2.29 Backward breaks step
		13.2.30 Scissors step
		13.2.31 Suzie Q step
		13.2.32 7up
		13.2.33 Spiral kick step / kick twist step
	13.3	Spotting
		Practice combinations
	13.5	Footwork and shines
		13.5.1 Four Basic Rules
14		rnational-Style – Moves and Variations 23
	14.1	Variations of Walks
		14.1.1 Walking forward, walking backward
		14.1.2 Turning left and right
		14.1.3 Sideways walk to the left
		Sideways walk to the left w/ FO'OT
		Sideways walk to the left w/ LE'RT
		Sideways walk to the left w/ FO'OT and LE'RT
		Sideways walk to the left w/ FO'OT and FO'IT
		14.1.4 Sideways walk to the right
		Slow form
		Fast form
		14.1.5 Together steps in a circle
	14.2	Variations of Single turns (dbl, 70, 07, sombreros)
		14.2.1 Some general concepts
		Variations of FO'OT
		Variations of FO'IT
		Variations of LE'RT
		Variations of LE'LT
		FO'OT-70, back-to-back, FO'OT

	14.3 Variations of Cross-body leads	. 236
	XBL with foot extensions	. 236
	XBL+IT with foot extensions	. 237
	XBL+2xIT	. 237
	14.4 Variations of Reverse cross-body leads	. 237
	14.4.1 Important note about turn terminology	. 237
	14.5 Variations of Paseas	. 238
	14.6 Lateral moves	. 238
	Lateral moves FO behind LE	. 238
	Lateral moves LE behind FO	. 239
	Lateral moves FO beside LE (zig-zags), hands kept low	. 240
	Lateral moves FO beside LE (zig-zags), hands going high	
	Lateral moves LE around FO (zig-zags)	
	14.7 Variations of Dips	
	14.8 Setenta in a square	
	14.9 Enchufla's	
	14.10Synchronous steps	. 242
	14.11FO sitting down on LE	
	14.12Assisted FO shines	
IV	Other Dances	245
15	Cha-cha-chá	247
13	15.1 Rhythm	
	15.2 Free format of cha-cha-chá	
	15.3 Basic Step	
	15.3.1 Starting the dance	
	15.3.1 Starting the dance	
	13.4 Disconnecting the feet	. 240
16	Bolero and Bachata	249
15		251
17	Merengue	251
	17.1 Complex Holds for Merengue	
	17.1.1 Sombrero opposite hold	
	17.1.2 Sexy hand slide	
	17.1.3 Sombresiete hold	
	17.1.4 Underarm hold	
	17.1.5 Forced hug hold	
	17.1.6 Crossed-arms	
	17.1.7 Hooked arms	
	17.1.8 Noodles hold	
	17.1.9 Tunnel hold	
	17.2 Merengue moves and variations	. 256

	17.2.1 Crouch turn	256
	17.2.2 The worm	256
	17.2.3 Tunnel move	256
	17.2.4 Noodles move	257
V	Notes	259
18 (	oncepts and Observations	261
	8.1 Some ideas to tinker with	261
	18.1.1 Principle of constant variation	
	18.1.2 Use repetition only with intent	
	18.1.3 Quantity of movement	
	18.1.4 Principle of Continuity	
	18.1.5 Solo style should be good enough	
	18.1.6 Unity vs. Solo	
	18.1.7 Slow tempo is harder	
	18.1.8 Dance behind the beat	
	18.1.9 Uniformity vs. variations	
	18.1.10 Breaking patterns	
	18.1.11 Landing moves	
	18.1.12 Stiffness vs. Looseness	
	18.1.13 Fluidity vs. Markedness	
	18.1.14 Equilibrium, Focused, Centered energy at the core	
	18.1.15 Principle of economy	
	18.1.16 Invisible energy	
	18.1.17 Do every move with intent	
	18.1.18 Be wary of over-compensation	
1	8.2 About following	
	8.3 About attitude	
-		207
	onclusion	269
1	9.1 A note about learning and analysis	269
Span	ish Words Translations	273
Α	1 General Glossary	273
Α	2 Body parts	274
Α	3 Some useful verbs	274
A	.4 Directions	274
Musi	cal patterns reference	277
В	.1 Basic pulse	277
В	.2 Foot patterns	
В	.3 Instrument patterns	
	B.3.1 Binary patterns	

	B.3.2	Ternary patterns	278
Workin	g with n	nusic	279
C.1	Makin	g practice CDs	279
C.2	Recom	mended music	279
	C.2.1	Són	279
	C.2.2	Cha-chá	280
	C.2.3	Timba, Salsa Cubana	280
	C.2.4	Straight Salsa	280
Silly Ru	eda Ga	me Ideas	281
License	and Te	rms of Use	283

# **List of Steps**

Són step 44 Saludo, alarde 45 Basic step 46 Rotation 47 Cajón, quadrado 48 Rocking 67 Back break 68 Casino step 69 Musician's step (Paso del musico) 71 Oscarito 80 Ovida 81 Lateral-with-pivots (engaño step) 88 Rumba-mop 102 Columbia accent 103 Push 104 Push-kick 105 Double push-kick 105 Curling 106 Drop 106

Drop variation 106

## **List of Exercises**

Cintura / Ocho 16

Shoulder shakes 16

Reduce step size 19

Simple Clave With The Mouth 35

Clave and Count 35

Clave and Dancing Mouth 35

Dance with the Clave 35

"On 1" vs "On 3" 36

Rotate Beats with the Clave 36

Changing girón rotation 50

Mouse in a Maze 64

Switching rhythms 66

Push off the wall 70

Caballo pasos 72

Adornos 73

Walk transitions 74

Displacements 75

Reversing dynamics 75

Simple olas 77

Underarm turns 86

Continuous paseas 88

Dile que no or engaño 90

Prima sin hermana 91

Bayamo turn timing hunt 93

Dancing with adornos 97

Mop style 98

Paradas 99

Engañala 100

Feet in concrete 100

Magnet lead 100

Blind date 100

Transexual dancing 100

One-Handed Lead 101

Little Toes 101
Turbulence 101
Reversed sides 101
Mario's precision exercises 101
Open-close slide 102
Coordination exercises 103
3-step switch 104
One-foot-out dancing 105
Drop variation 107
Interrupted displacement 107
Torre de Pisa 107
Setenta fakes 112
Cha-cha-chá and hands 248
Cha-cha-chá vuelta 248

# **List of Combinations**

Casino, displacement and dile que no 93

Getting into girón 93

Hecho, deshecho & dile que no 94

Hecho & dile que no 94

Free hecho & LE'RT 94

Engaño o dile que no 94

dile que no + LE'RT 94

Norberto Wrap 94

Half-sombrero camino 95

Double maja 96

Setenta complicado, Setenta y complicate 112

Setenta complicado doble 113

Setenta incomplicado 113

Setenta incomplicado con alarde 113

Trompo 114

Tropicana 114

Cero siete complicado 115

Parte de la mano 115

Wrap her up 115

Setenta y peina te 115

Tornillo al lado #1 116

07 sombrero complicado #1 116

07 sombrero complicado #2 116

Oscar 116

70 abajo 116

Setenta y uno (71) 117

Setenta y dos (72) 117

71 y pasea 117

The tunnel of Bayamo 117

Soga/Amare 117

07 breast-curl 117

07 tunnel hombre 118

Bayamo into 07 tunnel hombre 118

Arms down 118
Hesitating rama 118
Arco iris 119
Maja de la mujer 119
Jungle hands 119
Hollandaise #2 119
Enradala a la Charón 120
Tunturuntun 120
Wrap into behind 120
Bayamo-maja 120
Bayamo 07 121
70 into wrap 121
Wrap with alarde 121

# **List of Figures**

1.1	Skill Sets	5
3.1	Horizontal resistance	11
3.2	Different ways to hit the ground with one foot	14
3.3	Parts of the man's body that move	14
4.1	Notation	22
4.2	Upbeats and Downbeats	22
4.3	The three step sequence of salsa dancing.	23
4.4	Son Clave	24
4.5	Rumba Clave	24
4.6	Tumbao rhythm	24
4.7	A tiempo	25
4.8	1	25
4.9	1 ' &	26
4.10	1	26
	j j	27
		27
		28
	1	28
	. I	29
	$\mathcal{E}$	29
	8	30
	$\mathcal{E}$	30
	$\epsilon$	30
		31
		31
		32
	8	33
4.24	Laidback rhythm, creating groove	33
5.1	Closed hold for són	
5.2	Movements of the shoulders in són step	45

5.3	Rotation step foot placement					. 4	47
5.4	Location of the feet for cajón					. 4	48
6.1	Various hand grips					. :	53
6.2	Free hands should be kept in front of you					. :	54
6.3	Freestyle, no hold: LE and FO are dancing without holding hands					. :	54
6.4	Closed Hold.					. :	55
6.5	Single open holds					. :	55
6.6	LE'LH holds FO'RH and LE'RH holds FO'LH. Do not rotate the hands in a circle.						56
6.7	Single crossed holds					. :	56
6.8	Double crossed holds					. :	57
6.9	Doubly-crossed holds						57
6.10	Back-to-back Hold					. :	58
6.11	Single open holds					. :	58
6.12	Wrapper Hold						59
	Front-to-back holds						59
	Single open holds						60
	07 hold						61
	Single open holds						61
	Different ways to stop-check FO						62
7.1	Upper body rotation in paseo de olas						67
7.2	Upper body rotation in casino step						67
7.3	Cuban-style rotation for casino step (LE's perspective)						69
7.4	Relative movement of LE and FO in casino step						70
7.5	Caballo adorno (horse ornament kick)						70 72
7.6	Shoulder angles for displacement in open hold						75
7.7	Facing your partner's back when doing the paseo de olas						, s 77
7.7	Fundamental concept of rotation between FO and LE						, , 78
7.9	Sencillo displacement						79
1.9	Selicino displacement	•	•	•	•	•	17
8.1	FO Right turn cuban-style: as if walking around something						84
8.2	dile que no displacements					. 8	86
8.3	Engaño motion					. 9	90
8.4	Displacement for correct bayamo turn					. 9	92
8.5	Different ways to twist your feet for "mop" style					. 9	98
10.1	Directions of "arriba" and "abajo"					. 12	28
	Configuration: "forward"						
	Configuration: "reverse"						
	Configuration: "in-and-out".						
	Configuration: "carrusel"						
12 1	Important characteristics of each framework					21	03
	The four corners						

Latin Dance Study Guide LIST OF FIGURES

12.3 Upper body rotation in international salsa	. 205
12.4 Walks	. 207
12.5 Papillon	. 207
12.6 Single turns	. 208
12.7 Cross-body leads	. 208
12.8 Reverse cross-body leads	. 208
12.9 Paseas	. 209
12.10Zig-zags	. 209
12.11Dips	. 209
12.12 Watch the elbow when leading an FO'OT	. 210
12.13Preparation for inside turn of FO	. 212
12.14Cross-body lead	. 213
17.1 Sombrero opposite hold	. 252
17.2 Sombrerosiete	. 252
17.3 Underarm hold	. 253
17.4 Forced hug hold	. 253
17.5 Crossed arms over heads	. 254
17.6 Hooked Arms	. 254
17.7 Noodles hold	. 255
17.8 Tunner Hold	. 255

LIST OF FIGURES

Latin Dance Study Guide

## **Preface**

When I first got introduced to latin dance in may 2000 (and dance in general), I was quite surprised at the fact that most of it can be organized in a very thorough manner, with fairly definite concepts. It tickled my intellect and triggered the impetus to document all of what I learned.

I first wrote a diary with a description of what I was learning daily. At the time, I was obsessed about salsa and was taking several lessons a week, in a group and in private, with various teachers. I was hooked. The diary quickly became the only way I could manage to remember and assimilate all the information that I was presented with. After a few months, my notes looked like a mess and I decided to organize them. It took the form of a sort-of dictionary of steps, arm holds, combinations. I called it "a technical introduction to latin dance", and put it on the web for others to enjoy. Although it contained most of the important information about the individual body movements, it lacked context.

Taking most of my lessons with a cuban teacher stirred the interest to find out more about Cuba. So in january 2001, I visited the country for a month in order to take lessons both in Havana and Santiago de Cuba, following the tracks of Eric Freeman who had been there earlier to shoot the !Salsa a la Cubana! video series (http://www.salsaville.com). I was very much puzzled by the distinctive style of the dancers present in these videos, dancing a style rarely seen in my city. This trip put many aspects of latin dancing into perspective: the origins of salsa, són, the contribution of folkloric dancing into styling salsa. I learned many concepts that were simply not taught back in Canada, that nobody danced there at the time (or very few people anyway). It allowed me to distinguish clearly between the cuban style and the P.R. / L.A. and N.Y. styles. What is often taught in most places away from the island is a kind-of hybrid of these two styles and I realize now that it is not clear to most people what style they're dancing.

At that point, I decided to perform one more synthesis of my dancing notes, to organize all the information differently, introducing concepts in the context of style and various dances (development period), rather than all together as an enumerated list. This was a way for me to summarize and remember the very many lessons I took in Cuba and further in Montreal.

The result is this set of notes, a kind-of "study guide" for latin dancing. I originally wrote the bulk of these notes in 2001, and left the book to simmer for a few years after that, undecided with respect to what I was going to do with it. I largely stopped learning as I got less and less interested in non-Cuban salsa during this period.

In early 2004, I decided to take time off to clean up the book in order to validate all the time I had spent organizing it. I felt that I should not waste my previous efforts by leaving the book unpublished. At this

point, the resulting set of notes was still rather disconnected, and if I had time and interest I would probably be able to remove half of it and synthesize it in something better. I made just enough of an effort to organize the old material in a structure that made sense to me and have not been able to review the notes very much. Apart from some introductions and general descriptions I added in the final review, much of the notes are still at the point they were when I first wrote them after in 2001-2002.

Please note that I have had no supervision in organizing these notes. They might contain erroneous material, and although the notes are written with a definite tone, I don't claim to be any kind of authority on the matter of dance and the structures I chose may not be the best way of organizing a description for the dance. The contents of this document only reflects what I understand from it.

Use this guide as you wish, feel free to discard whatever you think is not relevant. Remember that there are hardly any hard truths in dancing; to me, there is only equilibrium, balance and a sense of measure and taste. Always keep in mind that many teachers have different teaching techniques, different knowledge sets and that the dancing world is full of strong contradicting opinions.

I would go further and say that in addition to dancing, any other discipline which develops awareness of the body in space and time may help in salsa dancing, such as:

- for rhythm: playing a musical instrument;
- for style: break-dancing / capoeira;
- for body awareness: contact improvisation;
- for coordination and pattern memory: aerobics;
- for elegance: tai-chi / martial arts.

I very much hope that this document will be helpful to you in some way. Any suggestion or comment will be appreciated. Learning more concepts is only worth it if it can be used to enjoy dancing better. Admittedly, the more you know, the more enjoyable and powerful it becomes. But don't forget: the most important thing is to enjoy yourself.

Martin Blais, February 2004 blais@furius.ca

#### **Credits**

Axel Mulder first dragged me into this salsa obsession, he is mostly responsible for initially getting me involved in this.

I have learned most of what I know by watching cubans dance, and countless hours of watching people dance in clubs. I first took lessons with Orlando Alfonso Quiñones in Montreal (http://cubabaila.com), who later became a good friend and answered a lot of my queries about fine details of the dance, and took me to various unusual places in Havana where I discovered the less popularized folkloric cuban music and dance. While I took lessons with many teachers, he certainly had the most profound influence on my learning and dancing.

I took rueda lessons independently with Orlando Alfonso, Nelson Castellano and for a while I participated in the rueda de Montreal, supervised by Gilles Dutrisac.

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# Part I Introductory Material

## **Chapter 1**

## Introduction

When I am told, I forget. When I see, I remember. When I do, I understand.

**CONFUCIUS** 

This document represents a summary of the important concepts and moves for dancing salsa and a few other latin dances. It does not aim at becoming a replacement for teaching. We believe that the only way to learn dancing is by experiencing it first-hand, by taking lessons with a group of people and a teacher. This guide *cannot* replace lessons.

However, it can be used as an accompaniment for a latin dance course, where material is placed in context, some exercises are offered and specific steps are described in more detail. Parts or most of it may be useless to some readers, and many teachers will not be familiar with many concepts introduced here, and will surely disagree with some of the material. Unfortunately, most salsa dancing instructors outside of the island are not professional dancers and often lack information about the context of those dances.

We believe that this set of notes can be useful in that they

- allow you to place specific moves in context (from a historical and style point-of-view) and organize the information you will learn;
- point out and categorize the essential basic blocks from which you build more complex dancing;
- can help you discriminate what information you will learn during classes is valuable and what is not worth spending effort on;
- brings you to focus on aspects of the dance which you may otherwise not have thought about immediately.

I realize that the format is quite arid, text is probably the worse medium for describing dance, and as such this book is not meant for any kind of audience. I figure that it will appeal mostly to geeks like the me.

However, I remember when I was obsessed with learning, that the lack of decent information about salsa dancing was quite an annoyance and I would have felt very happy to be able to use a text like this. This is a great part of the reason why I'm publishing this book, I think that it will indeed be useful to some people.

This document may be a bit too technical for many, in the description choices I used of the different movements. It is a personal attempt at documenting most of what I think is essential in latin dancing, from an engineer and musician's perspective. The appendix contains some of the remaining details which may or may not be useful.

#### 1.1 A Note About Terminology

There is no standardized vocabulary in latin dancing, and in order to expose the concepts without ambiguity, I had to choose a subset words from commonly used vocabulary and stick by them. Latin dancing is simpler in form than modern dancing and ballet, so the very many modern dance notation systems, although very interesting, are overly complex for this purpose. I tried to use the most commonly used choice of words whenever possible. The choices of words you will learn independently during classes will most certainly differ from those in this document. However it does not matter much, the moves are the same.

These notes do not contain moves gathered from the web. They are simply a witness of my own experience. In that sense I have not tried to synthesize here dance moves using other people's information. However, I may have borrowed certain naming of moves. In particular, the notes of Frank Ramos contain terminology which I think is interesting, and Eric Freeman also developed a set of names for his videos, so I'm using some of these terms in places.

Also, the move descriptions assume a leader's perspective, because that is what I have learned to do. Perhaps one day I'll be able to follow well and update the document with more complete descriptions for followers.

#### 1.2 Skill Sets

There is a relatively well-defined sets of skills that can be learned in a particular order for the cuban style and the international style (L.A., P.R., N-Y, whatever). These are shown in figure 1.1.

### 1.3 Organization of this Book

This book is separated in a few main parts:

- 1. Introductory Material: common information for salsa dancing in all styles;
- 2. Cuban salsa: contains notes about cuban són, salsa and rueda;
- 3. International salsa: contains notes about the common style of salsa danced outside of Cuba, whatever it is called, L.A.-style, puertorican style or New York-style;
- 4. Other dances: various notes about other latin dances;

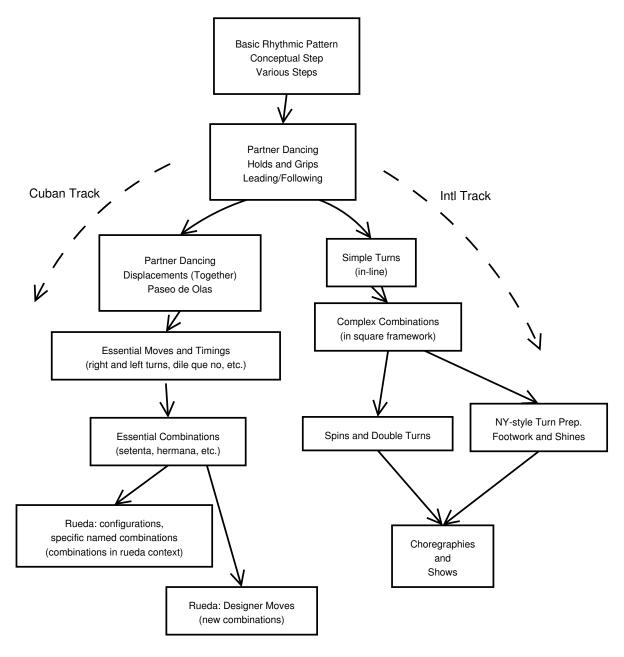


Figure 1.1: Skill Sets.

# Chapter 2

# **Brief History**

#### 2.1 Evolution of Salsa Music

Salsa dance and music comes from són. It was mixed and has evolved over time within the rich basin of music from Cuba.

In the 1950's, many Cuban són bands went to the USA, in particular to New-York to play (e.g. La Orquesta Aragón). When the revolution came about in 1959-1960, many of these musicians had to return to their country and left a void to be filled later by the puerto-ricans in New York City in the 1970's, meddled in the rising of black soul music, rock and later on, disco.

From there on, we have a split history of latin music evolving both within the island and outside the island. In Cuba, music remained traditional for quite a while and eventually, influences from outside were integrated into local music, which gave us various original styles, "songo", "timba". Even today, timba music is rarely widely played in the clubs outside of cuba, for it is very rich and jazzyfied with complex breaks, and most dancers are used to simpler music. Furthermore, Cuban salsa has enjoyed a rich input of the folkloric "rumba" music and traditions that are still very alive there, including that of the music of Santería. Inevitably all of the Cuban bands include some of these elements in their modern music, and a lot of the timba made today grooves to the rumba rather than the són clave.

The music having evolved outside of the island, which has developed a more homogeneous sound, built on a solid foundation that was created in the 1970's with the Fania recording company (so important that, were it not for the existence of Fania, the development of latin music would have quite different today.) Incorporating influences of the "jamming" rock music from that era, a more modal style of salsa has emerged, based less on arrangements around melody and sections but rather more on long solos improvisations over a fast canvas. More recently, various styles have appeared, including pop-salsa which mixes non-traditional instruments and formats (e.g. Marc Anthony), and salsa incorporating elements of puerto-rican folklore: plena, bomba music.

Collectively, this music is what we now call "salsa". "The sauce" is a widely encompassing moniker for music which varies quite a lot in its influences and development.

## 2.2 Evolution of Salsa Dancing

In parallel to the parallel evolution of both of these musics, dancing followed through equally with separate, parallel development.

In Cuba, the popularity of "casino dancing" gave birth to what we call "rueda". This is the main style of dancing danced to popular cuban music today, whether with a single partner or with a group in a circle. Many elements of folkloric dancing, like the solo male dance "columbia", are often integrated by cuban dancers within their salsa-casino dancing. A new style, raw and dynamic, perhaps even a little rough, is current in Cuba. This style is rarely taught by Cubans emigrees; they usually settle for teaching a blend of what they see the gringos do and their own style. (Són dancing is still very much alive in the eastern part of the island, although much fewer people know how to dance it properly.)

Outside of Cuba, latin dancing evolved into mambo and social dancing the 1960's and 1970's. Over time, styles have been blended in various amounts in various places, which gave us the kind of salsa that is danced most everywhere else than the carribean today: a simple salsa danced on the downbeats, within the framework of a line an a few simple turns. Exceptions are: New-York-style dancing (mostly in the "dancer" community, not necessarily in the puerto-rican barrios), with its fast elegant turns, L.A.-style dancing, which spices it up with various dips and acrobatic figures, and finally "dancesport", the evolution of social dancing into a sports-like competition of precision and speed. Even though there are clear differences, all of these styles have much in common. For lack of a better word, in this document I will call the *common denominator* of all these styles "international salsa".

In this document we will consider the two tracks of dancing in separate parts.

# **Chapter 3**

# **General Considerations**

We start by describing the some basic considerations in approaching dancing. We introduce some general comments and conventions used in this document, and point out various aspects of the dance that you might want to be aware of from the outset when learning salsa dancing. Often these aspects are overlooked in lessons for beginners.

# 3.1 Starting the dance

*Always* take your partner in closed hold to start the dance. This sends a clear message that the man is leading the dance and gives confidence to the woman that she is dancing with a good, strong leader.

This is for psychological reasons: if you start dancing in open position, you don't have control over her. If you start in closed position, you assume a position of control right away. Women like to dance with someone that exhibit control and stability, a good dancer. If you start in closed position, holding FO close to LE, your FO will think "oh, I have to deal with a macho here" (and in dance, this is a good thing). The attitude you show when you start the dance can greatly influence the perception of your lead. Besides, to start frankly and properly is treating your partner with respect. This might seem obvious to some, but it never occured to me until it was mentioned by one of my teachers.

 ¡Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #5, "Side-to-Side Start into Dile Que No position"

Also, for cuban salsa, start by rocking gently sideways in the rocking step described below. Smoothly transition into back break step. Then move into basic salsa step and start traveling your partner around the floor, or perform a *dile que no* and get into it. Take your time, build the dance, don't rush it. This is very important, the cubans like to enjoy themselves and don't necessarily always enjoy complex turns and combinations (although they are the most creative I have seen in that respect). Try not to move straight into the basic step like is routinely done in P.R. or N.Y.-style salsa.

#### 3.1.1 Starting directly into casino step

¡Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #4, ""Pull Her In" Start into Basic"

In a practice setting, you most often want to start right away into casino step to perform whatever you're studying. There is no time to do a slow buildup from closed hold. To do this, LE pulls FO with R-L on 5, right into casino step. Note that this pulling action is also where the push-off would occur.

## 3.2 Leading and Following

Leading is always performed by the man, and following by the woman. Learning how to lead properly can take time, and preferences for leads vary quite a lot between leaders and followers, although there is always a safe common ground among advanced dancers.

### 3.2.1 Comments for Leaders

Some comments for beginners about leading:

- Be *GENTLE BUT FIRM*. In north american social life, a macho attitude tends to be frowned upon. An adverse consequence of this is that all of us gringos trying to learn to lead dancing are waaaay too soft in our leads. You must be firm in your lead. Good female dancers like a strong lead. However, you must be firm *but gentle*. My teacher says it like this: "macho rose" (pink macho), meaning you should be a little macho, but don't be too hard, be nice on your follower. If you are playing too rough, then you are an "animal!":
- If you don't lead with confidence, a follower will just \*not\* know what you want to lead. At the same time, for lack of experience, your first leads are not very confident. Catch 22. Just keep working through it, this is a hard phase to work through;
- Watch those female toes. Women like to buy shoes where they expose those vulnerable toes to your big, very mean shoes. I'm really annoyed when I manage to get a good dancer to dance with me and I step on her toes . . .

#### 3.2.2 Comments for Followers

Some comments for beginners about following:

- FOs should give good resistance with their arms in the horizontal direction (see figure 3.1);
- FOs should let go and never try to lead nor anticipate an LE's move. This makes it difficult for both
  partners to dance with other dancers, and for teachers to diagnose problems with dancers (since they're
  more or less acting a choregraphy).
- FOs should continue stepping whatever is happening, they should never stop dancing if getting confused. When I dance with an FO better than me, I can make errors, and she never stops, ...this saves my face sometimes and it looks much better!



Figure 3.1: Horizontal resistance

• If LE initiated some turns, FOs should continue dancing no matter what. A leader will indicate a follower clearly to stop if that is what is required, never stop dancing on your own.

Here is my very personal opinion on characteristics that I enjoy about a follower:

- FO is looking back at you, or somewhere in the vicinity. I hate to dance with an FO that looks like she's thinking about doing her laundry;
- FO never stops, whatever happens. She keeps stepping her 1-2-3, 5-6-7. She doesn't care much if you start stepping wrong or all over the place, she doesn't rely on your basic step to keep hers going, the music is what we're dancing to;
- When you mess up, she laughs with you, and goes into freestyle mode for a little while. I also enjoy an FO who'll give me a chance, and dance a few songs with me. I guess this becomes less and less a problem as I'm becoming better at leading;
- FO lets me lead. This is a very noticeably bad habit for some women: they just want to lead anyway, they resist the lead. It can take some women a long time to learn not to lead... in my opinion a woman that tries to lead probably cannot become a good dancer. A strong leader and a strong follower are necessary for unity;
- FO is loose, not stiff, but responsive. Her arms are rather loose, but they offer just enough resistance to let the lead be effective. A stiff FO makes it very difficult to lead well, and the dance is not fun... FO has to let loose and have fun, that's the whole point of the dance. I don't like to dance with an FO that is so terrified of what is coming next that she's really stiff;
- FO likes to play. This dance floor is a playground!!!

#### 3.2.3 How much force should be used between partners?

Two experienced dancers should be able to dance with minimum pressure between the leader and the follower's hands. The lead should be very *very* soft and gentle. Cuban style dancing is in general softer than P.R. or N.Y.-style dancing, because there are less fast turns and dancers accommodate the complex arm combinations by turning continuously.

• If the leader is inexperienced, his lead will usually be too soft or too hard, and it becomes difficult for the follower to relax her arms.

3.3. TERMINOLOGY Latin Dance Study Guide

• If the follower is inexperienced, the leader has to apply lots of pressure in order to guide her follower where he wants her to go, thus ensues a stiff lead. Moreover, a follower lacking pressure or giving stiff arms will require much more work from the leader. *Followers:* if your leader is giving you a strong lead and you feel that he may be using too much force, it *may* be solely because you're not letting yourself be guided or are not giving correct arm stiffness.

#### 3.2.4 Dance is a relation

Dancing is a relation. You must keep contact with your partner at all times and be conscious of him/her.

One trick to improve this is to maintain eye contact with your partner all the time, except for very brief periods of time, when turning, when it is impossible. If you can manage to maintain eye contact, this will help the turns a lot, and help complete them with the right timing.

## 3.3 Terminology

I pinned the following terms for different concepts in this document, I tried to be thorough and to stick to them to avoid ambiguity. Note that these may not necessarily be the most appropriate dance terms.

#### Hold

Holds are how the arms of LE are placed with respect to the FO, which hand is holding which, and where it is placed (in her back, crossed hands, etc.). Examples: closed hold, reverse single crossed hold.

#### Grip

How one hand of LE is holding an hand of FO, the hand specifically, how they are gripping each other.

#### Step

A small sequence of specific steps, duration is usually 2 or 4 beats. This refers specifically to the feet only. Examples: basic step, extension #2 step, lateral step.

#### Move

A small sequence of steps and arm holds and changes, together in a couple, usually a few bars. I try to identify moves in sequences as small as possible, in order to reduce the number of moves that into combinations.

#### Configuration

How couples are oriented relative to each other. This is used for rueda, where there are clear, definite configurations of dancers. Examples: forward configuration, in-and-out walk configuration.

#### **Preparation**

Latin Dance Study Guide 3.3. TERMINOLOGY

A preparation is something that LE does before to initiate momentum for a move and help indicate the move. A good example is the preparation for FO'IT. Many dancers haven't learned to do proper preparations and often have a more clunky style, preparations are very important.

#### 3.3.1 To "break"

There is great confusion in using the term "to break". I found that "to break" can have the following different meanings for people:

- I use to think that "to break", meant to "break the togetherness of the feet" by moving one feet out ("break the feet apart"). This is what I now call "to step";
- Some people on the web mean "to break" as in changing the direction, "breaking the motion from forward to backward" or vice-versa, i.e. for the "on 1", this corresponds to beat 1;
- One of my teachers says "to break" means to stop, pausing. I now call this "to pause".

This is confusing, so I have decided to avoid using the term "break" in this document. However I will use "back break" to talk about the "back break step".

#### 3.3.2 Abbreviations

Throughout the text, I try to typeset spanish words in *italics*, most of the time.

**LE** leader (usually man)

**FO** follower (usually woman)

CH / OH / XH closed hold / open hold / crossed hold

RH / LH / RF / LF right hand / left hand / right foot / left foot

LE'RH / LE'LH / FO'LH / FO'RH leader's right hand / ...

LE'RH+FO'LH leader's right hand holding follower's left hand

RT (or LE'RT) / LT (or LE'LT) LE's right turn / LE's left turn

OT (or FO'OT) / IT (or FO'IT) FO's outside turn (right turn) / FO's inside turn (left turn)

XBL cross-body lead

**DQN** dile que no

We refer to a leader's right and left turns, while refers to a follower's outside and inside turns, simply to avoid some ambiguity. Also, we can sometimes refer to directions in rueda as CW (clockwise) or CWW (counter-clockwise) (as seen from above/the ceiling).

#### 3.3.3 Vocabulary for the Feet

There are a few types of way that a foot can hit the ground, we use the following words:

3.4. BODY PARTS THAT MOVE Latin Dance Study Guide

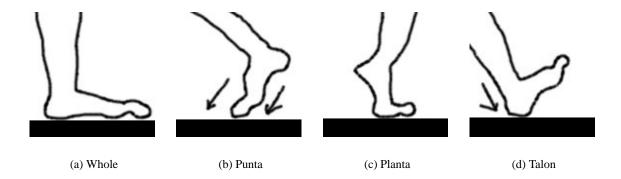


Figure 3.2: Different ways to hit the ground with one foot

- Whole foot (see figure 3.2(a)): the entire foot his the ground at the same time;
- Punta (see figure 3.2(b)): the tip of the foot hits is used. You cannot put weight on it this way;
- Planta (see figure 3.2(c)): the front part of the foot only is used;
- Talon (see figure 3.2(d)): only the heel of the foot is put on the ground.

# 3.4 Body parts that move

Nelson

The sternum is the only part of the body that doesn't move at all. The upper and lower body move a lot, or turn, but generally the sternum should remain in a fixed point in space while dancing. Someone should be able to put their index on it while the dancer is doing back breaks and it remains in a fixed point.

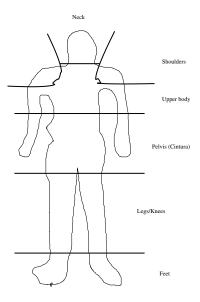


Figure 3.3: Parts of the man's body that move

Latin Dance Study Guide 3.5. WARM-UP EXERCISES

## 3.5 Warm-up exercises

Before dancing practice, you should warm up and stretch your body. A typical warm up routine has been shown to me by various cuban dancers, and they seem to do pretty much the same so at some point I took notes. Here is the routine, to be done alone or facing your partner. Perform to music (it's more interesting).

- Head:
  - Rotation, left-right;
  - Rotation, up-down;
  - Rotation, in a circle; change direction;
  - Tilt, side-to-side;
  - Move forward, backward;
- Shoulders. Hands are relaxed to the sides of dancer and don't move. The elbows move a bit:
  - Move up, down;
  - Move forward, backward;
  - Rotations; change direction;
- Upper body. Try not to move pelvis area:
  - Move left, right;
  - Move front and back;
  - Four directions: front, left, back, right; change direction;
  - Rotations; change direction;
  - Raise one side, lower the other;
- Pelvis. Bend knees before starting these, it will allow for more movement. Try not to move upper body area nor knees:
  - Raise side-to-side:
  - Front-up, back;
  - Four corners; change direction;
  - Rotations (see Cintura exercise below); change direction;
  - Upper body and pelvis combination, curl forward, uncurl backward;
- Knees, with arms relaxed:
  - Bend knees, up-down ("el muelle" exercise like rumba);
  - Knee rotations. Be careful with this one;
- Ankles:
  - Rotate, relax them;
- Arms:
  - Shake arms, relax them:
  - Rotate wrists in all directions;
  - Shake hands, relax them:
- Stretch exercises. Stretch what is necessary, especially if you have specific weaknesses. Use typical training stretching exercises.

3.5. WARM-UP EXERCISES Latin Dance Study Guide

#### 3.5.1 Exercise for arm and shoulder flexibility

Facing mirror, raise one arm, and lower elbow to the side of the body, bending upper body a bit, with fingers of the hand touching together and pointing towards the head. The exercise is meant to improve flexibility of the arms in the backwards direction.

#### Exercise: Cintura / Ocho

The "cintura" movement is the classic example of what most Cubans have been doing easily since they're small children, and typically represents a difficulty for us gringos.

There are four corners that your pelvis can lock into: north-west, south-west, south-east, north-east. Start out by moving into these four positions and stop there. Then, do it a littler faster. Raise the speed until the movement becomes fluid.

Note that the movement is sometimes called the "ocho" (8), but that does not mean that you should try to perform a figure-of-8 with your pelvis.

If you're just starting out, you'll have to practice this a little bit everyday until you get it right. Eventually, it becomes second nature. Do it to the rhythm of music, it's less tiring and looks more interesting. Practice until it becomes effortless. Give yourself time, you will develop abdominal muscles, it will not happen in a week!

#### 3.5.2 Independent movement of shoulders

Salsa dancers often shake the shoulders independently from the resto the upper-body. This is difficult to achieve at first . This section contains an exercise to develop that motion.

Latin Dance Study Guide 3.6. GOLDEN TRICKS

#### Exercise: Shoulder shakes

The afro-cuban dances seem to make great use of the upper body movements, and in particular of the shoulder movements. This is where the "shoulder shakes" comes from: a fast alternating front-to-back movement of the shoulders.

This can be achieved with great ease, but is very difficult for westerners to perform, because lack the practice of afro-cuban dances. But it can be developed:

Chiquitico

Standing up, face close a wall, try to touch the wall with one shoulder slowly. Retract that shoulder and try to touch the wall with the other.

#### Notes:

- don't raise the shoulders upwards, the movement should be horizontal;
- make sure you don't rotate upper body;
- if the elbows are moving, it is only a consequence of the shoulder movement. You should not move the elbows or arms explicitly;
- the movement has to be relaxed.

Increase the speed. There will be a point where your coordination will fail. At that point, do *three* shoulder shakes rapidly in succession, then relax. Try to do them a little bit faster than you can do them continuously. It is very important to relax in between the shakes, because the point of the exercise is to learn to do these in a relaxed manner, so you can do it continuously at that speed.

Try doing five. Practice this until it is very relaxed...this could take months or years to master, but once you start focusing on it, it actually improves a lot rapidly.

 $ar{\it U}$ se it to spice up your salsa!

### 3.6 Golden tricks

One of my teachers said that the arms are the most difficult part of dancing. There are a few extremely important rules and tricks for how the arms should behave when dancing. Apply these and they will save you \*tons\* of trouble.

- For leaders: lead with the right hand. LE'RH is the hand that does everything 99% of the time, LE'LH rarely ever does anything but decorate the rest of the lead. Attempt to do your leads with LE'RH only. You should almost be able to dance with LE'LH behind your back;
- In any move, combination, anywhere: **point the elbows to the ground!** Lowering the elbows will always position the arms in the right manner, there will never be any locking of the arms. Sometimes you have to raise the arm and elbow, but do it for as short a duration as possible, and lower your elbow right after;
- **Keep the elbows inside**. This trick goes hand in hand with the previous trick. Always keep the elbows inside the space between the two partners, when the hands are down, up or anywhere;
- For leaders: when you lift an FO's hand up lift hands as late as possible. Always wait until the very

3.7. A SENSE OF MEASURE Latin Dance Study Guide

last moment to move an FO's hand over your head, this is greatly ease the motions;

- If you're dancing with a small FO and the arms-over-head moves are difficult to accomplish, **bend the knees, don't lower your head**. If you lower your head, it not only looks bad, but you're also stuck afterwards. Bend the knees instead, and perform the moves naturally. This requires some strength in LE's legs;
- In complicated figures with double holds, **do not extend arms to the sides**. For example, for moves with one hand high and one hand low, a common problem is for LEs to try to turn with one hand extended too far to the side. This just doesn't work. If FO's arm has to be down, pull it down. This will make an LE's 07 much easier to do:
- For the grips: **try not to use your thumbs**, with moderately good dancers anyway. The only reason you would be allowed to use them is if you're leading a particularly difficult FO who hasn't learned not to lead yet;
- When doing turns, **use your wrists**. The more wrist rotation action you give your FO, the better she will feel your lead. Don't exagerate too much though, it still has to look good;
- When doing turns, keep those fingers flat. Flat fingers against flat fingers with some good pressure
  together will create a nice platform for hands to rotate against each other. Keeping the fingers closed
  will result in cracking sounds and broken fingers;
- When you rest your hand on a woman's shoulders or back, watch her hair if they're long. Don't just let the hands fall over her hair. The men often don't notice when they're doing this, it is quite an annoyance for women;
- When LE's is turning with his hand above his head, a problem is that FO's hand is often slipping off LE's hand, which is quite annoying. **Rotate and twist the hand** in a way that will make it as soft for FO as possible, and use some wrist action.
- In general, the feeling of the lead should be a *relaxed* body, but *hard* hands.

#### 3.7 A Sense of Measure

Matters of style can often be reduced to a question of "how much is still nice" rather than "this is wrong" or "this is the right way to do it" (dancers tend to be hard-headed about these things). It is important to realize that there is an acceptable range within which a movement will look good, and outside of which a movement will look out-of-place or simply just ugly.

As a rule of thumb, a body in equilibrium is graceful. Keep this in mind, it provides a nice simple rule to help judge just how much is enough and how much it too much.

#### 3.7.1 Size of steps

In particular, at first, beginners tend to make steps very large, to open feet very wide and break the feet too far away. The more you learn and practice, the smaller your steps become. I think that this is due to the initial inability to change weight in the right directions and at the right time. As you internalize the moves, it becomes possible to create the same "body dynamics" by moving feet much less.

In fact, the best dancers can create the illusion of movement without actually moving their feet.

Dancing with smaller steps makes it easier for the follower as well. Although moving long distances while dancing can be an exhilirating feeling, learn to do it in the right places and with a sense of measure.

### ➤ Exercise: Reduce step size

Exercises to help reduce the size of your steps:

- Dance all the steps described in this guide very largely, much exaggerated and while doing the same step, reduce the size progressively until it becomes to small that it becomes difficult to feel the "body dynamics" of the step;
- Dance all the steps and exercises described in this guide as small as possible, without trampling the feet;
- As an exercise, attempt to lead a dance without moving your feet.

## 3.8 Social Advice for Beginning Dancers

Ok, when the salsa bug hits you, in the first few months nothing else seems to matter, and you spend a lot of time in the clubs; Here is a bit of dance-floor advice for the beginner that may help out in those sometimes difficult moments.

- Never mention to a girl that you're a beginner, unless you know her well, because there is a weird phenomenom that happens if you do tell them: girls will suddenly *forget* all that they've learned about dancing altogether and will keep babbling about how you should do "this and that" instead of "this and that". They won't dance with the same assurance and ease as if you hadn't told them, really!! And in the meantime you're not getting any practice...;
- Criticism, even the good sort, is \*rarely\* received well. Rather, if the dance doesn't work out, just thank politely after the song. Don't stop in the middle of a song, a woman would find that quite insulting;
- Always keep in mind that most people go out dancing to have fun, and might not be as keen to learn as much as you are as a beginner;
- People who don't have solid rhythm will argue to \*death\* that \*you\* have got it wrong if they lose the beat while dancing with you. Just go freestyle for a while if they get lost they'll eventually realize it and get back into it;
- A general comment about the dancing scene: most instructors I've met seem quite annoyed and get defensive when discussing material they know come from other schools. I guess as a pupil you're better off making up your opinion for yourself. You have to be subtle, when discussing material learned from alternative sources.

# **Chapter 4**

# Rhythm

In the latin dance scene, one quickly discovers various misconceptions and unclear tentative explanations of the rhythms of salsa dancing. This chapter is an attempt at providing a clear, definitive description of the rhythms involved therein, limited to a dancer's context.

#### 4.1 Introduction

The popularity of salsa dancing has swept over the world over the past 30 years. Considerable interest in latin dancing has led to a variety of popular styles being developed and refined from different places, with a few stronger, distinctive styles being taught outside their birthplace (e.g. New York-style, Puerto-Rican/L.A. style, Cuban style). At the same time, the origin of the dance, and its closest original form of dancing–specifically, cuban *són*–is still a very popular dance in much of Cuba today.

The dancer's business is intimately intertwined with that of the musician. However, in general, dancers do not necessarily have a rigorous musical background. The lack of a deep understanding has led to the many vague, confused explanations of sorts one can find from dance teachers and on the internet. One who is to become proficient rhythmically must read between the lines and ultimately, learn from observation.

This document attempts to provide a complete, clearer explanation of the various principal rhythms used by advanced salsa dancers all over the world. Furthermore, to avoid confusion, we do so using standard musical notation <sup>1</sup>.

Note that this document focuses specifically on information relevant to *dancers*, and will not bring much to an audience interested in music without relation to the dance.

This text aims at provideing a precise, technical description rather than to try to explain the concepts intuitively. Thus it may not be appropriate for the reader who is not interested in the minute details of those rhythms.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>If you do not know how to read music, we recommend you find a musician to give you a quick introduction; the level of knowledge you need to understand this document is pretty basic, and this will also help your understanding of dancing rhythms.

4.1. INTRODUCTION Latin Dance Study Guide

#### 4.1.1 Notation

Salsa music is played in 4/4 time signature. Consider two measures of music (figure 4.1)

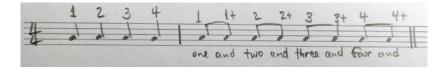


Figure 4.1: Notation.

We number 4 beats per measure (beats 1, 2, 3 and 4), and we will also want to refer to the individual 8 eight-notes of that measures, which we will dub: 1, 1&, 2, 2&, 3, 3&, 4 and 4&.

When we need to refer to both measures of the clave, we will make use of beats 5, 6, 7 and 8, but in general it suffices to use beats 1, 2, 3, 4, while being conscious that a full cycle of feet patterns lasts for two measures.

We refer to beats 1, 3, 5, 7 as the **downbeats** or the **pulse**, and to beats 2, 4, 6, 8 as the **upbeats**. If you draw the typical musician's 4/4 cross with a finger in the air in front of you, why so becomes more obvious (see figure 4.2).

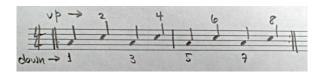


Figure 4.2: Upbeats and Downbeats.

The downbeats have a "grounded", solid feel, while the upbeats have a "suspended", lighter characteristic.

Some musicians write the same patterns as a single measure, but half-time (i.e. the 8th notes become 16th notes). This makes it possible to write the entire clave in a single measure, and the "pulse" simply falls on the four beats of the measure, but this makes it harder to read the music.

Steps are annotated L for "left" and R for "right". The regular salsa dance pattern goes like this (on two measures): L-R-L, then R-L-R.

Additionally, we refer to the three steps of the salsa dance pattern as A, B and C, where:

- "A" is the step that breaks away from the basic position;
- "B" steps in-place with the other foot;
- "C" steps back into the basic position.

See figure 4.3.

#### 4.1.2 Learning to Count

An *essential* part of understanding rhythm (...and the material discussed in this document) is being able to count with the music. Even an intermediate dancer *must* be able to count 1, 2, 3, 4 with the music, and to be



Figure 4.3: The three step sequence of salsa dancing.

able to identify, quickly, and with certainty, where beat 1 is located (or at least where the downbeats fall). You absolutely *must* be able to tell unambiguously where the 1 is at any point in time, and be able to do it without effort.

Some people maintain that it is better to dance to the "feeling" and that analyzing or counting is not a good thing. I think that this is an extremely foolish attitude that exhibit a very poor understanding of music.

Analyzing and counting provide you the basic tools for eventually *not* having to count and feel the music right. The fact that at some point you devote some energy to counting does not reduce your perception of music at all: it increases it by providing attention to detail of the music itself. In fact, the most aware person should be able to count at the same time as they are independently doing everything else. Now, at some level, you will find that counting is achieved in a natural way, without having to think about it. At any moment you are aware of where the music is situated in time without effort.

What is problematic is that at an early point it is difficult to simultaneously count and dance. Now, that does not mean that you should never or always count. Exercise counting as an exercise in itself, and you will eventually find it easier to perceive the music without effort. When you need to focus on other aspects (hands and arms, for example), let go of the counting if needed or better, slow down. No improvement can be achieved without effort.

#### 4.2 The Clave and the Tumbao

The matter of the role of clave in music is a deep subject which we won't delve into, and which we won't need for the purpose of our explanations of the simple patterns. We will however introduce the main types of claves you are likely to encounter in the music you'll hear over the dance floor.

Note that even though the clave is formed by two distinct bars, dancers in general, don't focus on a specific side (see section 4.8), so in a general context it will not not make sense to speak about dancing on beats above 4, e.g. "dancing on 6". Most of your dancing (even advanced) can be performed without clave awareness (see section 4.8).

There are two main types of *binary* clave patterns around which modern salsa music is based today, which both stem originally from a *ternary* west-african bell pattern, or bembé clave.

The son and rumba clave can be thought of having a "3-side" and a "2-side". They can both be played either starting from the 3-side or the 2-side. But once the clave starts, it rarely changes direction. One of the factors that make latin music so rich, is the divine games played by musicians with odd measure counts, which effectively reverse the clave feel: for example, they will make a 5 bar break, and move into another musical section, the clave feel has been reversed (but the clave has never stopped).

#### **4.2.1** Clave Son

By far the most common type of clave you'll encounter is the son clave.

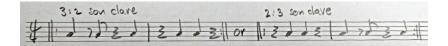


Figure 4.4: Son Clave.

Even though the clave can sometimes be heard in the music (incidentally played on the *clave* instrument, a pair of wooden blocks which produce a sharp high-pitched sound), in general you won't hear it. Rather, it is a musical pattern "around which" all the other instruments play. Although the instruments don't necessarily play the clave pattern directly, they are very much influenced by it and the musicians are constantly conscious of the clave when interpreting the music.

#### 4.2.2 Clave Rumba

The second most common clave in popular music is the rumba clave, or clave guaguancó.

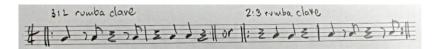


Figure 4.5: Rumba Clave.

This pattern is the main driver for the cuban rumba <sup>2</sup>, a folkloric music whose influence can be found in much of salsa music, especially cuban salsa music. In fact, much of the cuban "timba" is governed by the rumba clave rather than the son clave.

#### **4.2.3** Tumbao

The other important pattern for the dancer to be aware of is the "tumbao", or the pattern formed by the conga player (figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6: Tumbao rhythm.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Note that the "rumba" we're referring to in this document has nothing to do with the rhumba that people refer to in the context of social dancing, which really is, the cuban bolero.

Latin Dance Study Guide 4.3. RHYTHM: "A TIEMPO"

Note that there is a sharp "slap" on beat 2, and two open tones on beats 4 and 4&. When dancing, you should always be conscious of.

Among the other musical instruments, there is also often a bell accentuating the 1, 3, 4 and 7 beats. There are also other patterns played (e.g. *cascara*) but in general these revolve around and are less important than the clave.

# 4.3 Rhythm: "A Tiempo"

This is the simplest and most common rhythm the dancers use. It is also the one you'll encounter the most often if you travel and dance around the world.

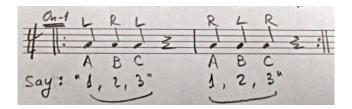


Figure 4.7: A tiempo.

This quickly becomes boring to dance to as you progress to a more advanced level. Most dancers add a little kick on beat 4, generally with the foot that is about to step next on the 1.

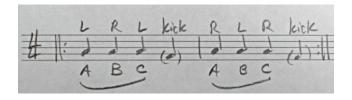


Figure 4.8: A tiempo with kick.

Note that you start the first step on the 3 side of the 3-2 clave. Also, on the 2-side, your last two steps conclude the clave. Your 1st and 3rd steps are on the downboats, which give a grounded feel to the dance pattern.

Also, it is very important to notice that since the downbeats are very strong, starting the dance pattern on beat 3 bear almost no effect to the feel of this dance pattern. For all practical purposes, dancing on 1 is equivalent to dancing on 3. This is why we prefer the "a tiempo" denomination for this pattern, because it emphasizes the fact that we're dancing on the downbeats, which is what it's all about, really.

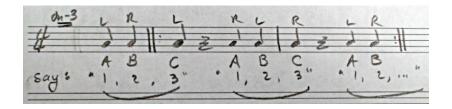


Figure 4.9: A tiempo, dancing "on 3".

# 4.4 Rhythm: "A Contratiempo" (Son Style)

This is the simple, original form of "dancing on 2". Although it doesn't feel terribly wrong to dance on 1 (unless you know it well), this is the one and only correct way to dance to cuban *son* music (figure 4.10).

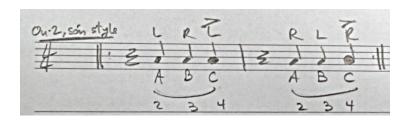


Figure 4.10: A contra-tiempo.

In addition, to achieve a proper "son" dancing feel, you must put a **greater emphasis on beat 4**, and let it linger until you start again on 2 of the next measure (i.e. you should not kick on 1). This is very important for appropriate feel, the timing of the feet is not sufficient to dance son properly.

Your feet sequence starts (or "breaks") on the 2, which is why people call it "dancing on 2". This is the same beat where the conga plays a slap tone. Also note that you're starting and stopping on the upbeats, and that last upbeat is lingering in the air for what appears to be a long time.

In contrast with dancing "a tiempo", in general you will not be able to have the pattern beginning on beat 4 (the *other* upbeat) without a discernible effect. People who dance "a contratiempo" almost begin the pattern on beat 2 (see section 4.10 for a digression).

Note that on the 2-side, you start your first two beats stepping on the clave on, and that on the 3-side, your last step concludes with the clave.

The challenge in dancing son is to get your partner entertained by subtle games and motion across the floor while in closed position. There should not be any fancy fast turns and you should not get too excited (except maybe a little when dancing a guaracha. Cubans say you should dance "as if her father was watching".

## 4.5 Rhythm: on-2, New-York style

When people discuss of "dancing on 2", this is the feel they generally refer to, rather than the simpler "a contratiempo" described in the previous section (figure 4.11).

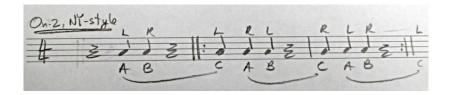


Figure 4.11: New York -style "on 2" rhythm.

Notice that rhythmically, the pattern is the same as dancing "a tiempo. Also, the only difference with the son-style "a contratiempo" is that the last beat is danced on 1 instead of on the preceding 4. NY-style dancers also dance the following pattern (I have observed both equally), see figure 4.12.

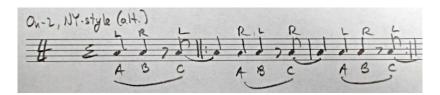


Figure 4.12: New York -style "on 2" rhythm (alternative).

Here, the only difference with the son-style "a contratiempo" is that the last beat is danced on 4& (in-between beat 4 and beat 1). Also, rather than putting emphasis on the third step, it is more or less "blended" in-between the two other steps, resulting in a dynamic shift of the partners without a strong pause nor a kick.

#### 4.5.1 Counting Variation

Perhaps what makes it more confusing to most dancers is the fact that most instructors who are proficient in dancing this rhythm simultaneously consider the feet pattern to "start" on what is considered the 3rd step of dancing "a tiempo", AND count one time ahead, pronouncing the "one" count on beat 4& (like for anticipated-1 timing) or the next 1. This only makes sense, as it is much closer to the counting of the music itself.

I believe that this practice is the main reason why it makes it difficult for people to quickly have a quick grasp of the difference between the two rhythms. In the end, practice is what it's really all about and if that's how those people count it, that's how it should be counted. Here is the same rhythmic pattern, with the modified counts (figure 4.13).

The important thing to notice here is that the A, B, C steps are shifted with respect to the "a tiempo" rhythm.



Figure 4.13: Modified counts for NY "on 2".

# 4.6 Rhythm: Anticipated A-Tiempo

Let's face it, most people dance on "a tiempo", and unless you're living in a very large city (or you are in Cuba or Puerto Rico...), there aren't many dancers who will lead or follow on 2. A natural and interesting way to dance on 1 and interpret the music feel a bit more is to anticipate beat 1 to the preceding eight-note (4&), see figure 4.14.

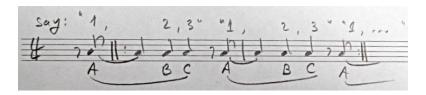


Figure 4.14: Anticipated 1.

Most intermediate followers will not be thrown off by the leader dancing in this rhythm, and you can enjoy accentuating the second open tone of the tumbao rhythm. The bass sometimes accentuates that beat too.

Note that the timing is exactly the same as for the NY-style "on-2", except that the foot pattern starts in a different place (i.e. on 4& instead of on 2).

(The matter can be taken further, I know someone who steps with both feet on beats 4 and 4&, and then proceeds to 2, 3, but he only does this on one side. It's a pretty cool looking step which tickles the mind the viewer when well executed.)

Note that you can equally apply this anticipated step on-3, which falls on the bass line (see section 4.8).

# 4.7 Blending the Rhythms

When I had the chance, I carefully observed one of the few non-cuban dancers that really impressed me at a workshop: Felipe Polanco (from Puerto Rico) and noticed that he was actually blending the three forms of dancing on-2.

Apart from executing with style and precision, he was changing which pattern he was using almost every bar which made the dancing very interesting (incidentally it made it quite tricky for the people following the workshop to follow anything though). Even with the variations, he was definitely dancing in the feel of the 2. In figure 4.15 is an example rhythm combination (with modified counts as described in section 4.5.1).

Latin Dance Study Guide 4.8. CLAVE AWARENESS



Figure 4.15: Example of blending.

#### 4.8 Clave Awareness

In listening to advanced dancers, you will hear a lot about *dancing on clave*. There is a lot of misunder-standing about what really means amongst the dancers. In fact, I have found that very few have any way to explain what they mean with certitude.

The clave has 5 beats. Regular salsa dancing patterns, although they are sometimes modified temporarily either to fit a non-regular move or just from improvisation from an advanced dancer, are of 6 steps, following this pattern: L-R-L, R-L-R. So technically, without changing the regular pattern, you cannot step on all the beats of the clave—and besides, there would be no point in doing that: the music doesn't either.

There is a loose consensus that dancing on-2 interlocks better with the clave than dancing "a tiempo" (I definitely agree). Thus, some people that talk about "dancing on clave" actually mean "dancing on 2".

What actually makes sense, is for *some* of the steps to land on the beats of the clave. Just like musicians shape their rhythmic patterns "around" the clave (and do not simply execute it), an advanced dancer can modify his foot patterns to better fit one side or the other of the clave. This requires that at any moment you be aware of which side the clave is played on. This is actually not always obvious to execute, because the music is sometimes not explicit about which side the clave is on—i.e. you might end up dancing with the clave on the wrong side if you cannot hear the music clearly (e.g. 3-2 instead of 2-3).

An example of shaping the feet to the clave is to shift one eight-note the first step of the on-2 dance pattern, but on the 3-side of the clave only. Dancing on-2 (figure 4.16).

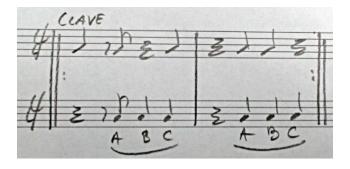


Figure 4.16: Dancing "on clave, on 2".

R. Moreno from L.A. has an interesting explanation for it: "if you remove the music (the sound), dancing on-1 and dancing on-2 look the same; it's not the case for dancing "on clave". I think he means the same that I do above: you accentuate certain beats of the clave, you're aware of the clave while dancing.

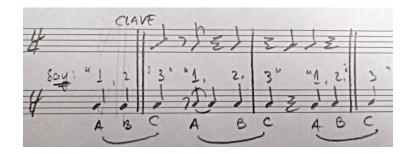


Figure 4.17: Dancing "on clave, on 3".

# 4.9 Emphasizing the Tumbao

When dancing on-2 (a contratiempo), another really interesting change to the foot pattern is to accentuate the tumbao's open tones by adding a light extra step on beat 4& (figure 4.18).

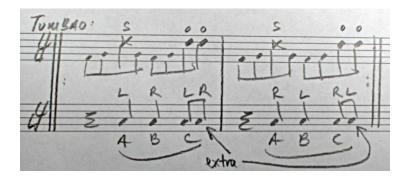


Figure 4.18: Accentuating the tumbao open tones.

# 4.10 Rhythm: Dancing on-4

An interesting exercise is to dance "a contratiempo", that is, on the upbeats, but starting on beat 4 instead of starting on beat 2. This is not the usual way to dance a-contratiempo. What happens is that you start the sequence directly with the open tones of the tumbao.

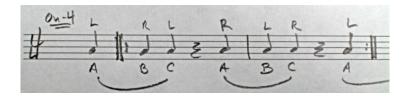


Figure 4.19: Dancing "on 4".

I find it interesting to play with this by shifting the second step of the dance pattern ahead to dance it on the tumbao, creating an apparently large delay until the third step occurs:



Figure 4.20: Dancing "on 4" with funny variation.

# 4.11 Rhythm: Cha-Cha-Chá

There is only one true way to dance the real cuban cha-cha-chá: it is akin to dancing on 2, filling in with extra steps on beats 4& and 1 (figure 4.21).

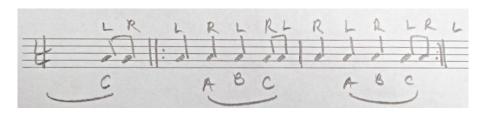


Figure 4.21: Cha cha chá.

Musically, the "cha-cha-chá" is always on beats 4, 4& and 1.

I'm still puzzled as to why so many dancers (including advanced dancers) get this wrong. Many people dance the "cha-cha-chá" on beats 3, 3&, and 4. The only explanation I can come up with is that it probably comes from social or ballroom dancing. This is incorrect: cha-cha-chá is still very close to its cuban origins and should be danced accordinly. Moreover, doing cha-cha-chá accents on beats 3, 3& and 4 is simply against the music. Plus, in all cha-cha-chá music the open tones on the 4 and 4& and always very loud and clear.

# 4.12 Assymetrical step: Cuban Casino step

One interesting regular step modification of note is the way a large number of cubans dance the casino rueda. In rueda, the man steps behind with the left foot and forward with the right foot <sup>3</sup>. Rueda is danced "a tiempo". The men kick on both sides of the pattern, but kick at different moments: when stepping back and away, they step: "1, 2, kick, 4", but when stepping in front and closer to their partner, they step: "1, 2, 3, kick" (figure 4.22).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>In reality, it's a little bit more subtle than that as the man and woman form small circles while stepping away and towards each other, there is some sideways motion going on.

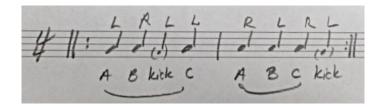


Figure 4.22: Irregular Casino step.

The women don't tend to do the same.

# 4.13 Subtle Timing Issues: Tensed And Laidback

Perhaps of greater importance than all the preceding discussion is the matter of small-scale precision of the steps with respect to the music. As a trained jazz musician, I cannot forego noticing someone who dances consistently just-a-little slightly ahead of the beat. This is a very subtle point, which requires great attention, because ultimately it has a the greatest effect on how your style comes out.

#### 4.13.1 Precision issues

A legitimate question is how precise should one be? Some people seem to think that the fact that your feet do not hit the ground precisely on the beat does not matter as long as you're not drifting off the rhythm. The fact that you must not be drifting away from the rhythm is obvious, but precision with respect every step is tantamount to the perception by others that the feet are actually going to the music. However, accurate rhythmic precision itself is not as much an issue as the question of being early vs. being late.

So should you dance slightly ahead of slightly late? Dancing slightly late to the beat looks more "in the rhythm" than dancing slightly ahead of the beat. The human mind seems to play the same trick as in jazz music, where most players are playing in a very "laidback" manner, behind the rhythm section, yet the brain still perceives it "on time".

#### 4.13.2 Analogy with Music

The analogy with music applies perfectly here: there is a very useful lesson to be learned from musical interpretation. When a soloist plays just *slightly* ahead of the accompanying music—and I really mean just slightly, not on different beats—it creates musical **tension** (figure 4.23).

Conversely, when a soloist plays behind the music, which is generally referred to as playing "laid-back", it creates a relaxed, groovy feeling. So much, that our minds will easily be dragged along by a solo that can be as much as nearly a full beat behind the rhythm section, and we will still perceive it as being "on the beat" (figure 4.24).

Listen to any of the classic jazz ballads and slower standards for ample examples of this musical effect.

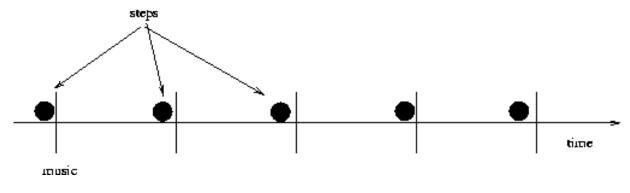


Figure 4.23: Creating Musical Tension.

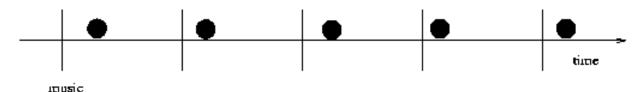


Figure 4.24: Laidback rhythm, creating groove.

If you have a strong sense of rhythm and are able to play with this, try it for yourself in front of a mirror, you'll see that dancing slightly late looks much better. Dancing slightly ahead gives it a nervous flavour, which doesn't look nice.

The tension created by playing or dancing ahead is not pleasant for a long duration of time. It's like someone who's singing off key: you "could" use it for effect, but you can't use it much nor for very long.

The same trick of the mind is in effect for someone watching the dancers: if you dance ahead of the music, you look like you're not "on the beat", so-to-speak, even if you're dancing at the same general "pace" as the music. If you dance behind the music, you can even afford to be lazy and behind and it won't show too much, plus you'll appear to be "in the groove".

Now, once you realize that, the *real problem* is that to be able to create a relaxed, groovy feeling, you yourself must be at ease. Conversely, if you're tense, you will tend to accelerate and create tension yourself. There is only one solution: practice and practice and practice until you are *in control of your emotions* (and your feet).

There is an important lesson out of this, even for beginners: when you feel that you are getting confused by the music and you start "losing the beat", at that very moment, you are **ALWAYS** accelerating. Relax, slow down, take a deep breath, and you will very often fall back right into it and will be home-free!

#### 4.13.3 Losing the Beat

When you are not familiar with latin music, which is rather different than the simple backbeat patterns us gringos are used to, it is easy to get lost. From the discussion above it follows that if you're feeling that

you're losing the beat, you will get nervous, and thus you will invariably accelerate.

If you lose the beat, you are invariably going too fast. I don't think I have ever seen anyone lose the beat by dancing too slow. Here is the rule that saves you: if you're lost **slow down**. You will almost always find the beat again.

#### 4.14 Indications For Each Music

Technically, you could dance on any binary pattern over any binary music. However, proper interpretation requires attention to style and applicability—in the same way that you won't dance salsa to merengue music, you will want to dance to the beat that is the most appropriate for the music. Here is a table of guidelines for choosing an appropriate beat to dance to, which summarizes some of the material in this document:

Modern salsa	on-1 or on-2, depending on music (listen to bass)
Cumbia	on-1, always
Cuban Timba	generally on-1, sometimes on-2, rumba-clave
Són	on-2, always
Cha-cha-chá	on-2 + cha-cha-cha step on 4& and 1

# 4.15 Independence Exercises

There a number of simple rhythm exercises that you can work to develop specifically the independence between the limbs and increase rhythmic perception.

For independence exercises related to salsa dancing, we work with the following body parts:

- hands: together forming one pattern, either clapping together, or using a clave, or separately, forming an alternating pattern between the two hands;
- feet: forming a single alternating pattern;
- mouth: forming a vocal pattern, with the use of language;

Note that we could add more, but this would be overkill. We can develop hard enough exercises with just these limbs already!

We can combine the following patterns, assigned to different parts:

- pulse (downbeats): 1, 3, 5, 7;
- pulse (upbeats): 2, 4, 6, 8;
- the són clave;
- the rumba clave:
- all beats: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

This way we can create various independence exercices.

#### **4.15.1** Exercise to Develop the Feel of the Clave

Here is a simple exercise to develop the awareness of the clave against the beat. For this exercise we are going to use the mouth only.

#### Exercise: Simple Clave With The Mouth

Say with a hushed voice all the 8 beats of the cycle, and emphasize the clave beats by saying then normally, like this (the hushed words are in parentheses):

The idea is that by maintaining a hushed count of all the beats, your mind is forced to be aware of the constant flow of the beats, while at the same time you need to focus another part of your brain on the clave accents. This exercise is great to reinforce where the clave pattern fall in the cycle.

You should equally practice this exercise reversing the clave, i.e.:

You can also do this exercise with the rumba clave, i.e.:

#### ➤ Exercise: Clave and Count

Count aloud 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and play the són clave with your hands. You should be able to play the 3-2 clave and the 2-3 clave.

- Count, playing the rumba clave instead;
- Count, playing the simple pulse (downbeats);
- Count, playing the upbeats only.

#### 4.15.2 Exercises with the Clave

Some exercises that relate the clave to non-trivial patterns.

#### ➤ Exercise: Clave and Dancing Mouth

Play the són clave with your hands, and practice saying out loud:

- 1-2-3, 1-2-3, ...
- 2-3-4, 2-3-4, ...

Do the same exercise with the rumba clave.

#### ➤ Exercise: Dance with the Clave

Play the són clave with your hands, and practice dancing:

- on 1 (stepping on 123);
- on 3 (stepping on 341);
- on 2 (stepping on 234);
- Do the same exercise with the rumba clave;
- Add turns when you're ready.

The trick is to be able to do these things simultaneously to develop the independence between the clave feel and the constant 1-2-3, 5-6-7. One has to be careful not to accelerate the count on the "3" beats of the clave. Also, counting loud with your mouth helps finishing the turns in time (and style). Call me crazy, but if you can do this really well and it is still too easy, try switching between 2-3 and 3-2 clave every 2 bars.

The following exercise attempts to develop a taste for the difference between dancing on the downbeats starting on beat 1 or on beat 3. You could do it with music as well. The clave is used in this exercice as a vehicle for maintaining your sense of the first beat in place.

#### ➤ Exercise: "On 1" vs "On 3"

- Practice dancing a-tiempo "on 1" doing the són clave with your hands. Do not stop playing the clave;
- After dancing a few measures of this, maintain playing the clave, but stop the feet and start again dancing a-tiempo on beat 3.
- Do the same going back to dancing a-tiempo "on 1" and keep going.

Both feel almost the same, but there is actually a very noticeable difference if you are conscious of beat 1 while you are dancing.

#### Exercise: Rotate Beats with the Clave

Play the són clave with your hands, and dance two, or four, or a fixed number of measures "on 1", then without stopping the clave, start dancing "on 2". To perform the switch, all you need to do is insert an extra beat to the pause.

Then while dancing "on 2" and doing the clave, keep the clave going, and switch to dancing "on 3". Never stop your hands doing the clave.

Then while dancing "on 3" and doing the clave, keep the clave going, and switch to dancing the strange "on 4".

Then again, without stopping the clave with your hands, go back to dancing "on 1".

You can repeat this cycle as long as you want. At first you should start by dancing at least 8 measures of each beat to feel them enough. Eventually, you should get to a level where you can dance one measure of each, back-to-back.

Note that this is not something useful on the dance floor, but if you want to try a funny game with a partner that has a good sense of rhythm, try dancing it with her doing one measure of each beat. That is like dancing on 5 beats (i.e. it drifts with respect to the music). It looks weird and the pause feels like a long time, but it is a good exercise to test your limits.

#### 4.15.3 Maracas hands

Mario Charón

To start developing independence of the feet and hands, you can perform hand throws in front of you, with open hand. Throw fingers in front. Alternate your hands as if playing maracas, left-right-left-right, one on each beat.

You can also do it with real maracas, or you can buy a pair of the more convenient Maxtone "chicken shake" percussive eggs at your local music store. Doing it using an instrument is even more difficult, since you'll get audible feedback when you screw up with your hands, and it will confuse you. However, you will build a more precise sense of independence this way.

Start doing this simultaneously with back breaks without adornos, add the adornos, then with rotation step, then rotation step with kick, then move on to all the other basic steps. Vary the pattern.

What is important here is to unlock the physical connection that has been made between hands and feet. Even very advanced dancers may find this exercise very difficult, as this is a not a traditional thing to do: we usually learn the basic motions of hands and feet together, and then learn individual body schemas related to these patterns, but we rarely try to disconnect them totally.

The maracas hand motion can also be used to inject style, with good measure.

## 4.16 Notes About Perception

Just as you can work on developing precision in dance by practicing moves with your partner, you can also develop your perception of rhythm and time. Most dancers don't usually recognize this, but this is a commonly accepted concept amongst jazz musicians. Many high-level musicians use a series of independence exercises designed specifically to develop perception of music. The underlying idea is that by attempting to do two tasks at the same time, you force your mind to record and automate into "muscle memory" some parts of each task, thus requiring less energy to perform them. Perhaps the dance world has not needed such exercises because the dance, even at high levels, does not seem require the level of parallelism and independence that playing music requires from a musician.

However, the same principles apply. Just like learning languages, just like learning to play music, and probably like learning anything else, at first you cannot perceive the details of what is happening. Sentences are heard as long words without separations between them; musical harmony appears too complex to understand and improvising music is very difficult because one must focus on the chord changes, the harmony and the rhythm–everything just seems to go too fast and the mind can't keep up. With time and practice however, once you start perceiving more and more, the energy required to perceive the simple things is lessened, and part of that energy can be channeled to good use in other places.

Part of the reason for the perception increase is that your brain starts recognizing patterns that it has seen over and over again through repetition, and associates them with a well-known recorded concept in your mind. At first this concept doesn't exist, and you can only perceive the flurry of details coming at your senses. Once you've developed the concept, what was once a complex arragements of movements has become associated with that unique concept. As you analyze, the mind tends to organize all learning into concepts, into "boxes".

But how does this ability get developed? For autodidacts, the perception increases naturally with years of practice and repetition. Depending on your background in other disciplines, certains abilities will be automatically put into practice in the new subject of interest and will help develop perception as well. For example, musicians will have a tremendous advantage over non-musicians when learning to dance, because they don't have to devote much brain energy to the perception of rhythm, so they can focus more on other parts of the dance. But this normally just takes a lot of time to develop.

For people who want to work at it, however, there are some very good exercises that can be done specifically to increase the perception of rhythm and time very rapidly. These are inspired from similar exercises developed for musicians and completely apply to dancing, which requires very similar skills. There are a few basic concepts:

- 1. **Repetition.** Performing the same movement or combination of movements over and over again will become easier, the further you do it. Musicians repeat songs over and over again before being able to perform them in public;
- 2. **Independence, parallelism.** Learning to perform two actions simultaneously requires lots of concentration. At first, one must think of the two-part or three-part pattern as one single pattern, and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Part of the job of a teacher or mentor is to identify and present those concepts to the pupil, to guide him/her in the right direction for them to develop their perception of those concepts.

"synchronize" the limbs on that one pattern. As you internalize it, start focusing your brain energy on one or the other pattern. Eventually, your brain starts developing the ability to simultanously think in two separate, independent "threads" of concentration. Each of the separate threads is allocated less energy than if doing only one pattern. Thus independence exercises force your brain into requiring less energy to perform one action, to learn it and internalize it better. There are numerous examples of independence exercises in music: drummers learn to play different patterns with different limbs, piano players learn to separate the left and right hand, classical guitarists learn to separate "voices" on one instrument;

- 3. Surprise. Having to follow an external order requires attention and concentration. Students must then dedicate much focus and energy towards being attentive to the external commands. They must also learn to recover when they get destabilized. Musicians develop this through sight-reading. There are sigh-reading books specifically designed to cause surprise to the reader, to destabilize him (they are often horrible to listen to);
- 4. **Improvisation.** Thinking ahead of time is an ability that requires some energy. The mind cannot concentrate fully on the present, it must think of the future as well. This requires that the simple concepts be already learned well. One usually starts by copying the masters, then to randomly include only parts of what the masters do, and with time, to combine and change those parts. This is one of the most difficult exercises because the only real way to learn it is by doing it. It is extremely difficult at first. With time, one will develop individuality through improvisation. Jazz musicians develop this by "jumping in the bath", by forcing themselves to play improvised in public, subjecting themselves to praise or humiliation. It is said that some advanced jazz musicians can think a whole chorus or even a whole song buildup ahead of time.
- 5. **Precision.** Focusing attention on one aspect of the art requires that the other aspects be learned well enough as not suffer during the exercise. Constant work on precision is important to avoid developing bad habits, to allow one to correct himself, to keep learned concepts maleable, to allow change.

These exercises easily translate to similar experiences in the dancing field:

- 1. Repetition: Practice the same moves with very many different partners. Repeat them often until you think that you have understood them (I'm mentioning "think" here, because often you'll "rediscover" that same move in a different context months later, only to find that you had not completely understood the move the first time around);
- 2. Independence, parallelism: Practice the rhythm exercises in this study guide. Not many people do these, but they will give you an extra edge and provide you with more energy to focus on the other parts of your dancing;
- 3. Surprise: Take part in a rueda group or lesson. Having to focus on the commands of a skillful caller will require much attention. Have the caller modify the moves along the way, e.g. pa'tras! A good caller will also improvise new stuff that you have never done before, don't limit yourself to doing only "canned" moves, exactly as they were shown. Having to react to this, and to the errors of other dancers will destabilize you and require that you learn to adjust accordingly;
- 4. Improvisation: Go out and dance in front of everyone at the club. Try not to think of them or what they think, this will draw much of your energy away (this is especially true for many girls who are

very public-conscious);

5. Precision: Practice moves with a single partner, over and over again, until they feel perfect.

## 4.17 Marking the Beat vs. Improvising

When dancing with beginners to intermediate-level girls, if the leader doesn't mark a clear, obvious basic step, the girl will get lost (or sometimes whine and wonder about "what are you doing?"). There is no space for improvisation. The problem is that some women dance to the man's feet, and not to the music. A good dancer should lean on the music.

In fact, if the leader is good enough adjust his lead properly, it is entirely possible to dance on two separate beats (both on the music) and for it to look good. This often happens when the leader improvises with different rhythmic patterns on his feet.

Good dancers don't really care if you improvise within the pattern (and do not lose the beat while doing so), they just keep leaning on music and their basic step (or sometimes even improvise as well). With really good dancers, it is more important to be listening to what each other is doing (i.e. play with your partner) than to mark an obvious basic step.

Note that it is very important that you remember where the simple basic step should be, and how it relates to what you're doing, because the change of balance is important when doing moves together. I've seen really really good dancers that improvise throughout: when you watch them dance, you can't clearly see their 1-2-3 steps (or barely), but it's really there, just hidden within their improvisation (their are totally aware of it, they're not just doing random stuff).

# Part II Cuban Salsa

# Chapter 5

# Són

The Cuban són music is enjoying unprecedented popularity in the world today, due partly to the popularity of the Buena Vista Social Club project. This music is the traditional music of the eastern part of Cuba. It has a sweet, compelling rhythm marked by the maracas and the bongos, ornamented by the tres (a kind of three-stringed guitar). It is a music that old people dance to, and it is not rare to see them being some of the best són dancers in a *casa de la trova* in Cuba.

Són is the foundation for salsa dancing. It is encouraged to learn to dance són before salsa, because it emphasizes work on the different feet movements without mixing it up with turns, and as such forces the leader to come up with interesting use of very simple moves and subtleties to create an interesting dance, something that many north american dancers seem to lack due to our interest in complex turns. Mastering són provides the basis from which to move into more complex dancing. Furthermore, the slower rhythm should make it easier for beginners to focus on the steps. However, dancing a contra-tiempo might be more difficult to learn for dancers which already have a base in salsa dancing "on 1".

In són, there are no complicated turns, this only comes about with salsa. In són you work the feet, in salsa you add a lot of complex hand movements.

# 5.1 Rhythm

Són music is characterized by the són clave:



This clave is played on wooden blocks (clave) that have a brighter and stronger sound than the rumba clave. The clave is usually quite clearly heard in són music.

5.2. HOLD Latin Dance Study Guide

For the dancer, són *always* dances *a contra-tiempo*, i.e.



Note that we're usually counting 1-2-3, 5-6-7, or 1-2-3, 4-5-6, even though the actual beats that are danced to are 2-3-4, 6-7-8. Dancing són *a tiempo* would be a gross mistake. There is also a very strong accent on the 4 and 8 beats in són, with the bodies of the dancers almost stopping on these beats. Contrarily to salsa, són dancers should avoid making kicks on the free 1 and 5 beats.

#### 5.2 Hold

For the great majority of the time in són partners dance in closed hold. In són, LE'RH is positioned high in FO's back, and his right elbow is raised high so that his arm is horizontal (this is otherwise to be avoided in all positions in salsa, but is normal in són). LE'LH is help high and vertical, so that LE's left elbow touches FO's right elbow and the arms are horizontal too. L-R are in closed position, with LE's hand covering FO's hand (see figure 5.1).



Figure 5.1: Closed hold for són

# 5.3 Steps

#### 5.3.1 Són step

The són step is a *small* step inside and back. The feet are supposed to be held relatively close together, do not open legs much when stepping (remember that this is a dance performed by old people, and so everything should be easy on the body). *Always* performed *a contra-tiempo*, *always*. The embrace should be very close. LE'RF should be between FO's feet.

Latin Dance Study Guide 5.3. STEPS

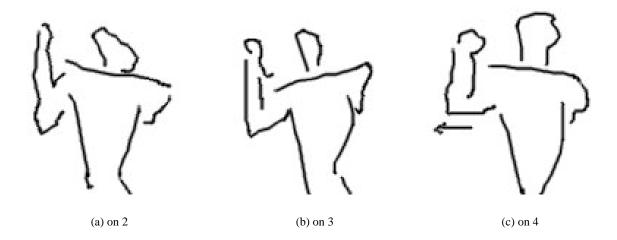


Figure 5.2: Movements of the shoulders in són step

## & Step: Són step

In closed hold,

- 2: Step back and inside with LF. Do not step *too* far back, and do not close the feet *too* much sideways, the step should be *small*, very small. This foot steps in planta.
- 3: Perform a small change of weight to RF, and step a little tiny bit with it. Do not raise knee or step big. This should be a subtle little step with RF.
- 4: Step LF back to its original position, stepping with great accent and the *whole* foot on the ground. The accent is very clearly marked on this beat, with the body moving sideways as well.
- 5: ... let the 4th beat linger until 6
- 6781 mirror for other side.

The upper body and shoulders should make a balancing motion: on 2, the left shoulder should go up and the right shoulder should go down; on 3 you should balance the opposite: the right shoulder should go up, and the left one should go down. On 4 move like on 2. See figure 5.2.

The style of the són step should be one where all the accent is put on the 4. The steps on 2 and 3 could be so small that you could almost bypass stepping those at all.

#### 5.3.2 Saludo

There is a variation on the són step, a kind of "pause", called the salute ("saludo", or "alarde"). You can add this in whenever you want, for effect. Most of the turns finish with a saludo. You most often do only one side of the saludo, when starting or ending a move.

5.3. STEPS Latin Dance Study Guide

#### Step: Saludo, alarde

• 2: Step with LF planta pointing out sideways (to the left), perhaps a tiny little bit back as well, weight on RF. Turn head and look towards the left too, but *not* the upper body, just the head.

- 2+: Optionally raise the left hip a little bit to mark time (and for style).
- 4: Step LF back to its original position, as in the són step.
- ...(continue)...

Mirror for the other side. Notice that the weight doesn't change during the step.

Turning a little bit, both LE and FO together (a rotation), makes the saludo a bit nicer.

#### 5.3.3 Side-to-side walk

LE can also step sideways with FO, with displacement. From the són step, you have to start to one side by closing the feet on 2, then open on 3, then close again on 4. When closing, almost put the feet together, leave just enough space for FO's foot the fit between LE's feet.

For example, after a saludo to the left:

- 2: you close RF towards LF
- 3: open LF out to the left
- 4: close RF again towards LF

Then do another one to the left:

- 2: open LF out to the left
- 3: you close RF towards LF
- 4: open LF out to the left again, ending in són step position, where you could do a saludo to the right or something else.

#### 5.3.4 Basic step

The second most important step in són is the basic step of salsa, that we'll just call the "basic step" here. This is the common front-to-back step.

# Step: Basic step

- 2: step forward with LF
- 3: step in-place with RF
- 4: step LF back beside RF, and a little bit behind
- 6: step backwards with RF
- 7: step in-place with LF
- 8: step RF back beside LF, and a little bit in front

For beginners: you need to practice this one a lot, in order to learn the correct body dynamics, which makes FO understand that you're going forward or backward.

Latin Dance Study Guide 5.3. STEPS

#### 5.3.5 Sacude el agua al pozo, adelante-atras

This motion is a variation on the basic step which is very much in the són style. LE enters his RF and leg farther in between FO's legs and moves his LF farther, almost behind FO, in a closer embrace.

- 123: Do as if doing a basic step forward, but step in-place. Exaggerate moving upper body forward *a lot*;
- 567: Do as if doing a basic step backwarsd, but step in-place. Exaggerate moving upper body backward *a lot*.

It's fun to exaggerate this move, until it almost takes a ridiculous flavour. FOs often like this kind of fooling around a lot.

#### 5.3.6 Rotation

The rotation step is a variation on the basic front-to-back step (sec 5.3.4), but stepping on a circle in CW order.

This step can be done in salsa as well. When done in a són context, try crossing feet in smaller amounts, it should be pretty small, since you're in closed hold.

#### 

Start on the 5, always. You can finish on either 5 or 1.

- 5: cross RF behind LF, much to the left of it;
- 6-7: proceed with basic step on the left side of a circle;
- 1: cross LF in front and to the right of the RF, moving rightwards on 1;
- 2-3: follow with basic step on the right of a circle.

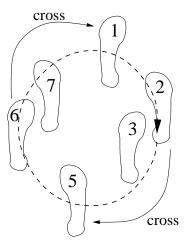


Figure 5.3: Rotation step foot placement.

This move has a feeling as if it was meant to be done low. Starting on the 5 is useful when doing it in a couple: LE starts with the RF in the back while pulling signal on FO to induce the rotation. Be careful not

5.3. STEPS Latin Dance Study Guide

to turn body sideways when doing the rotation step, keep facing straight.

#### 5.3.7 Cajón, quadrado

The cajón (litterally: box) is a move very typical of són. The feet step in a square pattern, hence the name (see figure 5.4). This step requires a bit of practice to lead it right (it tends to confuse FOs).

#### Step: Cajón, quadrado

- 2: step almost in-place, slightly backwards with LF, close to RF
- 3: step backward with RF, rather far
- 4: with LF, do as if stepping backward, and then open far to the left. The foot should first be moving back, then to the left, in an angle (see figure).
- 6: step almost in-place, slightly forward with RF, close to LF
- 7: step forward with LF, rather far
- 8: with RF, do as if stepping forward, and then open far to the right. The foot should first be moving forward, then to the right, in an angle.

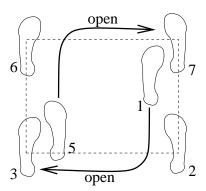


Figure 5.4: Location of the feet for cajón

The feet should be stepping on a square pattern. Note the L-shaped path of the foot that opens.

#### 5.3.8 Girón

iSalsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #29, "Hecho into Tight Turning"

iSalsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #30, "Explanation of getting into Tight Turning"

¡Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #31, "Explanation of Tight Turning" Latin Dance Study Guide 5.3. STEPS

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #2, move #10, "Tight Turning"

The girón<sup>1</sup> consists in a simultaneous turn in the same direction of both partners in closed hold. The dancers can keep turning as long as desired. The turns can be done CW or CCW. The CW turn is usually much easier. Note that this step can also be called "tight turning", "papillon", or la prima.

During the turn, hold L-R at a 90 degrees angle, with hands pointing up in the air, in very close embrace. Make sure that LE is centered in front of FO, almost nose-to-nose; some FOs tend to move into LE's right, which screws up the balance and elegance of the move.

LE'RH must be providing strong support in FO's back to fight the centrifugal force. Also, stand high upstraight: if the legs are bent it makes it much more difficult to turn with ease and move the feet together in a rotating pattern. Depending on FO, you will want to open feet a bit, but not too much.

You can continue turning like this for as long as you want. If you stare at your partner as you turn, it gets a little scary after a while, since the world is spinning around you, so try to spot.

This move is difficult to perform with beginner FOs, because they must learn to get close and do small steps. A major trick is to turn around the *combined* center of gravity and to center each other face-to-face.

When dancing traditional-style, always end the girón with a saludo.

#### Girón CW (a la derecha)

Entering the girón CW can be done at many places, but it looks best right after hecho in single open hold.

On 12, LE does a back break and moves forward a lot on 2, and enters LE'RF between FO's legs. L-R is important, pulling FO towards him a bit, indicating her to get closer in closed hold. On 3, LE and FO should be together in closed hold with feet close together and both dancers have executed a 180 degree turn.

There are two forms of steps for LE during the girón CW:

- 1. RF is always in between FO's feet, and LF always searches forward, feet are rather close together;
- 2. LF is always in front and RF is always behind it, rather far. RF is always crossing behind LF.

There are many other ways to exit, some possible ones:

- simply let go of LE'RH behind her back, and end up in double open hold;
- on 56 LE does a back break, and on 7 LE raises FO'RH and moves under it and goes behind FO. If LE hold FO'RH, she will be turning a half-turn to the right. From here LE could do a full spin to the right, which looks quite good.

#### Girón CCW (a la izquierda)

The girón CCW is more difficult than the girón CW because LE's leg that advances is in between FO's leg.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Girón is just a general spanish term for a "turn" but we deliberately choose it here as terminology for this particular move

5.4. HECHO / VUELTA Latin Dance Study Guide

Entering the girón CCW:

- first step forward with LE'LF as if going CW and change there on 1, easier;
- from dile que no (difficult).

Again, stepping can be done in two forms:

- 1. with feet close together (easier);
- 2. with LF always crossing behind and behind RF (more difficult).

#### Changing direction

During the girón, you can slow down and change direction. Playing with the direction changes is an excellent exercise. FO can lean backwards when changing directions. Play with it.

➤ Exercise: Changing girón rotation

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #32, "Tight Turning with some Dips"

Practice changing rotation direction during girón. You need to find the right spot (there are many).

#### 5.4 Hecho / Vuelta

In traditional són, typically the only turn that is present is a turn to the right of FO (see "hecho" section 8.2 for full description). The vuelta is always performed very softly, very gently.

To terminate a turn, you can step back into the basic step, start a cajón, a girón, a pasea, etc. If you're already familiar with salsa, you should avoid doing *dile que no*; rather chain smoothly into something in closed hold.

#### 5.5 Pasea

A pasea (litterally: a "promenade"), is when FO walks around LE. Typically in són the paseas are done with LE holding his hand above his head (pasea arriba) when FO turns behind him. Like the vueltas, the paseas are always performed very gently as well.

In són, the paseas are always done in four bars. A good way to start a pasea is to start with a vuelta (hecho), and chain directly into pasea. You end the pasea like you end the vueltas, i.e. recover closed position and move into something else.

Latin Dance Study Guide 5.6. TORNILLOS

#### 5.6 Tornillos

Norberto

A tornillo (litterally: screw), is when one of the dancers is in equilbrium on on foot, and the other is dragging a turn by walking around her/him.

Very often, only LE does the tornillo, but if both partners are going to perform a tornillo and if you're dancing in a traditional style, you should *always* lead a tornillo of FO before a tornillo of LE.

#### 5.6.1 Tornillo of FO

Begin in double crossed hold, with an hecho (see section 8.2), and stop FO's turn when LE is facing her back, hold both of her hands from behind, with LE's palms up. FO lowers downwards, bending left leg, and extending RF in front of her. This should *always* be done on FO'LF, never RF. The tornillo has started.

LE walks the salsa walk CW around FO and and does not cross his feet (important). He is the one who decides to stop and ligts her and make her do another hecho to finish.

LE stops his feet at some point while she is on her way up. Both start together again in closed hold, *always* to the left (on beat 4 with accent).

#### 5.6.2 Tornillo of LE

Begin with either of:

- girón to the left or to the right;
- pasea CW (perhaps help her understand with LE'LH).

FO starts walking the salsa walk (does not cross feet). She must understand that a tornillo is about to start when she sees LE that stops stepping. FOs must walk a lot, must walk fast, and around, and offer some stability to LE!

LE either lowers on one leg like FO or does something else, on one foot. Simply raise RF on 1 to start into tornillo, use both hands for pressure. LE can put the free leg not only in front, but also on his knee, behind in the air, wherever looks nice and interesting.

LE decides to finish by simply moving up and perhaps doing a turn. Pick up FO in closed hold for són step.

Note that if LE's shoes are too sticky (e.g. running shoes on a concrete street somewhere in Cuba), you can do a false tornillo by first crossing feet and then slowly undoing the leg twist by letting FO pull. You can even twist one more turn if desired.

5.6. TORNILLOS Latin Dance Study Guide

# Chapter 6

# **Holds**

This section describes various ways for the leader to hold the follower for leading. At the time I wrote this I was interested in finding commonalities and discovering all the possible ways to hold and combinations of arms. I realize now (2004) that it is very much overkill. Nevertheless, I include this section anyway since it was part of the original notes, and it may be worthwhile to spend some time trying to understand the various combinations of arms. There are more than are described here.

# 6.1 Holding hands

The various usual ways that leader can hold follower's hand are shown in figure 6.1.

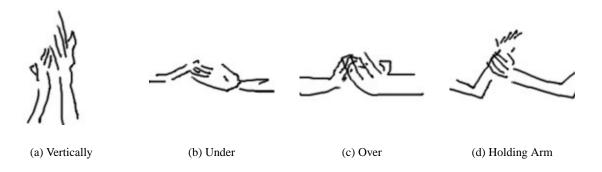


Figure 6.1: Various hand grips.

The preferred way to hold hands for cuban salsa is with LE's hand over FO's hand, with FO holding LE's thumb (6.1(c)). Since the cuban salsa involves more surprise and play from the part of the leader, this hold gives more control. LE can also occasionally hold FO's wrist (6.1(d)) or the opposite. This is common, especially in the context of rueda, where leads can get a little rougher (you can lag behind when making

mistakes). Often, cuban FOs will present their arm up e.g. after *dile que no*, and it is common for LE to grab her wrist.

# 6.2 Hands that are not busy

Arms that are not used look better when kept bent at 90 degrees, hands in front of you at belly level (figure 6.2). Don't let the arms fall down, it looks bad.



Figure 6.2: Free hands should be kept in front of you.

#### More notes:

- If FO's hand was let go on LE's belly, keep it there for contact, sliding as he turns, or ready to be gripped;
- If FO's hand is let go on LE's shoulder while he's facing away, FO slides her hand down in his back, don't let it drop too fast;

#### 6.3 Holds

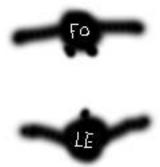


Figure 6.3: Freestyle, no hold: LE and FO are dancing without holding hands.

Latin Dance Study Guide 6.3. HOLDS

#### 6.3.1 Closed hold

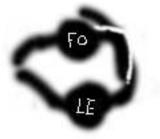


Figure 6.4: Closed Hold.

LE places RH behind FO's left shoulder blade, a little bit more to the center of FO's back is ok too. LE'LH holds FO'RH palm to palm, with LE'LH's fingers pointing more towards the outside (see hand holds below). About the LE'LH or FO'RH hands moving: do not move the hands! You'll see some people moving the hands in a rotation, this should not be done deliberately. A common problem with LEs in closed hold is with LE'RH not being in the appropriate place. LEs tend to rest their right hand too low, almost on FO's hip. It is not possible to exert proper control with the LE'RH in this position. LE'RH must be far in FO's back, in the middle of her back, and high, near her shoulder blade.

#### 6.3.2 Single open hold and reverse single open hold

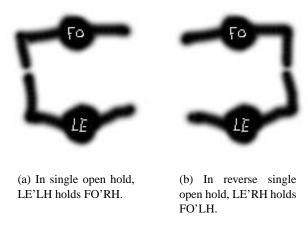


Figure 6.5: Single open holds.

6.3. HOLDS Latin Dance Study Guide

# 6.3.3 Double open hold

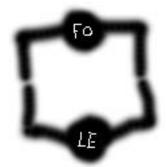


Figure 6.6: LE'LH holds FO'RH and LE'RH holds FO'LH. Do not rotate the hands in a circle.

# 6.3.4 (Single) crossed hold and reverse single crossed hold (x-hold)

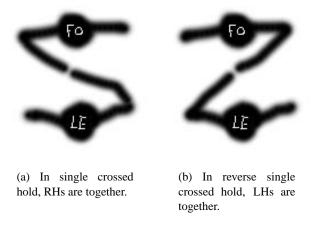


Figure 6.7: Single crossed holds.

Latin Dance Study Guide 6.3. HOLDS

#### 6.3.5 Double crossed hold and reverse double crossed hold (x-hold)

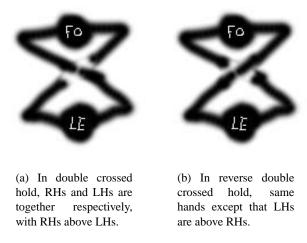


Figure 6.8: Double crossed holds.

#### 6.3.6 Doubly-crossed hold and reverse doubly-crossed hold

Same hands as double open hold, except that an extra turn of one of the partners with both hands above head has been added. To get into doubly-crossed hold, do an FO'OT or LE'LT. To get into reverse doubly-crossed hold, do an FO'IT or LE'RT.

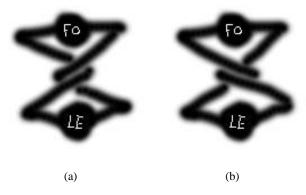


Figure 6.9: Doubly-crossed holds.

#### 6.3.7 Back-to-back Hold

Hold hands far apart.

6.3. HOLDS Latin Dance Study Guide

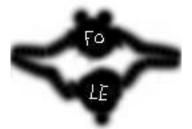


Figure 6.10: Back-to-back Hold

## 6.3.8 Double backcrossed hold and reverse double backcrossed hold

Same as crossed holds, except partners are back-to-back, with hands low. If one partner moves slightly to the side, this is similar to the *sombrero* holds, except with hands low behind partner's backs instead of high behind their necks. You can switch between the two holds by pulling on one arm and turning simultaneously. It's rather difficult to get out of this other than leader crouching and turning under all hands with hands in his back.

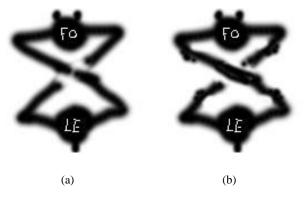


Figure 6.11: Single open holds

Latin Dance Study Guide 6.3. HOLDS

## 6.3.9 FO/LE Wrapped hold (FO or LE is wrapped)



Figure 6.12: Wrapper Hold.

One of the partners does a half-turn, moving one hand over head and then back down, to get into a wrapped hold. You can imagine four variants of wrapped holds:

- wrapped LE hold, with LE'RH over LE'LH
- wrapped LE hold, with LE'RH under LE'LH
- wrapped FO hold, with FO'RH over FO'LH
- wrapped FO hold, with FO'RH under FO'LH

#### 6.3.10 Front-to-back crossed hold and reverse front-to-back crossed hold

One of the partners is facing the other's back.

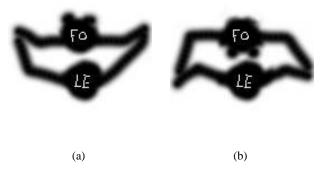


Figure 6.13: Front-to-back holds

6.4. OTHER COMMON HOLDS Latin Dance Study Guide

#### 6.4 Other common holds

Some of these hold aren't actually called "holds", but it can be convenient to declare some of these hand combinations as extra vocabulary to help describe some of the more complex moves. I sometimes call them "positions" instead of holds.

#### 6.4.1 Sombrero holds

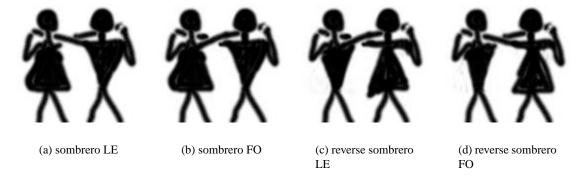


Figure 6.14: Single open holds

LE'RH is behind FO's neck and FO'LH is behind LE's neck. RHs and LHs are held together, respectively. Lower those elbows, this is very important for style and comfort of the other partner. If one of the partners is much taller than the other, that partner should bend the knees a little bit for comfort. To remember if the position is a *sombrero LE* or a *sombrero FO*, look at which arm is in front. This position is difficult to hold the first few times you do it, but there is a way to hold it comfortably. The trick lies in the arm that is bent. To get into *sombrero LE* position, simply start from REVERSE double crossed hold and LE raises hands over heads with both dancers looking west. Or start with double crossed hold and do an FO'OT with both hands over FO's head, then rest LE'RH behind FO's neck (very common too, I guess you could call this one the *sombrero* move). The sombrero FO hold is the same as sombrero position LE, except that FO has her arm inside, i.e. in front of LE. To get into *sombrero LE* position, simply start from double crossed hold and LE raises hands over heads with both dancers looking west.

#### **6.4.2** Cero siete hold (07)



Figure 6.15: 07 hold.

The dancer has one arm behind his/her back, and the other arm's hand behind his/her neck, with elbow bent down. It is very important that the elbow be bent down and not up, both for style and for ease into other moves from this position.

To get into one of these positions, start with single crossed hold and do an FO'OT, raising RHs and keeping LHs low. LE'RH can free FO'RH from behind her neck and bring it in front e.g. for preparation for FO'IT.

#### **6.4.3** Setenta hold (70)

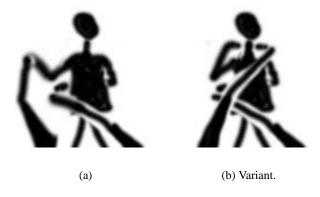


Figure 6.16: Single open holds

Same as *cero siete*, except that LE's hands are crossed. LE'LH can free FO'RH from behind her beck and bring it in front e.g. for preparation for FO'IT.

6.5. STOP-CHECKING FO Latin Dance Study Guide

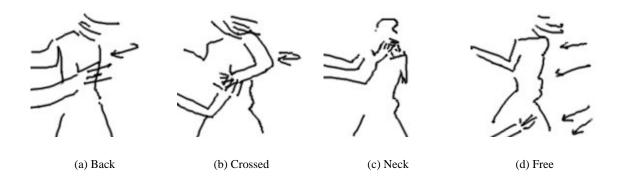


Figure 6.17: Different ways to stop-check FO

# 6.5 Stop-checking FO

There are several ways to place the hands to stop FO and reverse direction within a turn:

- with one hand in her lower back (figure 6.17(a)). Put hand in low back and make sure that your resistance is strong enough, there should be no ambiguity;
- with one arm crossed behind her back (figure 6.17(b)). You may twist her hand slightly to get her into this hold, and to avoid confusion leading into this;
- with hand/arm blocking behind her neck (figure 6.17(c)). You can also use this on LE when doing turns;
- let her free and give her a soft push (figure 6.17(d)).

# **Chapter 7**

# Cuban Salsa (Casino)

Cubans have a distinctive flavour of salsa dancing. Not only do they integrate many elements from the afrocuban dances, which gives their salsa dancing an extra spice, but they dance a very dynamic style, where bodies are in constant movement in space. In general, cuban-style salsa dancing has a less-rigid, more fluid feeling than the P.R. or N.Y styles, and make use of more complex arm combinations, and very few dips, if any at all.

This chapter consists of notes specifically about the cuban style of salsa.

# 7.1 Introductory Notes

Dance is an important, rich part of the cuban culture. Every cuban dances at least a little bit, and most if not all have a good sense of rhythm.

#### 7.1.1 General attitude

There is a great difference between the roles that leader and follower take between the cuban style of salsa and the common salsa danced in north america and europe.

In the cuban style, the center of the show is the man. The man improvises, does a series of tricks and games with his follower, while the women dances more vividly, more actively, but without ever leading anything, and usually just marking the beat. Also, the dance is much more about the enjoyment of the dancers than the enjoyment of the onlookers: they dance for fun between themselves, rarely to make a show. The is a "play" and surprise aspect that is very present and important.

The attitude that the follower should have towards "the walk", is very dynamic, always in movement. It reminds me, to a certain extent, to that of a mouse trying to exit a maze, avoiding the walls, always be moving forward. In the cuban style girls seem to always walk forward somewhat on 2 and 6, after a small

7.1. INTRODUCTORY NOTES Latin Dance Study Guide

back break (sometimes even stepping it a bit forward). FOs should cultivate the aptitude to find a way to walk forward.

In cuban salsa, FO walks and moves much more than LE. It is not uncommon to have the impression that the women are dancing around the men. Every step that FO makes is anything between in-place back breaks and full forward salsa walk. The idea is always the same: "walk, walk, walk, walk, walk, ..." where walk means either of back break, sometimes means a back break with forward displacement, or forward walk—in various quantities, but there is always some forward displacement.

#### Exercise: Mouse in a Maze

Here is a little game for FOs, to develop this attitude: without holding, FO and LE do back breaks walking forward, freely, anywhere on the floor. LE attempt to block FO's path, and FO tries to find an "escape" by walking to one of his sides (and never away from him). FO is not allowed to do lateral steps, nor step backwards, that is, wherever she's going, she has to be facing that way (this is very important). In other words, when FO moves somewhere, she always

- 1. turns in that direction;
- 2. walks forward.

During this game, LE and FO should keep fairly close to each other. The interaction is what is interesting here. This exercise is for FO only.

#### 7.1.2 Dress Fashions

The Cubans often dance in the street, at popular fiestas, on concrete ground. Most cubans prefer to dance in running shoes, which may seem odd to some of us used to the club scene. For cuban salsa, running shoes are not a problem since there are no fast spin turns. *Warning:* once you start enjoying your sneakers for dancing, it becomes difficult to enjoy your leather shoes again.

Cubans dance anywhere, anytime. There is no dress code for street salseros. Cuban men often like to wear cargo pants and running shoes. I've seen many cuban girls who enjoy wearing tights with vertical colored stripes, a funny fashion item there. Women, like men, often wear running shoes, sometimes by necessity, I suppose.

At tourist clubs cubans are dressed up just like us.

#### 7.1.3 Influence of Folkloric Dancing

A very important part of the cuban style of dancing comes from integrating movements from rumba folklore. To fully integrate the cuban style, it may help to learn to dance some rumba.

Also, everything that you can do in són you can dance in cuban salsa. Thus this material will not be repeated in this section, we assume that everything in the són section is valid here as well, unless especially mentioned.

Latin Dance Study Guide 7.2. RHYTHM

### 7.2 Rhythm

Modern cuban salsa and timba music is mostly danced *a tiempo*, but can sometimes be danced *a contra-tiempo*, just like cuban són, it really depends on the type and feel of the music. Some of the cuban timba carries the flavour of són, and it is sometimes more appropriate to dance it *a contra-tiempo*.

#### 7.2.1 Switching rhythms

Dancers can switch between dancing *a tiempo* and *a contra-tiempo* or vice-cersa. Advanced dancers will be able to perform this seamlessly *during a single song*. LE has to perform a confident switch and "mark" very clearly. FO should be able to pick up on the new rhythm after one or two bars at most. This may seem overly difficult or impossible, but I've seen it done by some cubans as if it was second nature.

Here is how you can change the steps to perform the switch. Note that even though the switches are described on 1,2,3,4, you can also perform similar switches on 5,6,7,8:

#### Switching rhythms, solo steps

These next two switches break the alternating movement of the feet, and thus should only be done solo.

To switch between dancing a tiempo into dancing a contra-tiempo:

- 1,2,3: Same step as usual (LF-RF-LF)
- 4: Step the accent of a contra-tiempo with RF. (You have switched.)
- 5,6,7,8: Continue a contra-tiempo with LF.

To switch between dancing a contra-tiempo into dancing a tiempo::

- 2,3: Same step as usual (LF-RF)
- 4: Instead of stepping on the 4 with the accent, do an adorno (a kick) with LF here
- 5,6,7: Step a tiempo with LF-RF-LF. (You have switched.)

#### Switching rhythms, with partner

These next two switches maintain the alternating movement of the feet, and can be done with a partner. In general, the change can be applied on the forward or backward step. It is better for LE to perform the change on his backward step, as to give FO one bar to notice and adjust her step accordingly (otherwise, she might be stepping forward while LE is waiting).

To switch between dancing *a tiempo* into dancing *a contra-tiempo*:

- 5,6: Same step as usual (RF-LF)
- 7: Wait, where you would usually bring the back feet together
- 9: Step the accent of a contra-tiempo with RF. (You have switched.)
- 1,2,3,4: Continue a contra-tiempo with LF

To switch between dancing a contra-tiempo into dancing a tiempo:

7.3. BASIC STEPS Latin Dance Study Guide

- 2,3,4: Same step as usual (LF-RF-LF)
- 5: Do not perform the pause. Step right into a tiempo with RF. (You have switched.)
- 6,7: Continue a tiempo with LF-RF.

#### ➤ Exercise: Switching rhythms

Practice dancing in closed hold with partner using only basic steps (no turns) and switching between *a tiempo* and *a contra-tiempo*, back and forth.

Before you attempt this exercise, you *must* be able to feel both rhythms very solidly and confidently. If you are still hesitating or getting confused in either, you will not be able to perform the switches. This is an advanced exercise.

## 7.3 Basic Steps

All salsa steps obey the same basic pattern:

- from feet more or less together, move and change weight one foot outside (anywhere);
- step more or less in-place with the other foot, changing weight again, to it. Conceptually, it does not move, but in practice, you "walk", so it does move;
- bring the foot that moved outside back together. Again, "together" is conceptual, in practice the foot does not necessarily come close to the other because you're constantly walking.

Any direction and combination of displacement is valid. It is more important to understand the conceptual framework than to step in exact places. In this section, we examine minute details of the various steps, which are really just specific selections of directions to step into.

#### 7.3.1 Upper body rotations

iSalsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #19, "Explanation of Shoulder Angles for Paseo De Olas"

In cuban salsa, there are the principal upper body rotations, which are very different from the upper body rotations in the international salsa style (see section 12.2.1). This is a very important differentiating characteristic, and is the cause of much of the trouble in trying to dance the cuban style with someone used to the other style. Those rotations are carried out throughout the dance.

In the cuban style, the rotation of the shoulders of FO is opposite that of LE (rather than synchronized, see figure 7.2), thus shoulders come together on 1 and 5.

Most of the turns are performed with the following upper body rotation (see back break step, in section 7.3.3):

Latin Dance Study Guide 7.3. BASIC STEPS

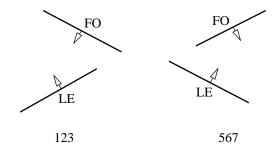


Figure 7.1: Upper body rotation in paseo de olas.

The shoulders of LE and FO can come arbitrarily close during the moves. Notice how LE's rotation is the opposite as FO's rotation.

The other upper body rotation is similar but reversed in time:

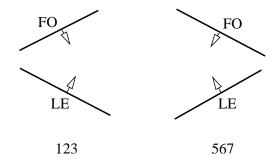


Figure 7.2: Upper body rotation in casino step.

Although it is rather subtle, cuban dancers continuously change between these two types of rotations during the dance.

This type of opposite rotations also tends to induce lateral movement (see section 7.4, figure 7.6) a, i.e. partners feel it natural to move sideways across the floor.

#### 7.3.2 Rocking step

The dance should start smoothly, with a gentle side-to-side rocking step.

Step: Rocking

This step should be light, and is always done in closed hold. With feet side by side,

- 1: step LF inside towards RF, this is a light step;
- 3: step LF back out to its original position;
- 5: step RF inside towards LF;
- 7: step RF back out to its original position.

7.3. BASIC STEPS Latin Dance Study Guide

From there on, you gradually transform your step into the back break step, which is the most important step in cuban salsa.

#### 7.3.3 Back-Break Step

#### 

It's basically the same as the basic step (see 5.3.4), except that the LF backwards on the 1 instead of forward.

- 1: step with LF backward, just behind RF. Rotate shoulders to place the right shoulder forward a bit, and body pointing north-west, but not too much;
- 2: step in-place with RF, with toes now pointing a little bit to the north west;
- 3: bring LF back to its original position next to RF, shoulder straight once again;
- 4: pause (or adorno, see section 7.3.7);
- 5: step with RF backwards, mirror 1, left shoulder in front;
- 6: step in-place with LF, with toes now pointing a little bit to the north east;
- 7: bring RF back to its original position next to LF
- 8: pause (or adorno, see section 7.3.7);

The back break step can be done as described above, or with feet staying more or less in-place, or with some displacement forward or backward. Note that the back break with lots of forward displacement becomes salsa walk (see section 7.4.1). It is a general sequence of steps that is used as a basis for almost everything in cuban salsa a.

Note also that on 2 and 6 the foot that steps in-place is not really "crossing" in front of the other foot, due to the orientation of the toes. "Crossing" the foot would be in the toes were oriented the other way.

If you want to work the details, make sure that the elevation of your knee is equal on both sides, especially if you've been introduced to casino, which tends to develop your dancing asymetrically.

One very important detail that is apparent in the cuban style is that the shoulders should be rotating throughout the back breaks. Make sure that your upper body is rotating very smoothly left and right, but not too much, just a little bit, and in equal amounts on each side. This, and the other, shoulder rotation is performed during the whole dance.

The back break is done slightly differently in other styles, see section 12.2.4. What is specific to the cuban style is the rotation of the shoulders and body. The rotations are described in more detail in section 7.3.1.

See exercise 7.6.3 for an exercise that includes practicing back breaks with shoulder rotation.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Note that in the north american styles of salsa, the basic step is used more that the back break step, but not in cuban style.

Latin Dance Study Guide 7.3. BASIC STEPS

#### 7.3.4 Casino Step

The casino step is the most step which is done when dancing in open hold in cuban salsa or rueda. This is the step for LE, FO does the basic step (see section 5.3.4) with LE, in single open hold, i.e. holding L-R.

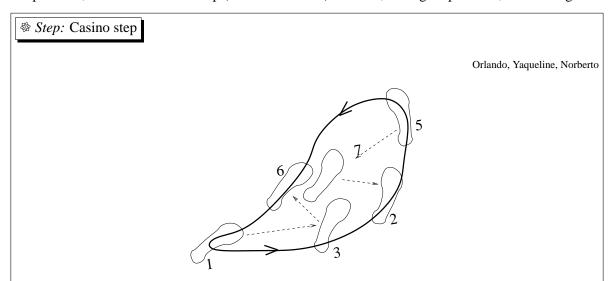


Figure 7.3: Cuban-style rotation for casino step (LE's perspective).

- 5: step with RF forward (a smaller step than for basic step, because FO's LF will also be stepping forward in the same place while she does the basic step). This is called *marking*, because this step marks the beginning of the sequence, and to mark very clearly is important, because this is what FOs will be looking at to adjust themselves when starting. Push LE'RH off FO'LH (see below for details about hands);
- 6: step with LF a little bit to the left, displacing body and weight towards the left;
- 7: bring RF to the right of LF, and open position by turning slightly to the right, not quite a quarter turn. The opening rotation is very important;
- 8: pause (or adorno);
- 1: step with LF sideways—actually, it's more like stepping backward since your body should be turned slightly to the right at this point;
- 2: open with RF sideways to the right, and a bit forward, displacing body to the right a lot, this is almost a side-step;
- 3: bring LF beside RF, completing the sideways body displacement, and, close the body orientation to be facing your partner face-to-face, by rotating to the left, ready for marking and push-off on 1;
- 4: pause (or adorno).

Notice the rotating displacement of the body (see figure 7.3). There is sideways motion on 2 (to the right) and 6 (to the left), and the body rotates on precisely 3 and 7 as well. In general, bending knees will help avoid making this step seem too rigid. Also, don't twist the hips for no reason.

In simple terms, this step is the reverse of the basic step: step with LF backward on 123 and with RF forward on 567. When looking at a detailed level, to do it right (and to get the right feeling), it is in fact much more

7.3. BASIC STEPS Latin Dance Study Guide

involved than this.

The description above is for LE's step. FO performs the same sideways motion but with the feet for the basic step (see figure 7.4).

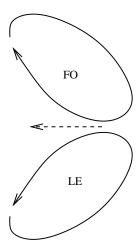


Figure 7.4: Relative movement of LE and FO in casino step.

**Hands for Push-Off** During the push-off, LE's right elbow should not move behind the body, it should stay close to LE's body, and offer resistance. Also, be careful not to dip the right shoulder in, rotating the body. LE should offer something that seems like a lot of resistance at that point.

The pressure that you should use for push-off has to be worked out. A good exercise is described below.

► Exercise: Push off the wall

Yaqueline

Left hand against a wall, with body leaning towards it a little bit, push away from the wall with right hand, without letting right elbow go behind upper body. Let body return to wall naturally. Try to do this pushing as little as possible, but with enough resistance not to return close to the wall.

instructional video #1, move #3, "Woman's Left Arm Placement During Basic"

For FOs, there are many acceptable ways of pushing against LE. FO can take her apoyo not only on LE's hand, but also on either his wrist, his arm, his shoulder, his back, his belly, etc.

Another important thing is that what is really essential is the sense of direction that you give to your body, your forward and sideways motion. By exaggerating the alternating coincidence of the shoulders as in the open hold displacement (see figure 7.6), you should be able to understand the correct body dynamics. You should have the same dynamics as this when doing the casino step, just smaller. You can even perform this step by stepping all the steps almost in-place, if you have the right body dynamics.

Latin Dance Study Guide 7.3. BASIC STEPS

Remember that the most important part of the casino step is to mark forward on 5. This is the reference for FO, and this seems to be the only thing what cuban FOs are looking at when dancing with a man, that he marks clearly. Don't be afraid to put a strong accent on the mark on 5. Exaggerating this accent can also create style (some cubans like to make it look as it they were pushing something heavy, it has a nice push-pull feel to it).

There are several other ways to enrich the basic step.

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #2,

#### 7.3.5 Side-to-side step

Think of the basic side-to-side step as the same as a forward-backward basic step, except that the exiting foot goes to the side. The tricky thing about the side-to-side step is the weight change. If you don't change the weight properly, it will look bad.

This step really is just the "no displacement" end of the more cuban musician's step described below.

#### 7.3.6 Musician's step (Paso del musico)

This is a **very** important step in the cuban style. I call is the musician's step because it is what the singers typically dance on stage. It is just like the side-to-side step, except that you displace yourself on 2. You do not stand in one place, but rather belong in two fixed places (one on each side).

Step: Musician's step (Paso del musico)

¡Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video, Singers of La Dinastía

- with feet together, step in place with left foot, and push your body to the right, commencing a quarter-rotation towards the left;
- displace body to the right, stepping with right foot outside to the right, shifting the weight to right leg. After this you have gone to the location on the right;
- bring left body behind the right foot, fully assuming the new location. Body is looking diagonally towards the left;
- kick with the right foot in-place;

Repeat again in the other direction. Your body should be displacing itself between the two locations (once to the right, once to the left).

#### 7.3.7 Adornos (kicks)

When you first learn the steps, you make a pause every bar (four beats). When your perception opens and the quantity of energy required to perform the steps becomes small, you will want to step on those beats, to

7.3. BASIC STEPS Latin Dance Study Guide

use them, to feel the rhythm. More advanced dancers perform decorations on these beats, some *small* kicks, called adornos (literally: adornment).

The adornos are usually done when dancing *a tiempo*, thus we assume *a tiempo* timing in this subsection. Most often you do not add an adorno when dancing *a contra-tiempo*, because of the strong accent on the *4*, that looks better when you let it linger on the next beat.

#### Standard adorno

The most common adorno is a kick with planta on the 4th and 8th beats, with the same foot that is about to step/break on the next beat, i.e.:

- 123: step with LF-RF-LF
- 4: kick with RF
- 567: step with RF-LF-RF
- 8: kick with LF

Kick a little bit forward. You can also kick down with the heel, or kick without touching the ground.

#### Caballo adorno

Norberto

This step consists in an interesting inversion of the stepping and the kick, where the kick is done on the 3 and the foot comes to rest on the 4. Also, the foot that kicks slides back on the 3. This looks somewhat like a horse kick, which is why I choose to name it "caballo", see figure 7.5. Just life the knee, and let it fall. You shouldn't need kick more than the foot naturally moves forward by lowering the knee. Make sure your foot touches the floor when sliding back.

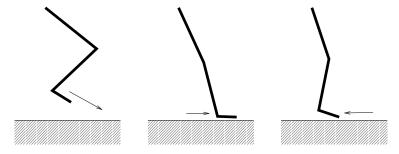


Figure 7.5: Caballo adorno (horse ornament kick).

Notice that it can be confusing because the timing appears to change to the following:



Latin Dance Study Guide 7.4. DISPLACEMENTS

#### ➤ Exercise: Caballo pasos

Mario Charón

Do a basic step where you mark forward with both LF and RF on 1 and 5 respectively. Do caballo adorno on both 34 and 78. Don't forget to turn shoulders here too.

Many cubans do this kick on the left side only, which gives a very interesting assymetrical bend to their step.

#### Post adorno

What I call the "post" adorno, is similar to the caballo adorno, but the foot that kicks on 3 doesn't actually kicks, rather does a bouncy step on the planta, and steps again on planta on 4, just before resting. This step has more of a north american flavour.

#### ► Exercise: Adornos

These are exercises to make the adornos come out in your steps:

- Do back breaks, with and without adornos, switch between them, to feel the difference clearly. Improvise.
- Mix adornos consecutively, e.g. caballo adorno after LF, and standard adorno after RF (this particular example is actually used by many cubans in the casino step, see for example Chirri's step in ᠖¡Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video, Chirri & Yumila, Chirri Solo).
- Practice the adornos with back breaks in place, back breaks traveling forward and backward, in different amounts.
- Try to perform some simple vueltas with all types of adornos.

# 7.4 Displacements

An important feature of the cuban style is that couples are rarely, if ever, dancing in a line in front of each other. LE is constantly displacing FO during the basic steps. It should be possible for a leader to entertain an FO just by displacing her around the floor in interesting ways.

#### 7.4.1 Salsa walk

You can walk three steps forward or three steps backward, in time, to displace your partner. Alternate the feet just like any basic step, i.e. LF-RF-LF, then RF-LF-RF. Make sure that your body dynamic is moving with confidence, and FO should understand and follow. Push when walking forward, and pull with LE'RH when walking backward. Do small steps to avoid bumping toes.

7.4. DISPLACEMENTS Latin Dance Study Guide

**Changing directions** A fundamental concept is that the transition between walking forward or walking backward always happens at very specific moments:

- transitioning from forward to backward walk \*always\* happens on the 1, with 123 part of basic step (LE'LF breaking forward);
- transitioning from backward to forward walk \*always\* happens on the 5, with 567 part of basic step (LE'RF breaking backward);

This is a fundamental concept and is very important.

#### ➤ Exercise: Walk transitions

In closed hold, practice the salsa walk across the floor, with LE changing direction of motion every now and then. LE can displace FO in different directions. Note that you should not be doing just the basic step: walk for a while in one direction, and practice the change in direction.

#### 7.4.2 Displacement in closed hold

As part of the basic step of salsa, LE can displace FO a lot around the floor. When in closed hold, LE will almost always displace FO in a CCW fashion.

Start in closed hold with back breaks, and start moving more and more gradually, traveling your partner around the floor, in what becomes almost a XBL motion, but not quite (LE keeps facing FO throughout). Try to vary the patterns, try to surprise FO within this limited framework.

#### 7.4.3 Displacement in open hold

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #8, "Small Camina"

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #9, "Small Camina with Crossed Hands"

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #10. "Large Camina"

Once you open and are doing the casino step, you can also travel FO around the floor, again, in the CCW direction. The lead is mostly performed with LE'LH, but there is also a pull-push dynamic to the displacement.

When greatly exaggerating the displacement, the shoulders of LE and FO should come in contact. On 123, LE's left shoulder and FO's right shoulder are together and upper bodies at an angle (see figure 7.6). On 567 the opposite shoulders and angle is used.

LE and FO should be moving in the direction of the opening of the angle. The casino step is modified a bit, in that LE and FO can cross forward on 1 instead of stepping backward/sideways in the casino step. This

Latin Dance Study Guide 7.4. DISPLACEMENTS

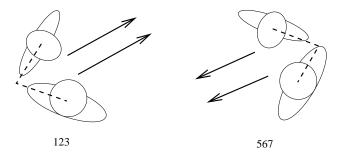


Figure 7.6: Shoulder angles for displacement in open hold.

helps add even more displacement. Because of the shoulder angles, you are not truly *crossing* one foot in front of the other, rather stepping forward, because the body is turned in that direction at that time. Note that LE should move slightly more on the 123 part than on the 567 part, this is not truly symmetrical. "Search" her more by moving forward on that measure.

Note that LE can also step backward on 567, pulling FO somewhat more like a *dile que no*. See "reversing dynamics exercise" below.

Note: try this displacement in single crossed hold (i.e. holding R-R only), and exaggerate a lot, this has a very much cuban style. LE can forego offering LE'RH to push against, and FO must use an apoyo on LE (see section 8.12.1). LE can also use an apoyo with his free hand.

This shoulder angle rotation is also a fundamental dynamic of the cuban style, which can be used in many turn combinations.

LE is pulling FO'RH with LE'LH to lead her through this displacement. Note that when pulling FO to his left on 567, LE should keep his elbow close to his body, rotating LE'LH around his elbow, more or less. The way FO'RH is pulled makes a big difference in the lead of that part.

Also, LE can pull FO to his left using R-L (see § ¡Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #8, "Small Camina" for an example).

#### Exercise: Displacements

Start in closed hold and start traveling with your partner across the floor. Practice traveling both little distances and large distances. Try to change the angles of displacement.

Open and practice small and large open displacements. Try single open hold and single crossed hold. Try switching into single open hold on 123 and into single crossed hold on 567 (very cuban).

Try the displacements where LE moves less than FO, and displacements where LE moves more than FO.

Practice switching between closed and open displacement, without doing *dile que no* or vueltas. Try to break patterns and to be creative within this limited framework. How much variation can you create? Can you create interesting dance with only displacements and basic steps? Cubans can dance whole songs like this, with a lot of flavour.

7.5. PASEO DE OLAS Latin Dance Study Guide

#### ➤ Exercise: Reversing dynamics

As an exercise specifically for body dynamics, do the casino step with displacement described in section 7.4, and alternate between doing a 567 by marking/crossing forward, and doing a 567 by stepping backwards or sideways, as in *dile que no*, e.g.

- 123,567: casino step with displacement, cross forward with RF or sideways to the right and push on 567
- 123,567: casino step with displacement, step back with RF and pull on 567
- ...(continue)...continue...

Practice playing with the different forms.

#### 7.5 Paseo de olas

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #18, "Paseo De Olas"

iSalsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #19, "Explanation of Shoulder Angles for Paseo De Olas"

Literally: "promenade of waves" 1.

Understanding this basic motion is the most important thing you need to learn about dancing the cuban style! It is the key framework within which all the other moves can be easily analysed.

This is the most *fundamental and important* concept of cuban-style salsa dancing. It is the basis for much of the vuelta variations and should be learned and mastered first when learning the combinations<sup>2</sup>. This concept and the exercises below are enormously important to realizing the moves in a smooth manner.

The concept is simple: that LE and FO are traveling CW, moving forward using small breaks, with partners changing respective places during this walk. Details:

- Use single-crossed hold (R-R hands) at first, because this hold naturally gives correct starting positions:
- Keep a very short distance to your partner, never drift away far;
- Rotate the shoulders as seen in the back break step. This is very important for style and correct relative body movements;

Nelson

• "The wave": the R-R hands are doing a forward-backward movement. LE'RH moves back and up on 3 and out and far forward on 7. LE pulls FO to walk forward more on 123. LE can practice this alone with back break. This arm movement coincides with the shoulder rotations. I observed that if the shoulder rotations are incorrect or insufficient, this forward-backward arm movement does not

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>I think it can be called like that because the smooth hand movement is reminiscent of waves. This concept does not have an official name, we're choosing this name following the ¡Salsa a la Cubana! tapes

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>I'm aching thinking of the pain I had to go through trying to learning some of these combinations in a rigid NY-style framework, which makes it so much more difficult to perform the cuban moves.

Latin Dance Study Guide 7.5. PASEO DE OLAS

feel smooth. When it feels smooth, effortless, it is a measure of correctness. Let your arm go forward all the way; if done right, it will feel natural and both partners will be at close distance together;

• Note that on 123 FO is almost facing LE's back and that on 567 LE is facing FO's back. It should go that far. See figure 7.7.

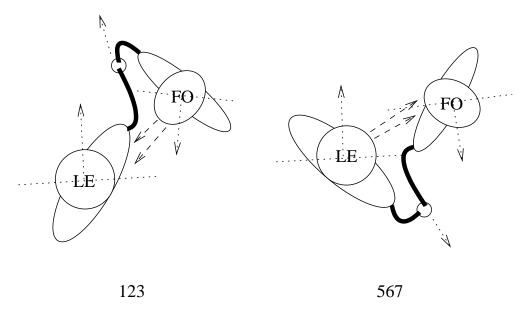


Figure 7.7: Facing your partner's back when doing the paseo de olas.

This relative movement adds a lot of dynamic to the cuban style, and greatly simplifies the completion of the complicated moves. Most, if not all of the cuban vuelta combinations are done traveling in this fashion. LE can use the expected movement of FO to perform the turns. It is very difficult to perform the same complicated moves if dancing in-line, such as in the NY-style.

This concept is the **key** to completing all the complicated turns with ease, softly.

➤ Exercise: Simple olas

Practice this until you get it smooth. This is extremely important.

## 7.5.1 Variants within paseo de olas

Variant with turns within the paseo de olas are presented in the next chapter and form part of the essential moves for the cuban style. You should practice these individually within the paseo de olas, and make sure that you can return from the turn smoothly into the smooth paseo motion.

## 7.5.2 Dancing freely

When FO is set free, she should ALWAYS get in the pasea de olas with vuelta of FO. This is a fundamental concept of the cuban style and adds much dynamic to the dance. LEs get used to this and it feels quite

7.6. EXERCISES FOR TURNS

Latin Dance Study Guide

awkward for a FO to stay in place when set free.

#### 7.5.3 Direction of rotations

Sometimes the relative rotation is reversed to CCW for certain moves. This section attempts to give an idea of which moments you travel CW and which you travel CCW.

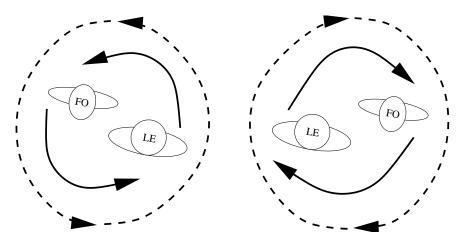


Figure 7.8: Fundamental concept of rotation between FO and LE.

The rotation is always CCW for:

- basic step
- dile que no
- casino step, with displacements
- paseas

The rotation is always CW for:

- all the vueltas, the combinations
- reverse paseas

In summary: while doing the combinations, never remain static. FO especially, always walks CW or CCW.

## 7.6 Exercises for Turns

## 7.6.1 Sencillo Turn

The sencillo (simple) is just an exercise in which the dancer is moving to one side and facing sideways for four bars (see figure 7.9). This exercise is interesting because it requires combining a turn and a step variation, and thus developing stability in landing the turn.

Here is a description of the sencillo to the right:

Latin Dance Study Guide 7.6. EXERCISES FOR TURNS

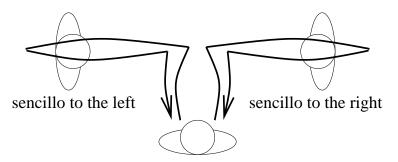


Figure 7.9: Sencillo displacement

- 123,567,...: start by doing back breaks, stepping with LF on 1, and RF on 5. It is very important to perform the shoulder rotation described in the back break step;
- 567: Step your back break, and after, turn 90 degrees to the left, facing west. Use shoulder rotation;
- 123,567: Traveling backwards facing west step back breaks and do variation;
- 123: Step your back break with LF, but step a little bit more sideways and turn 90 degrees to the right, facing north, taking original position again;
- 567,...: Back breaks.

Sencillo to the left is the same but mirrored. It is important to note that the shoulder rotations should be smooth throughout.

#### 7.6.2 Sencillo with 3/4 turn

Same thing as sencillo described above, except that we're adding a turn before doing the variation:

- 123,567,...: back breaks
- 567: Step your back break with RF and perform 3/4 turn, ending the turn when facing east
- 123,567: Traveling backwards facing east, with variation;
- 123: Step your back break with RF, but step a little bit more sideways and turn 90 degrees to the left, facing north, taking original position again;
- 567....: Back breaks.

Mirror for other side.

#### 7.6.3 Lateral-with-pivots and spin turn

Ibert

This is an exercise to work both the lateral-with-pivots and the spin turn. Focus on maintaining a smooth rotation of the *shoulders* throughout the whole exercise, as well as equal knee elevation when doing the back breaks. The shoulders should drive the momentum of the turn. Landing the turn should be done with balance and confidence.

123,567,123,567: 4× back breaks
123,567: 2× lateral-with-pivots

7.6. EXERCISES FOR TURNS

Latin Dance Study Guide

• 123: vuelta (turn)

Repeat, chaining directly into back breaks for the same thing but the other side.

#### 7.6.4 Back breaks with full turn

Do back breaks with upper body rotation, and chain with a full turn:

- 123,567: back breaks;
- 123: Step your back break with LF and perform a full turn to the right, ending;
- 567,...: get back into back break with RF behind. Keep shoulder rotations smooth.

Mirror for other side.

#### 7.6.5 Combined full turns

Do back breaks with full turn, one chained directly after the other, alternating sides. This should make you very dizzy at first. This is a good test for your stability and ability to spot.

#### 7.6.6 Sencillo with 5/4 turn

Same thing as sencillo with 3/4 turn described above, except turn even more and face the opposite direction.

- 123,567: back breaks
- 567: Step your back break with RF and perform 5/4 turn, ending the turn when facing west
- 123,567: Traveling backwards facing west, with variation;
- 123: Step your back break with LF, but step a little bit more sideways and turn 90 degrees to the right, facing north, taking original position again;
- 567,...: Back breaks.

Mirror for other side.

### 7.6.7 Variations on These Exercises

Here are a few step variations suggestions that can be added after the sencillo turn. Chaining directly into these will require more concentration than just chaining into a basic step.

Latin Dance Study Guide 7.6. EXERCISES FOR TURNS

## & Step: Oscarito

Nichito

I think this move was created after a step that Oscar D'Leon was making in concert a few years back in Cuba.

- 4: adorno kicking RF together with LF
- 1: step sideways to the right with RF, with weight on it
- 3: open feet at the same time moving RF back and LF forward. Back leg is extended, front leg is bent slightly. Your weight should be on the front foot. Try to avoid jumping.
- 5: hop on LF, with right leg raised up and in front, with knee bent
- 6: hop again (same)
- 7: step down with RF, with weight
- 8: adorno with LF
- ...(continue)...

## *Step:* Ovida

Nichito

- 8: adorno kicking RF together with LF
- 1: step sideways to the right with RF
- 2: adorno kicking LF together with RF
- 3: step sideways to the left with LF
- 4: adorno kicking RF together with LF
- 5: step forward with RF
- 6: raise hip forward in a circular motion
- 7: bring RF back beside LF, but not too close
- 8: adorno kicking LF together with RF
- ...(continue)...

You can chain directly into Ovida with LF, or go into back break.

7.6. EXERCISES FOR TURNS

Latin Dance Study Guide

# **Chapter 8**

# **Essential Moves in Cuban Salsa**

In this section we describe the essential moves of cuban salsa. These basics elements can be combined to form all the more complex moves.

The importance in mastering the timings for the essential moves is understated: once you can do all of these with the correct timings, all the other variations and combinations fall in place effortlessly. The timings do not change, only hand positioning, and sequences of these sames moves are put together to form what looks like much more complex moves (they are just sequences of these basic elements).

The most important thing to understand in each of these moves is the timing, the sweet spots in time where the move can get initiated and where the weight shifts occur. Once you get the hand of each move, practice them over and over.

## 8.1 Right Turn

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #12. "Hecho"

The standard right turn. You move forward on 1, pivot on the other foot, bring the first foot back and do a back-break on the other side. This move is seen in more detail in the international salsa section. It can be done in cuban-style, but the hecho turn is much more common.

## 8.2 Hecho (Cuban Right Turn)

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #12, "Hecho"

This form of right turn is similar to the standard right turn, except that it is done early in comparison. The difference is very noticeable. In the "hecho", the lead starts with a little spring/pumping action of the hand on the preceding 3.

#### Comparing the two:

- 123: back break with RF;
- 567: pivot turn to the right, using RF as pivot.

#### Cuban-style hecho:

- 123: pivot turn to the right, using RF as pivot this means that they step in place on 1 with RF;
- 567: complete the turn as if walking around something.

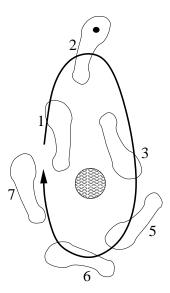


Figure 8.1: FO Right turn cuban-style: as if walking around something

This difference is a major reason why some moves (e.g. engaño motion, panqué or vacilala) are difficult to lead on north-american salsa dancers (even good ones), because they have learned to always pivot on 567. This is the reason that a free hecho (vacilala) can be led on 2. The north-american turn would have a hand throw on 6 and not on 2.

Hecho is almost always on 567. There are some exceptions though. If you look carefully at Rex' lead in § Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video,

Rex & Deyris, a characteristic from his style is that he often leads hecho on 123 and lets the turn finish on 567.

#### 8.2.1 Fake on hecho

🗃 ¡Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video,

Rex & Deyris You can fake an hecho by keeping L-R and pulling FO back to LE's left on 5.

## 8.3 Deshecho / Enchufla

What I call "des-hecho" is the same as the first part of the rueda move called "enchufla". Use any combination of hands. It can be done by the man or the woman, regardless, it's the same, just with timings exchanged.

#### 8.3.1 Fake on deshecho

Here are different variations for faking a deshecho: ᠍ ¡Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video, Rex & Deyris

- LE can stop-check FO on 5 and send her back (this is called *enchufta doble* in rueda);
- Same as above, plus LE does a right turn on 567;
- Same as above, plus LE directly leads an hecho on 123,567 (hecho is normally done on 567, this is early but can be done too)

## 8.4 Inside Turn

Unless otherwise noted, most FO left turns will be of this type. The type of fast, snapping XBL +FO'IT is never done in cuban style.

It is not easy to pull off nicely, but this move can be faked (see § ¡Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video,

Rex & Deyris). Start FO inside turn, and keep her close to LE. With LE'RH staying on her belly throughout and all the way to her left hip, stop her midway facing her back, and do not finish the turn, rather pull her out for an outside turn to LE's right.

## 8.5 Leader's Right Turn

Most often the leader's right turn is done on 567.

#### 8.5.1 Underarm turns

**Underarm right turn** A cool trick is for leader to perform LE'RT under R-R. You need to be in single crossed hold for this, and it looks nice right after a deshecho. LE must move forward on 56 and move his right elbow over R-R before starting to turn to the right. Bend forward and move LE's head under FO'RH during the turn.

8.6. DILE QUE NO Latin Dance Study Guide

**Underarm left turn** The same turn can be done to the left. Also move elbow over R-R before turning.

#### ➤ Exercise: Underarm turns

Practice the paseo de olas (section 7.5) with FO's deshecho, and perform the underarm right or left turn, alternately.

## 8.6 Dile que no

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #15, "Dile Que No"

A move that some associate to the XBL because of the similar timings, but the form is very different, the change of weights is quite different.

- both face same direction
- FO must turn sideways to face same direction as LE when preparing for dile que no
- FO must turn during pause on 4
- push on 4, and push again to the left out on 6 (check this out with Lucia)

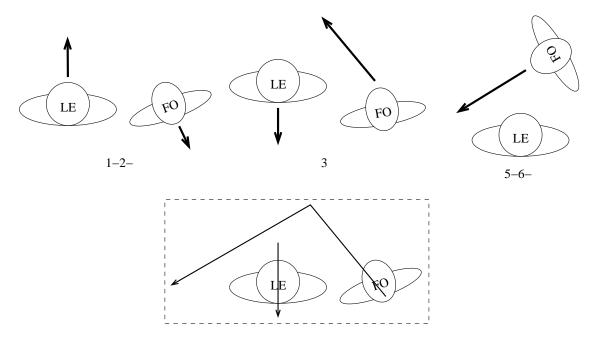


Figure 8.2: dile que no displacements.

Important Note! Women who dance the international style have a really hard time doing a dile que no, because their weight is always on the wrong foot for the pull on 5. This is due to the difference between the rotations of cuban style and international style: with the faster rotations of international style, the weight is on the wrong foot at that moment. On 5, women must has their weight on their right foot/leg, and offer some resistance for the man to pull them next to him.

Latin Dance Study Guide 8.7. PASEA / PROMENADE

### 8.7 Pasea / Promenade

¡Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #38, "Paseala Por Atrás"

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #39, "Who Marks Time?"

Litterally: "promenades". When FO walks around LE. Most of the time, FO walks CCW around LE. We will call reverse pasea when FO walks CW around LE. There are two types: abajo (low) and arriba (high), referring to where LE's hands are when leading FO around him.

## 8.7.1 Paseala abajo

Paseala abajo is performed in single holds, because LE needs to change hands. There are two possible timings that work (perhaps more):

Pulling on 2: From single crossed hold,

- 123: Start with dile que no
- 567: lead FO behind LE, to his left. LE does a back break, pulls FO on 6.
- 123: lead FO in front of LE, from his right. LE does a basic step, pulls FO on 2.
- ...: (repeat 567, 123)

LE can optionally rotate a bit to the right, or move leftwards on 123 to help reduce the distance FO has to travel.

Pulling on 1, trickier for LE but easier for FO: From single crossed hold,

- 123: Start with dile que no
- 567: lead FO behind LE, to his left. LE walks 3 steps forward, pulls FO on 5.
- 123: lead FO in front of LE, from his right. LE walks 3 steps backward, pulls FO on 1.
- ...: (repeat 567, 123)

#### 8.7.2 Paseala arriba

Paseala arriba is basically the same as paseala abajo in single hold. In double hold, both LE's hands move above his head when FO walks behind him. Experiment with different angles of pulling FO for different styles.

E.Freeman

To perform paseala arriba continuously with a double hold, you have to bump one set of hands with the other when FO moves in front of LE, and catch them again just after. this can be done quickly and discreetly without onlookers noticing at all. When FO walks:

• CCW: keep R-L, bump L-R

8.8. ENGAÑO MOTION Latin Dance Study Guide

• CW: keep L-R, bump R-L

You bump the set of hands that move down on the other.

#### 8.7.3 Paseala with inside turn

It is possible to lead an inside turn during the paseala, but in the same timing as it is performed normally.

Exercise: Continuous paseas

Norberto

Practice continuous paseas:

- change hands between abajo and arriba;
- change between single and double holds;
- do inside turns, sometimes;
- to change direction: bring FO to LE's right to change from CW to CCW, and viceversa:
- practice successive direction changes, then move into paseas;

## 8.8 Engaño Motion

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #20, "Paseala En Frente"

Litterally: the deceit. This motion doesn't really have a name, but is one of the important subtle variations which can be added to any cuban move to modify it in an interesting way. This can also called the Santo style ("el estylo Santo")p.

The engaño motion is a very interesting and important variation of dynamics which consists of a change of direction by LE. LE changes his step into the "lateral-with-pivots" step described below, which directs his body motion in the opposite direction than the usual. This variation is unique to the cuban style and creates a very nice variation and sense of complexity. It can be applied to many (if not all) moves of the cuban salsa style. Cubans which have learned to master and play with this change of motion always carry a distinctive element in their style, something very Cuban. Sometimes it is exaggerated for effect (e.g. as in exhibela), and sometimes it is performed in a very subtle way.

This motion is very rarely done in north america and europe, where the P.R. and N.Y. styles prevail, and unmistakingly, FOs which are led an engaño will be confused the first time. However, the steps FO must do involve no change and this is a perfect example of a move that requires FOs to learn to keep walking and dancing to the music and not follow LE's feet.

Latin Dance Study Guide 8.8. ENGAÑO MOTION

## <sup>™</sup> Step: Lateral-with-pivots (engaño step)

This step is similar to the lateral step (13.2.14) but adds a rotation of the body and pivoting action of the foot that is inside. This step is to be performed by LE only during the engaño motion.

- 7: instead of stepping RF beside LF, move RF in front and to the left of RF and continue shoulder motion of body a bit further towards the left. You are not actually "crossing" RF in front of LF, because your body is turned to the left at that moment, and both feet are pointing west. This is the difference with the lateral step.
- 1: while still facing west, step in front of you with LF (towards the west).
- 2: pivot feet and body 180 degrees to the right, to face east.
- 3: while facing east, bring RF beside LF. Again, this is not really crossing the feet, because your body is facing east at that moment.
- 5: while still facing east, step in front of you with RF (towards the east).
- 6: pivot feet and body 180 degrees to the left, to face west
- 7: while facing west, bring LF beside RF. Again, this is not really crossing the feet, because your body is facing west at that moment.

It is important to turn the whole body while executing this step. This turning effect is what makes it interesting and different. The should rotation should be at the same rate as when doing back breaks.

See the dance exercise in section 7.6.3 which offers a way to practice this step.

Now, for the engaño step with partner (simple engaño). Start with either of

- hecho
- dile que no (Note: you could call engaño: "dile que no y queda te")
- hecho + deshecho
- simply a basic step and turn FO on 3

and LE steps right into the lateral-with-pivot step while FO is completing her turn. e.g.

- 123: start lead for hecho
- 567: FO does hecho, and LE steps his first lateral-with-pivots step, his body towards the left while FO is performing her turn towards the right
- 123: while LE is turning his body towards the right with a lateral step with LF, FO is stepping back with RF and then walks forward on 2-3.
- 567: while LE is turning his body towards the left with a lateral step with RF, FO is stepping back with LF and then walks forward on 2-3.

Eventually, FO doesn't really step backwards, all she does is three small steps forward. See figure 8.3 for a graphic depiction of this motion.

8.8. ENGAÑO MOTION Latin Dance Study Guide

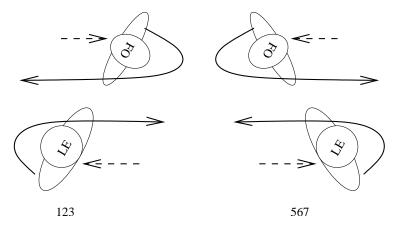


Figure 8.3: Engaño motion

There is a sweet spot at beat 3 where it is important to give a strong indication to FO that she has to turn left and walk back. Do this with LE'RH in her back. You pretty much have to do this in closed hold. There is a trick to avoid confusion, to make sure that FO doesn't go into a turn on 5: keep L-R down *low* on 567.

## ► Exercise: Dile que no or engaño

You can do an engaño motion with hecho (i.e. exhibela) on 123 at the same point where you would do a *dile que no*. Play with this while dancing, i.e. sometimes do *dile que no*, sometimes exhibela. This can help teach FO not to anticipate.

#### 8.8.1 Foot variations

You can experiment with LE's feet while doing the engaño. Try the following variations:

- Step sideways lightly on 1 and 5. Use the foot where you would normally step on 2 and 6 as a pivot: keep weight on it and turn on it and don't really step on 2 and 6. Layback stepping on 3 and 7, as if "falling" onto it. You can layback very late, almost on the 4 and 8 beats, if your lead is in time.
- Don't step on 1,2 and 5,6. Only step on 3 and 7. The rest of the time, turn the body in the correct direction in equilibrium on one foot. This looks pretty cool.

#### Exhibala

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #21, "Exhibala"

The exhibela is simply and engaño motion with an hecho on 567. Note that the hecho is done early here, and FO can start turning as early as 3.

- 123: engaño motion
- 567: LE raises L-R up above FO's head while he is moving towards the right.

Note that here the turn looks much more cuban if FO is stepping the hecho cuban-style, i.e. in a circle, as described in section 8.2. LE does the lateral-with-pivots.

## Engaño with two hands

You can also perform the engaño motion with a double-crossed hold. It can be useful for switching sides before entering a new move. LE has to remain close to FO when doing this. A trick is to keep the exterior arm bent and close to LE's body when FO moves out, to prevent her from going too far. Keep LE's hands very close to body.

## Engaño and alarde

Using an alarde hold leads naturally to the engaño motion. Use either one or two hands, e.g. after a setenta. LE should be careful not to confuse their feet, as not to throw off FO.

## 8.9 Girón, Papillon, Tight Turn

Exactly like the Son's girón, see section 5.3.8.

The girón CW can be entered here two ways: directly afer 1-2-3

• 1-2-3, 5-6-7: hecho, then LE moves forward, close to FO, into girón.

The girón CCW can be entered directly from dile que no.

#### 8.9.1 Prima

Do a half a tight turn and move under FO'RH and turn left.

#### ➤ Exercise: Prima sin hermana

Lead a prima, moving under L-R, but do not chain with deshecho, chain with something else (e.g. hecho, or LE'RT). It is too often chained with deshecho as in "prima con la hermana" in rueda.

## 8.10 Bayamo

A very nice and different kind of turn is sometimes often as part of a more complex move and deserves special attention because it is somewhat different than the other turns. We will call this the "bayamo turn", because it is the most important part of the bayamo rueda move.

8.10. BAYAMO Latin Dance Study Guide

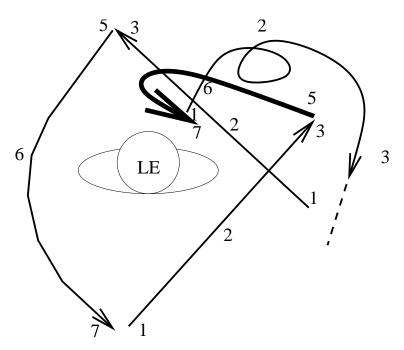


Figure 8.4: Displacement for correct bayamo turn.

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #2, beginning of move #17, "Bayamo"

#### From single crossed hold,

- 123: start with dile que no with R-R, catch L-L when FO passes to LE's left side
- 567: no second half of *dile que no*, bring FO farther than usual, behind LE, by passing LE'RH above his head as in pasea arriba
- 123: finish pasea arriba by pulling FO to LE's right, slightly in front of him
- 567: pull FO in front and to the left of LE. LE has to pull fairly hard. *This is extremely important!* This is the preparation for the ensuing turn. Without this clear preparation, FO will get confused and the timing for the next turn will bad! Also, LE'RH must be brought pretty far to the right and then stop. This is very unique to this move.
- 123: using a rather large LE'RH motion, lead FO into a right turn. This is not an hecho and does not feel like it (the turn is on 123). You *must* complete the *full turn* in front and to the right of LE before going on. When doing the turn, LE *must* remain close to FO, especially during the part where R-R moves in between the partners. A common error is for partners to separate too much. It may seem funny to the arms, but staying close will actually cause less tension for the arms to move through. FO'RH and elbow *has* to stay folded with elbow pointing down and hand pointing up, all very close to her body. This is important, otherwise she'll take her arm down and then everything goes awry. There is a very important trick here, especially trying out this move with non-cuban girls: LE *must* twist FO'LH with his LE'LH behind his back. If you don't do this, FO won't turn and walk behind you (FO has to walk back behind LE).
- 567: bring R-R far forward in front of LE so that people see it, moving it up a bit, thus leading FO to walk behind LE, towards his left

- 123: LE'LT, to face FO again, with L-L behind her back in 07 hold
- 567: deshecho, undoing 07 hold
- ...(continue)...

See figure 8.4 for a graphical depiction. Practice keeping eyes on FO throughout, this will help proper completion of the bayamo turn.

#### ► Exercise: Bayamo turn timing hunt

Get into bayamo hold, i.e. right after pasea arriba, with LE'LH crossed behind his back and R-R leading FO. Do not chain into the bayamo turn right away; rather, stay in this hold for a while, on purpose, trying to lead FO with some stability.

Search for the bayamo turn exit (on 5). This may appear simple, but the hold somehow makes this non-trivial to execute. This exercise will help develop the sense for the correct timing of the bayamo turn.

Note that the timing for the turn of the woman in this move is the same timing than for the cuban hecho/right turn, and the same little pumping action should be done to prepare the girl and indicate the switch in direction.

## 8.11 Simple practice combinations and exercises

☆ Vuelta combination: Casino, displacement and dile que no

- 123,567: casino step
- 123,567: casino step with displacement
- 123,567: hecho123,567: dile que no

Repeat.

☆ *Vuelta combination:* Getting into girón

Dancing on 1 on salsa (i.e. faster than són):

- 123,567: casino step with displacement
- 123,567: hecho into...
- 123,567,...: girón CW, or girón CCW
- 123,567: dile que no

Repeat.

### ☆ Vuelta combination: Hecho, deshecho & dile que no

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #11, "Basic combo: hecho, deshecho, pull-in & Dile Que No"

- 123,567: hecho
- 123,567: deshecho (and pull-in)
- 123,567: dile que no

☆ Vuelta combination: Hecho & dile que no

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #16, "Hecho straight into Dile Que No"

- 123,567: hecho123,567: dile que no
  - Practice this one, alternating with the basic combo.

☆ Vuelta combination: Free hecho & LE'RT

Norberto

Interesting is the variation of LE's feet.

- 123: hecho, pushing FO'RH out softly on 3 for free hecho. LE steps forward on 3, and doesn't step with RF on 2;
- 567: FO does free hecho. LE turns to the right but only steps with RF on 7;
- 123: dile que no.

Practice this one, alternating with the basic combo.

☆ Vuelta combination: Engaño o dile que no

Notice that the starting position for *dile que no* is the same as for the engaño step. Many FOs tend to get confused on the engaño step because they try to guess what LE is about to do (which is wrong). This exercise works precisely that: do a mixed sequence of either *dile que no* or engaño, improvising between those. Try to make it so that it isn't obvious what is going to be the move, so that FO cannot guess.

🖈 Vuelta combination: dile que no + LE'RT

Source: Yaqueline

- 123: Start dile que no
- 567: Pull for second part of dile que no, but perform a LE'RT at the same time

☆ Vuelta combination: Norberto Wrap

Source: Norberto

From rev. double-crossed hold,

- 123,567: hecho with displacement, wrap her up in arms until you face her back and only then...
- 123,567: walk behind her and LE'LT, unwrapping the whole thing

## ☆ Vuelta combination: Half-sombrero camino

Source: Norberto

## From double-crossed hold,

- 123,567: hecho into sombrero, but only go into one of the half-sombrero holds; try the two forms of half-sombrero holds
- 123,567: walk together in a camina
- ...(continue)...

## ☆ Vuelta combination: Double maja

Source: Yaqueline

This is a cool vuelta, combining the same maja-rama combination on the two different sides. Practing this will allow you to understand where to perform the maja-rama motion.

- : ...
- 567: hecho
- 123: deshecho
- 567: maja with LE'RH
- 123: continue moving under rama R-R
- 567: hecho
- 123: deshecho
- 567: hecho
- 123: maja with LE'LH
- 567: continue moving under rama L-L
- 123: deshecho
- 567: hecho
- 123: deshecho
- : ...

You can even cut some of the turns:

- : ...
- 123: deshecho
- 567: maja with LE'RH
- 123: continue moving under rama R-R
- 567: hecho
- 123: maja with LE'LH
- 567: continue moving under rama L-L
- 123: deshecho
- : ...

Then when incorporating it in moves, do only one side, for example:

- 123,567: hecho
- 123: maja with LE'LH
- 567: continue moving under rama L-L
- ...(continue)...

Or

- 123: deshecho
- 567: maja with LE'RH
- 123: continue moving under rama R-R
- ...(continue)...

Latin Dance Study Guide 8.12. NOTES

#### **8.12** Notes

## 8.12.1 Notes on Style

### Dancing with Kicks

➤ Exercise: Dancing with adornos

Try to dance all the moves you know, always doing the adornos (kicks) during your dance in couple. Do small kicks but always make a point in doing them explicitly.

## The "3"-effect

There is an rhythmic effect that many cuban dancers apply to their dance which enhances their style in a very definite way, which I will call here the "3"-effect. It consists in anticipating the move that you would normally do on the 1, by starting it on the preceding 3, accentuating beat 3.

A good example of this is the peculiar way that many cubans will do a *dile que no*. On the 7 before you would normally start the *dile que no* by stepping forward, "break" on that step, changing direction *at that moment*, then instead of stepping forward on 1 as you normally would, make three steps backwards. This will create a very, very cool effect. Since you're in effect leading your moves a little bit early, if FO is relaxed and doesn't panic, she will have no problem following this at all.

I have seen some cubans dance more than half their moves in this manner. This is also very distinctly cuban, I have never witness dancers from other places do this.

## The "pull" style

Many street dancers in Cuban adopt a style in which they appear strongly pulling the follower. In fact, the lead doesn't have to be that strong, and it is performed by playing with the weights of the two dancers, so that the weight of FO is led/pulled on precisely every 1 and 5 beats. Even the paseas share this pull action.

## Apoyo

instructional video #1, move #3, "Woman's Left Arm Placement During Basic"

Litterally: "support point". In the cuban style specifically, FO is allowed and should occasionally take points of support to keep contact with LE. These consist of the free hand of FO touching softly against LE's arm, shoulder, back or side of body. Frequent apoyos create distance cues and help maintain consciousness of the other partner's location, a reference in space.

Note that these support points are intended solely to keep contact with LE and should not be required for executing the moves. For example, FOs should *never* grab LE's arm relying on him to pull her weight

8.12. NOTES Latin Dance Study Guide

around in a *dile que no*. In general, FOs should be able to support their own weight and very rarely require LE's support, they should be able to dance alone if required.

## The "mop"

Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video, Rex & Deyris, Eydel & Leidis, Eydel Demo

Many cubans seem to have a peculiar foot technique where often instead of kicking on the 4 and 8 beats, they will twist their feet on these beats. See figure 8.5 for examples of how to twist your feet.

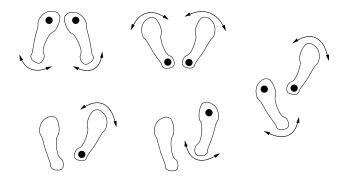


Figure 8.5: Different ways to twist your feet for "mop" style

#### ➤ Exercise: Mop style

Practice doing back breaks with doing any of the feet twists shown in figure 8.5. Start with very slow music, because this is difficult to perform fast. It is very important to try to relax your feet and legs when doing the mop twists. This should be done very relaxed, just like the cintura, effortless.

## **Tembleque**

The "tembleque" is a very jerky movement of the body, very intense, the "shakes", literally. This is a cool effect, probably with origins in break dancing.

One way to do the tembleque of the lower body is to mark a strong, fast step with one leg by raising and stepping on the heel of that leg, and to alternate softly with the other, without raising the heel.

Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video, Onoris Solo, Mario Charón

Another way of doing the tembleque is to enter knees inside and take them outside, very fast, making sure the whole lower body is very relaxed.

Latin Dance Study Guide 8.12. NOTES

### 8.12.2 Notes on Improvising

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #40, "Basic Improvising"

There is a lot of improvising in the cuban style, albeit, of a different type than in N.Y. and P.R. salsa. The improvising is usually done together, and the man improvises *while leading* the woman. This contrasts with the north american type of improvising where FO is set free and both perform shines. This section contains a few exercises to develop the ability to improvise

## Independence of the feet and music

The idea that what your feet are doing should be independent of the music is very important for improvising. You need to develop an inner sense of the difference between 123 and the 567, as opposed to a simple understanding of 123. Clearly, the two succesive bars of the steps repeat with the same pattern, and most often the continuity of our feet keeps us in sync with our partner.

To improvise, you need be able to do *anything* with your feet and get back into the basic at any moment at the right place—that is, to know where the 1 is, vs. where the 5 is, because your partner is keeping the beat and you cannot just enter at either of 1 or 5.

#### ➤ Exercise: Paradas

(We will assume here that LE is doing the exercise, but FO could be doing it too.)

Dancing together in couple, LE stops moving his feet at random moments, for either of 1, 2, 3 or more bars (randomly). The other partner should keep stepping. Practice not looking at your partner. If the exercised is failed, start again.

This is also a good exercise for beginner FOs, which tend to look at their LE's feet. In this exercise, FOs must learn not to stop stepping their feet, whatever LE is doing (in this case just stopping).

## The hesitation game

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #1, move #36, "Arm Checks"

**FIXME** todo in general: stopping a move in-between and moving back and forth under an arm, as if searching for something.

"fakes"

8.12. NOTES Latin Dance Study Guide

#### Engañala

Another game that some cubans play a lot is to start leading FO into a turn, and to abruptly stop that turn halfway, into something else. This can be done in many many different ways (see, for example, 🛎 ¡Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video,

Rex & Deyris ).

**Engañala arriba** A good example is to start with deshecho in double hold, and halfway through, on 3, reach in with LE'RH under FO'RH in surprise, and make her turn to the right instead, with LE'LT. You have to surprise her.

**Engañala abajo** You can also do the same by grabbing FO'LH with LE'RH while you're passing by, *if* it's available.

## *►Exercise*: Engañala

Practice doing multiple deshechos + LE'LT in a row, and improvise between

- simple deshecho
- engañala arriba
- engañala abajo

This is an exercise where FO really has to let go and follow. LE must learn to surprise her softly, without leading too roughly.

## 8.12.3 Strange Exercises To Improve Lead And Follow

Here are a few interesting exercises to develop a better lead and better ability to follow.

#### ➤ Exercise: Feet in concrete

LE does NOT move his feet and leads all the usual combinations with FO dancing around him. LE is allowed to turn, but not to step. You can also try shifting in and out of this mode.

## ➤ Exercise: Magnet lead

LE and FO do not touch hands; Rather, where you would, keep fingers are a few centimeters and LE leads with that. FO must be very attentive to follow LE's hands with hers and LE must make sure that his lead is very clear.

### ➤ Exercise: Blind date

FO closes her eyes. Keeps her eyes closed, throughout. Practice everything you know like this, all the turns.

Then LE closes his eyes and leads everything eyes closed. Also try dancing both with eyes closed. This is cool.

Latin Dance Study Guide 8.12. NOTES

#### ➤ Exercise: Transexual dancing

For the fun of it (and as a humility lesson for both dancers), LE and FO exchange roles—that is, FO leads, and LE follows. Realize how difficult it is for your partner.

#### ➤ Exercise: One-Handed Lead

Practice dancing and leading all the moves in single open hold only, then in single crossed hold only. You are only allowed to use one hand for leading, LE puts the other hand in his back and does not use it.

#### ➤ Exercise: Little Toes

Practice dancing in couple with the smallest possible steps.

## ➤ Exercise: Turbulence

Nelson

Do back breaks, and have your partner shake you by the shoulders, or turn you at random moments, attempting to disturb you and make you lose the beat. You have to try to keep your feet going in the rhythm and not mind the disturbance. Guys at dance schools sometimes do this in Cuba to improve their sense of not losing the rhythm.

#### ➤ Exercise: Reversed sides

With the usual roles (man leading and woman following), lead and dance everything on the *other* side. The usual dancing conventions are very asymmetrical and we learn to recognize the sweet spots on one side only (both LE and FO). Trying to do all the moves the other side can be very confusing: you'll have to invert steps and most importantly body weight motions. But everything can be done on either side, due to the natural symmetry of the human body.

The idea here is that it should eventually be possible to free one's asymmetrical mental idea and to free it for both sides. Perhaps a greater understanding of the body motions can be developed this way and besides, you'll certainly discover some new moves this way.

## 8.12.4 Integrating Columbia into salsa

A very distinctive trait of cuban salsa is the introduction of steps inspired by Columbia dancing into salsa dancing. This section presents a few exercises to develop Columbia feet movements compatible with salsa dancing.

8.12. NOTES Latin Dance Study Guide

### Exercise: Mario's precision exercises

Mario Charón

These are a series of exercises to develop precision in timing, when fumbling around with improvised steps. The framework is that you should mark forward with RF as in casino step 567, and do something minimalistic and stylish on the remaining 81234, i.e.:

- (8+)1: on heels, open and close toes; or on toes, open and close heels; or with just one foot shaked either on toe or heel;
- 34: kick + slide (caballo adorno, see section 7.3.7).

#### Variants:

- 12: (do nothing)
- 34: kick + slide

#### Normal open-close:

- (1+)2: open-close
- 34: kick + slide

#### Anticipated open-close:

- (8+)1: open-close
- 23: anticipated kick + slide

#### Double:

- (8+)1(1+)2: open-close-open-close
- 34: kick + slide

With full spin turn to the right. Also, the whole series should be done by adding a fast spin turn to the right on 567. Get spinning impulse on 3 and perform it very fast and sharp. You should be stopped and ready for the feet decorations on 1, facing FO in balance. Practice all the combinations above with the turn.

With half turn to the right. Instead of adding a full spin turn to the right, only do a half-turn to the right, facing away from FO, and make her walk in front of you on 123 using LE'RH, while doing the feet decorations.

#### ➤ Exercise: Open-close slide

This exercise works the displacement of the feet on planta and heel.

With feet side-by-side, displace yourself sideways (to the right or to the left) without lifting the feet off the ground, by opening toes in a V-shape, and then closing toes and opening heels. Notice the change of weight that is required to do this: one foot has the weight on the toes while the other has the weight on the heel, and you switch for the other half. Practice this first by raising the part that has no weight on it, and then eventually by leaving the whole foot on the floor.

Latin Dance Study Guide 8.12. NOTES

## 

Mario Charón

This step is a cross between the rumba step and mop-style foot rotations. This kind of step inspires the kind of dynamics that can be done while integrating Columbia into salsa.

- 1: open RF to the right on planta, L-R pointing inside, with weight on RF
- 2: slide LF heel to left, bringing LF pointing inside. Keep weight on RF
- 3: move RF back together with LF, movint to left and opening slightly
- 567 mirror for other side.

#### Comments:

- you can open the arms as in rumba
- you can swing the upper body sideways a bit, add style

Also, you can perform this very step by stepping forward left and right.

#### 

Ibert

This is a step very much similar to the rumba-mop, but stepping forward both times.

- 1: step backward with LF;
- 2: step forward with RF, with weight forward, on planta, and with both feet sideways to the left. The back leg (left leg) is straight. The right shoulder dips in low;
- 3: straighten both feet to point forward and step back inplace with LF;
- 4: kick right foot's heel (talon), but very low, make it a subtle kick.
- 5678 mirror for other side.

Watch the weight change during this move, it's not obvious.

8.12. NOTES Latin Dance Study Guide

#### **►***Exercise:* Coordination exercises

Mario Charón

Here is a series of suggested coordination exercises to develop independence of the hands and the feet. Doing a rotation step (see step 5.3.6), include some combinations of the following motions:

- hand-throw-pantalon #1: throw LH upwards on 1, grab pantalon with LH on 3;
- hand-throw-pantalon #2: throw LH upwards on 3, grab pantalon with LH on 5;
- RF heel swing: on 4 with RF's heel touching the ground (talon), rotate foot, swinging toes left and right;
- LF kick: kick in front with LF on 8. Don't kick far in front, just a little kick knee raised.

Suggestions for practice combinations:

- rotation step (simply)
- rotation step with kick
- rotation step with hand-throw-pantalon (either #1 or #2)
- rotation step with heel-swing
- rotation step with kick and heel-swing
- rotation step with hand-throw-pantalon and kick (watch coordination!)
- rotation step with hand-throw-pantalon, kick and heel swing
- rotation step with double kick
- rotation step with double kick and double-heel swing
- rotation step with triple kick (try to keep that leg relaxed!)
- rotation step with triple kick and triple-heel swing

Also add the maracas hand motion throughout (see section 4.15.3).

➤ Exercise: 3-step switch

Practice switching between the

- casino step
- lateral step
- rumba step

Latin Dance Study Guide 8.12. NOTES

## & Step: Push

Ibert, Orlando

This is a step inspired by traditional afro-cuban dances. It looks like a forward-moving, exagerrated back break step with a body wave.

- 5: place RF behind LF (really just behind, not far) with toes pointing somewhat to the right;
- 6: step with LF forward and to the right, "pushing it" forward with weight on RF, pelvis moving forward.
- 7: slide RF closer to LF, but still behind it, really slide the foot on the floor, don't lift it
- 123 mirror for other side.

The upper body should move as if a wave was going through it, this is very important for correct motion.

You can also use the push step in a couple, to relax a bit, it adds some variation instead of always doing the basic step in between moves.

## 

Ibert

This step is similar to the push step, except that the front foot gets kicked.

- 56: (same as push step)
- 7: move RF just behind LF, put weight on it, and kick LF with it instantaneously.
- 8: LF does a circle to the left and goes into position to land behind RF.
- 1234 mirror for other side.

## *Step:* Double push-kick

Mario Charón

Push-kick step, cutting corners and double speed.

- 1: kick RF forward and sideways with weight on LF
- 3: step with RF
- 5: kick LF forward and sideways with weight on RF
- 7: step with LF

The body moves a bit sideways. Kick other foot far, in diagonal. Use the hands.

8.12. NOTES Latin Dance Study Guide

#### ➤ Exercise: One-foot-out dancing

Ibert

An exercise to develop LE's ability to link salsa and rumba. Dance with partner, and LE does

- 1: step out with LF on planta, with weight on it, do not step on 2
- 3: take foot back in (optionally)
- 57 mirror for other side.

If you can avoid stepping back on 3 and 7 it's good too. Shift in and out of salsa steps into this step. Always keep in mind which foot should be stepping.

## & Step: Curling

Ibert, Mario Charón

I don't know why I'm calling this the "curling" step, it just makes me think of a way that one steps when walking on ice.

- 12: Lift left knee in the air and do circles with LF.
- 3: Stomp LF on ground, and at the same time kick back RF, keeping weight forward on LF. Slide the back foot on the floor (this can be seen during

Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video, Ibert & Sunny

- , near the end).
- 567 mirror for other side.

When stomping foot on 3, you can also kick the other foot as in a push-kick step.

Use this sparsely, interspersed with other Columbia moves.

## Step: Drop

Mario Charón, Orlando

I've seen many Columbia dancers do this step.

- 1: punta LF crossed close behind to RF
- 2: mark forward RF with weight forward, as if falling, with heel touching down, full foot down.
  - Turn the shoulder inside.
  - Do not bend upper body fwd.
  - The fall is rather downwards. Bend knees.
  - Lift pantalon.
  - Do not move nor turn LF!
- 3: step LF beside RF, in front
- 4: kick with RF
- 5678 mirror for other side.

Latin Dance Study Guide 8.12. NOTES

## 

Mario Charón, Orlando

This is an extremely interesting variation on the drop step.

- 12: start back break with RF, step in-place with LF
- 3: jump with bnoth feet forward, sliding on landing and return
- 4: slide back LF bent, and body backward
- 4+: slide back RF very close and crossed in front of LF. Body upwards, and both legs straight.
- 5: wait (pause). (This is the exciting moment for me.)
- 6: drop for drop step
- 7: complete drop step

The rhythm that your steps should make should be:

Drop variation "on 1"



## ➤ Exercise: Drop variation

Some suggestions to practice the drop step and timing:

- Switch between back breaks and the drop step
- Do drop steps, and add variation
- Switch between back breaks and do *only one* drop variation, stepping into break break right after
- Continuously do drop step variation one side after the other

## 8.12.5 Exercises to practice stops

Here are a series of moves that can serve as exercises to practice stopping stepping and starting again.

#### ➤ Exercise: Interrupted displacement

Doing the basic step with displacement, in closed hold, travel with FO (as if doing XBLs, but right after 7, LE crossed his LF punta in front of RF, and stops for 12 while FO is walking in front of him. LE opens with LF on 3 and resumes.

The displacement feels like a XBL (elt FO walk in front of LE).

8.12. NOTES Latin Dance Study Guide

### Exercise: Torre de Pisa

Norberto, 🗃 ¡Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video, Norberto & Yaqueline

This is very stylish.

- 123: start dile que no
- 567: move to the right and far forward and away from FO, and **stop!** directly on 7, with weight forward on LE'RF on planta, with body much forward and left leg extended. Toes are cramped in right shoes, and LE'RH pulls pantalon.
- (1)2(3): LE'LH throws FO'RH on 2 for free hecho and LE pushes an impulse to start rotating slowly to the right. Bring LE'RF behind LF and plant in punta pushing into the ground to perform a slow controlled turn
- (56)7: while FO completes her hecho, LE finishes his slow turn and LE'RF lands on 7, and mark forward for next move, catch her as if going into *dile que no*.

## 8.12.6 Cool, crazy cuban stuff

Here is some offbeat, zany stuff that many cubans guys seem to do.

## Wall support

If near a wall, lean on the wall with one hand, as if requiring support. You can keep leading FO some moves. More sure you keep stepping throughout.

#### The discussion

Leave FO for a few bars, and go stand in front of someone (perhaps in a group of people having a serious discussion) with a serious look on your face, perhaps with one hand to your mouth. Fake as if participating in the discussion, but keep the beat in your mind so that when you enter again you step on the correct foot. It is very important not to look at FO while doing this, face away from her if possible. Then get back into it at once, perhaps catching her with *dile que no*.

## Hold me I'm fainting!

LE tightens his whole body hard as a stick, and starts falling on his FO or someone else in the area (e.g. an onlooker). The person which is receiving the fall should move back a bit and push LE back up. If falling on your own FO, a trick is to put LE'RH under her left arm and grab her shoulder from behind with it.

Be careful, if you pull this on an unsuspecting FO, you might just fall on your face. Nobody does this kind of thing in north-america. You really need to have a "play" setting and a fun partner to pull this off. I suggest freeing FO for a bar and doing this on your best buddy if he's nearby.

Latin Dance Study Guide 8.12. NOTES

## Supernatural equilibrium

Perform the engaño step with body leaning to the left and in front, as if gravity was pulling in a different direction than down. This is similar to taking wall support but without wall. You can change the rhythm to accommodate the equilibrium, step on 423 and 567 (move the 1 step early).

## Double foot slide

Norberto, 🕃 ¡Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video, Norberto & Yaqueline

After dile que no,

- 6: jump and open feet large
- 7: land with feet open
- 123: slide both feet slowly back together

You need to have a slippery floor or shoes to do this.

## **Dollar**

LE lands low on the floor on one foot, and picks up the dollar. Do as if falling, as a surprise.

FO can go down on the floor too, but with a different style, while dancing. See 🕃 ¡Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #2,

moves #7-#8 for examples.

8.12. NOTES Latin Dance Study Guide

# **Chapter 9**

# **Various Cuban Salsa Combinations**

#### 9.1 Basic combinations

Here are a set of combinations which many cubans should know. These are often used as part of more complex combinations, in forming rueda moves.

Remember that the *key* to successfully pulling off all of these crazy combinations is for FO to keep walking CW around LE (section 7.8). This is the only way that you can pull some of these moves off nicely. Many of these are simply impossible to perform in an in-line, NY-style fashion.

Note: this section was never quite completed, it needs to be synthesized further.

#### 9.1.1 Prima con la hermana

Prima, then enchufla.

#### 9.1.2 Setenta (70)

From double-open hold,

- 123,567: hecho
- 123,567: deshecho
- 567: LE'LT, moving R-L over his head
- 123: deshecho

There are many different "fakes" that you can do as part of 70:

- 1. first fake incomplete hecho with L-R behind LE's head after hecho, as if going to do 70 complicado, but bring it in front of LE's head right after doing a normal setenta
- 2. fake LE'LT with R-L behind LE's head after deshecho

9.1. BASIC COMBINATIONS Latin Dance Study Guide

- 3. fake LE'LT with alarde on LE'RH, moving directly into dile que no
- fake second deshecho after LE'LT, just raise hand as if, but actually lead slowly into a hecho (this one is cool, see it in ĕ¡Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video, Rex & Deyris )
- 5. don't do LE'LT, rather do two handcombs with LE'RH then LE'LH

#### ➤ Exercise: Setenta fakes

Practice performing fakes starting with the setenta move. First do each one separately, then do the three ones in a row, then improvise.

#### Comments:

- Keep both hands through-out.
- beginners can offer hand, but for intermediates and more hands must be caught late (very late, invisible to the eye).
- can do only hint of FO'IT, don't have to move over head and turn.

Often, the setenta move is completed with:

• 567: LE'RT

• 123,567: dile que no

### 9.1.3 Cero-siete (07)

FO'RT but throwing L-R behind FO's back and catching it to follow-through the turn with LE'RH.

## **9.1.4 70** complicado

☆ Vuelta combination: Setenta complicado, Setenta y complicate

#### From double-open hold,

- 123,567: hecho, but no complete fully, and leave L-R behind LE's head.
- 123: deshecho, with L-R over FO's head, switching position with FO. LE moves to the left so that FO moves behind him and ends up to his left. Don't rush the timing here, the timing is really the same as for deshecho, you pull on 2. When you're first learning this move you may be confused with the positioning and be tempted to rush pulling FO starting from 1, which breaks the smoothness.
- 567: LE'RT, L-R above his head.
- 123: deshecho
- 567: LE'RT

#### Possible fakes:

• on the first hecho, complete 70 hold fully by bringing L-R in front of LE, then move it above and behind again, guiding her to move behind LE

Latin Dance Study Guide 9.1. BASIC COMBINATIONS

# Variations of 70 complicado

☆ Vuelta combination: Setenta complicado doble

Onoris

Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video, Onoris and Mileidis, and Deyris

This is a pretty spectacular move and arm twister that can be done at the end of a 70 complicado.

- 123,567,123: hecho-deshecho (behind) of 70 complicado
- 567: wrap FO by turning her one more turn to the left with L-R over her head, wrapping her up on LE's left side
- 123: LE bends forward and does LE'RT moving head under L-R, effectively performing a majarama with LE'LH. This seems to be easier on the hands if FO still hasn't finished her turn and butts are together during LE's turn. LE must walk CW around FO while turning. Move LE's head under FO'RH.
- 567: LE raise his head up, faces FO close and moves into girón or something else

☆ Vuelta combination: Setenta incomplicado

Onoris

Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video, Onoris and Mileidis

- 123,567: hecho 70 complicado
- 123: LE'RT, bringing R-L high over her head and in front of her
- 567: LE'LT, moving under R-L
- 123: deshecho

☆ Vuelta combination: Setenta incomplicado con alarde

Onoris

Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video, Onoris and Mileidis

- 123,567,123: hecho-deshecho (behind) 70 complicado
- 567: still maintaining L-R crossed behind LE's back, do an alarde with LE'LH over FO'RH, emphasizing your alarde down on 7
- 123: raise L-R over FO's head and do LE'RT, raising R-L over FO's head to LE's right (the 70 incomplicado)
- 567: LE'LT moving under R-L
- 123: deshecho

In the video, they're actually drifting a beat (watch FO's feet closely).

# **9.1.5** Trompo

☆ Vuelta combination: Trompo

From double-crossed hold,

- 123,567: hecho
- 123,567: pasea arriba behind LE, turn FO to her left behind LE
- 123,567: move her under LE'LH and then LE'RH, and enter LE's right elbow inside right away for "parte de la mano". This is a very uncomfortable position, bending LE's knees and lowering will help a bit
- 123,567: LE lowers his head, moving under FO's hands and does LE'LT
- 123,567: another LE'LT, and then hecho
- 123,567: dile que no

# 9.2 Various Other Combinations

In this section, practice combinations are presented, which are creations of individual dancers/teachers. These are probably not known under the given names by anyone except the dancer who created it. Practice these to develop fluidity.

☆ Vuelta combination: Tropicana

Source: Nichito

From double-crossed hold,

- 123,567: hecho, with L-R hairbrush behind LE's neck
- 123,567: while doing back breaks, R-L hairbrush behind LE's neck, then L-R hairbrush, and keep hands on the last one
- 123,567: deshecho + hecho, blocking at FO's neck level
- 123,567: deshecho + hecho, blocking with FO's hands bent in her back. Leave hands after this
- 123,567: deshecho + hecho, blocking with LE's hand on her sides. Free her after this by moving...
- 123,567: LE moves in front of her on her left. Free reversed pasea. FO must walk for the pasea since she's free
- 123,567: recoger and dile que no
- ...(continue)...

# ☆ Vuelta combination: Cero siete complicado

Source: Nichito

### From double-crossed hold,

- 123,567: hecho-07
- 123,567: while maintaining the 07 hold, move to her left, keeping FO'RH, which becomes wrapped around her beck, and on 567 unfold using LE'LH into sombrero hold
- 123,567: pasea arriba behind you with both hands
- 123,567: deshecho123,567: dile que no

# ☆ Vuelta combination: Parte de la mano

Source: Nichito

### From double-crossed hold,

- 123,567,123,567,123,567: same 6 bars as Trompo.
- 123,567: caminala (both walk around), FO walks a bit more than LE, moving to his back
- 123,567: LE'LT, hands are undone
- 123,567: deshecho123,567: dile que no
- ☆ Vuelta combination: Wrap her up

Source: Norberto

### From reverse double-crossed hold.

- 123,567: traveling hecho, wrapping her into L-L, until you face her back.
- 123,567: walk behind FO and do a LE'LT, thus unwrapping her
- ...(continue)...

This move could actually be done simpler, with LE turning at the same time as FO, with both hands above both partners, but the nice wrapping effect is create her by waiting long enough after FO's turn for LE to execute his turn.

### ☆ Vuelta combination: Setenta y peina te

Source: Norberto

Literally: "brush your hair". From reverse double-crossed hold,

- 123,567,123: first bars of 70
- 567: fake going under under R-L, enter head under hand and then return, as if brushing your hair with her hand. At this point, you entered an engaño motion.
- 123: repeat, but with L-R, to the right
- ...: continue more as desired
- ...(continue)...exit somehow

Note that the hand that you go using to comb your hair is not the next one that you would normally go to in 70.

# ☆ Vuelta combination: Tornillo al lado #1

Source: Norberto

### From single open hold,

- 123,567: hecho, change hands into single crossed hold
- 123,...: move forward, with LE'<sub>1/2</sub>RT and place FO'RH behind LE's neck and LE'LH on her back, under arms. Both looking the same direction, turn CW together.
- ...: LE'<sub>1/2</sub>LT, change to LE'RH behind her back, grab L-R and pull both hands for a smooth change in direction. Walk together CCW. Note that LE could stop his feet, getting into a tornillo letting FO pull him around, to perform this switch;
- 123,567: pull to stop her and go into dile que no.

### ☆ Vuelta combination: 07 sombrero complicado #1

Source: Norberto

#### From double crossed hold,

- 123,567: hecho 07
- 123,567: LE'<sub>1/2</sub>RT, put R-R behind LE's neck and turn together CW
- 123,567: move R-R out from behind neck and behind LE's head, then raise it above LE's head and in front
- ...(continue)...

# ☆ Vuelta combination: 07 sombrero complicado #2

Source: Norberto

### From double crossed hold,

- 123.567: hecho 07
- 123,567: LE'1/2RT, put R-R behind LE's neck and turn together CW
- 123,567: move out under R-R rama in LE's back
- ...(continue)...

# ☆ Vuelta combination: Oscar

Source: Norberto

### Imitating Oscar D'Leon playing bajo: From single open hold,

- 123,567,123: hecho, deshecho
- 567,123,567,...: hecho/deshecho pair (enchufla doble), and try to keep placing yourself behind FO, all the while playing upright bass on her belly
- ...(continue)...

# ☆ Vuelta combination: 70 abajo

Source: Norberto

- 123,567,123: like 70 (dbl.open hold hecho, desehecho)
- 123,567: LE'<sub>1/2</sub>RT and stop yourself, LE'LH in front and slightly above, and LE'RH low, be ready to move under. LE can stop his feet here for style.
- 123,567: move under L-R or let FO continue walking to let you go under
- ...(continue)...

# ☆ Vuelta combination: Setenta y uno (71)

Source: Norberto

- 123,567,123,567: 70
- 123: alarde with LE'LH.
- 567,123,...: you can keep doing this, in the engaño step, by moving LE's lower body sideways.
- 567: with this alarde only (LE'LH), lead a pasea arriba CCW.

Variation: do 71 with LE'RH instead of LE'LH.

☆ Vuelta combination: Setenta y dos (72)

Source: Norberto

Same as 71, but with both hands doing alarde.

# ☆ Vuelta combination: 71 y pasea

Source: Norberto

- 123,567,123,567: 71
- 123,567: pasea arriba with L-R
- ...(continue)...

# ☆ Vuelta combination: The tunnel of Bayamo

Source: Norberto

- 123,567,123,567: pasea arriba CCW
- 123,567: tunnel, with FO moving behind and to the left of LE.
- 123,567: trompo LE'RT; this move goes into bayamo hold
- 123,567,123,...: bayamo

What is interesting here is that you can chain half a trompo into a Bayamo.

### ☆ Vuelta combination: Soga/Amare

Source: Yaqueline, last day

From double crossed hold,

- 123,567: hecho with both hands above
- 123: deshecho with both hands above
- 567: LE'LT, with LE "diving" down and to the left of FO, in the direction where LE'RH points. FO has her arms locked twisted together. LE moves his head under arms while turning and pop head out eventually;
- 123,567: while LE goes back up, FO moves head down to untwist. LE needs to give her an impulse, a bit to the left and up. Be careful not to give strong, this can be done very smoothly.

What is interesting here is that you can chain half a trompo into a Bayamo.

# ☆ Vuelta combination: 07 breast-curl

Source: Yaqueline

### From double crossed hold,

- 123,567: hecho 07, but don't bring R-R behind FO's head
- 123,567: slow deshecho with FO moving under L-L into a breast-curl

# ☆ *Vuelta combination:* 07 tunnel hombre

Source: Yaqueline

#### From double crossed hold,

- 123,567: hecho 07, but on 567 LE crouches and moves to the left and behind FO, under R-R
- 123: LE stays with head down and moves farther behind FO under L-L and pops his head out on her left.
- 567: hecho to undo doubly-crossed hold
- 123,567: slow hecho to complete

#### A few tricks for LE's tunnel:

- bend knees, and bend forward;
- pop head out before body, it looks good, and it helps as well;
- turn with LE'LH, only pull upwards with LE'RH, and don't move too much yourself (LE).

# ☆ Vuelta combination: Bayamo into 07 tunnel hombre

Source: Yaqueline

This is the first part of bayamo, and right after the bayamo turn, move into 07 tunnel hombre directly. From double crossed hold.

- 123,567: ... somehow get into pasea arriba
- 123,567: pull her in front of LE and do bayamo turn
- 123,567: LE not only turns left to face FO, but keeps going and moves under R-R into LE's tunnel, and then hecho to under doubly-crossed hold
- 123,567: finish with second slow turn

# ☆ Vuelta combination: Arms down

Source: Mario Charón

### From double open hold,

- 123,567: hecho with both hands above, wrapping FO, and a bit later, LE'RT under hands;
- 123: follow into more LE'RT, lowering LE'RH in LE's back and moving under L-R;
- 567: LE moves into FO's right arm and lowers L-R straight down in between them;
- 123: list L-R up and to LE's right, all the while caminando
- 567: deshecho
- ...(continue)...

### 🖈 Vuelta combination: Hesitating rama

Source: Mario Charón

Do one of the sombrero ramas and play the hesitation game under FO's arm

# **☆** *Vuelta combination:* Arco iris

Source: Mario Charón

### The rainbow. From double crossed hold,

- 123,567,123: hecho, deshecho, with both hands above, as if doing sombrero
- 567: double hairbrush R-R on 5, L-L on 7, keep L-L behind LE's neck. LE does a half-turn to the left. LE'RH grabs FO'RH which was just dropped when LE is turned away from FO.
- 123: with LE facing away from FO and with both L-L and R-R hands together, raise hands straight up and lower them slowly to the sides, performing an arc. Bend knees to help if FO is smaller than LE.
- 567: camina CW (waiting)
- 123: mark forward with LF, move R-R straight over on 3, and let FO exit to the left of LE
- ...(continue)...

# ☆ Vuelta combination: Maja de la mujer

Source: Mario Charón

- 123,567,123: 70 hecho-deshecho
- 567: LE moves under L-R, turning a bit to the right
- 123,567: FO RT bayamo, LE moves FO to his right switching positions. Make sure to keep LE'RH low in FO's back to induce her into maja FO'LH
- 123,567: LE'LT, deshecho
- ...(continue)...

# ☆ Vuelta combination: Jungle hands

Source: Mario Charón

- 123,567: 70 hecho
- 123: follow into more FO'RT with a FO breast-curl, with LE pulling R-L up (FO'LH is behind her back at this moment)
- 567: as FO finishes the breast-curl, move L-R over and behind LE's head, itno maja
- 123: step forward, enter LE's right elbow and exit with LE'LT, bending knees a whole lot to accommodate the discomfort.
- 567: FO must walk CW
- 123,567: exit 70 with deshecho

### ☆ *Vuelta combination:* Hollandaise #2

Source: Mario Charón

From single crossed hold,

- 123,567: hecho
- 123,567: deshecho + LE'RT, bringing R-R behind LE's neck
- 123: hollandaise with LE'LH, grabbing FO'LH
- 567: hecho smoothly inside, keep both hands together, stry close to FO
- 123,567: hecho sombrero

# ☆ *Vuelta combination:* Enradala a la Charón

Source: Mario Charón

- ...: perform an enredo
- 123: deshecho, wrapping up FO
- 567: follow into more FO'IT and perfrom an LE'LT, bending forward and moving under arms...this is crazy!
- 123,567: FO is still wrapped up. Exit somehow.

# ☆ Vuelta combination: Tunturuntun

Salsa a la Cubana! Instructional video #2, move #25, "Tunturuntur"

- 123,567: hecho 07
- 123: LE moves to his left towards FO's back, keeping R-R, which at that point is in front of her neck with LE from behind. Start taking out L-L from behind her, in a large circular motion so that FO doesn't get confused;
- 567: bring L-L up above her head, and to the right, with FO rotating a bit to the right;
- 123: deshecho, using R-R from behind FO's neck, with FO ducking head under R-R;
- 567: put L-L behind LE's head for sombrero hold, exit in *dile que no*; or better: bring it behind FO's head, along with R-R that should already be there, and move directly into girón CW, with both of FO's hands behind her head, with elbows raised.
- ...(continue)...

### ☆ Vuelta combination: Wrap into behind

Ibert

Can be seen during 🗃 ¡Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video, Ibert & Sunny

### From reverse double hold,

- 123: hecho, wrapping up FO using L-L
- 567: LE stays in-place while FO walks behind him, towards his left, still with R-R low
- 123: FO left turn, unwrapping with L-L above her head
- 567: LE'RT
- ...(continue)...(perhaps deshecho)

### ☆ Vuelta combination: Bayamo-maja

Martin Blais imagined in a dream, never did

- 123: bayamo turn (FO's right turn)
- 567: FO moves behind and to the left of LE and FO does left turn
- 123: maja LE'RH
- 567: reversed bayamo turn (FO's left turn)
- 123: FO moves behind and to the right of LE and FO does right turn
- 567: maja LE'LH
- ...(continue)...(you could connect more of the same and repeat)

☆ Vuelta combination: Bayamo 07

Norberto

First enter bayamo hold somehow,

- 123,567: bayamo turn, keep FO to LE's right, and enter RH over and behind FO's head;
- 123,567,...: with this arm lock, LE looking in one direction and FO in the other, walk forward and backward;
- ...(continue)...exit somehow

☆ Vuelta combination: 70 into wrap

Norberto

- 123,567,123,567: setenta, LE stays wrapped up instead of exiting the wrap;
- 123,567: LE moves into FO's right in this wrapped hold, and both walk CW, facing same direction (LE walks backward)
- 123,567,...: continue walking CW for a while
- ...(continue)...

☆ Vuelta combination: Wrap with alarde

Ismael

Salsa a la Cubana! Demonstrational video, Ismael and Mileidis

This is a cool way to get into a 70 (engaño style) other than the usual FO'OT From double-open hold,

- 123,567: FO'OT, leading it with R-L and wrapping up FO with R-L, and end with alarde with LE'RH over FO'LH when FO finishes her turn
- 123,567: 70 or something else, in engaño motion

# Chapter 10

# Rueda de Casino – Basics

Rueda is a group dance, that dances on salsa music. The couples dance in a circle, following moves called by someone (often one of the dancers participating in the rueda). Having solid knowledge of basic salsa steps is a prerequisite in order to dance rueda. The social setting for rueda is much more forgiving for a beginner than for salsa, since it is a "group thing". However, there is the extra stress that if you participate in a rueda, if you miss a move you may break the flow. Rueda is a lot of fun and is often used to warm up an evening. For a history of rueda or more spicy information, look in the links section.

I learned moves from two different types of rueda in Montreal: *cuban rueda*, taught by Orlando Alfonso, and also taught separately by Nelson Castellano, and *miami-style rueda*, taught by Gilles Dutrisac "la rueda de Montreal". The cuban rueda seems looser, less organized than the miami rueda. In cuban rueda oftentimes moves are modified along the way by the caller whereas the miami-style rueda follows a well-coded vocabulary and call one move after the other. I also did a very brief introspection into a third rueda lesson from another school, which seemed to be a cuban rueda.

This text aims at documenting the information I learned in my ruedas, and should not serve as a definitive guide of rueda. In this document I will describe moves in terms of both ruedas, with an emphasis on cuban rueda, because its structure seems to have less exceptions (e.g. moves almost always change partners). All moves are described in spanish, since this seems to be the norm. Also, some of the cuban moves are open to improvisation by the caller, so it is better if you can understand spanish.

# 10.1 Rueda basics

# **10.1.1** Timing

Rueda dances on the 1. For the reversed basic step, this document counts the 1 on the LE'LF doing a back break step, and 5 is on the LE'RF doing the small forward step. Although rueda teachers often call it the opposite way, this choice makes more sense with the music and is consistent with both basic configurations.

10.1. RUEDA BASICS

Latin Dance Study Guide

# 10.1.2 Basic steps

In rueda there are three basic steps:

Rocking step, in forward configuration:

- This is the primary step and is used to perform moves where the dancers walk in a circle;
- The rueda always starts with the LE facing the center on his left, with the basic salsa position. This position is taken on call *Al centro*. The FO is opposite him. Partners are rocking left and right, towards the center of the wheel and out. The rueda left-right step: on 1, bring left foot back together with the right, then on 2, put left foot back towards the center, on 3, bring right foot together with the left, on 4, back to the outside. This is a simpler step.

### Guapea or casino basic step:

- This is the step in which the great majority of the moves are performed;
- The reversed basic step starts with the LE's left foot going backwards on 1, and the LE's right foot moving somewhat forward on 5, pushing the FO back. There doesn't seem to be a pronounced forward step, it's just less strong as the back step or salsa. Hold the FO's left hand all the while. Always hold the FO'RH with the LE'LH with the palm upside up (some people, even advanced, seem to hold the FO's hand with the thumb inside the FO's hand, which I think is wrong). Most of the rueda steps seem to hang in the reversed step position (with the center to the right of the LE). Let's call this one the reversed salsa basic position/step or guapea position/step.
- This position is also referred to as the "no" position, as in "tell her no", *dile que no*. She moves forward, you push back, you are saying no.
- To start the rueda directly into this step, the FO offers her hands in the air, palms facing LE. LE grabs both of her hands, his hands outside of hers, with his thumbs inside FO's palms, and pulls to initiate a 5, with LE doing the forward step with the right foot for the reversed step push-off.
- For distances, when doing the basic rueda step, make sure that on the 1 you're shoulder to shoulder to the next FO (arriba). When the caller says to "watch your casino!", it means to check your distances.
- (cuban) However, \*don't\* open the rueda by facing inside the wheel; rather, keep the body alignment within the wheel's itself, facing your partner, this is very important, otherwise you'll be cutting yourself a step short when doing the moves.
- (miami) In contrast, the miami rueda I learned explicitly teaches to open on 1-2-3 and face the center of the wheel.
- Put down your right leg fully, with your weight on it, and resist temptation to just point the toes down. I noticed Orlando sometimes has the heel down and sometimes even has the toes off the ground. When stepping forward on the 5, step with the ball of the foot first. This does NOT however mean that you should plant the tip of my foot on the floor. However, even though the weight will be transfered to the right foot, the ball of the foot has to touch the ground first, and not the heel.
- When I do this step, I don't keep enough pressure in my left arm, e.g. for doing an *enchufla*. You must maintain enough pressure to keep your left arm bent, and never let it go to full extension.
- I have often felt uncomfortable doing the push-off with LE'RH on FO'LH. At some point I noticed how to do it right: LE pushes off *down*, and to the right side, sort-of. That actually looks right. Use the full hand, at a slight angle.
- I have heard from some ppl who went to Cuba say that they call this step the "casino" step. As in "we danced casino" (one couple only).

Latin Dance Study Guide 10.1. RUEDA BASICS

• According to Nelson, the casino step consists of two back breaks, he says you're not supposed to bring the right leg in front on the 5, you do a normal back break. However, when I watched his group dance, he and others were actually often stepping forward on the 5. I remain puzzled about this.

# forward salsa basic step:

• The normal salsa basic step with LE moving LF forward on 1 is called *son montuno* in the miami-style rueda.

In addition, there are two very simple moves used to move between the forward and backward positions above. Most of the other moves start in one position or the other and end in the same.

# Dile que no:

- This call is used to move from the forward position to the reversed position.
- This is spanish for cross-body lead (XBL). Litteraly means "tell her no".
- When dancing rueda, the XBL tends to be loose depending on the teacher. I was mentioned that it is important for the leader to really step \*forward\* on the FO, and not step towards the center of the wheel. Really step forward on 1, moving toward your FO, close to her. Also, FO should not "escape" to the outside before the *dile que no*.
- You should already be able to perform a very solid XBL when learning rueda, because there are heaps of them all over the place. This XBL is the very same as the one done in salsa except, perhaps, that LE's don't connect LE'LH with FO'RH as much (it shouldn't be necessary for a good XBL anyway).
- Rueda is full of XBLs all over the place.
- From the rocking position, the proper step for transferring between the *centro* step and the reversed step with a *dile que no* is a little confusing. There seems to be many possible ways, but the following is what I was taught. The transfer towards *dile que no* is done this way:
  - On 1, weight on both legs, on 3, accent with right foot inside on the left, on 5, weight on both legs, on 7, accent with left foot inside on the right. The count here is 1-2-3, 5-6-7, just as usual, with the rocking with weight on both legs being on 1 and 5.
  - The transfer is done with a normal step back on the 5-6-7, after the accent on the left. This tells our FO that we're about to step forward for *dile que no*. Without this it doesn't feel as natural to walk forward on the FO.

# Se queda:

- This call is used to move from the reversed position to the forward position.
- Spanish for "it stays".
- On call *se queda*, on back step on 1-2-3 with LF, then 5-6-7 with a right half-turn along with the woman (man is moving to the left of the woman), and go back into the basic step position. Similar to an *adios* (see below), but you stay there.
- This is the same as the first half of an *adios*.

### 10.1.3 General principle for which step to use

When the partners are facing each other in the forward position (LE facing CCW), if the partners are going to dance anything more complex than the rocking step, LE always does the usual salsa basic step. However,

10.2. GENERAL NOTES

Latin Dance Study Guide

when the partners are facing in *guapea* position (LE facing CW), LE always does the reversed salsa basic step. The FO always does the usual salsa basic step, regardless of position.

# 10.2 General notes

- Do small steps, "watch your casino!"
- The rueda caller or leader is said to be the "singer" in spanish. One says "to sing" the rueda.
- The calls are meant for the leaders. So verbs that end in "te" means that LE do that to themselves, and verbs that end in "la" means that LEs do that FOs.
- (FO doesn't have to wait, but if she doesn't, she must walk inside the wheel, and not towards LE) Followers: PLEASE \*WAIT\* for that *dile que no*. A major annoyance is FOs rushing into LEs in anticipation for *dile que no* instead of keeping their basic step going. There is plenty of time for XBL, wait until LE comes to get you... he'll push you into it, you'll know, don't worry!!!
- If another LE is in the way, push him! Push him *into* the rueda, that is, not outside of it, e.g. if someone is late, push in where he should be next.
- "In rueda, there is no politeness." says Orlando. When an FO fails to be in the right spot, grab her and bring her back into it.
- FOs should be dancing here, not just be lost into whatever move the LEs happen to be subjecting them to, they should be alert, e.g. when doing *con dos palmadas*, they should turn and clap, they have to dance! This was said at some point because some FOs were just a little too lost.
- In miami-style rueda, in general:
  - variants of FO'OT is called exhibela
  - variants of FO'IT or XBL+IT are called coca-cola

# 10.2.1 Hand signs

In a club setting, where the music is really loud, it is difficult to hear the calls. Hand signs have thus been created for most of the moves. You must be alert at the caller when doing a rueda and have visual contact most of the time.

### 10.2.2 Miami-style taps

In miami-style rueda, there are foot "taps" that are very pronounced and that punctuate the moves and help FOs take a reference. These "taps" seem to be absent from cuban rueda. The "taps" are performed on 4 and 8, with the foot the is about to move back. The basic step is done with the LE'LF stepping inside the wheel on 8.

From the guapea position, on the 8 beat, that is, right after the push-off, LE and FO both face the center of the rueda while LE extends FO's arm inside forward (not low), and does a step with his left foot (FO uses right foot). You should not put weight on LE's left foot when tapping, since it will have to move backwards right away on 1. When doing the tap, do not put the heel down, just the ball of the foot. This "tap" doesn't

Latin Dance Study Guide 10.2. GENERAL NOTES

feel natural for me at all, and I haven't seen the cuban rueda use that tap. When in Rome do like the romans. I think that they actually do the arm extension a bit early, rather on the 7 than the 8.

Also, an important trick of the hand: when extending FO'RH in the center of the wheel, it is much easier to carry out if LE'LH is *over* FO'RH, holding it with the thumb, and not inside it as in the casino step. You have to change your grip before you go for the tap.

### 10.2.3 How to XBL a new FO (dame)

Between the cuban ruedas I've seen, the way the *dile que no* (XBL) is done varies. Both systems argue that theirs is "the only possible way" (this happens very often with latin people).

- 1. Grab FO with LE'RH behind her back, and push her, like a normal salsa XBL, but with some more elastic motion. You wouldn't do an XBL quite like that in salsa, salsa dances more in-line. "Of course it's impossible to XBL with manner #2 if the music is fast."
- 2. FO offers her RH and LE grabs it with LE'RH, in single crossed hold, and pulls her for an XBL, switching hands halfway through. "Of course it's impossible to XBL with manner #1 if the music is fast."

# 10.2.4 Some useful spanish

- *otra* means "another". When called on its own, usually means to do the same move as was done before. My teaching often says "*otra mano*".
- vez or veces: "times", e.g. otra vez is "one more time".
- epa! or wepa! is an onomatopea for "go!", "do it now!"
- con means "with". Multiple moves can be called together in advance, e.g. enchufla con bikini means that you do an enchufla but instead of going to the next FO, you skip one, effectively doing a bikini (dame dos).

#### 10.2.5 Move modifiers

Moves are often qualified with adjectives that add something to the move.

- ...por arriba, or ...pa'tra (para atras): up the mountain, in front of you.
- ...por abajo, or ...pa'ilante (para adelante): down the mountain, behind you
- ...por dentro: on the inside (of the wheel)
- ...por fuera: on the outside (of the wheel)

These modifiers refer to directions, and usually mean that your next FO is in that direction. The miami people will point to the ceiling or the floor to indicate *por arriba* and *por abajo* in their hand signals.

Orlando once explained to me that *arriba* refers to the next FO in front of you, regardless of where you're facing, so when you're facing CCW, *por arriba* will refer to the FO that would be to LE's right when everyone is facing the center. However in general the modifiers are pretty consistent and *por arriba* almost always means the one CW, and *por abajo* almost always means the one CCW.

10.2. GENERAL NOTES

Latin Dance Study Guide

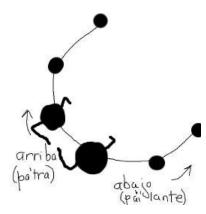


Figure 10.1: Directions of "arriba" and "abajo".

- ... con dos is often added to some moves. The usual meaning of con dos is two hand claps, stands for con dos palmadas.
- ... con quattro palmadas can also be added. In this case do two with the next FO, and two with your current FO.
- ... con chocolate is meant to indicate an LE's right turn with hand above (in single hold).
- *y pa'abajo* and *con bikini*. Was explained that many moves could be modified to replace the change of FO with either *pa'abajo*: move to the previous FO instead of the next, and *con bikini*: skip one FO when doing the change of FO instead of just grabbing the next FO. Note that this is different (and more exciting) than e.g. *la prima* + *bikini*, in which you would XBL your next FO and \*then\* do a *bikini*.
- y una vuelta. "and with a turn". Whatever move was modified, when going to fetch your FO for, do a turn
- In the miami-style rueda: *exhibela* called from the reverse configuratino can be considered a move modifier.
- ... de las dos, ... la mujer y el hombre, (sometimes) ... doble: whatever the move that is modified is, both do whatever was done instead of just one.
- ... complicado. A move that is complicado means that it is a move with a complication.
- ... y complicata / ... y complicate. Means "... and make it complicated for her / you".

# 10.2.6 Notable differences in rueda styles

- When teaching new moves from reversed basic position, my cuban rueda teacher starts with LF back on 1, while the miami rueda people start on 5 by pulling the FO'LH where the push-off would normally occur.
- In NC's cuban rueda, moves often end with a reversed enchufla to go get the next partner. Such occurences are often replaced by a *dile que no* in the miami-style rueda.
- Nelson notes that the *only* time LE steps forward in his cuban rueda is when LE goes for *dile que no*.
- A variation that can apply for most of the moves of cuban rueda is that a half-turn can be added at
  each bar, where both partners are turning to the right. This gives great motion to the rueda and it not
  much more complicated than without, except that everything has to be done a little bit faster. This is

Latin Dance Study Guide 10.3. CALLING THE RUEDA

an important difference between Nelson's style and Orlando's style. Orlando likes to add in the extra turns.

# 10.3 Calling the rueda

# **10.3.1** Timing

My cuban rueda teacher is calling rueda on the 5, with the intent of doing the move on the following 1. The miami rueda people I danced with are calling rueda on the 1, with the intent of doing the move on the next 1, after a whole bar. This makes the rueda slower, but if the caller is connecting moves together one after the other it results in the same. I find it easier to call on the 5, although sometimes it creates longer breaks when my imagination is lagging behind.

Make sure that the partners are exchanged often enough. A trick to start doing this is to call a *dame* between every move. When you're comfortable doing this you can probably think about if the move you just called will include a change of partner.

# 10.4 Basic configurations

What I dub a "configuration" is a general relative positioning of the dancers from which we can dance idle, waiting for calls. Different calls are called depending on configurations and some calls with the same name are different depending on the starting configuration (e.g. see *al centro* calls). See specific sections for description of basic configurations:

- Forward configuration 10.4.1
- Reverse configuration 10.4.2
- In-and-out walk configuration 10.4.3
- Carrusel configuration 10.4.4

A note about terminology: we refer to the FO being "upstream" or "downstream" with "up" or "down". However, in the ruedas I've learned the terminology is different (!!!). If all dancers are facing the center of the wheel.

- for the cuban rueda: *arriba* is the FO to LE's right (CCW), *abajo* is the FO to LE's left (CW). Most often *pa'tra* or *pai'lante* are called rather than *arriba* or *abajo*.
- for the miami rueda: arriba is the FO to LE's left (CW), abajo is the FO to LE's right (CW). e.g. adios por arriba.

### **10.4.1** Forward Configuration

The forward configuration is where LE dances the salsa basic step, with FO, usually in closed-hold, and the greater majority of the time with LE facing CCW (but this is not a strict rule, the caller may ask for dancers to turn, e.g. *se vira*). The rocking step starts in this configuration. The idea is that whenever you're dancing

10.4. BASIC CONFIGURATIONS

Latin Dance Study Guide

in closed hold and facing an FO, whether facing CW or CCW, walking like this, or rocking in the center, it is a forward configuration. LE do a normal salsa basic step.



Figure 10.2: Configuration: "forward".

### Notes:

- In the rueda opening, you have to clearly distinguish *dame arriba/abajo*, and *vamo arriba/abajo*. *dame arribe/abajo* means that you move to the next/previous FO in the wheel, while you keep walking either of forward and backward (it doesn't matter which you're doing, just keep walking the wheel in the same direction). *vamo arriba/abajo* rather means that we switch the direction of the wheel ("let's go forward/backward").
- You may be walking in either direction: CW or CCW. See *virela*.
- Notice that when walking CW, when *dame arriba* is called, LEs must walk to FO's left too, that is, \*outside\* the wheel, not inside.

# **10.4.2** Reverse Configuration

The reverse configuration is where LE dances the *guapea* or *casino* step, in single hold (LE'LH holding FO'RH), and LE is facing CCW. This is where most of the rueda calls start from, this is the configuration in which you spend the most time dancing.

Most of the moves in this configuration are already known to a good salsa dancer. However, there is a notable difference in rueda: often the moves are the same as in salsa but the partners move 180 degrees on each bar. The partners are turning a lot more together when doing rueda.



Figure 10.3: Configuration: "reverse".

# 10.4.3 In-And-Out Walk Configuration

The in-and-out walk configuration has LEs doing large salsa basic steps toward the inside of the wheel, with FOs doing the same thing but alternating with LEs (i.e. when LEs step forward, FOs step backward, and vice-versa).

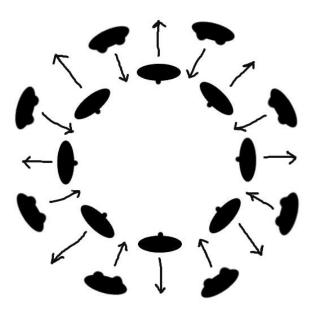


Figure 10.4: Configuration: "in-and-out".

# 10.4.4 Carrusel Configuration

The carrusel configuration has all the partners either

- walking salsa together everyone facing the same way, with one hand extended in the center, holding your partner's hand, all hands in the same spot, and the another hand is on the exterior shoulder of the dancer in front of you
- walking in-and-out with all of LEs and FOs together, holding both of your neighbors hands (this is different than the in-and-out walk configuration);

An important concept about the carrusel moves: always remember who you were dancing with. Unless a call for a change of partner has been issued, you should be dancing with the same partner as before.

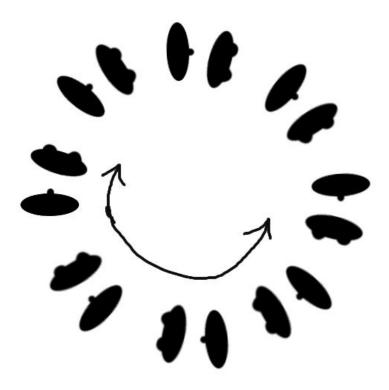


Figure 10.5: Configuration: "carrusel".

# **Inversion**

Another concept is that a carrusel can be simple or inverted. The carrusel is "inverted" (*invertido*) if you're behind your own FO. For example, if just carrusel is called for, you should end up with your FO to your right, if you were facing the center of the wheel. If an inverted carrusel is called for, you should end up with your FO on your left, if you were facing the center of the wheel. If you're already in carrusel configuration, a call for "inverting" the carrusel has the partners doing a move to change positions.

Similarly, a non-specified exit from carrusel configuration (e.g. *se queda* ("it ends"), instead of a call for a specific move, such as *enchufla*) will use different exit moves depending on if the carrusel is simple or inverted. In a simple carrusel, you're dancing with your FO to your right, you'll exit with *dile que no*. If the carrusel is inverted, you'll exit with an FO'OT.

So there are two possible ways to enter the carrusel, and two possible ways to exit it.

10.4. BASIC CONFIGURATIONS

Latin Dance Study Guide

# **Chapter 11**

# Rueda de Casino - Moves

This section contains a dictionary of moves in rueda. Some basic moves are essential to dancing rueda, but keep in mind that many if not most of the complex moves are creations by their respective groups and are not in any way "official". A group that has been dancing together for a long time will carry a larger legacy of moves. You can create your own, and there is no "official" repertory of the complex moves, and if someone tells you so, it's wishful thinking, they're just attempting to set a standard which will never exist, due to the spontaneous nature of rueda dancing.

However, in each section we will include a reasonable list of the common essential moves that everyone should know within that configuration. That list is usually pretty small.

# 11.1 Moves in the forward configuration

# 11.1.1 Essential Moves

- Al centro;
- Dile que no;
- Vamos arriba/abajo, Sube/Baja la loma;
- Vamos arriba/abajo con vuelta;
- Dame arriba/abajo, Dame un coco, Tarrito de mentira ;
- Pa'abajo;
- Exhibela (miami), Una vuelta de la mujer (cuban);
- Una vuelta del hombre;
- Una vuelta de los dos;

# 11.1.2 Move Descriptions

### Al centro, centro, al medio

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "at the center"

**☞ Hand sign:** 

*Al centro* is yelled to call people to the rueda. Grab a consenting FO and synchronise into the rocking step with others. This forms the wheel. Make sure the wheel is not too loose nor too tight. Smile at the others in expectation of a great rueda.

You \*always\* start a rueda with a centro position.

# Dile que no

Attribution:

Translation: "tell her no"

Hand sign:

A simple XBL to move into the reversed basic position.

# Vamos arriba/abajo, Sube/Baja la loma

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "let's move up/down, the hill"

☞ Hand sign:

Arriba: walk salsa forward with your FO in closed hold, on usual 1-2-3, 5-6-7 pattern. Couples are walking CCW. Direction changes should be done just like in salsa walk, i.e. if you're walking backwards you change direction on 5, and only on 5 can you change direction.

Abajo: walk salsa backward with your FO in closed hold, on usual 1-2-3, 5-6-7 pattern. Couples are walking CW. Direction changes should be done just like in salsa walk, i.e. if you're walking forward you change direction on 1, and only on 1 can you change direction.

Make sure you are walking with the same steps as the caller, otherwise you might break the rueda on the next call.

# Vamos arriba/abajo con vuelta

Attribution:

Translation: "let's move up/down, with a turn"

Hand sign:

A series of XBL360 (XBL with a full turn), circling around, like in the G.Estefan video "No me dejes de querer". Although I can't quite do it right just yet, I like to stop the hip motion, like dancing on the two, for style. Add a tiny little bit of left/right balancing of the upper body for even more, but not too much.

### Dame arriba/abajo, Dame un coco, Tarrito de mentira (miami)

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "give me the one up/down"

Hand sign:

Arriba: when doing the forward walk in closed hold: lift your FO'RH over your head with LE'LH and move forward past the girl to get the next one. The walking remains in time but there is no precise timing for the change of hands.

When doing the backward walk in closed hold: lift your FO'RH over your head with LE'LH and step in place, while the FOs keep walking in time, and grab the next FO that comes to you.

Abajo: when doing the walk in closed hold: grab the FO'RH of the FO behind you with LE'LH, and while walking turn left to face the FO behind you in closed position. When changing for the FO behind, the LEs always perform this left turn inside the wheel, i.e. you never just let the FOs walk by and grab that one behind you.

Tarrito de mentira in the miami-style, is the same as dame arriba.

### Enredala

Attribution: old-cuban

Translation: "make a knot with her (not really)"

Hand sign:

Called from the rocking step. During this move, you interact with three FOs. When called, grab the FO'RH of the FO to your left, and instead of rocking outside with LE'LF towards the right, do a back break with LE'LF, which becomes 1-2-3. On this 1-2-3, make FO perform an FO'IT in-place, with hand above, like an *enchufla*. On 5-6-7, skip your own FO (i.e the one to your right, not the one you just made turn an IT) and go do *dile que no* with the next one.

### Tarrito hasta la tuya

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "... until you get back to yours [FO]"

Hand sign:

LE's start walking inside the wheel, CCW while FOs back break in-place, perhaps clapping hands or whatever, and LEs do a full turn of the rueda wheel like this and go back in the basic step with the \*same\* FO that they left.

### Pa'abajo

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "below!"

Hand sign:

Always called when rocking in and out.

- 1-2-3: after moving LE'LF to LE'RF, LE does a forward salsa basic step with LF, while pushing his FO sideways to the outside of the wheel,
- 5-6-7: continue with usual salsa basic step, while pushing your FO sideways to LE's left, inside the wheel, where FO does a back step sideways. LE pulls on FO'RH to swing her back outside the wheel. Keep doing this until the next call. Cubans keep their arm behind FO's back when she goes inside the wheel (other people seem to prefer to let that arm go).

This is an alternate note I took when doing another rueda class somewhere else: On call "abajo", after LE's foot moves inside, move it back so weight is on two legs, but then also move LF close to RF so both feet are together; then on 1-2-3 do a side-step outside the wheel, while the FO is doing a back step inside the wheel and back, then on 5-6-7 do a side-step inside the wheel (to LE's left) and the FO does a back step outside the wheel. We're essentially rotating left and right together, not in opposed directions.

### Exhibela (miami), Una vuelta de la mujer (cuban)

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "show her, a turn of the woman"

**☞ Hand sign: hand sign: finger pointing to eye (like** *vacila*)

On call *exhibila*, on 5 (that is-on LE's right foot side-step) do an FO's OT, when the FO moves towards the inside of the wheel. The hand sign for exhibila is the caller pointing his/her eye. LE raises the FO'RH for the OT when moving towards the inside of the wheel.

They perform an outside turn inside the wheel in the same 1-3-4 pattern as LEs. LEs take FO'RH hand above just as for usual salsa outside turn.

For miami-style rueda, the *exhibela* is not done with FOs inside the wheel, rather keep the FOs in front of you. Also, *dile que no* is implicit to completion of *exhibelas*, regardless if *exhibela doble*, or *exhibela tres* are called.

### Una vuelta del hombre

Attribution:

Translation: "a turn of the man"

Hand sign:

On "1, 3 4 5, 7", do an LE's left turn inside the wheel. The step starts on 1, towards the center, execute the left turn on 3-4. Back on 5, weight on both legs, and there will already be some momentum that will bring left foot inside for accent on the 7. Move under FO'RH when doing the turn.

### Una vuelta de los dos

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "a turn of both"

Hand sign:

On 1-2-3, FO'OT together with LE's left turn, simultaneously. You land rocking towards the outside of the wheel.

# Exhibela doble (miami)

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "show her twice"

Fland sign: hand sign: finger pointing to eye, and then showing two Same as exhibela, except that we do two

FO's OT in a row. LE's do not need to grab the FO's hand between the two FO's OTs.

# Exhibila dos con una

Attribution: miami Translation: ""

→ Hand sign: same as exhibila doble + add a one finger count after.

Same as exhibita doble, except that LE's do a right turn alone from the sideways position, and then the FO's to an outside turn alone right after the LE's right turn. The LE's right turns are really done with the feet sideways, and so the turn has a feel of pushing in the center towards turning on the outside.

# Una bulla, una bullita

Attribution: miami

Translation: "a shout, a sound"

Hand sign:

Called during the rocking step. Shout something happy on the 1 (when rocking in the center of the wheel). Also, when calling it "como en Miami", the answer is "cogno!" Oops... watch that language. The goal is to share energy.

# ...con patiqua

Attribution: Translation: "" F Hand sign:

So from a typical rocking position, LEs kick inside the wheel with RF and FOs kick with LF. You kick with the leg that is outside the wheel.

# Una bulla con patiqua

Attribution: miami

Translation: "a shout with a kick of the leg"

**☞** Hand sign:

Like una bulla, just add a kick on 1 in the center.

### Virela, se vira, el contrario

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "turn yourselves, the opposite"

**☞ Hand sign:** 

Turning left, grab previous FO'RH, the one to LE's left when looking towards the center. We're now facing the wrong side of the wheel in the rocking position (clockwise). The steps keep rocking in the same beat and the feet don't change at all (I'm certain about this, I asked specifically). Often Orlando calls for walking in this reversed direction (CW). Sometimes we walk in the reversed position, where we can also do *vamos arriba/abajo* and *dame arriba/abajo*, in this CW walk. Also, when walking in the reversed position, if called "*virala*" again, turn right together with FO to end up walking in CCW direction, while keeping the walk.

# 11.2 Moves in the reverse configuration

### 11.2.1 Essential Moves

- Dame, dame una, dame la, dame otra, bota, bota la, etc.;
- Dame dos or sometimes simply "dos", Bikini;
- Dos con dos, actually means Dame dos con dos;
- Dame tres, tres!;
- La prima (cuban), Adios (miami);
- Adios con la hermana, La prima con la hermana, or simply "la hermana";
- Prima por de 'tras ;
- Enchufla, enchufa, enchufle, enchuffla;
- Enchufla doble:
- Castiga la:
- Pelota uno (young-cuban), pelota dos, pelota tres Enchufla y palmada (old-cuban);
- Panqué (cuban), Siete (miami);
- Vacila, vacila la ;
- Vacilense, Vacila de las dos, Vacila de la mujer y el hombre ;
- Pasea abajo, pasea la;
- Setenta:
- Cero siete:
- Sombrero, in one of its variations;
- A Bayamo;

#### 11.2.2 Variations of Dame

Dame, dame una, dame la, dame otra, bota, bota la, etc.

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Attribution:
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Translation: "give it to me, give me one"

Hand sign: mimick throwing something behind your back above your

shoulder

On 7, open LE'RF to the right facing the center of the wheel and leave your current FO, and perform a *dile que no* with the FO to your right. Important notes:

- Do \*not\* use the LE'LH when doing the *dile que no*. Just like in salsa, the LE'RH is doing all the work.
- LEs do NOT move at all. Really! Stay in place, even when doing several *dame* in a row! You pass your FOs to the next LE. This helps to prevent the rueda from getting loose or from drifting.
- Beginner FO's tend to rush into the *dile que no*, so they end up closer to the LE which makes it hard to do a nice full length XBL, and the reason for it seems to be where their right foot lands behind them. They have to make sure that they put their right foot back in a back step, just as usual, and turn only on the 5. Otherwise they're cutting a step short.

- A way to LEs to prevent FOs from rushing into the *dile que no* is to not only move the left foot in front for the XBL, but to also move the whole body \*in front\* of the FO i.e. inside the wheel, really, thus blocking FO from moving forward. Move the left foot \*right away\*, so when the FO turns left to you, you're already there. Some FOs noted about the cuban rueda instructor: "when I turn... he's already there." So they just \*have\* to back off. However, don't make the mistake to walk to the next FO. Remember if we're doing a bunch of *dames* in a row, the LEs stay in the very same spot (otherwise that brings the rueda moving somewhere else... like in the backyard or something).
- One of my cuban rueda teachers consistently does the dile que no by grabbing a single crossed hold, instead of using LE'RH behind FO's back. He says it's better for FOs which are not on time and that it's faster.

In the miami rueda, there seems to be an emphasis on keeping the FO's hand all the way until 1. This means that there is a moment where all LE's hold FO'RH, but also put their LE'RH behind FO's back at the same time. This looks nice.

# Dame dos or sometimes simply "dos", Bikini

#### **Attribution:**

Translation: "give me two, bikini relates to two because there are two pieces

in a bikini"

☞ Hand sign: dame hand sign + two fingers in the air

On call *bikini*, on 7, put right foot towards the right, walk on 1-2-3, skipping an FO, and grab the next one and do *dile que no*. Ends up in reversed rueda basic again. The caller likes to do this one multiple times.

When doing *dame dos*, already start moving to the next FO on -6-7. You move right away. Move! That is the single most important thing. As soon as you leave your FO, just walk over there right away. Beginners tend to be in the way. Push the other LE if he is in the way. Then 7-1 step will help get some more distance. It was mentioned that the girls must move backwards to let us move.

#### With two couples only:

- (miami) instead of walking to the other LE's left (our right), we walk on his right and lock LE's right arms together to help turning right. The steps are a little funny because you end up with your same partner on the 5, so step \*backwards\* with LF.
- (cuban) walk around the other LE, just as you normally would, except that you have to come back fast enough.

I had a big problem with walking the *dame dos*, I just never got there on time, and the feet never felt right. I was careful this time to notice that for *dame dos* (*bikini*), Orlando actually will walk toward the next FO on the 1-2-3 beats, rocking forward on the right foot on the 2 and stepping back outside the circle on the 3. This gives you more time to get to the next FO and a circular motion for a more vigorous XBL.

### Dos con dos, actually means Dame dos con dos

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "give me two, with two hand claps"

Thand sign: same as dame dos, you have to say the con dos call, there is

no special signal for that

Same as dame dos, except that you clap your hands twice on "1, 2" while walking to the next FO.

# Dame y una vuelta

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "give it to me, with a turn"

**☞ Hand sign:** 

Same as *dame*, except that LE does a right turn while walking to the next FO.

# Dame tres, tres!

Attribution:

Translation: "give me three"

☞ Hand sign:

Same as *dame dos*, except skip two FOs instead of just one. Move it! I've never seen *dame quattro* called, but I'm sure it can happen in a big big wheel.

# Cruza (crossed exchange)

Attribution: cuban Translation: ""

Hand sign:

When I mention "crossed exchange" (for lack of a better name), it will refer to a form of switching of partners that is similar but different than *dame dos/bikini*. This form of switching can only be done with four couples. The calling LE first switches with the LE that is across him in the rueda, as they would a *dame dos*, while the other two LEs wait just a little bit. After the first two LEs have moved, the other two LEs will move across also as a *dame dos*, right after the first ones. This requires the first two LEs to move very very fast in order to leave time for the two other LEs to move in time.

#### Dame doble

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "double give-me"

Hand sign:

This move can only be done with four partners.

• 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dame* 

• 1-2-3: crossed exchange

• 5-6-7: dile que no

Actually, the interesting bit here is because there are four partners and LE ends up walking straight to the FO opposite him. This makes interesting movement of LEs in the center (be sure not to bump into anyone in the crossed exchange!).

# 11.2.3 Variations of Adios/La prima

# La prima (cuban) Adios (miami)

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "goodbye"

Hand sign: waving hand in a goodbye motion

From the open rueda position, on 2-3 close the position with the FO, and do a right turn with her, that is, you both are turning 180 degrees to the right, back step on 5-6-7 in closed hold, and on 1-2-3 leave the girl moving to her left, pulling FO'RH over LE's head and grab the next FO. When leaving your FO you move under FO'RH and leave her hand above your head.

It was emphasized that I should raise the FO'RH above my head. However, for *prima dama'arriba*, it is possible to not move it above. I noticed other LEs doing it the same as for normal *prima* though (raising FO'RH+LE'LH and letting go).

Also, be careful to not grab the FO's back too much on the side. Grab farther, with LE'RH well in the middle of the FO's back. Otherwise it hurts them, it's not comfortable.

### Adios (2)

Attribution: cuban Translation: ""

Hand sign:

Like *la prima*, but instead of LE moving under FO'RH, LE lowers FO'RH after the turn, and LE'RH going above FO'RH, waving goodbye as if saying "adios!".

(Nelson C.'s cuban rueda is where I learned that *la prima* != *adios*. Nelson's *adios* is done this way. Consequently, he also calls *la prima con la hermana* and not *adios con la hermana*.)

# Adios con la hermana, La prima con la hermana, or simply "la hermana"

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "goodbye with the sister"

Thand sign: wave goodbye, then put hand on chest as if grabbing breast

cup

Simply: *adios* + *enchufla*. Start with an adios, but when going under FO'RH, don't let it go; keep it, and turn around to the left, and then enchufla your FO and then *dile que no*.

Cuban rueda: you *dile que no* with next FO (you change partners). Miami rueda: you *dile que no* with same FO (you don't change partners).

# Adios con la prima

Attribution: miami

Translation: "goodbye with ...?"

Thand sign: same as adios con la hermana plus point the right hand's

thumb to the girl to your right

In the miami-style rueda, you don't change partners after the *enchufla*. This move is called in the miami-style rueda only, it is *adios con la hermana* where you *dile que no* with the next FO (you change partners). In other words: miami's *adios con la prima* = cuban *adios con la hermana*.

### Adios por arriba, La prima pa'tra/pa'arriba

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "adios down"

Thand sign: sign for adios, then point to the ceiling with index

*Adios*, but go fetch the previous FO, not the next one. Although it's a little more subtle, you can move under LE'LH+FO'RH when doing for the previous FO.

(This shouldn't really be described as an independent move, just that r.d.G has defined a call for it.)

### Adios con Roberto

Attribution: miami

Translation: "adios with Roberto"

**☞ Hand sign:** 

Normal *adios*, then do an XBL+IT with the next FO by grabbing her sides with both of LE's hands, then *dile que no* with next FO. FOs must raise their arms to leave space for LEs to grab their sides.

When doing the walk in closed hold: grab the FO'RH of the FO behind you with LE'LH, and while walking turn left to face the FO behind you in closed position. When changing for the FO behind, the LEs always perform this left turn inside the wheel, i.e. you never just let the FOs walk by and grab that one behind you.

# Adios con Roberto doble

Attribution: miami

Translation: "adios with Roberto, twice"

**☞ Hand sign:** 

Same as *adios con Roberto*, except that you do the XBL+IT with the next two FOs instead of just the next one.

# Prima por de 'tras

Attribution: young-cuban

Translation: "" **☞ Hand sign:** 

# From NC's rueda:

- 1-2-3: star as *piima*
- 5-6-7, 1: LE does a right spin turn on himself and lands on 1 in the center of the wheel
- -2-3, 5-6-7: dile que no with the next partner

### 11.2.4 Variations of Enchufla

### Enchufla, enchufa, enchufle, enchunfla

Attribution:

Translation: "plug her"

Thand sign: pull down raised fist, like pulling a train "choo-choo" siren

Note that noone seems to agree on the appropriate spelling of this. I've been to four different schools and they all spell it differently. Perhaps they are all illiterate, who knows.

On call *enchufla*, on 1, do a back step and move forward to the left of the woman lifting LE'LH with FO'RH over her head and to her left while you're moving to her back, then on 5-6-7, pull a lot and go grab the next FO. Make sure that the 1-2-3 step with the next woman is clearly marked. XBL her on 5-6-7 and you end up in reversed rueda position again.

Miami rueda: you do not change partners, LE does *dile que no* with same FO. Cuban rueda: you move to the next FO. In miami rueda you would call this *enchufla con dame*.

# Enchufla doble

Attribution:

Translation: "plug her twice"

Thand sign: enchufta hand sign, with index and little finger up

Initiate the usual *enchufla* on 1, but on 5, stop the FO in the middle of her turn with LE's right hand in her back and move her back on 5-6-7. Then proceed with enchufla again on the 1 and complete it the usual way (back step on 5-6-7, move forward to next FO on 1-2-3, XBL on 5-6-7.

When stopping the FO midway, make sure that you put your hand well in her lower back, not just lightly grabbing the arm, rather really \*stop\* her. LE controls, and so you really have to stop the FO and assume that she doesn't know we're going to stop halfway through.

Note that in both cuban and miami ruedas you change FO to complete enchufla doble.

# Patiqua

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "the leg"

☞ Hand sign:

Like a *doble enchufla*, but LE stops FO stopping her with LE's right leg (the *patiqua*).

- 1-2-3: in single hold, back break for both and pull FO'RH above FO's head
- 5-6-7: on 5, LE stops FO using LE's right leg, FO moves back in reversed configuration
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: on 1, LE grabs FO'RH and performs and enchufla
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: switch partners *abajo* and *dile que no* (this is a cuban move).

# Pegale el pescao

Attribution: Translation: "" Hand sign:

Like patiqua, but instead of stopping FO with LE'RH on her FO left leg, use LE's right knee to stop her around waist level, and push her back like this, with action of the knee.

I've also seen this called to mean something else, but I'm not familiar with the cuban expressions yet.

# Castiga la

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: "punish her" 
Tanslation:

Like *enchufla* in single open hold, but on 6 slap FO'RH with LE'RH, and on 7, slap (gently) FO's forehead with LE'RH.

# Castiga lo tuyo y lo ajeno

Like *castigala*, except that after *dile que no* with the next partner, on 1, you slap/pinch the third FO's left leg from behind using LE's first and second fingers i.e.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *castigala*
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no* with next FO
- 1-2-3: on 1, slap/pinch behind the left leg the FO that is to LE's right, keep stepping. FOs may want to try to avoid the slap/pinch, it's funny if they do.
- 5-6-7: resume into push-off.

# Castigala por atras

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: "punish her low" 
Tanslation:

From NC's rueda.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufta but on 5, LE'RH is raised above FO'RH, and on 7, slap FO's butt over her arm
- go grab the next FO

# Castigala por atras y venga te

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: "the vengence"

Hand sign:

This is a long move, which is like a little story.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: castigala por atras, LE make sure you hit her enough that it will hurt a bit...
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no* with the next one
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: on 1, LE grab the butt of the FO on their right (yes, grab their butt!)
- 1-2-3: LEs look at the FO on their right with a defying look
- 5-6-7: *vacila de las dos*, as LEs face the FO on their right, she slaps him in the face, in the same direction that he's turning towards, that is, to her right with her left hand, and...
- 1-2-3: LEs spin on the slap's energy, two turns, and...
- 5-6-7: come in time for the push-off and resume

## Pelota uno (young-cuban), pelota dos, pelota tres Enchufla y palmada (old-cuban)

Attribution: cuban Translation: "the ball" Tand sign:

Like *enchufla*, but clap hands on 7, right after the *enchufla*. For *pelota dos*, clap on 7 and 8. For *pelota tres*, clap on 7, 8 and 1.

Could be called *enchufla y palmada*. Don't confuse with *enchufla con dos palmadas*, where this means to first do an *enchufla* then *dame* then *dos palmadas* with the next FO and then back into casino step. Also note that claps are on the 1, 1-2, or 1-2-3 after the *enchufla*, not on 7, 7-8, or 7-8-1.

Some people clap hands up and down, to really show the clapping motion.

## Policia

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: "the police"

Hand sign:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: dile que no with next partner
- 1-2-3: on 1, mimic shooting a gun at the forehead of FO to LE's right
- 5-6-7: resume into push-off

## Robin Hood

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: "Robin Hood" 
Translation:

Like enchufla but right after it,

- on 5 LE grabs an arrow from his back sack
- on 6 LE prepares to shoot the arrow by lifting his left hand above and right hand is pulling the string
- on 7 LE shoots the arrow by suddenly lowering the right hand below

Move right away into dile que no as usual.

## Sacude la mata

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: "shake the tree" 
Tand sign:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *enchufla*
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: dame
- 1-2-3: move to FO that is to your right after the *dame*, grab both her shoulders and shake her like a tree
- 5-6-7: be back in time for push-off on 5, in casino step

# Enchufla con chocolate

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: "the plug (move), with the chocolate (move)" 
The Hand sign:

- 1-2-3: enchufla
- 5-6-7: LE'RT, with both hand high (the *chocolate*)
- 1-2-3: reversed *enchufla* and go to the next partner

This move is also close to *chocolate* (the move), except that *chocolate* (the move) starts with an FO'OT to start it with.

The "chocolate" itself, is used to as a modifier to indicate an LE'RT in single hold with hand above LE's head.

## Tocale la rodilla de la otra

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: "grab the knee of the other" Translation: "grab the knee of the other"

This could be considered a play move.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *enchufla*
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: dame
- 1-2-3: with LE'RH, grab the left knee of the FO to your right after the dame
- 5-6-7: be back in time for the push-off

If called from a moved that is already started, directly go to the knee grab.

# Enchufla con tres besos

Attribution: old-cuban Translation: "the plug (move), with three kisses" 
Translation: "the plug (move), with three kisses"

This could be considered a play move.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: dame
- 1-2-3: casino step
- 5-6-7: grab your own FO's head and kiss her three times, once on the left cheek, once on the forehead, and once on the right cheek

### Cerveza

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: "beer"

Hand sign:

This could be considered a play move.

• 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *enchufla*, but on 5-6-7, mimic drinking some beer (lots of them) using both hands towards mouth and thumbs. Slllllrrrrrpp.

# Principe bueno

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: "good prince" 
Tanslation:

This could be considered a play move.

• 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla, but around 5 LEs kiss FO'LH.

### Dos saltos al centro

Attribution: young-cuban

Translation: "two jumps in the center"

Hand sign:

The two jumps are not obvious here.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-: *enchufla*
- -7, 1-2-3: LE does two hops in the center, on the upbeats of the music. The upbeats are not well-defined here, they depend on what music is playing. It seems the timing for the jumps is not terribly important anyway, it seems to be on 7 and 2. Also, the jumps here are not really jumps, just hop forward without jumping, moving the pelvis. You can keep upper body straight when doing this, to not jump up at all.
- 5-6-7: chain right away into the seconf half of *dile que no*.

# Enchufla con bikini al centro

Attribution: young-cuban

Translation: "plug her then bikini in the center"

Hand sign:

This is a cool variation of enchufla con bikini.

- 1-2-3: enchufla
- 5-6-7, 1-2-3: walk for *dame dos*, but at the same time perform an LE'RT. Look at the other LEs and just barely avoid them in the center if the wheel is small.
- 5-6-7: second half of *dile que no*.

# Cuidado

Attribution: young-cuban

Translation: "watch out! attention!"

**☞** Hand sign:

This is a play move.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no* as usual, but on 7, hit the floor hard with LE'RF, looking to your right, point a finger, make a surprise! watch out! attention!
- 1-: make sure that you resume with LE'LF behind on 1

### El señorito malta

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "the cocky guy"

Hand sign:

This is a play move.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla
- 1-2-3: adjust your necktie, perhaps pull on your shirt there, while looking arrogantly at your FO before going to get the next one. Be cocky, very cocky.
- 5-6-7: dile que no

### El dollar

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: ""

Fand sign:

From N.C's rueda:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla, and pick up the dollar on the floor on 7
- 1-2-3: finish with dile que no as usual

### 11.2.5 Variations of Siete

# Panqué (cuban), Siete (miami)

Attribution:

Translation: "seven, pancake"

Thand sign: make a right angle with index and thumb fingers, as if

counting seven but one hand was missing

From back break on 1, pull FO'RH towards you and to the left (exterior), to make her turn to her right, keep LE'LH+FO'RH together and she winds into a cinnamon bun, and you stop her facing her back with LE'RH on her right side. Push her back into reversed basic position.

For the cuban style, sit down a little bit. There is plenty of time, don't rush it.

For the miami style, start with LF "tap" on 8, and "tap" on 4 when facing FO's back. The tap is difficult to execute when simultaneously stopping the FO.

Note: the lead is non-trivial here.

## Siete doble

Attribution: miami Translation: "double seven"

Thand sign: sign for siete, then two fingers in the air

Same as *siete*, except that LE does a simultaneous left turn with FO. LE ends up on 4 back to back with FO. Make sure you hold LE'LH+FO'RH throughout. Do the taps on 8 and 4 (more difficult than siete). When LE does the left turn, raise LE'RH up in the air.

# Siete con coca-cola

Attribution: miami

Translation: "7, with an FO'IT"

Hand sign:

Start a siete on 1-2-3, and stop your FO with LE'RH on 3. Then on 5-6-7 with single open hold unwind FO in IT and perform an additional FO'IT, all on 5-6-7 (this turn goes fast). Move single open hold over FO's head. On 1-2-3 be ready for a *dile que no* and do it. This is similar to *siete moderno*, except that you keep LE'LH+FO'RH throughout, it's simpler.

### Siete moderno

Attribution: miami

Translation: "modern seven"

Thand sign: sign for siete, then two fingers in the air

Start similar as siete: on 3, gently throw FO'RH to the left (outside of the wheel) and let it go. On 3-4-5, FO performs half-right turn, LE stops her on 5 with LE'RH in her back and grabs FO'LH with LE'LH and starts an FO'3/2IT (*coca-cola*) right away, to try complete in -6-7. Simultaneously, LE moves inside the wheel to take the place that FO was at before she started the *coca-cola*. Stay close to FO. On 1, FO is usually still completing the turn, but go for *dile que no*.

# Panqué doble

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "double pancake"

Hand sign:

Same as single panqué, except do it twice.

# Panqué y sientala

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "pancake and sit her"

Hand sign:

Same as single panqué, except that both partners should sit for a little bit, FO sitting on LE's legs.

# Panqué y complicala

Attribution: old-cuban

Translation: "pancake and make it complicated for her"

**☞ Hand sign:** 

• 1-2-3, 5-6-7: panqué y sientala

• 1-2-3, 5-6-7: crossed exchange

## 11.2.6 Variations of Vacila

# Vacila, vacila la

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "check her out, enjoy her"

Translation: "check her out, enjoy her"

Translation: "check her out, enjoy her"

## Miami-style:

From "tap" position, on 1, after arm extension, bring back LE'LH+FO'RH fast and to LE's right a bit (when facing the center), and send your FO for a free outside turn towards LE's right while doing the back step, perhaps shifting LE's body towards the left along the wheel a little bit, so that FO lands her turn clearly on LE's right for a *dile que no*. Note: when pushing the arm slightly pull toward LE before, in a circular motion, and push arms straight and low.

Cuban-style (both O.A. and N.C.):

Like miami *vacila*, that is, send your FO into a free OT by throwing her LH back, except that your FO turns in-place and there is no *dile que no* that follows the FO's turn.

## Vacilense, Vacila de las dos, Vacila de la mujer y el hombre

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "check them out"

Thand sign: index and major fingers pointing to both eyes

Miami-style:

Same as miami vacila, except that LE executes a left turn while FO is turning OT. Then dile que no.

Cuban:

Same as cuban vacila, except LE executes a left turn while FO is turning OT. There is no dile que no after.

# Vacila y sientala

Attribution: miami

Translation: "check her out and sit"

**☞** Hand sign:

Same as *vacila*, with LE putting the left knee down on the ground and the right knee at angle, and FO turning as usual and finishing sitting on his right knee. The key is to open the right knee, not to put it in the center of the wheel, because it will be in the way of the FO's turn.

# Vacila y respira la

Attribution: old-cuban

Translation: "check her out and smell her"

Hand sign:

Same as *vacila*, except when FO turns, LE bends his knees and breathes, sniffs her butt (I guess). After she's finished turning and LE has finished sniffing her, LE acts as if the smell is horrible, pinches his noses, whatever. Keep your FO's hand in case she decides to leave the dance floor after this:-)

### 11.2.7 Variations of Pasea

## Pasea abajo, pasea la

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "take her for a walk"

Hand sign:

*Dame*, but instead of doing a *dile que no*, grab FO'RH with LE'RH and lead her turning around you CCW in 2 measures. You're walking towards the left of the wheel as you do this. You end up in the original reversed position. *Abajo* refers to the hands being kept low.

## Pasea arriba

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "take her for a walk, with hand above"

Hand sign:

*Dame*, but instead of doing a *dile que no*, grab FO'RH with LE'RH and do an XBL+IT then rope spin her CCW around you in two measures, then do an additional XBL360 on the next measure so you end up in original reversed position.

Note: the last XBL360 can be replaced for an easier LE walking in front of FO and then a *dile que no*. There is a lot of turning of the two partners while executing this move so that motion feels natural.

# Pasea doble

Attribution: cuban Translation: ""

Hand sign:

First do a pasea abajo, then directly lead FO around you into an XBL+IT into pasea arriba.

### 11.2.8 Variations of Setenta

### Setenta

Attribution:
Translation: "70"

Hand sign: hand sign: same as siete, then bring thumb and index together and form a "0"

Start on 1 with a back break, offer LE'RH to get into a double open hold, do an FO'OT while both partners perform a quarter turn to the right, then on 1 back break again extending FO'RH in front and to the left of LE, and on -2-3 bring it to the right and over FO's head, while doing another quarter turn to the right (moving to the left of FO), you should end up in double open hold again. Then...

for cuban style: ... roll yourself up (LE) using LE'RH+FO'LH over LE's head while doing a qu.turn to the left, moving to FO's right, then *enchufla* again and *move to the next FO* (you change partners).

for miami-style: ... pull FO towards you on 5-6-7 for reverse XBL while raising LE'RH+FO'LH over LE's head, thus bringing FO to LE's right, then *dile que no*. It helps a lot if LE moves around, to the outside of the wheel for this last part.

## Alternate description:

- from dbl.open hold
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'OT 70
- 1-2-3: rev.XBL, unwinding the *setenta* hold
- 5-6-7: LE hairbrush using FO'LH
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla for cuban-style, dile que no for miami-style

Also, a variation in cuban style is to add a half-turn at each bar. The partners rotate much more.

# Setenta complicado (miami), setenta y complicate (cuban)

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "complicted 70 / 70 and complicate it"

Hand sign:

Miami-style version setenta complicado:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: start with the first bar of the rueda *setenta* move (FO'OT-70), but don't bring FO'RH in front of you after she turns. You should end up with LE facing the center of the wheel and FO facing outward.
- 1-2-3: LE does a side-step to the left, and pulls FO across, back-to-back, with LE'RH low behind his back and LE'LH moving over FO's head and in front of her. She is in effect doing a half-turn to the left.
- 5-6-7: LE does a right turn bringing LE'LH+FO'RH above his head, and ends up in double open hold in reverse configuration.
- 1-2-3: stay in double open hold and do an *enchufla* with both hands going over FO's head.
- 5-6-7: keep double hold and move LE'RH+FO'LH over FO's head, both partners facing the center, thus wrapping up your FO.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7 dile que no.

Cuban version *setenta y complicate*: this move is very similar to the miami-style *70 complicado* except that after the FO'OT LE will face outside the wheel, and that after the *enchufla* LE grabs the next partner.

- from double open hold
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: start with an FO'OT-70, but keep LE'LH+FO'RH behind LE at the end of the FO'OT-70. LE should be facing outside the wheel. FO moves to the left of LE, and LE moves to her right.
- 1-2-3: LE does a back break, and lifts LE'LH over FO's head and makes her do a half-turn to the left. Make sure that you start this early, because there is a high probability of confusion with the salsa's 70 complicado, where FO would stay back-to-back with LE.
- 5-6-7: with LE"LH+FO'RH over LE's head, LE performs a LE'RT on himself.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla with both hands above, and LE goes to get the next FO abajo.

#### Setenta doble

Attribution: cuban Translation: "double 70"

**☞ Hand sign:** 

Start with normal 70 FO'OT while turning a half-turn, and undo it there (FO'IT). Then do the very same again in the other orientation (70 FO'OT, then FO'IT). Then there is an exit with I think an *enchufla*, but I'm not sure

### Setenta y queda te

Attribution:

Translation: "70 and stay"

Hand sign:

Like 70 + 80:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: from double open hold, perform FO'OT-70
- 1-2-3: FO'1/2IT while LE moves to other position, partners in forward configuration.
- 5-6-7: land LE'RH+FO'LH over and behind LE's neck
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'IT in single hold in-place, FO and LE stay there!
- 1-2-3: LE steps forward in the center of the wheel and pulls FO with LE'RH in single hold, like *ochenta*
- 5-6-7: finish pulling FO into *dile que no* to end up in reversed configuration.

### 11.2.9 Variations of Enredate

This next family of enredate moves was created by Orlando. They are a series of moves which all start with the following beginning:

Enredate beginning: from reverse configuration, LE starts by turning on himself to the right on -6-7, keeping LE'LH+FO'RH during the turn, then offering his LE'RH in front and to the right for FO'LH to grab, thus ending in 70-LE'LH hold (LE has LH behind his back). With this turn, LEs have positioned themselves outside of the wheel, with FOs inside. LE's butts should be facing the center of the wheel. Then, very important: back break on 1 for both partners (i.e. with LE'LF).

Orlando calls this move on 5, so when you hear it, don't waste time, go right away for the turn. If he calls it just after, finish your casino step's 1-2-3, then go into the right turn without the LE'RH push-off.

#### **Enredate**

Attribution: Orlando
Translation: "knot yourself"

Hand sign:

Start with the *enredate* beginning described above.

On subsequent 5-6-7, pull on LE'RH to bring FO moving in the back of LE and outside the wheel, and perform an FO'OT ending up with one of the twisted holds. FO should be on the outside of the wheel at this point, with LEs facing out, but with their backs inside the wheel. On 1-2-3, *dile que no*, pulling FO towards the center of the wheel, and right away on 5-6-7 perform LE'RT outside FO while moving to grab next FO for *dile que no*. This is a very cool move.

### Enredate uno

**Attribution: Orlando** 

Translation: "knot yourself, number 1"

Hand sign:

Start with the *enredate* beginning described above.

Then it's a setenta complicado with an FO'IT at the end:

## 11.2.10 Other numbered moves

#### Uno

Attribution: Translation: "1"

☞ Hand sign: index up in the air

From crossed hands position LE'RH + FO'RH, back step, and on 5, pull on FO'RH and "break" her right arm behind her back, and extend LE'LH to reach for FO'LH. At this point LE is facing FO's back. On -6-7 FO is moving and swinging away from LE to LE's right, with LE holding both of FO's hands. On 7-8 LE pulls FO'RH to the left behind her back and FO moves to the left of LE, so that on 1-2- LE does a salsa basic (forward) to the right of FO, still holding both hands. On -3-4, LE pulls FO'LH behind her back again, and executes a back step on 5-6-7. Repeat twice (or more). To conclude, from -3 step (at this point LE is facing FO's back, and FO is to the left of LE moving to his right, with FO'LH+LE'LH behind her back), on FO's way to LE's right on 5-6-7, lift FO'RH up and over her head, essentially bringing FO to your right in a x-hands rights-over-lefts position. Then on 1-2-3, move FO'LH over and behind LE's head, as well as LE'RH+FO'RH over and behind her neck too, like in the *sombrero* ending position, while LE does a back step, finish on 5-6-7 by moving LE'RH in the back of FO and XBL.

Sometimes the caller will ask for an *exhibela*, which will be carried out from the *sombrero FO* position at the end into a *sombrero LE* position.

### La uno

**Attribution: cuban** 

Translation: ""1", but this move is different than the miami uno"

Hand sign:

This is the 1 that is used in the cuban rueda from NC.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: in single open hold, FO'OT, in-place
- 1-2-3: enchufla in single open hold
- 5-6-7: LE'LT, with hands low, switching hands behind your back
- 1-2-3: reversed enchufta and go to the next partner

This move is closed to *la dos*, with the difference that LE performs a left turn with hands low instead of a right turn with hand high.

## El dos

Attribution: miami Translation: "the 2" ☞ Hand sign:

This move is similar to the miami-style *uno*, except that in this case LE steps in front of FO.

- 1-2-3: from single crossed hold, enchufla
- 5-6-7: back break, with FO on LE's right, and on 3 step in front of FO, with FO facing LE's back, keeping LE'RH+FO'RH and offer LE'LH for FO'LH to take
- 1-2-3: back break to the right, keeping both hands throughout
- 5-6-7: back break to the left
- 1-2-3: back break to the right
- 5-6-7: back break to the left. On 7 raise LE'RH and move under it, you should be in dbl. crossed hold
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: sombrero miami-style

### La dos

Attribution:

Translation: ""2", but this move is different than the miami el dos"

Hand sign:

This is the 2 that is used in the cuban rueda from NC.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: in double crossed hold, FO'OT, in-place
- 1-2-3: enchufla with both hands above from rev. dbl. crossed hold
- 5-6-7: LE'RT, with both hands high
- 1-2-3: reversed enchufta and go to the next partner

This move is close to *la uno*, with the difference that LE performs a LE'RT with hand high instead of a LE'LT with hands low.

This move is also close to *chocolate* (the move), except that *chocolate* is done in single hold.

### Ocho

Attribution: cuban Translation: "8" **☞ Hand sign:** 

Start with an *enchufla*, and walk between FOs at the rate of one measure per FO, alternating between inside and outside, grabbing FO's hands along the way (as in a greeting), starting with going outside. You end it all going back to your original FO, and *dile que no*.

#### Cero siete

Attribution: Translation: "07" Tand sign:

Perform an FO's outside turn while keeping FO'RH low and folding behind her back and when finishing the outside turn leave FO'RH high and bring it behind her neck. It's the same as the 07 in salsa, except that you perform a 180 degrees turn to the right while doing it. Then XBL and unwind in an inside turn by keeping and pulling the LE'LH+FO'LH that is behind the FO's back. The difference for rueda is that while performing the outside turn, LEs will move outside the circle to face CCW, and then walk forward to the next FO, while letting the current FO unwind into the inside turn to his left.

### **Ochenta**

Attribution: cuban Translation: "80" 

☞ Hand sign:

- 5-6-7: vacilala, i.e. from single open hold, free FO'OT
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *pasea abajo*, i.e. with LE facing the center of the wheel, bring FO to the left and behind LE, outside the wheel. LE grabs FO'RH with LE'RH. FO should be behind LE, slightly to his right, both partners facing the center of the wheel.
- 1-2-3: LEs steps forward in the center of the wheel, and on 3 pulls FO forward using LE'RH+FO'RH
- 5-6-7: LE does a back break, while FO walks, LE keeps pulling her into an XBL using only the single crossed hold
- 1-2-3: on 1, you should be in reversed configuration again

### Seis

**Attribution: cuban** 

Translation: ""6", the intention here is to say "60", but sesenta would sound

too much like setenta"

**☞ Hand sign:** 

- 1-2-3: change hands into double crossed hold
- 5-6-7: FO'OT in-place with both hands above
- 1-2-3: from rev.dbl.crossed hold, enchufla with both hands above
- 5-6-7: simply leave hands and move to the next partner

# 11.2.11 Other moves, miami-style

Some moves I documented from the "rueda de Montreal".

### Suena (miami), mata la cucaracha (cuban)

Attribution: miami

Translation: "sound, or kill the cockroach"

Thand sign: index pointing to the ground in the center of the wheel

Kick loud on the floor on "5" with right foot forward. *Suena* is used to make sure that everyone is synchronized properly.

## Suena doble

Attribution: miami Translation: ""

Thand sign: index and major point to the ground in the center of the

wheel

Same as *suena*, but kick on 5 and 6.

### Media

Attribution: miami Translation: ""

Thand sign: finger together straight and thumb like holding a sandwich

In reversed position with single crossed hold, start on 1-2-3 as you would an *enchufla*, but stop your FO facing the inside of the wheel on the 3, with LE behind FO holding both her shoulders. You should be standing behind your FO, facing her back and both dancers facing in the center of the wheel. On 5, spin your FO by using both her shoulders so she does a right turn on herself, while doing an in-place back-break step on 5-6-7. Then *dile que no* with same FO to return to reversed position.

#### Sombrero

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "mexican hat"

Thand sign: index finger pointing up and turning in a circle

### Miami-style:

On 8, do "tap" and arm extension, while bringing FO'RH back quickly to iniate an outside turn, change hands from single hold to double rights crossed hold i.e. LE'RH+FO'RH. While FO is turning CW, offer LE'LH and FO grabs it early in the turn. Complete the turn with both hands over FO's head, and end in the sombrero position described before, with LE'RH on FO's right shoulder behind her neck and LE'LH holding FO'LH on LE's left shoulder behind LE's neck. Then *dile que no*. During the *sombrero*, LE steps an in-place back-break. Dominique notes that the FO is actually not doing a spin, that she should be rather walking (I guess I was giving too much spin to my FO). You could call this simply: from dbl.crossed hold, rev.XBL+OT w/ hands above.

## Cuban-style:

On back break on 1 from double crossed hold (rights over lefts), do a sombrero while doing a 180 turn to the right. You should end up in sombrero position facing the center on 1 again. On -2-3 step in place and push FO foward with LE's right elbow behind her head and do half of a sombrero in the opposite direction (FO doing left turns) on 5-6-7 while doing another 180 turn to the left, and end up in the same sombrero position but this time facing outwards. From 1-2-3 release LE'LH and lift LE'RH over FO's head and lead an XBL + IT, then *dile que no* with same FO. Note that RdGilles' *sombrero* starts with tap (which implies a late switch of hands) and ends with a *dile que no* right after the first sombrero turn.

In other words, cuban-style sombrero starts just like the miami-style sombrero (except for the tap), but instead of the *dile que no* you perform another half-sombrero to the left to face outside the wheel, then XBL+IT, then *dile que no*.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: from double crossed hold, do an FO'OT in-place, and land hands in *sombrero* hold on 7, with partners looking outside the wheel
- 1-2-3: XBL into forward configuration
- 5-6-7: reversed enchufla
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: go to next partner and dile que no

#### Notes:

- When doing sombrero, do not open the hands as wide as possible, as you can be taught me in a
  merengue lesson. You can hurt your FO this way. Rather use the pushing pressure between the hands
  above the FO's head.
- In the *sombrero* position, lower the hand that has the FO's hand in your back, i.e. the LE'LH after doing the first sombrero from single crossed hold (rights).
- In the *sombrero* position, keep LHs fingers together, because some moves can be added after this one.

## Exhibela

Attribution: miami

Translation: "show her, exhibit her"

Hand sign:

This is used in a modifier fashion rather than by itself. In miami-rueda, exhibela is used to refer to FO'OT.

This is called for moves that end in a *sombrero LE* position (e.g. uno, montaña), the caller will call for an ... *exhibela*, which means to perform a turn of the FO to get into the other *sombrero* position. It goes like this: from *sombrero FO* position, on 1-2-3, both LE and FO do a back break facing the center, on 5-6-7 LE has raised *sombrero* hands and is leading an FO'OT with both hands over FO's head with FO turning somewhat in-place. Rest in *sombrero LE* position in the same spot, and finish with *dile que no*.

## Abanico

Attribution: miami Translation: "the fan" Thand sign:

This is used in a modifier fashion rather than by itself. In miami- rueda, *y abanico* is used to modify moves that end in a sombrero hold with partners facing the center. Instead of doing a *dile que no* to conclude the move, on 5 pull LE'RH behind FO and send her doing and FO'OT outside of the wheel, landing in reverse configuration on 1.

#### Montaña

Attribution: miami

Translation: "the mountain"

Thand sign: hand moving along sine wave, outlining a mountain ridge

From dbl.crossed hold, do an FO'OT on the first bar, as you would a *sombrero*, except that you don't lead into the *sombrero* position at the end of the first bar. You should be standing in the forward configuration. Keeping both hands, start the second bar with a back break and lead into an *enchufla* with both hands on 1-2-3, then on 5-6-7, still keeping hands, do a LE's right turn with both hands over your head (called a "roundy"). You should be standing in reversed configuration. Still keeping both hands, do another *enchufla* on 1-2-3, and on 5-6-7 lead into the *sombrero* position. You should be in forward configuration.

On the next bar do dile que no and get back into reversed configuration.

In simplified notation:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: from dbl.crossed hold, FO'OT w/ rev.XBL
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'IT like *enchufla*, with LE'RT (roundy) on 5-6-7
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'IT like enchufta, and lead heads into sombrero hold on 5-6-7.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no* with same FO

Sometimes the caller will ask for an *exhibela*, which will be carried out from the *sombrero FO* position at the end into a *sombrero LE* position.

## Besito

Attribution: miami
Translation: "little kiss"

Hand sign:

This move feels a lot like the Miami-style *setenta complicado*, but in dbl.crossed hold instead of open hold.

- from dbl.crossed hold,
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: rev. *pasea arriba* + FO'OT, end up with both facing the center, with FO facing LE's back, somewhat to his left. You could also describe this as FO'OT rev.XBL *sombrero* where LE doesn't land the *sombrero* but pulls FO behind him and to his left instead.
- 1-2-3: both partners stay in-place and do back breaks. On 1, LE moves LE'LH+FO'LH over and behind FO's head. On 3, LE raises it above and brings those hands back in front of her.
- 5-6-7: LE'RT spin (roundy), with LE'LH above his head.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla and drop a sombrero hold on 5-6-7.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: dile que no.

## Abrazala

Attribution: miami Translation: "embrace her"

**☞ Hand sign:** 

This is the same move as *besito*, except that it is done in single crossed hold (with one hand) instead of from dbl.crossed hold

- from single crossed hold,
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: rev. *pasea arriba* + FO'OT, end up with FO behind LE and his left, both facing the center.
- 1-2-3: LE moves LE'LH over and behind FO on 1, and moves it back in front of her on 3. This has been shown with some distance to FO, but I think it is a pretty good guess that *this* should be the embrace.
- 5-6-7: LE'RT spin
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: dile que no, from single crossed hold.

# Balsero

Attribution: miami

Translation: "the waltz dancer"

**☞** Hand sign:

You could call this move a double *sombrero* and it would describe it pretty well.

- from dbl.crossed hold,
  - 1-2-3, 5-6-7: rev. *pasea arriba* + FO'OT with both hands above. In other words, FO goes around LE a full turn and lands in the original position.
  - 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'OT rev.XBL + FO'OT sombrero
  - 1-2-3, 5-6-7: dile que no

# Kentucky

Attribution: miami
Translation: "Kentucky"

Thand sign: close fist and move with wrist up and down, as if giving gas

to a motorbike

From double open hold

- 1-2-3: enchufla keeping both hands, thus wrapping up your partner into an FO wrapped hold
- 5-6-7: stop-check your wrapped up partner like an enchufla doble, moving behind her slightly
- 1-2-3: LE and FO do a back break, with LE raising LE'LH+FORH to rest on FO's left shoulder, so that FO's neck is blocking the back break
- 5-6-7: raise LE'RH+FO'LH over FO's head while moving behind and to the left of FO, holding the arms throughout, thus completing what could have been the original *enchufla*, and LE does a right turn keeping both hands. The right turn is not performed with both hands above LE's head. Rather, from the reverse doubly-crossed hold, LE puts LE'RH+FO'LH on his left shoulder right away and moves LE'LH+FO'RH over his head, wrapping himself up.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: ... and move into *dile que no*.

### Evelyn

Attribution: miami Translation: "Evelyn"

**☞ Hand sign: trace a woman's silhouette** 

This is not quite the same as *prima por de 'tras*.

- 1-2-3: start on 1-2-3 with half of an adios
- 5-6-7: LE performs a left spin turn on himself keeping single open hold low and switching hands behind his back to end up in single crossed-hold
- 1-2-3: LE steps forward in the center of the wheel, and pulls FO from behind and does a *dile que no* with single crossed-hold
- 5-6-7: complete dile que no

### Dedo

Attribution: miami Translation: "finger"

Thand sign: raise pinky finger up in the air, with the palm of the hand

inside

This move is exactly like *montaña*, except that you do it in single crossed hold throughout.

- 123: move into single crossed hold
- 567: perform an FO'OT, moving FO to LE's right, essentially switching positions, there is a bit of idle time where you would normally move into *sombrero* hold, make sure FO just wait by lowering RH and keeping it there.
- 123: *enchufla* (in this inverted position)
- 567: LE'RT with LE'RH above head, still in single crossed hold
- 123: enchufla
- 567: dile que no, but still in single crossed hold, i.e. don't put LE'RH behind FO's back.

# 11.2.12 Other moves, cuban-style

### Caramelo

Attribution: cuban Translation: ""

Hand sign:

On the 3 (LEs finishing back break step with left leg), throw FO'RH down and behind her back. On 4, catch FO'RH with LE'RH to her right and behind her back, while simultaneously traveling to put yourself in forward configuration, step back on 5-6-7 with FO'RH in LE'RH behind her back, and while moving to next FO on -6-7, pull firmly to send FO whirling in an outside turn. FOs can optionally do two turns when you leave them, if they're agile enough.

Note that the next FO is the one with whom you would do *dame*. If called *caramelo por arriba*, then you go grab the other.

# Caramelo complicado

Attribution: cuban Translation: ""

Hand sign:

Start like *caramelo*, but don't perform the extra turn, as if you were going to do *caramelo por arriba*:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: from single open hold, rev.XBL w/FO'OT using FO'RH behind her back (*caramelo*)
- 1-2-3: keep FO'RH with LE'RH, and keep facing *arriba*. LE is facing away from FO, FO is facing LE's back at this point. LE does a small back break, moving slightly to his right.
- 5-6-7: throw FO'RH on 5, while FO is stepping forward. LE does a small back break, moving slightly to his left.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no* with FO *por arriba*.

# Caramelo y sientala

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "caramelo and sit her"

**☞** Hand sign:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *caramelo* but keep FO turning in-place, no traveling (FO'OT throwing FO'RH behind her back)
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: panqué y sientala

#### Estrella

Attribution: Orlando Translation: "the star"

Hand sign:

From reversed configuration, start in single crossed-hold on 1-2-3, 5-6-7 with FO'OT while doing a qu.turn to the right. LE should be facing the center of the wheel, with your FO in the center of the wheel. There are many moves that start with this FO'OT being brought inside the wheel from single rights crossed hold, e.g. see Avion.

The next 1-2-3, 5-6-7 is a *dile que no*, when your FO goes outside the wheel, and your extend LE'LH+FO'RH, while FO is raising the LH up in the air for style, then on 1-2-3 pull on LE'LH to roll up your FO like a *panqué* onto your side, step her with LE's left side of the body, and bend LE's right knee. FO should stand on the right leg only and bend the left leg and bring the foot up to the knee. Push FO out back on her feet towards the exterior of the wheel. Don't move feet just yet, LE's feet will go L, then R, then LRL for *dile que no*. After FO is back on her feet, do an FO'OT while doing a qu.turn to the left. You should be in position to do a *dile que no*. I lost the precise timing for resolving this one, so I'll have to figure it out later. I can sort-of fudge it though. This is a beautiful move, althought the timing for resolving it is not obvious.

Corrections for timing, seen later, for show. This is exactly how it should be done:

- 5-6-7: FO'OT moving FO inside the wheel
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: dile que no FO is moving outside the wheel
- 1-2-3: roll FO towards LE
- 5-6-7: lean on 5, and hit the center on 7
- 1-2-3: push FO back out, she gets back on her feet, time switches here, we're missing a half-bar here
- 1-2-3: with left foot in front on 1, basic step
- 5-6-7: FO'OT outside the wheel
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: dile que no into reversed configuration

## Avion, hangar por arriba, hangar por abajo

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "the airplane"

Hand sign:

Start in single rights crossed-hold on 1-2-3, 5-6-7 with FO'OT while doing a qu.turn to the right. LE should be facing the center of the wheel, with your FO in the center of the wheel.

On the next two bars, LE executes two salsa basic steps inside and outside of the wheel. FOs perform two turns (one on each bar) by walking around CW around LE, sliding one hand on his side. While FO is turning around, LE is raising the arm that the FO goes under up in the air. Use both arms to perform a motion that looks like an airplane.

There are two hangars that the airplane can go park itself into, after the two bars of flying.

Hangar por arriba: the default if nothing is called for. After the 5-6-7 basic step of LE, on the 7 lead that LE'RF to the right and twist to the right, then on 1-2-3 do an LE's left turn (don't move too far!), on 5-6-7 do a back break, and *dile que no* with the next FO. FOs: wait in basic step! Do not rush the *dile que no*.

*Hangar por abajo:* LEs walk to the previous FOs and *dile que no*. It is very important that when the FOs are done walking around LEs, they don't do any turns, they just wait for LEs to come and get them.

### Casa te, arrivar el marido, se fué el marido

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "get together, the husband arrives, the husband is gone again"

Hand sign:

Start from single right x-hold in 1-2-3, do an FO'OT on 5-6-7, moving your FO in the center of the wheel. Offer LE's right arm, FO grabs it, and walk together arm-in-arm CW. Keep walking together until "arrivar el marido" is called. When the husband arrives, LEs leave the FO's arm and start walking forward in the opposite direction as the FOs, that is CCW, thus forming two wheels, an inside wheel with the FOs walking CW and an outside wheel with the LEs walking CCW. When "se fué el marido" is called, the husband is gone again, and the next time your same FO walks by you, dile que no with her to get back in the casino basic step.

If dame de la adelante is called, LEs walk faster outside to go offer their right arm to the next FO. You've switched mistresses.

## Complicado

Attribution: Orlando Translation: ""

Thand sign:

I believe this move has just been created by Orlando on-the-fly, for the rueda show.

- 5-6-7: from double open hold, right after push-off, LE'LH+FO'RH is kept and LE does a RT on himself and offers LE'RH in front of FO. LE should be facing the outside of the wheel, in setenta hold.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *pasea arriba* w/ FO'OT using both hands (i.e. bringing FO around you in CW direction), FO should be walking around and landing in the center of the wheel, and LE will do a half-turn to the right during the *pasea* so that he ends up looking towards the center of the wheel, with FO in the center. Watch out, make sure not to push your FO too far in the center, otherwise she will bump into the others.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: XBL+IT, bringing the FO outside the wheel
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: LE's gently leave their FOs waiting and walk forward towards the FO *por arriba*. LEs are walking CW, and are in reversed configuration.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: XBL, you should end in forward configuration
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: back breaks, H.yM. clap hands on 1 and 2.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: XBL, you should end in reverse configuration

# Candela y quemala

Attribution: Orlando

Translation: "the candle and light her"

**☞ Hand sign:** 

I believe this move was created by Orlando for the rueda show.

- 1-2-3: back break in single crossed hold
- 5-6-7: FO'OT moving LE in front of FO and in the center of the wheel, to the right of FO
- 1-2-3: LE moves backwards with LE'RH+FO'RH, and under it with LE'RH high in his back
- 5-6-7: another FO'OT, with LE moving to the left of FO again
- 1-2-3: back break for LE
- 5-6-7: still from single crossed hold, FO'1/2IT by pulling on RH, and let her hand go, stop FO by grabbing FO'LH on 7 and grab the hand of the FO to your left too.
- 1-2-3: back break and *enchufla* and start into *quemala* (see description below)
- ...
- ...(quemala) y tu tambien

### Hollandaise

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "the dutchwoman"

Hand sign:

#### From double crossed hold:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *sombrero* bringing FO to LE's right with both partners looking in the center of the wheel, and on 7, LE moves LE'RH under FO's left arm, and offers it, and FO grabs with FO'RH
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: XBL+2xIT with hands *arriba* then *abajo* with FO'RH behind her back on the second IT. LE \*must\* move through the center of the wheel and then more in order to have FO on his right in forward configuration after the XBL+2xIT. This prepares for the...
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no*. Usually the second IT isn't quite completed at this point, so you can finish it on the 1-2-3.
- 1-2-3, ...: go get the next FO, or stay with current FO without changing.

### Biscocho

**Attribution: Orlando** 

Translation: "lady's finger biscuit"

Hand sign:

This move is a creation of Orlando.

- from double open hold
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'OT, FO moves inside the wheel, keeping both hands, and LE stays in-place and keeps facing the same direction, i.e. CW. LE does small back breaks.
- 1-2-3: LE wraps himself up in the double open hold, while FO is facing his back behind him. Let go of arms and switch arms in front of LE. Partners do back breaks.
- 5-6-7: hand throw with LE'RH on 5. FO does a half turn to the right.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: go get the FO por'arriba and perform XBL360.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla. On 1, when doing back break, make sure you extend far before the enchufla.

## **Trompo**

**Attribution: Orlando** 

Translation: "the spinning top"

Hand sign:

This move is a creation of Orlando.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: reverse pasea arriba w/ FO'OT behind LE (outside the wheel)
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: LE'2xRT
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no* with FO abajo.

#### **Torturala**

Attribution: Orlando Translation: "torture her"

Hand sign:

This move was a spontaneous creation of Orlando.

- from dbl.crossed hold,
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'OT, keep hands you should be in rev.dbl.crossed hold
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: XBL+IT and paseala, keep both hands. LE keeps facing abajo (CW)
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: XBL+2xIT leaving her for the second IT
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dqn* with the next FO

# Doble enchufla y complicala

**Attribution: Orlando** 

Translation: "double enchufla, complicated"

Hand sign:

This move is a creation of Orlando.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7, 1-2-3, 5-6-7: doble enchufla
- 1-2-3: LE'1/2LT, that is, step forward with L, in-place with R, and turning 180 degress to the left step with L (like a left turn); LE is moving to the left of his FO, somewhat like a *pasea*
- 5-6-7: LE'1/2RT, that is, step forward with R, in-place with L, and turning back 180 degrees to the right with R.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dqn* with your own FO (don't change)

You can adopt a robotic break here when doing the two half-turns, to confuse your FO a little bit. You can also lift arms in the air when passing her by.

## Una/dos vueltas sitas

Attribution: Orlando

Translation: "one/two tiny turns"

Hand sign:

This move is a creation of Orlando. From reverse configuration, or on opening, with Foto your left:

• 5-6-7: FO'OT or FO'2xOT (in the same time)

# Pinchala como la vieja

**Attribution: Orlando** 

Translation: "one/two tiny turns"

Hand sign:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla, with pipi como la mujer
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: dile que no
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: panqué

## A Bayamo

Attribution: young-cuban

Translation: "" **☞ Hand sign:** 

This move is done entirely in reverse crossed hold:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'OT
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no*. This is the start of the Bayamo turn described in section 8.10. Move FO to the left and behind LE, *pasea arriba*
- 1-2-3: continue pasea arriba bringing FO to the right of LE
- 5-6-7: pull FO in front and to the left of LE, bringing LE'RH far to the right, making her turn so the she looks to LE's right
- 1-2-3: FO'OT to the right of 'LE
- 5-6-7: FO walks back (CW) behind LE
- 1-2-3: FO'LT
- 5-6-7: LE turns to the right a half-turn, so that FO is facing his back, moving R-R over his head to his right
- 1-2-3: LE continues the right turn and moves maja-rama under L-L
- 5-6-7: *enchufla*
- 1-2-3: dile que no directly with next FO

## Dedo nuevo

Attribution: Orlando Translation: ""

Tanslation: ""

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: from single crossed hold, FO'OT
- on 1: LE'LHs touch together in the center, and make a bit of a robotic break there;
- -2-3, 5-6-7: FO'IT and FO walks around LE CW. LE actually helps her at first by moving in front and to the right of her
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: more FO walking CW, with LE all the while turning towards the center of the wheel
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: dile que no

#### Punta talon

Attribution: Orlando Translation: ""

Thand sign:

Remember that the foot that does the *punta/talon* is the foot that is outside the wheel, i.e. LE'LF or FO'RF.

- 1, 3, 5, 7: punta, talon, cross LE'LF behind RF, open
- 1, 3-4-5: pivot turn with foot outside the wheel as a pivot, LE'LT or FO'RT. Note that time changes here, we're losing a beat, pick up 1 on 7.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: XBL+3/2IT, with FO turning in the center and LE exiting outside to pick up the FO *abajo*
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no* with FO *abajo*

### **Tocala**

Attribution: Orlando Translation: "touch her" Tand sign:

Remember that the foot that does the *punta/talon* is the foot that is outside the wheel, i.e. LE'LF or FO'RF.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: XBL w/ LE'LT (tube)
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: in single crossed hold, FO'IT w/ LE'RT
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no* with FO *abajo* with *palmadas* on 1-2.

## 11.2.13 Other moves, cuban-style

## A guarachar

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "let's have fun"

**☞ Hand sign:** 

Start with *enchufla* on 1-2-3, then move in, facing the center of the wheel and bring FO behind you and to your left on 5-6-7. Grab FO'RH with LE'LH still facing center, and also grab the next FO's LH with LE'RH, and on 1-2-3 do *quemala* y tu tambien right away.

To exit, simply do an enchufla.

### Que no se mueva

Attribution: cuban Translation: ""

Hand sign:

Start on 1-2-3 with *dame*, and let her go on 5-6-7 (Nelson does his *dames* in single crossed hold, so this works better to swing your FO this way). On 1-2-3, FO's do a left pivot turn by themselves, moving away from the center, while LE's step with LF forward in the center of the wheel, left hand pointing in the center. On 5, LE step forward in the center of the wheel with RF, LE'RH pointing in the center, and on -6-7 perform a right spin turn and land with LE'LF on 1 in the center of the wheel again, and on -2-3 start walking backwards towards the outside of the wheel, facing the center. On 5-6-7 and 1-2-3 LE's keep doing the back walk while FO's are doing the back walk but towards the center of the wheel, facing outside. On 5, FO's have done a 1/2RT and are stepping forward with FO'LH in the center of the wheel, on -6-7 they turn back a 1/2LT towards the outside of the wheel, facing LE's which are walking closer to them. On 1, FO's step back with LF, on 3 they step with both feet, weight on LF and tapping the RF in front of them, hands up in the air, ready to be caught. On that same 3 LEs jump somehow and grab FO's hands up in the air. On 5-6-7 perform FO'OT in the center of the wheel, and on 1-2-3 *dile que no* (in single crossed hold).

### Cochero, ... bota

Attribution: cuban
Translation: "the coachman, ... throw her"

Thand sign:

As seen in NC's rueda.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: from dbl. crossed hold, FO'OT, in-place
- 1-2-3: start as you would an *enchufla* with both hands high, but...
- 5-6-7: block on 5 with LE'RH+FO'RH at FO's neck level. LE is doing a back break with RF behind FO, with both partners facing the center
- 1-2-3: block on 1 with LE'LH+FO'LH at FO's neck level. LE is doing a back break with LF behind FO, with both partners facing the center

Keep this last bar going for as long as you please. On call *bota*, or *bota la*:

• on 5-6-7: raise LE'RH above FO's head while LE is moving to her left. Leave her there and go pick up next FO. Do not do an *enchufla* here.

# Doble play

Attribution: cuban
Translation: "double play"

Franchise Hand sign:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla, but on 7, step hard on the floor with LE'RF
- 1-3-5-7: on 1 step hard on the floor with LE'RF, on 3 and 5 clap hands, on 7 step again
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no* with next FO

### Momia individuale

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "individual momy"

Hand sign:

When the caller points a finger at a couple, that couple, and just that couple, stops dancing and freezes, while the rueda keeps dancing, perhaps calling other moves between themselves. There is no actual call, the caller just points the finger silently.

The caller will eventually point to other couples in turn, and in the end will be dancing alone. Everyone should resume at the same time on the push-off (i.e. on 5) when he indicates so.

### Chocolate

Attribution: cuban Translation: "chocolate"

☞ Hand sign:

Same as enchufla con chocolate, except that it start with an FO'OT in-place.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: in single open hold, FO'OT, in-place
- 1-2-3: enchufla
- 5-6-7: LE'RT, with both hand high (the *chocolate*)
- 1-2-3: reversed enchufta and go to the next partner

This move is also close to *la dos*, with the difference that *la dos* is done with in a double hold.

### Salsea

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: ""

Fand sign:

If called from stable reversed configuration, start with

• 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla

and chain into the following. Otherwise, just go into this:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: on 1 LE's extend LE'LH in the center of the wheel and LE'RH outside the wheel, large, and perform a LE's left turn (spin). The arm extensions has a bit of rotating motion, and fingers of the left hand should point in the center of the wheel. FO's just keep doing their back breaks.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no* with next FO

# Salsean los hombres y salsean la mujeres

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: "salsea of both"

Figure Hand sign:

Same as *salsea*, except that on 5, while the LE's are doing their left spin, FO's do the arm extensions as well, and perform a left spin on 1-2-3 right after, just before walking for *dile que no*.

### Tiene el blumer roto

Attribution: young-cuban
Translation: "you've got the stinking underwear"

Thand sign:

- 1-2-3: FO'IT like you would an *enchufla*, but LE also turns a half-turn to the left as well, and both partners end back-to-back
- 5-6-7: on 5, LE "bumps" FO by sticking his butt out.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no* with next FO.

# Una por arriba, una por abajo

Attribution: cuban Translation: "one up, one down" "Hand sign:

Enchufla por arriba + dame.

## Una por arriba, dos por abajo

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "one up, two down"

Hand sign:

*Enchufla por arriba* + *dame dos*.

### Pañuelo

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: "handkerchief" 
Tand sign:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: from double crossed hold, start with an FO'OT in-place
- 1-2-3: on 1, land LE'LH+FO'RH over and behind LE's neck, on 2 drop it there, on 3 throw LE'LH behind and high. LE steps forward on 1 without actually shifting weight, just extent LF forward. Turn LE's body to the right to throw.
- 5-6-7: on 5, grab and land LE'RH+FO'RH over and behind LE's neck, on 6 drop it there, on 7 throw LE'RH behind and high. LE steps backward on 5 without actually shifting weight, just extent RF backward. Turn LE's body to the left to throw. It is important to show the rotation of LE's body.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: (repeat last bar)
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: make sure LE does a back break on 1, and enchufla
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: dile que no with next partner and resume

# Por abajo

Attribution: cuban Translation: "below"

☞ Hand sign:

### From NC's rueda.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: start in dbl.crossed hold, and FO'OT in-place
- 1-2-3: from rev. dbl. crossed hold, rev. XBL moving both hands above her
- 5-6-7: LE'RT with both hands above
- 1-2-3: you should just be in dbl.crossed hold
- 5-6-7: FO'OT with both hands above, ending in rev.dbl.crossed hold
- 1-2-3: stepping in-place, close to FO:
  - on 1, land LE'LH+FO'RH behind LE's head,
  - on 3, land LE'RH+FO'LH behind LE's head
- 5-6-7: dile que no
- 1...: go grab the next FO for dame

#### Enredala

Attribution: cuban Translation: "knot her" 
The Hand sign:

### From NC's rueda.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: start in dbl.open hold, and FO'OT-70 in-place
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'IT/enchufla while LE is switching places with FO, moving behind her. Until here it's just like the first half on setenta
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: back break and *doble enchufta* from dbl.open hold, bringing FO in wrapped up hold with both facing outside the wheel
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: (repeat last bar)
- 1-2-3: from dbl.open hold, enchufla with...
- 5-6-7: LE'RT with both hands above, wrapping up LE in the process: bring LE'LH above and to the right of LE's head, and lower it, while LE'RH is to the left of LE's head, and bring it above and out while lowering LE'LH. Crossing hands vertically like that is impressive, if done fast enough (a person looking doesn't really know what's going on). Bring your FO in the center of the wheel in the process
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla and go grab the next FO

## Que no te toque

Attribution: cuban Translation: "she doesn't touch you" 
That sign:

### From NC's rueda.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: from single open hold, FO'OT
- 1-2-3: LE'RT, hands abajo, switching behind back
- 5-6-7: FO'OT in single crossed hold
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: LE's left turn. On 5, throw FO'LH over LE's right should and leave FO'RH to rest on LE's right should while turning. The game here is that she is trying to touch you but you're avoiding it ("she doesn't touch you").
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: while doing smaller back break steps, with FO's hand behind LE's neck, move LE's head to the left and to the right, under FO'RH and arm on 1, 3, 5, 7
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: with LE doing a back break on 1 (very important), enchufla

#### Sunday

Attribution: young-cuban

Translation: "sunday, probably as in banana ice cream"

Hand sign:

#### From NC's rueda.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: from single hold, rev.XBL w/ 2xFO'IT in the center of the wheel. FO must perform two turns
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: dile que no

# Engañala

Attribution: cuban
Translation: "betray her"

Hand sign:

From NC's rueda.

- 1-2-3: start in single open hold, and start an *enchufla*. On 3, with LE'LH above FO's head, you move LE'RH around outside and over FO'RH inside. This is a little tricky, and requires LE to be fast, because FO has some momentum, and will most likely think LE is going for an *enchufla* (thus the betrayal)
- 5-6-7: pull LE'RH down to make FO spin to her right instead of completing the *enchufla*. LE will switch hands behind his back and do a left turn.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no* with next FO

#### Mambo

Attribution: young-cuban

Translation: "" **☞ Hand sign:** 

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: free FO'1/2OT + LE'1/2LT, like half of a vacila, and on 8, both partners stop and claps their hands (in 8). LE's are facing the other FO (LEs CCW and FOs CW).
- 1-2-3-4: LEs step sideways to their right, towards the outside of the wheel, with RF, LF, RF, LF (together), while FOs do the same towards the inside of the wheel
- 5-6-7-8: do the same but the other way, i.e. LEs to their left towards the inside of the wheel and FOs towards the outside
- 1-2-3-4. 5-6-7-8: repeat the same. LEs will end up in the center of the wheel and FOs outside.
- 1-2-3: LEs and FOs do three little hops backwards, using both feet at the same time. LEs are hopping towards the outside, and FOs are hopping towards the inside. The count changes here (skip 5-6-7).
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *dile que no* with FO in front of you.

#### Lusete

Attribution: cuban Translation: ""

Hand sign:

From NC's rueda. This move is very similar to La Hollandaise.

- from dbl.crossed hold,
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: rev.XBL FO'OT *sombrero*, thus bringing FO to LE's right, both facing the center of the wheel. Let go of LE'RH and offer it to FO'RH under FO's left arm.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: XBL+2xIT, keep holding both hands, both hands above FO's head on the second turn
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: XBL360, to get back into reverse configuration

#### Sacudete

Attribution: cuban
Translation: "shake yourself"

Tand sign:

- from dlb.open hold,
  - 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'OT with both hands above FO's head
  - 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *enchufta* with both hands above and LE'RH dropping FO'LH behind his neck
  - 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufta with single open hold, and LE'LH dropping FO'RH behind his neck
  - 1-2-3, 5-6-7: XBL360 to get back into reverse configuration

#### Pa'lante

Attribution: cuban
Translation: "forward"

Thand sign:

#### From NC's rueda.

- from slg.open hold,
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: free FO'1/2OT like a *vacila* but stop FO midway using both hands of LE on FO's shoulders. LE should be facing FO's back.
- 1-2-3: FO steps forward with RF on 1, LE steps forward with LF on 1. LE keeps his two hands on his FO's shoulders.
- 5-6-7: FO steps backward with LF on 1, LE steps backward with RF on 1.
- ...repeat the last bar *ad infinitum*... LEs with their FOs are all moving forward and backward together, with FOs doing a casino step and LEs doing a normal salsa step.
- ...on call "ah-ah" (with the caller's hand rotating) LEs will remove their hands from their FOs shoulders and perform a left turn on 1-2-3, 5-6-7. LEs come back to their FO's shoulders into the salsa step after that. Just a simple left turn.
- ...on call "bota" or "se queda", LEs will turn to their right and perform a dile que no with the next FO (abajo) (dame).

#### Caracol

Attribution: cuban Translation: "snail" Hand sign:

- from slg.open hold,
- 5-6-7: right after previous push-off on 5, LE performs a LE'RT on himself, keeping LE'LH+FO'RH.
- 1-2-3: LE's does a small back break while FO steps backward. LE has LE'LH in his back, which FO'RH is holding. Note: this feels a little bit awkward and I wonder if LE shouldn't step forward here.
- 5-6-7: LE pushes off with LE"RH+FO'LH on 5, and performs a left turn on himself
- 1-2-3: LE performs another left turn, maintaining LE'LH+FO'RH *abajo* throughout. LE is effectively rolling himself in that arm. I think that this is why this is called the snail, rolled in.
- 5-: LE is back on 5 in casino step ready for push-off.

# Lagartija

Attribution: cuban
Translation: "small lizard"

☞ Hand sign:

#### From NC's rueda.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *caramelo*, i.e. FO'OT with FO'RH going behind her back and hand switch from LE'LH to LE'RH, with a rev.XBL (i.e. LE is moving to the left of FO).
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7, 1-2-3, 5-6-7: LE crouches down like a lizard and walks in a circle around the FO *arriba*, for those two bars.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: on 1, LE comes close to his original FO and surprises her by going up, and *dile que no*.

Nelson says that if a camera was pointing at the upper bodies, it would see the LEs disappear while they're doing the lizards, and then reappear suddenly on 1 after two bars. You get the idea.

# Guaperia

Attribution: cuban Translation: ""

Hand sign:

From NC's rueda. This move starts just like the first half of 70.

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'OT-70.
- 1-2-3: rev.XBL + FO'1/2IT.
- 5-6-7: LE's hairbrush with FO'LH
- 1-2-3: LE's hairbrush with FO'RH
- 5-6-7: LE's hairbrush with FO'LH
- 1-2-3: LE's hairbrush with FO'RH
- 5-6-7: LE's hairbrush with FO'LH
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: enchufla in-place and go grab the next partner

While LE is doing the hairbrushes, he does back breaks.

#### Baila con las dos

Attribution: young-cuban

Translation: "dance with the two of them"

Hand sign:

#### From NC's rueda.

- 5-6-7: on 5, LE turns to his right and FO turns to her left, and they clap each other's hands. On 7, both turn to the center and claps their own hands.
- 1-2-3: on 1, LE and FO clap each other's hands, with original partners. On 3, clap your own hands in the center.
- ...repeat this for a while.
- (I don't remember how it ends.)

## Dale carinito

Attribution: cuban Translation: ""

Hand sign:

#### From NC's rueda.

- from dbl.open hold
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'OT wrapped, end with LE'RH locked over FO'LH, and get close to her
- 1-2-3: give her a little kiss on the cheek
- 5-6-7: LE grabs FO'RH with LE'LH and moves her under LE'LH+FO'RH and
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: dile que no with the FO pa'arriba

## Que no se vaya

Attribution: cuban Translation: ""

Hand sign:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'1/2IT, stop-check her with LE'LH on FO's left shoulder and LE'RH on FO's right shoulder
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'1/2IT, stop-check her with LE'LH on FO's left hand and LE'RH on FO's back
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'1/2IT, stop-check her with LE'LH on FO's left leg, and LE'RH on FO's waist
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'1/2IT, stop-check her with LE'LH just touching FO's left foot on 5. Take that foot out very fast and be careful not to trip FO. However, FO has been prepared three times, and so she should know she has to go back, she's been prepared.
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *enchufla*

# 11.3 Moves in the in-and-out walk configuration

#### 11.3.1 Essential Moves

- Al centro (when called in the reversed step), or enchufla y al centro, or Enchufla y dos palmas al centro;
- Hombre/mujer/(hombre y mujer) a la derecha, a la izquierda;
- La rosa (cuban), la flor (miami);
- Carga la;

# 11.3.2 Move Descriptions

Al centro (when called in the reversed step), or enchufla y al centro, or Enchufla y dos palmas al centro

Attribution:
Translation: "at the center"

Hand sign:

This move enters the in-and-out walk position. This is different than the call for the rocking step. This one is called when exchanging partners or in *guapea* position, this means that you should do large *guapea* steps inside and then outside of the wheel. Start with *enchufla* and then LEs and FOs walk forward and backward inside and outside of the circle, alternating. Just after the *enchufla*, LEs will skip one FO to the right when they walk inside the circle, so they are going back in the same relative location as before the *enchufla*. FO's alternate the inside and outside movements, doing a normal basic step, that is, when LEs walk in, FOs walk out, and vice-versa.

Miami style: some miami-style groups do it as described above. Some others do not skip have LE moving a la derecha after the enchufla.

In another cuban version, LEs and FOs do two handclaps (palmas, palmadas) in the center, and just keep doing it.

# Hombre/mujer/(hombre y mujer) a la derecha, a la izquierda

**Attribution:** 

Translation: "man/woman/both to the right, to the left"

Hand sign:

From the in-and-out walk, when this is called for man, when LEs walk inside, they move slightly to the right and walk outside skipping the FO to their right. Same for FOs. When called for both, LEs do it first, then FOs. This move adds a nice dynamic to this in-and-out step.

In another rueda (cuban), once this is called, LEs just keep doing them. When the caller calls *mujeres*, FOs also start moving *a la derecha* and just keep doing it. If he calls *a la izquierda*, then whoever is already moving will move to the left instead, and just keep going.

# Tres a la derecha

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "three times to the right"

**☞** Hand sign:

Three times  $hombre\ a\ la\ derecha + la\ mujer\ a\ la\ derecha$ . This gets a little confusing, but notice that you keep turning around the same FO.

# La rosa (cuban), la flor (miami)

Attribution:

Translation: "the flower, the rose"

Hand sign:

When doing the in-and-out walk, raise hands from the inside up and to the outside. LEs touch the tip of their fingers on the way out.

# Hombres tranquen

Attribution: miami

Translation: "men hold hands"

Hand sign:

This is called to indicate that men should grab each other's hand behind their neighboring FO's back, while facing the center. Everyone does small back breaks. Grab hands solidly, to prepare for an eventual *carga la*.

#### Sombrilla

Attribution: cuban
Translation: "umbrella"

Hand sign:

From in-and-out walk position, LEs turn left in-place while doing in-place back break steps, with both hands raised up in the air, mimicking to be an umbrella. Meanwhile, FOs crouch under the umbrella and put both hands on LEs body and turn CW around him, that is, they turn in the opposite direction that LE is turning on himself. FOs do that to the LE on their right, when facing the center of the wheel. This lasts two bars, and only one turn is performed. LEs start the in-and-out walk again with the step back on the RF. Exagerate the back step a bit, in order to create that flowing in-and-out motion.

An alternate way to do this one is to have FO doing two turns in two bars, but FO has to really walk fast enough around LE and step forward on 1.

#### Paragua

Attribution: cuban
Translation: "for the water"

Tand sign:

From in-and-out walk position, FOs step back breaks in-place, without turning. LEs put one finger on the head of the FO to their left and do a forward walk CCW around that FO. LEs are the water this time. This lasts two bars as well, and LEs restart the in-and-out moving with a forward step on the 1 with LF.

An alternate way to this this is to have LE do two turns in three bars, and don't forget, you end with LE stepping backwards on 5 before re-entering.

#### Carga la

Attribution: cuban Translation: "load her" Tand sign:

From in-and-out walk position, stop walking in-and-out, LEs and FOs walk CW into back break steps. LEs grab hands together tight behind their neighboring FOs backs. On call *carga la*, LEs lower hands and sit their FOs and raise them up in the air, while keeping doing back breaks and turning CCW. On another *se queda* call, lower FOs and keep turning. I think this resolves in *dile que no*. Be careful when lowering FOs back to their feet. Hold the next LEs arms, not the FOs legs, which can be a little embarassing if the FO is wearing a short dress.

# 11.4 Moves in carrusel configuration

#### 11.4.1 Essential Moves

- Carrusel;
- (holding hands);
- A la derecha, a la izquierda;
- Tarrito;
- Se fué;
- Quemala, quemala y tu tambien;
- Se vira, called from carrusel position;
- Se queda, called from carrusel position;

# 11.4.2 Move Descriptions

#### Carrusel

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "the caroussel"

Hand sign:

This move gets us from reverse configuration into carrusel configuration.

Start on 1-2-3 with an *enchufla*, change hands from LE'LH+FO'RH to LE'RH above FO's head while doing that *enchufla*, and all partners keep looking in CW direction, so that both FO and LE's body has right hand in the center. Extend FO's hand in the center while keeping the feet walking. Everyone is walking CW with hands extending in the center of the wheel and smiling at each other. You put your LH on one of your FO shoulders.

When walking in the carrusel position, hold your own FO's hand, not any hand. Remember who is your FO.

#### Carrusel invertido

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "the inverse caroussel"

Hand sign:

This move gets us from reverse configuration into carrusel configuration.

Start on 5-6-7 with an FO'OT in single crossed hold, and bring your FO'RH in the center of the wheel as she completes the turn, and all partners keep looking in CW direction, so all right hands are in the center of the wheel, and all left hands are on the left shoulder of the partner in front of you.

When walking in the carrusel position, hold your own FO's hand, not any hand. Remember who is your FO.

*Important:* If this is called from a simple forward carrusel configuration, where everyone is already walking, LE's crouch down in the center of the wheel, under their FO's hand, and do the in-place walk while under all the FO arms, thereby letting their FO walk past them. LEs move back up after their FO has walked by. You should be doing the carrusel behind your FO, and thus the carrusel has been inverted.

#### (holding hands)

Attribution:
Translation: "-"

Hand sign:

This move gets us from either of forward or reverse configuration into carrusel configuration (holding hands).

This doesn't really have a call (neither in my cuban or miami ruedas), the caller just grabs the neighbors hands and shows it, and everybody else does the same. It's not really a call, it's just that people grab hands in preparation for *quemala*, or something else, e.g. *se fué*.

#### A la derecha, a la izquierda

Attribution:

Translation: "to the right, to the left"

Hand sign:

From holding-hands carrusel, do small back breaks, with all partners moving in one or the other direction. "a la derecha" means CCW, while "a la izquierda" means CW.

#### **Tarrito**

Attribution:
Translation: "horn"

Hand sign:

From holding-hands carrusel with everyone facing the center, grab FO to your right and go in forward basic step. You should be in the forward configuration.

# Se fué

Attribution: miami Translation: "" Hand sign:

From holding-hands carrusel configuration. On call se fué, do an enchufla doble with the FO to your left.

# Quemala, quemala y tu tambien

Attribution: cuban Translation: ""

Hand sign:

From holding-hands carrusel configuration.

- On call *quemala*, grab one hand from each neighboring FO, and repeatedly perform *enchuflas* of the FOs, keeping the FOs hands throughout.
- On call *quemala y tu tambien*, when doing *quemala*, in between FOs *enchuflas*, do an *enchufla* of LE by turning towards the left and raising LE'RH+ above your head to wrap yourself in it (like an *enchufla*). This ends up looking like alternated *enchuflas* of FOs and LEs.
- This little game is repeated multiple times as well. I think it ends with a se queda call.

LEs should be standing farther outside the wheel. When doing the *quemala* of FOs, LEs simulataneously enter the wheel.

#### Se vira, called from carrusel position

Attribution: cuban Translation: ""

Hand sign:

• On call *se vira*, raise LH up in the air while turning to the right and bring LHs in the center of the wheel. Always keep the walk moving, but now everyone is walking in CCW direction, with LHs in the center, and RHs on one of the shoulders of the other FO (the one to your right if you're looking at the center of the wheel). Smile again.

# 1-2-3-4, called from carrusel position

Attribution: cuban Translation: "1-2-3-4"

☞ Hand sign:

1-2-3-4 is counted on beats 1, 5, 1, 5, and on the next 1, everyone crouches. This move doesn't really have a naming.

# Se queda, called from carrusel position

Attribution: cuban Translation: "it ends" 
Translation: "it ends"

• On call *se queda* (it ends), you do just like a *dile que no* on 1-2-3, but with the FO in front of your facing away from you (the FO whom your right hand sits on), grabbing her FO'LH to engage an FO's left turn inside the wheel, then on 5-6-7 exchange hands completing the turn, on 1-2-3 LE should back break with LF in *guapea* position.

# Con dos (palmadas), called from carrusel position

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "with two handclaps"

**☞ Hand sign:** 

When LEs walk inside, clap hands on 1-2, and right after when FOs walk inside, they also clap on 1-2.

#### Gusano, or Lombriz

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "the worm, mille-pattes"

Hand sign:

While doing the carrusel walk in one direction, LEs in between FOs, FOs place their hands on the hips of the LE in front of them, and LEs place their hands on the shoulders of the FO in front of them.

Latin Dance Study Guide 11.5. PLAY MOVES

# Casa té por dentro, se vira

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "get together, on the inside (for LEs)"

Hand sign:

While doing the carrusel, LEs keep walking in the center, in whichever direction is already started, and offer LE's left arm to their FO and walk like this, just like *casa té*. If *se vira* is called, LE performs half a right turn and FO performs half a left turn, and do *casa té* walk in the other direction. This will probably end in a *se queda* call, where LE will do *dile que no* to return in reverse configuration.

#### Dame de adelante

Attribution: cuban

Translation: "the woman in front"

Hand sign:

While doing the casa té walk, LEs will walk faster and offer their arm to the FO in front of them.

# Desengrana

Attribution: Orlando Translation: ""

Hand sign:

While doing the *carrusel* walk, LEs leave the circle and start doing the walk outside the FOs and in the opposite direction. Remember which partner you were in. On call *se queda*, LE grab LE'LH+FO'LH and perform XBL+IT with their FO. You're back in reverse configuration.

# 11.5 Play moves

These moves are meant to play, they are not really "dancing", as much of the rest. A caller can add some of these for spice and extra fun. I guess you can create your own crazy stuff, whatever is on your mind at that particular time.

#### 11.5.1 Essential Moves

- Yoghurt;
- La momia, la pesta que se mueva, la madre que se mueva, la foto;

11.5. PLAY MOVES

Latin Dance Study Guide

# 11.5.2 Move Descriptions

#### **Yoghurt**

Attribution: cuban Translation: "Yogurt" 
Translation: "Yogurt"

Called from reversed configuration. On 5-6-7, both partners lower their bodies and open the knees and move both up crotch to crotch.

# Yoghurt doble, yoghurt con las dos, yoghurt con pincha

Attribution: cuban Translation: "double yoghurt, with the two of them"

— Hand sign:

Called from reversed configuration. Same as *yoghurt*, except on 1-2-3 you do it with the FO to your right.

Most of the time Orlando just keeps doing *yoghurt*, one after the other. I don't think that there is a special call for yoghurt that means just keep doing yoghurt on and on switching partners just like *yoghurt con las dos*.

#### Yoghurt azucar, yoghurt cocino

Attribution: cuban, Orlando Translation: "yoghurt with sugar" Tanslation: "yoghurt with sugar"

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *yoghurt* but stay close to your FO
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: stay close and move your hips in a sexy way
- 1-2-3, ...: resume casino step

# La momia, la pesta que se mueva, la madre que se mueva, la foto

Attribution: cuban
Translation: "the momy, whoever moves stinks"

Hand sign:

Called anytime. When that is called, just \*freeze\* and stare at each other with a blank look on your face. Funny. Whoever moves stinks. Don't move! You can also do silly stuff during this pause...

But keep an eye on the caller, when he starts again, everyone should start dancing and be together on the 5 for the push-off.

#### Amaga

Attribution: young-cuban Translation: "fake it"

Fland sign:

From NC's rueda.

• on 5-6-7: LE turns to the FO on his right and fakes he's going to do something to her head, with both hands. She doesn't know what.

# Pipi como la mujer / A horinar como una viejita / caca como el hombre

Attribution: cuban
Translation: "pee like a woman"

Figure Hand sign:

Called from in-and-out walk configuration.

This was called once when doing the *al centro* step, LEs walking inside crouch like a girl peeing. I don't think I should be talking special note of this, as I'm sure our caller can come up with tons of crazy stuff like that, his cuban mind is just full of it.

For *caca como el hombre*, when the FOs walk in the center, they turn their butts in the center of the wheel and mime taking a dump. Charming, isn't it?

#### Virala con ...

Attribution:
Translation: "turn and ..."

Tand sign:

Called from reversed configuration. *Virala con* ...: this is a family of moves from the *guapea* position, where you turn to the FO to your right on 1 and do something to her.

- Virala con dos (palmadas): palmadas is hand claps. After the 5-6-7 push-off, turn to the right on 1, and clap both LE and FO hands together face-to-face on 1,2. Clap clap! Then turn back for the next push off.
- Virala con beso: On 1-2-3 turn to the right and kiss your partner on the cheek.

# 11.6 Show entries and exits

These are simply different ways that I've learned to enter and exit a rueda, during shows that I've either seen or done myself. As far as I know these entries and exits are not necessarily used for casual rueda dancing.

#### Entrada #1

Attribution: Orlando Translation: "entry #1" Tand sign:

LEs start together in line, FO also form a line in front of LE's with some distance in between them.

#### LE's steps:

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: basic step
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: hotpoint LF, hotpoint RF
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: LE'LT + extension #1
- 1-2-3, ...: walk forward towards line of FOs
- LE offers right arm and turn left 90 degrees

#### FO's steps:

- 5-6-7, 1-2-3, 5-6-7: basic step
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: FO'RT + extension #2, with protection hands
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: basic step + extension #2, with hands raised high
- 1-2-3, ...: walk forward towards line of LEs
- FOs grab LE's right arm offered and turn right 90 degrees

The couples walk one after the other, and the first couple turns right and everyone follows until we form a circle. Then:

- arrivar el marido
- se fué el marido: go into forward configuration right away, doing the rocking step

# Retirada #1

Attribution: Orlando Translation: "exit #1"

Tand sign:

(This was the exit in the first thursday show at Cubano's club.) From *quemala y tu tambien*, one couple separates with the man leading, walking towards the exit, and everyone keeps doing the *quemalas* together.

#### Retirada #2

Attribution: Orlando Translation: "exit #2" 
Thand sign:

(This was the exit in the christmas party show at Cubano's club.)

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: *enchufla*, then stay there and keep facing *abajo* (CW)
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: reverse *uno*, with LE and FOmoving sideways in back breaks, opposite directions. LE must keep elbows inside and pointing down, it looks bad with elbows up.

# Part III International Salsa

# **Chapter 12**

# International-Style – General Notes

# 12.1 Introduction

In the next few chapters, I include my *old* notes about learning how to dance the common style danced in north america, europe, australia (and I figure everywhere else). Some people call this style "L.A.-style", or "New York-style", or sometimes puerto-rican style. I do not argue any of the various denominations, in my document, I group all these very similar dances under the name "international style salsa" (see chapter 2).

#### 12.1.1 Differences in Analysis

The main difference between the analysis of the international style and the cuban style is that its framework focuses on different elements. In the cuban style, precision in the turns matters less than correct rhythmic execution and partner play and improvisation. In the international style analysis, an emphasis is put on maintaining the moves precisely within a coordinate system and fast moves and turns, with elegance (see figure 12.1).

#### Cuban Salsa:

- 1. rhythmic precision (groove);
- 2. partner "play", togetherness;
- 3. improvisation, male style;

#### International Salsa:

- 1. precision (dancing in-line);
- 2. elegance, female style;
- 3. fast turns and complex footwork;

Figure 12.1: Important characteristics of each framework.

Ultimately, trying to "fit" the moves in a rigid coordinate framework (i.e. on a line, front/back and sides) results in much more complications than necessary. Analysing the moves while restricting the direction greatly complicates analysis, for no particular reason. Simple moves are seen as multiple distinct equivalents with different names and unnecessary emphasis has to be put on minute details which in a looser framework become simple and do not require explanation.

12.1. INTRODUCTION Latin Dance Study Guide

In the cuban style, maintaining direction is only a matter of taste, and although *conceptually* we think of the dance as being in a line, in practice it is almost never as such and moving off of the line is even encouraged. You can dance the same moves precisely, squarely, or rather loosely. The looseness oftentimes offers unpredicted connections between various moves. Cubans are masters at leveraging these spontaneous opportunities that looseness allows into something that flows. Dancing loosely is more difficult because there is greater opportunity for surprise and spontaneous improvisation, the lead-and-follow has to be more developed. This is a major reason why even advanced international-style dancers cannot follow a complex cuban lead, because they expect moves to be drawn from a rather limited set, to which they have learned to respond in specific ways.

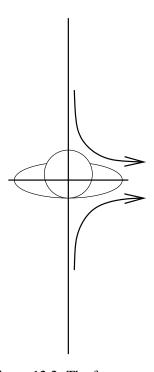


Figure 12.2: The four corners

In that context, women have a hard-time providing a lot of "dance energy" and movement while at the same time being responsive to the lead, because they cannot predict it... in international salsa, although largely unadmitted, women have learned to respond to specific codes and to execute sequences as a response. While a nicely executed sequence of moves can be performed within the framework of these codes, one quickly tires of the repetition of the same formulas over and over again. In contrast, the large amount of improvisation within the Cuban-style creates an original dance everytime (if the leader is spontaneous and skillful in using the opportunities that arise). The incredible talent of Cuban women as dancers is that of being able to provide a lot of dancing, movement and flow *while at the same time* being responsive to the lead. This is *exactly* what is so hard to teach, and why the style of salsa that has developed outside of Cuba has developed into more of a code-and-response type of lead.

Nevertheless, this square framework is how dancing is taught in that style, and my old notes assume this framework, it is how I first learned how to dance, so I left the presentation as it was originally written. Also,

I'm not sure that there is another way of teaching it better, the square framework does provide a simplified environment which is useful initially, but I believe that the student should attempt to break out of it early on.

# 12.2 Differences with Cuban style

#### 12.2.1 Upper body rotations

In this style, the upper body doesn't rotate the same way as in the cuban style. The upper body dynamics are very different: instead of being opposite to each other, the rotations here are the same, and are done faster:

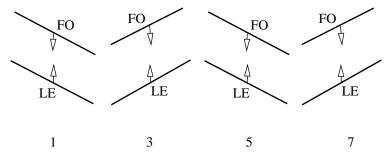


Figure 12.3: Upper body rotation in international salsa.

This set of rotations will help enforce the right timing for the turns in this style. Also, because of the faster rotations, the framework here is more rigid than in the cuban style.

Compare these to the rotations see in section 7.3.1.

## 12.2.2 Spin turns

Spin turns are very important in the non-cuban style. It is important that you should be able to turn with ease and land them with stability and assurance. This takes time and practice.

#### 12.2.3 Weight change

While doing a spin turn, the weight changes between the feet. Here's a trick to understand how that weight change is supposed to happen: cross on foot behind the other. The foot that is crossed behind should carry the body weight on its toes and the other foot should carry it on its heel.

Start turning, pushing in the ground with the crossed foot. As you turn, change the weight so that the foot that was in front is now carrying the weight on its toes and vice-versa.

12.3. GENERAL NOTES

Latin Dance Study Guide

#### 12.2.4 Back break variation

In this style, the back break is not done quite the same way as in cuban style (section 7.3.3). A particular variation of the back break step is done in other styles: keeping the body straight in front, without the shoulder rotations. When stepping backward, step *behind* the other foot. Step a little more to the left when stepping back with RF, step a little more to the right when stepping back with LF.

Swing the hips the following way, for a very distinctive style: on 1, swing left hip to the right, perhaps with knee more bent than you would at first, and close to the right knee, on 2 swing back the other way (to the left), on 3 swing again to the right. Mirror for 567 step. Note: there is a little "kick of the knee" that is very special when doing this. It's as if the backwards stepping foot's knee kicks down and forward a bit while stepping back.

## 12.3 General notes

This section introduces an attempt at classifying the different salsa moves and variations. In particular, I strive to separate the combinations in atomic moves that are as simple as possible, in order to be able to combine them into new, different variations later, and to also create a language to be able to describe new moves tersely.

It is not obvious how to organize all the different information about salsa couple dancing, since there are many many moves, but likely not an infinite number (after all, we've got only two arms and two feet). Can one decompose the dance in a simple language which can describe or generate all possibilities? Part of this query is what I would like to answer through my exploration. This is a daunting task, since every teacher has a different set of moves, adds a lot of creative value, and puts emphasis on different aspects. Moreover, most dancers/teachers do not suggest a particular organization for this information. I suspect that it may not be possible to organize all the combination in a linear manner; perhaps a sparse 2- or 3- dimensional table would make more sense than a linear document.

This is thus very much a work in-progress. In salsa lessons, most teachers will teach an objective through a combination. I have included here the combinations that were suggested to me during the lessons I took. They form good examples of patterns of use of the variations summarized here (this is often where the basic variations were extracted from). Note that the combinations are only examples, and no attempt will be done at classifying variations.

#### 12.3.1 Comments

- A note about distances: it's much better to be dancing close to each other, and it makes the moves easier to realize. However it requires that you know your distances more. Beginners tend to end up far from each other, which doesn't look right but makes the couple moves harder to realize.
- A problem with the large majority of dancers is that they practice making the FO turn a lot, but they don't practice turning themselves a lot. Test yourself: which is harder... to do 07 of FO or to do 07 of LE? This means LE should also practice turning a lot.

Latin Dance Study Guide 12.3. GENERAL NOTES

#### 12.3.2 Rev-Time Turns

There is an important concept when doing more complex moves, with lots of turns. The turns can be done either in the normal time for each partner, i.e. on 1-2-3, or in rev-time. What I call rev-time means that you do the same turn, but from the other half of the basic step, i.e. on 5-6-7, just like the second half of double turns, but possibly without the first turn of the double turns. When partners are turning a lot this can be done. These are spin turns. When doing turns in rev-time, it feels a little more awkward than normal time. However, rev-time is important for more complex moves, and it is important that dancers be able to keep their steps going right when doing turns in rev-time (especially FOs). FOs tend to get confused by rev-time turns, because they feel a little wrong, the lead has to be stronger.

# **12.3.3** An Attempt at Categorization

I'm trying to find a logical organization to categorize the different possibilities of salsa moves. In my current attempt, I divide all the simple salsa moves by referring to relative movement of the partners:

• Walks: when both partners are translating together across the floor, not necessarily in front of each other, but together as a unit

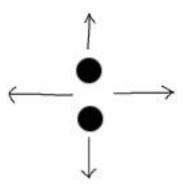


Figure 12.4: Walks.

• Papillon: when both partners are turning together



Figure 12.5: Papillon.

12.3. GENERAL NOTES Latin Dance Study Guide

• Single turns: when one or both partners are turning in-place

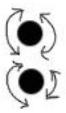


Figure 12.6: Single turns.

• Cross-body leads: when FO is traveling to the left of LE, perhaps with FO and/or LE turning, perhaps with some hand changes



Figure 12.7: Cross-body leads.

• Reverse cross-body leads: when FO is traveling to the right of LE



Figure 12.8: Reverse cross-body leads.

• **Paseas:** when FO is traveling around LE, perhaps with some turns. *Pasea* means promenade in spanish.

Latin Dance Study Guide 12.3. GENERAL NOTES

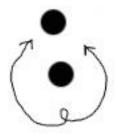


Figure 12.9: Paseas.

• Zig-zags: when LE and FO are moving, in opposite directions, alternating directions over time.

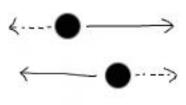


Figure 12.10: Zig-zags.

• **Dips:** when LE dips FO.



Figure 12.11: Dips.

Some more complex salsa moves are combinations of instances which are part of these groups. Most of the more complex salsa moves (e.g. in rueda) don't fit in any single category.

12.4. BASIC MOVES

Latin Dance Study Guide

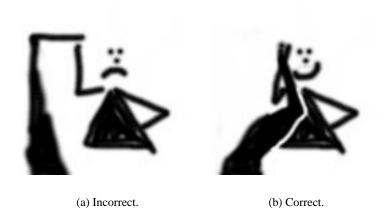


Figure 12.12: Watch the elbow when leading an FO'OT

# 12.4 Basic Moves

# 12.4.1 Follower's outside turn (right turn, FO'OT)

FO will do a right turn step, forward on 5-6-7 while LE is moving backwards (remember that 5-6-7 is backward for LE but forward for FO). LE'LH+FO'RH are kept together throughout. **From closed hold:** on 5, LE raises FO'RH up and over her head while pulling towards LE and pushing sideways (to LE's left) to indicate FO to initiate the turn. When FO enters her right turn on -6-7, keep pushing with LE'RH in her back. Move LE'LH over her head to LE's right. To maintain appropriate distance between the dancers, a great trick is to keep LE'RH sliding on FO's back and around her belly and to her back again. This also makes it easier to return to closed hold fast after the turn. **From double open hold:** same as with closed hold, except that LE doesn't push in FO's back. To help indicate the FO'OT, you can prepare a bit by pulling on FO'LH with LE'RH in a round motion first to the right of LE and then towards and to the left of LE.

- LE'LH must be kept with elbow low and "inside" (to the right). A common problem is for LEs to raise the left elbow up and to create a turning motion over and around the FO's head. Combinations will become much easier if proper technique is applied and elbow is kept pointing down and between the dancers. Also, LE'LH should simply move over FO's head, do not induce rotation with this hand. If you just gently leave the hand over FO's head, it will feel easier for her to turn. FOs are supposed to be able to turn by themselves, and unless you'll be doing 12 turns in a row, they don't need support from your left hand.
- Another very common problem is for FOs to step forward with their LF too far to their right (to LE's left) on 5 (their 1), almost sideways. This is from fear of stepping on LE's feet, or fear of not having enough room when LE moves forward. FOs \*must\* step straight forward, and not sideways, this is very very important to maintain balance throughout the turns. Plus, if FOs step like that, the turn completes too early, which looks bad.

Latin Dance Study Guide 12.4. BASIC MOVES

# 12.4.2 Leader's right turn (LE'RT)

On 1-2-3, LE initiates a right turn step, completes it in 5-6-7. The hands can be kept low and switched behind his back (two hand switches), or one of FO's hands can be raised above LE's head and kept throughout the turn.

- There is no preparation or signaling for the FO when LE decides to do a right turn. LEs must make sure they step forward as usual, and not step sideways to avoid FO's feet. FO's feet should not be in the way when stepping forward anyway!
- Be careful with the elbows, keep them close to your body otherwise your FO might get it in her face, and trust me you don't want that to happen.

#### 12.4.3 Follower's inside turn (left turn, FO'IT)

FO will do a left turn step, forward on 5-6-7 while LE is moving backwards (remember that 5-6-7 is backward for LE but forward for FO). LE'LH+FO'RH are kept together throughout. **From closed hold:** on 5, LE \*pulls\* FO towards him with LE'RH far in the middle of her back. This is the preparation, in the opposite direction of the turn, which gives some reverse motion prior to starting the turn. On -6-7, LE \*pushes\* FO back away from him while moving FO'RH to LE's right and FO moves into the left turn. LE just raise FO'RH above their head and do not do a circular motion, FOs must be able to turn by themselves once you've pushed away and gave the signal.

- It is very important that FO keeps her arm close to her and her elbow pointing down and close to her body as much as possible. A common problem is for FOs to raise their right elbows up in the air instead, which destabilizes the balance in the turn. LEs must try to keep their elbows down as well. The way my teacher says it: "FOs must turn around their arm, not their arm turn around them!".
- A very common problem here is that FOs are often not taught to let themselves be pulled on the 5. This makes it difficult for LE to do the preparation which is essential for a graceful turn. FOs: this preparation \*is\* important, even if you've been dancing for years without doing it! It gives motion to the turn, it avoids making the turn jerky.
- To maintain appropriate distance between the dancers, a great trick is to keep LE'RH sliding on FO's belly and around her back. This also makes it easier to return to closed hold fast after the turn.

**From double open hold:** on 5, LE pulls LE'RH+FO'LH to the left, far enough to move under LE'LH+FO'RH, and high (not low) and somewhat towards LE. This is the very important preparation in open hold. On -6-7 complete with a circular motion o the hands to the right and FO is turning to her left. Complete as in closed hold. FO must step forward with LF and not sideways to her right when doing the preparation.

12.4. BASIC MOVES

Latin Dance Study Guide



Figure 12.13: Preparation for inside turn of FO.

# 12.4.4 Leader's left turn (LE'LT)

On 1-2-3, LE initiates a left turn step, completes it in 5-6-7. The hands can be kept low and switched behind his back (two hand switches), or one of FO's hands can be raised above LE's head and kept throughout the turn.

 As for the LE's right turn, there is no preparation or signaling for the FO when LE decides to do a left turn either.

# 12.4.5 Cross-body lead (XBL, in spanish dile que no)

This is one of the most important moves in salsa. It is of tantamount importance that the XBL be learned solidly, because many moves in salsa are combined or part of an XBL. Rueda is also made up of a ton of XBLs. **From closed hold:** on 1-2-3 FO does usual step backward on RF. LE does usual steps on 1-2, but on 3 brings his LF back with toes pointing south and body sideways facing west, creating an opening for FO to walk across him, opening "a door". LE's feet should not be such that FO should be able to walk straight to the left of LE and not bump into him, yet be close to him. On 5, LE pulls FO quite strong with LE'RH behind her back, and steps in place with RF, pushing to go south. While pulling on 5, FO should be rotating to the right slightly. This is where the preparation for XBL+IT lies (but at this point FO doesn't know if IT is called for). On 5-6-7 FO walks forward, and does half of a left turn on 7, before stepping back with her RF on 1. On -6-7 LEs are now looking south and stepping in place with LFon 6, and bringing RF forward for basic position on 7. LE steps forward on 1 with LF for basic step.

- FOs should be walking straight and not sideways. When passing LE they should be at a perpendicular angle with him. This is very important.
- The XBL should "snap" on 7. Wait as long as you can for FO to do her half-turn to the left.
- LEs must not step back (east) with RF on 5. Keep the RF in-place, pushing to move south a little bit.
- LEs can help FOs rotate with the right timing on 5 by keeping and pushing LE'LH in front of them as they walk by.
- LEs should not pull with LE'LH, they should be able to carry out the whole XBL with LE'RH.

**From double open hold:** the feet are the same. The pull is similar to the preparation for IT. On 5 pull on both hands, but more on LE'RH+FO'LH in front of LE facing west (remember LE'RH is always the hand

Latin Dance Study Guide 12.4. BASIC MOVES

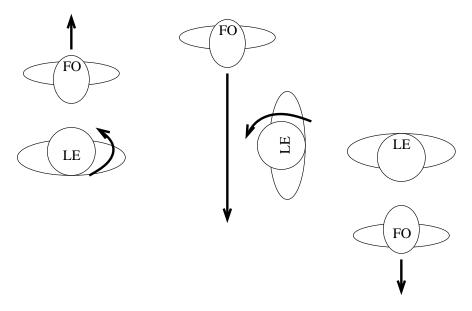


Figure 12.14: Cross-body lead

that guides), with LE'RH farther and over LE'LH. LE'RH is the hand that pulls, the other should stay back. I was told a few times that I tend to push too much on XBL. I think you have to adapt to the weight of your FO a lot. I was also told that pushing just at the beginning is better, don't push throughout.

12.4. BASIC MOVES Latin Dance Study Guide

# **Chapter 13**

# **International-Style – Steps**

"You should not dance here with your partner. Go out and ask some new girl to dance. To dance well, is to dance well with anyone. Dancing well with your partner does not count here."

ORLANDO ALFONSO, offering advice during a salsa congress

This chapter contains a list of step descriptions. Before learning how to dance with a partner it is important to invest some effort in learning how to step on your own. For a long time, in each lesson I would take some time was devoted to learning some new step to be danced solo. So in order to remember all the steps, I had tried to organize them and categorize them. This original effort is what produced this chapter.

# 13.1 Generic Step

While this chapter categorizes all the steps in a square framework, it is important to keep in mind that the only goal of this categorization is for the dancer to learn and practice how to move his/her feet gracefully. Ultimately, the exact steps that are performed matter very little, what matters is that they are done with balance and intended purpose, wherever the feet go.

More specifically, the generic concept is that of:

- from feet together, one step outside;
- a step of the other foot in-place;
- bring back the first foot together with the other.

In practice, to form all those other steps, combine the idea above with various displacements, rotations, crossing, walking, etc. All of this produces valid steps. Anything goes, as long as balance is maintained.

13.2. STEPS Latin Dance Study Guide

# **13.2** Steps

This section contains information about basic foot technique for salsa dancing. These are the basic steps that one should learn and that compose that more complex moves when dancing in couple with complex arm movements. My group lesssons always start with everyone in the basic step and the teacher calling steps. This is getting faster with time and he is calling more complex steps and calling them closer together. The descriptions don't discriminate between LEs and FOs since all those steps are valid for both. Some of the more advanced steps are not really meant to be performed together with a partner. These fall under the category of "shines". Advanced dancer will, however, dance using some of those more advanced patterns during couple dancing (they're improvising throughout).

#### 13.2.1 Basic step

The basic stance is standing up with right foot slightly in front of the left foot. This is the "on 1" step description (for a description of the "on 2" step, see section on timing):

- on 1 step with LF forward
- on 2 step in-place with RF, really step in-place because if the RF moves the steps will be difficult in couples and when doing the more complex moves
- on 3 bring LF back to its original position slightly behind RF
- pause on 4
- on 5 step with RF backwards
- on 6 step in-place with LF, really in-place
- on 7 bring RF back to its original position slightly in front of the LF
- on 8 pause

#### Notes:

- In the basic salsa step you *never* bring the two feet together next to each other, always have one slightly in front of the other, this gives nicer motion to the feet and makes a huge difference helping to get the style right. This is true for most steps, except the back break and the side-to-side steps;
- When dancing, you \*always\* alternate the feet in this pattern: LF-RF-LF, RF-LF-RF. A key to dancing is to never stop those feet from moving in this pattern. Practice this by doing everything around the house in this pattern, this should be internalized to death, so that your feet move by themselves during your sleep.
- About the hip swing: if you're not familiar with latin dancing, the first thing you'll immediately
  notice is the way people swing their hips... you might be puzzled at how people move them, in which
  direction, and so on. I was self-conscious about it at first, trying different possible ways when I started,
  tyring to get it right, but here's the jist of it: the man doesn't swing his hips on purpose, but the lady
  does.
  - The hip swing is simply a consequence of proper foot movement and weight change. Men should not "try" to swing their hips, it will look, huh, let's just say inappropriate.
  - The women should be moving the hips. My teacher often jokes: "move that cafetera! que rrrrrrico mami!". I can't describe how it's done right, but I can now distinguish between correct and incorrect FO's hip movement. FOs should try to get this one right from the beginning,

Latin Dance Study Guide 13.2. STEPS

since from what I've seen it looks difficult to lose a wrong hip movement habit. In any case, the movement is a consequence of the change of weight, and should never be exaggerated on purpose.

• At first it's more important to focus on doing smaller steps, and keeping the center of gravity centered at all times. The hip movement will just happen by itself at some point.

Tricks to help fine tune the basic step:

- Cross the feet. Yes, yes \*CROSS\* them. Really. That will get the hips moving right, and looks much better.
- Point the toes outwards, especially if crossing the feet. Don't make the mistake of crossing RF behind with toes pointing left, your toes should be pointing outwards.

# 13.2.2 Side-to-side step

Essentially the same as the basic step, except that the LF moves to the left on the 1, and the RF moves to the right on the 5. It is allowed here to put the two feet together on the pause. Description:

- on 1 step with LF sideways to the left, hips moving
- on 2 step in-place with RF, really step in-place because if the RF moves the steps will be difficult in couples and when doing the more complex moves
- on 3 bring LF back to its original position next to RF
- pause on 4
- on 5 step with RF sideways to the right, hips moving again
- on 6 step in-place with LF, really in-place
- on 7 bring RF back to its original position next to LF
- on 8 pause

# 13.2.3 Turning left or right (a quarter turn)

Within the *basic step*, it is possible to turn a quarter-turn i.e. 90 degrees to the left or to the right. Although one could argue that you can "loosely" turn in any direction while doing the basic step, there is proper technique and timing to turning. Using this technique for turning will help when turning in couples.

Turning left always happens on the 5: on 3, prepare/anticipate turn by bringing LF back to starting position i.e. slightly behind RF, move it farther behind RF and pointing to the left. On 5, body is finishing turning 90 degrees to the left and RF moves backward in this new orientation for completion of 5-6-7 part of basic step.

Turning right always happens on the 1: on 7, prepare/anticipate turn by bringing RF not as far as you would on the usual 7 of the basic step, and with toes pointing outward to the right. On 1, body is finishing turning 90 degrees to the right and LF moves forward in this new orientation for completion of 1-2-3 part of basic step.

Do not confuse turning left or right with the left and right turns. In a description context, we will refer to these as *basic step w/ qu.turn*'s, e.g. left qu.turn and right qu.turn.

13.2. STEPS Latin Dance Study Guide

#### 13.2.4 Notes on transitions

Transitions can happen on any 1 or 5 beats. It is important that when you transition between two steps that you keep alternating with the correct foot in the LF-RF-LF, RF-LF-RF pattern, regardless of the step that is performed.

All these steps can be performed in couples, in either closed or open holds.

Practice combinations:

- Combination: four turns to the left.
  - basic step w/ qu.turn left
  - right turn
  - basic step w/ qu.turn left
  - left turn
  - ... (repeat)
- Combination: four turns to the right. Note that the turns immediately start after the qu.turn which makes this combination more difficult.
  - basic step w/ qu.turn right
  - right turn
  - basic step w/ qu.turn right
  - left turn
  - ... (repeat)

# 13.2.5 Forward walk step, backward walk step, transitions

The walks can be used to travel distance with your partner and is used in more complex moves as well (e.g. in *paseas*).

- on 1 step forward with LF
- on 2 step forward with RF
- on 3 step forward with LF
- on 4 pause
- on 5 step forward with RF
- on 6 step forward with LF
- on 7 step forward with RF
- on 8 pause

In general do small steps. This might save a follower's toes. The backward walk is as complicated:

- on 1 step backward with LF
- on 2 step backward with RF
- on 3 step backward with LF
- on 4 pause
- on 5 step backward with RF
- on 6 step backward with LF
- on 7 step backward with RF

Latin Dance Study Guide 13.2. STEPS

on 8 pause

# 13.2.6 Crossed walk (marcha crusada)

This is an exercise used to learn correct posture and stability while turning. It is also used to learn spotting.

Walk forward, on 5-6-7: RF-LF-RF, on 1-2-3: LF-RF-turn. On 3, with RF in front, your body performs a full left turn without the feet moving. After the turn, LF should be crossed in front of RF with LF toes pointing to the ground. Resume with LF in front on 5 (which becomes 1).

#### For posture:

- you should stand upright, don't bend upper-body forward.
- make sure that when you start the upper body stays up straight.
- tighten the buttocks in order to be make body more firm when turning. This will also give more stability.
- don't start with looking at your feet.

# 13.2.7 Walk with "plier"

This is a ballet-like exercise use to gain stability and for perfecting utilisation of the feet.

- Start with RF behind LF.
- On 1, raise body \*straight\*, on the ball of the feet and start walking forward, crossing feet slightly.
- On 6, bend knees and lower body, with upper body remaining straight. You keep stepping as well.
- Knees go outside when lowering.
- Keep weight centered at all times.

You can combine the crossed walk with the walk with "plier".

# 13.2.8 Right (pivot) turn step

When we speak of turns, we assume by default pivot turns, and not spin turns. Spin turns will be mentioned explicitly. This step is used to perform a full turn of to the right. Description:

- on 1 move LF forward as usual basic step. Make sure the foot steps in front of you, and not to the right of RF, really plant that foot in front. FOs will have difficulty with this when doing the step in front of an LE.
- on 2 step in-place with RF with toes pointing backwards (south), and body starts turning to the right, by pushing using LF
- on 3 complete right turn and move LF back to original position, i.e. to the left of RF
- on 4 pause, gain stability
- ...complete as usual 5-6-7 basic step

Do not confuse this step with the "right qu.turn" step. Learning this step correctly is very important for the variations with the arms. Learn to turn with the right speed. A correct full turn is already finished on 5. A trick is to orient the feet to their final position early.

13.2. STEPS Latin Dance Study Guide

# 13.2.9 Left (pivot) turn step

This step is used to perform a full turn of to the left. Description:

- on 1 move LF forward as usual basic step
- on 2 step in-place with RF as usual
- on 3 move LF back to original position but pointing backwards (south) while body begins turning left
- on 4 pause, with body finishing the left turn by rotating on LF
- ...complete as usual 5-6-7 basic step

Do not confuse this step with the "left qu.turn" step. Learning this step correctly is very important for the variations with the arms. Learn to turn with the right speed. A correct full turn is already finished on 5. Orient the feet early here as well.

#### 13.2.10 Right spin turn step (rev-time)

This step is used to perform a full turn of to the right, in-place:

- on 5, cross RF behind LF and to the left of it, with RF's toes touching the ground.
- on 6 and 7, turn spin towards the right, weight shiftingg from RF toes/LF heel into LF toes/RF heel
- on 1, step forward for basic step

This can replace the second half of a right pivot turn step in order to perform a double turn.

An important trick: any fast turn that requires stability will benefit from tightening the buttocks together, stressing the muscles. This will greatly help maintaining the firm upright position which is required to perform fast turns.

Also, spin turns are typically done with feet together for FOs, with the weight on one foot. For LEs you can do like FOs, or spin with one ball of the foot and on the heel of the other foot. The weight is shifting while spinning. Start with the weight on the toes of RF and on the heel of LF, and while turning shift it to the toes of LF and heel of RF.

Rev-time turns feel a little funny when being led, the feet tend to be confused, and it is very important that the correct foot alternating pattern be kept. Step \*forward\* after rev-time turns.

#### 13.2.11 Left spin turn step (rev-time)

This step is used to perform a full turn of to the left, in-place.

- on 5, cross RF in front and to the left of LF, with RF's toes touching the ground
- on 6 and 7, turn spin turn towards the left, weight shifting from RF toes/LF heel into LF toes/RF heel
- on 1, step forward for basic step

Same comments as for right spin turn step. The weight change is the same also.

Latin Dance Study Guide 13.2. STEPS

#### 13.2.12 Double right turn step

This step is used to refer to

• 1-2-3: right pivot turn followed directly by

• 5-6-7: right spin turn

Don't forget the preparation with RF crossed behind LF on 5.

#### 13.2.13 Double left turn step

This step is used to refer to

• 1-2-3: left pivot turn followed directly by

• 5-6-7: left spin turn

#### 13.2.14 Lateral step

This is similar to a side-to-side step, except that instead of bring feet back beside the other, you bring the foot across the foot that didn't move. The lateral step always starts on the 7 (with RF moving from backwards crossing in front and to the left and of LF), and can finish on either 3 or 7, transitioning to some other step.

- on 5 and 6, do the second half of the basic step, but
- on 7 bring RF to the left of LF crossing in front of LF.
- on 1 and 2, do a side-step with LF but
- on 3 bring LF to the right of RF crossing in front of RF
- ... (repeat)

Note: when crossing in front of the other foot, do not "avoid" the still foot by moving the crossing foot around it. Rather, raise your knee a little bit so your crossing foot is moving somewhat above the still foot. This is very important.

#### **13.2.15** Parallel #1 step

Similar to lateral but in line with basic step.

- on 1 move LF forward as in basic step
- on 2 turn upper body 90 degrees to the right while stepping in-place with RF
- on 3 cross LF in front of and to the right of RF while looking east
- on 4 pause
- on 5 uncross RF and side-step to the right (south)
- on 6 turn upper body to face forward (north) again while stepping in-place with LF
- on 7 bring RF back to starting position

13.2. STEPS Latin Dance Study Guide

#### **13.2.16** Parallel #2 step

This step is the same as parallel #1, but with more turn to it, a quarter turn more, to be precise. You don't go looking sideways (east) in this one, you go looking backwards (south).

- on 1 move LF forward as in basic step
- on 2 turn upper body 180 degrees to the right while stepping in-place with RF
- on 3 cross LF in front of and to the right of RF while looking south
- on 4 pause
- on 5 uncross RF and side-step to the right (west), while still looking south
- on 6 turn upper body towards the left to face forward (north) again while stepping in-place with LF
- on 7 bring RF back to starting position

#### **13.2.17** Extension #1 step

This step is a little trickier because of the timing involved.

- on 1-2-3 do a usual basic step
- do usual basic step 5-6- with RF, LF
- on "-&-7", slide right foot back in starting position ("&") and extend LF and leg out to the left and in front with toes touching the ground. Do not bounce or jump, slide. The feet slide very fast, this is supposed to look agile.
- On 1 step forward with LF for basic step, ...

To make this look manly and with style is not trivial. Here are a few tricks:

- on 7, advance the RF to the position where LF is, as if kicking the LF with RF
- "slide" RF on 7, don't jump
- bend the right knee
- raise the right shoulder a bit and lower the left shoulder

#### **13.2.18** Extension #2 step

This step is even more tricky than ext.#1 but similar.

- on 1-2-3 do a usual basic step
- on 4 start moving RF backward in a circular motion in the air, to the right, with heel moving first
- on "-&-5", on "&" land RF with toes pointing to the right (east), on 5 upper body turns to the right (east) and LF and leg extend out and in front (north) with toes touching the ground. For women: the head turns to look backwards (south). For the men, the body and face are looking east.
- complete with usual basic step's -6-7 with LF, RF. Move fast into it, because there isn't much time.

When doing the ext.#2 step in couples, keep the RF pointing forward and don't do a half-turn of the upper body. For FOs, throw head to the right as you're doing this, with a facial impression of disdain, or pride. Practice combinations:

- Combination: four turns to the right with lateral steps
  - basic step w/ right qu.turn

Latin Dance Study Guide 13.2. STEPS

- parallel #1
- basic step w/ right qu.turn
- parallel #2
- ... (repeat)
- Combination in couples:
  - XBL, when completing XBL FO chains into ext.#2 right away, then
  - LE does ext.#2

#### 13.2.19 Left-LF half-turn step

This is akin to the parallel steps, but turning to the left.

• on 1-2-3 do the first half of a left turn (that is like a basic step but on 3 LF is pointing south), you should end up on 3 with body facing south

Completion if called by itself:

- on 5 do a side-step with RF while facing south (west)
- on 6 step in-place with LF while turning to the right to go back into facing north
- on 7 bring RF in starting position

This step can be used to "wrap" either partner in arms from double open position.

#### 13.2.20 Left-RF half-turn step

Same as left-LF half-turn step, but with RF instead. Same timing.

- on 5-6-, do basic step backwards with RF
- on -7, turn body a half-turn towards the left and face south, stepping with RF back in original position (but looking south)

Completion if called by itself:

- on 1 do a side-step with LF while facing south (east)
- on 2 step in-place with RF while turning to the right to go back into facing north
- on 3 bring LF in starting position

#### 13.2.21 Right-LF half-turn step

This is a half-turn on 1-2-3 first to the right and back to original position right away. Usual 5-6-7. This step moves fast on the 1-2-3, you must be able to turn into it and then back out of it quickly, in balance.

• on (8)-1 turn to the right 180 degrees, and step forward with LF towards the south instead of the north

Completion if called by itself (back to original orientation):

- on 2 rock on RF, while starting to turn back towards the left (in the opposite direction)
- on 3 step back with LF where LF was originally
- resume with usual salsa basic 5-6-7

13.2. STEPS Latin Dance Study Guide

This step be used to "wrap" FO in the opposite direction. You can quickly connect left half-turn and right half-turn steps.

#### 13.2.22 Right-RF half-turn step

Same as right-LF half-turn step, but with RF instead. Same timing.

• on (4)-5 turn to the right 180 degrees, and step backward with RF towards the north instead of the south

Completion if called by itself (back to original orientation):

- on 6 rock on LF, while starting to turn back towards the left (in the opposite direction)
- on 7 step back with RF where RF was originally
- resume with usual salsa basic 1-2-3

#### 13.2.23 Punta talon LF step

This is a funny step that reminds somewhat of footwork.

- On 1, point the tip/toes of the LF down (the *punta*), with knee in front and inside
- On 3, knock the heel (the talon) of the same foot down, and out to the left
- On 5, bring LF behind RF, to the right (east)
- On 7, open feet so that LF is out to the left (west) with toes on the ground and RF is to the right (east). At this point the weight should be on the RF. Try to perform this with as least jumping action as possible, in a manner similar to the extensions.

From here I've seen two possibilities:

- stepping on 1-2-3-4: on 1 step with LF, on 2 step forward to the left with RF turning leftwards, on 3 step in-place with LF, body still turning, on 4 step with RF back in original position. Resume with basic salsa forward on 1. Note that if you're doing this with an FO you've switched the direction of the steps, but the timing is the same (i.e. dancing on 5 instead of on 1).
- stepping on 1-3-4-5: on 1 step with LF, on 3 (not 2), step forward to the left with RF, on 4 step with LF and complete the turn, on 1 resume with basic step. Note that you're now dancing on the 3, and not on the one anymore. The only difference with the 1-2-3-4 way is that a pause has been spliced on 2, the rest is the same.

#### 13.2.24 Punta talon RF step

Same thing as punta talon LF, except with RF, and it starts on 5, after having stepped forward.

- On 5, point the tip/toes of the RF down (the *punta*), with knee in front and inside
- On 7, knock the heel (the talon) of the same foot down, and out to the right
- On 1, bring RF behind LF, to the left (west)
- On 3, open feet so that RF is out to the right (east) with toes on the ground and LF is to the left (west). At this point the weight should be on the LF.

Latin Dance Study Guide 13.2. STEPS

Then, there are also two possibilities. Do the same as for punta talon LF, except do it towards the right (east), doing a right turn instead. You resume on basic 5-6-7 step backward with RF.

#### **13.2.25** Kick LF step

This is simply a salsa basic step in which you kick with LF on 8, after stepping back on 5-6-7. The kick is from the knee, not the whole leg, and should be sharp. Point your foot while kicking and kick somewhat to the left. This should not be a big kick. Watch for your distances if you're going to do this with a partner (you want to kick in the air, you don't want to kick her!).

#### 13.2.26 Hotpoint step (LF and RF)

This is a very common step for shows and shines. It can be done on either side. Thomas Guerrero (NY-Santo Rico) calls this one a "front double cross". Hotpoint LF step:

- on 1 cross LF in front and to the right of RF, keeping weight on the RF, only toes touching the ground
- on 2 uncross LF and bring it to the left, extended, with toes touching the ground, still leaving the weight on RF. Try to extend far enough because when this is done fast you'll need stability at this point.
- on 3 step in front with LF (and slightly crossed over RF), planting your foot, that is, putting the weight on it (LF)
- (on 5, chain directly into hotpoint RF or resume usual 5-6-7 basic step with RF)

You can use the hands for style, and to maintain balance and achieve more width counterbalancing the front foot's movement. For ladies: the hands are much exaggerated, even more so on the 3 and 7. Move the hands in opposite directions of the foot that is moving in front. Hotpoint RF step: this is exactly the mirror of hotpoint LF, same comments apply

- on 5 cross RF in front and to the left of LF, keeping weight on the LF
- on 6 uncross RF and bring it to the right, extended, with toes touching the ground, still leaving the weight on LF.
- on 7 step in front with RF (and slightly crossed over LF), planting your foot, that is, putting the weight on it (RF)
- (on 1, chain directly into hotpoint LF or resume usual 1-2-3 basic step with LF)

You can chain several of these hotpoints. Often people go for two. Tricks:

- make sure you bend the leg that stays stable, it looks much better and the lower you go the more stability you get
- rotate the feet when they touch the ground, so that the toes point to the outside

#### 13.2.27 Hairbrush step

This is like a lateral step, but instead of doing a side-step to the side, you turn the body and side-step behind (south). FOs add additional hairbrushing action, but not LEs.

13.2. STEPS Latin Dance Study Guide

• on 7 after a basic step, cross RF in front and to the left of LF, and turn body a qu.turn to the left (facing west). FOs should comb their hair with LH at this point and FO'LH should be behind their head.

- on 1, do a side-step with LF south while facing west. FOs should throw the FO'LH out to the their left (south), as if throwing away some goo from their hair, palm facing down.
- on 2 rock on RF
- on 3 cross LF in front and to the right of LF, while body is turning back to original position and a qu.turn more to the right, so you end up facing east. FOs should comb their hair with FO'RH at this point.
- on 5, do a side-step with RF south while facing east. FOs should throw goo again, with FO'RH this time.
- on 6 rock on LF
- on 7 bring RF back to original basic position

#### 13.2.28 Forward breaks step

This is a step that you could also call "tip-toe'ing". Do it on the ball of the foot throughout (it would be pretty difficult to do it with the heels anyway). And do small steps, very small steps, keeping feet close together.

- on 1, cross LF in front of and to the right of RF
- on 2, cross RF in front of and to the left of LF
- on 3, cross LF in front of and to the right of RF
- (the second part is a mirror of this)
- on 5, cross RF in front of and to the left of LF
- on 6, cross LF in front of and to the right of RF
- on 7, cross RF in front of and to the left of LF

Thomas Guerrero calls this step the "cross over step".

#### 13.2.29 Backward breaks step

Same as forward breaks step, but crossing the feet backwards. For some obscure anatomical reason, this is more difficult to execute than the forward breaks step.

- on 5, cross RF behind and to the left of LF
- on 6, cross LF behind and to the right of RF
- on 7, cross RF behind and to the left of LF
- (the second part is a mirror of this)
- on 1, cross LF behind and to the right of RF
- on 2, cross RF behind and to the left of LF
- on 3, cross LF behind and to the right of RF

Latin Dance Study Guide 13.2. STEPS

#### 13.2.30 Scissors step

Simple step when you step forward on both 1 and 5:

- on 1, step forward with LF, crossing in front and to the right of RF, keeping the weight on RF
- on 3, bring LF back to original position
- on 5, step forward with RF crossing in front and to the left of LF, keeping the weight on LF
- on 7, bring RF back to original position

This steps has a slower feel to it.

#### **13.2.31** Suzie Q step

A step similar to the forward breaks step, except you don't cross the feet around. The NY "dancing on 2" people seem to enjoy this one a lot.

- on 1, cross LF in front of and to the right of RF, very close, twising the hips to the right. Weight is on LF
- on 2, step in-place with RF behind, perhaps displacing it very slightly to the right, twisting the hips to the left. Weight is on RF.
- on 3, step in-place with LF. Weight is on LF.
- (mirror this for 5-6-7 beats)

The key to a styling Suzie Q: twist those hips!!! Use your hands for balance, but without twisting the hips, this looks lame. Exagerrate it! The upper body stays relatively still. You can connect two or more of these.

#### 13.2.32 7up

The idea here is that this move enhances leg straightening and one leg lifting up to the other's knee (the 7 shape, leg up, hence 7up). Description "on 2" timing:

- on 1, step forward a small step with RF
- on 2, step forward more with LF, toes pointing straight, rightish
- on 3, shift weight on right leg, turn both feet's toes pointing to the left, with LF on the heel, stick your butt out a bit, left leg is straight
- on 5, move LF back to original position and shift weight on LF, at the same time rotate the toes to the right, with RF on the heel, right leg straight
- on 6, move RF together with LF, weight on LF, with toes touching the ground
- on 7, lift RF up to the knee of the left leg, possibly with right knee crossing the left leg a bit (the 7up)

I learned this both at the salsa congress and from some guy (Carlos) one night at Living.

#### 13.2.33 Spiral kick step / kick twist step

I saw this one from Néné's tape and the Montreal salsa congress. I'll describe it on "on 1" timing for consistency, but it was shown in "on 2" timing. Orlando also showed this one, and he calls it the "kick

13.3. SPOTTING

Latin Dance Study Guide

twist".

- (optional) on 8 kick in the air with LF
- on 1 cross LF to the right of RF, and a little bit back. Body has turned qu.turn to the right (facing east)
- on 2 step on RF in-place, well, actually moving it a little bit south (to the right)
- on 3 step on LF in-place, or moving it a little tiny bit south also
- on 4 kick in the air with RF
- on 5 turn body qu.turn to the left to get back into original position, while stepping back with RF
- on -6-7 finish basic step with LF-RF

In "on 2" timing, the 1-2-3-4 steps above correspond to 2-3-4-5. It is important that kicking in the air be done with a small kick, like if you didn't want anyone to see you kicking away, not a large kick.

# 13.3 Spotting

Spotting is a technique used in fast turns, it has two goals:

- to maintain equilibrium
- to avoid getting dizzy when turning

To do spotting, spot a feature in the vicinity of where you're looking at. This feature should be the last thing you see before you start turning, and the first thing you see right after you've turned. That is to say, your head should turn fast enough that anything in between should be invisible, i.e. keep your head looking at the feature, and when your neck can't handle the torsion anymore, turn your head very fast and spot the same point. It actually also looks nice.

#### 13.4 Practice combinations

Combination to practice changing directions: "four turns to the left"

- basic step + turn left
- right turn
- basic step + turn right
- left turn
- [repeat]

Combination to practice changing directions: "four turns to the right"

- turn right + do a right turn
- turn right + do a left turn
- [repeat]

A difference between those two combinations is that in "four turns to the right", there is no basic step in between the turns.

Practice combination for kick step, hotpoint:

• from basic step, kick on 7

- hotpoint LF + hotpoint RF
- left turn
- extension #1
- extension #2

#### 13.5 Footwork and shines

The simple atomic steps can be put together creatively in order to perform solo shines. This section contains suggested combinations of steps for shines. Please be creative and make up your own.

#### 13.5.1 Four Basic Rules

Thomas Guerrero mentions four important, basic rules in his style:

- Keep the head up high
- Keep the arms moving along with the shoulders
- Keep the knees very flexible
- Always dance on the ball of the foot

When he talks about "syncopated" steps or "syncopated" timing, he actually means double time, i.e. you step on all of 1-&-2-&-3-&-4-& (eight-notes) instead of 1-2-3-4 (quarter-notes).

# **Chapter 14**

# **International-Style – Moves and Variations**

This chapter groups together various notes about moves that I picked up during the early time I learned how to dance and a partial attempt at organizing some of these moves.

#### 14.1 Variations of Walks

These are simple traveling basic steps done together. Do these in both closed and open holds.

#### 14.1.1 Walking forward, walking backward

First, see note on transitions on the foot technique section. You always start the walk forward on 1 only, and you always start the walk backward on 5 only.

From basic step, to indicate you're going to walk forward (on 1), make it \*very\* clear by pushing FO by somehow moving LE'RH a little more to the side, and moving your body forward a little tiny bit in advance. You can use LE'LH if in closed hold. This walk always ends on the 1 as well. Your FO should most of the time be able to see that you're going to walk just by the momentum of your body.

From basic step, to indicate you're going to walk backward (on 5), make it \*very\* clear by pulling FO towards you with LE'RH, and move your body backwards a little bit in advance. The walks are very important, they are used in rueda a lot.

#### 14.1.2 Turning left and right

You should be able to reorient the couple while dancing, that is to perform the turning left and turning right steps together. Practice just doing four turns in both directions together, in open and closed hold. LE leads right and left turns while turning direction 90 degrees everytime. Quite easy. The open form requires you to pull the hands a bit to indicate clearly what you want to do.

14.1. VARIATIONS OF WALKS

Latin Dance Study Guide

Pulling the hands correctly (left and right) is extremely important in guiding the FO and doing the moves in time. If you pull the hands more the FO really knows where you want to go.

#### 14.1.3 Sideways walk to the left

Start from basic step. On

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: basic step together
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: LE and FO do back break.
- 1-2-3: LE does a back break, and FO also (normal part of basic step).
- 5-6-7: LE crossed RF behind for the second half of a rotation step, while FO crossed LF in front for the first half of a rotation step. LE must pull FO'RH towards his left, to bring her towards LE's left. The couple is moving towards LE's left.
- (repeat last bar many times)
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: end here with LE going for basic step forward, then XBL

Repeat as needed, across the room and back.

#### Sideways walk to the left w/FO'OT

Same as sideways walk to the left, except on 5-6-7 do an FO'OT.

#### Sideways walk to the left w/ LE'RT

Same as sideways walk to the left, except on 1-2-3 do an LE'RT.

#### Sideways walk to the left w/FO'OT and LE'RT

Same as sideways walk to the left, except on 5-6-7 do FO'OT and on 1-2-3 do an LE'RT.

#### Sideways walk to the left w/FO'OT and FO'IT

Same as sideways walk to the left, except alternate FO'OT and FO'OT between bars.

#### 14.1.4 Sideways walk to the right

The couple moves itself across the room, towards LE's right. There are two possible forms of this walk to the right.

#### Slow form

Start from basic step. On

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: basic step together
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: LE and FO do back break.
- 1-2-3: LE crosses RF forward and to the right on 1, steps in-place on 2, and brings LF back to original position on 3. FO crosses LF forward and to the left on 1, steps in-place on 2, and brings RF back to original position on 3. LE leads FO by pulling LE'LH+FO'RH very far to his right, and using his forearm to make FO travel to the right.
- 5-6-7: both partners back break.
- (repeat last bar many times).
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: basic step and XBL

#### Fast form

This form is similar to the slow form, except that both partners step on 1-2-3-4 throughout.

- (same first two bars as above)
- 1-2-3: LE steps forward and to the right, the same as above.
- 4: LE steps in-place with RF, FO steps in-place with LF.
- 5-6-7-8: repeat previous 1-2-3-4.
- (repeat last half-bar many times)
- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: basic step and XBL

#### 14.1.5 Together steps in a circle

What I call the "together steps" move (for lack of a better name), is when LE and FO walk together facing the same direction. Possible entries:

• From single crossed hold, start with an *enchufla* on 1-2-3, and directly after on 5-6-7 move in front of FO and move yourself to her right while guiding her to your left behind your back, FO always facing your back. LE'RH should be behind LE's back holding FO'RH. On the next 1-2-3 offer LE'LH for FO'LH, and while FO walks forward LE walks backward, so the couple is facing the same direction and turning together CW, FO doing the forward walk while LE is doing the backwards walk. On 5-6-7, pull FO'LH forward for FO'OT, and you should be finished in basic step on 1 (LE'LF stepping forward on FO). When doing the walk, you can add a bar of it (perhaps more), turning together. Note: if you don't add more time to the walk, you can accomplish this move similarly to an enchufla + reverse XBL w/FO'OT, and you should land in the same orientation as when you started.

# 14.2 Variations of Single turns (dbl, 70, 07, sombreros)

What I call single turns is when one partner turns on him/her-self. All the possible arm combinations can be best described by the tables below.

#### **14.2.1** Some general concepts

- Setenta (70) turns start in double open hold with one hand high and one hand low
- Cero siete (07) turns start in one of the double crossed holds with one hand high and one hand low
- Sombrero turns start in one of the **double crossed holds** with **both hands high** (above the heads)
- What I call -dbl turns are turns from **double open hold** with **both hands high** (above the heads)

#### Notes:

- LEs should learn to recognize which 07 they should go into, regardless of the hands. In other words, when given a certain crossed hold, you should know without thinking which FO's 07 or LE's 07 you can do. This way you can start eliminating basic steps. LEs find LE's 07 more difficult because they always make the FO turn, not them. Practice the LE's 07's!
- The following variations of the four possible turns are quite repetitive because of the symmetries.

#### Variations of FO'OT

- FO'OT:
  - from closed hold
  - from single open holds and single crossed holds
- FO'OT-dbl: from double open hold, both hands above FO's head, leads into doubly-crossed hold
- FO'OT-sombrero: from double crossed hold, both hands above FO's head, leads into reverse double crossed hold
- FO'OT-70: from double open hold, LE'LH high and LE'RH low, leads into 70 hold w/ FO'LH behind her back
- FO'OT-07: from double crossed hold, LE'RH high and LE'LH low, leads into 07 hold w/ FO'LH behind her back

#### Variations of FO'IT

All the FO'IT variations must have a preparation applied for them to be carried out properly. The preparation helps the FO a great deal.

- *FO'IT*:
  - from closed hold
  - from single open holds and single crossed holds
- FO'IT-dbl: from double open hold, both hands above FO's head, leads into reverse doubly-crossed hold
- FO'IT-sombrero: from reverse double crossed hold, both hands above FO's head, leads into crossed hold
- FO'IT-70: from double open hold, LE'RH high and LE'LH low, leads in 70 hold w/ FO'RH behind her back
- FO'IT-07: from reverse double crossed hold, LE'LH high and LE'LH low, leads into 07 hold w/ FO'RH behind her back

#### Variations of LE'RT

- *LE'RT*:
  - from closed hold or single open holds, either
    - \* keeping the held one hand above LE's head
    - \* switching hands twice: once behind back, and one more time one way back
- LE'RT-dbl: from double open hold, both hands above LE's head, leads into doubly-crossed hold
- *LE'RT-sombrero:* from double crossed hold, both hands above LE's head, leads into reverse double crossed hold
- *LE'RT-70:* from double open hold, LE'RH high and LE'LH low, leads into 70 hold w/ LE'LH behind his back
- *LE'RT-07:* from double crossed hold, LE'RH high and LE'LH low, leads into 07 hold w/ LE'LH behind his back

#### Variations of LE'LT

- *LE'LT*:
  - from closed hold or single open holds, either
    - \* keeping the held one hand above LE's head
    - \* switching hands twice: once behind back, and one more time one way back
- *LE'LT-dbl:* from double open hold, both hands above LE's head, leads into reverse doubly-crossed hold
- *LE'LT-sombrero*: from reverse double crossed hold, both hands above LE's head, leads into double crossed hold
- *LE'LT-70*: from double open hold, LE'LH high and LE'RH low, leads into 70 hold w/ LE'RH behind his back
- *LE'LT-07:* from reverse double crossed hold, LE'LH high and LE'RH low, leads into 07 hold w/ LE'RH behind his back

Half holds: when in back-to-back, you can go to double open and variants When in front-to-back, you can go to double crossed holds

I discovered this one once by fooling around:

• FO'OT w/ LE'RT(spin): start FO'OT on 5, but instead of stepping back with LE'RF, crossed RF behind LF, preparing for LE'RT(spin), and when FO has initiated her FO'OT, LE quickly gets into the spin, initiating his a little bit later than FO. You should end together on 1.

#### FO'OT-70, back-to-back, FO'OT

- 1-2-3, 5-6-7: from double open hold, FO'OT-70, ends up with LE facing west and FO facing east. LE should not be too far from FO, keep her close, this is very important, because the ensuing FO'OT will be much easier if we're close.
- 1-2-3: back break for both, on 3 LE moves under FO'RH into back-to-back hold, and use LE'RH to push FO to LE's right, behind his back, to help her move. LE must make sure to do the back break here.

• 5-6-7: let go of LE'RH+FO'LH, and using LE'LH indicate FO to perform and FO'OT

Another variant: FO'OT-70, back-to-back, rev.XBL+FO'OT

- ... (same as above)
- 5-6-7: let go of LE'RH+FO'LH and using LE'LH pull FO into a rev.XBL+FO'OT. The difference with the above is that you end up in the same orientation as when you started. LE needs to perform a large rotation movement with LE'LH to induce the rotation necessary for FO'OT.

Another variant: FO'OT-70, back-to-back, FO'OT w/ LE'RT

- ... (same as above)
- 5-6-7: let go of LE'RH+FO'LH and using LE'LH pull FO into an FO'OT, and as \*soon\* as FO starts turning, LE goes into a spin to the right and lands on 1 in basic step.

#### Practice combination:

• rev.XBL+FO'OT & tE'LT, FO'OT-70, back-to-back, rev.XBL+FO'OT

Simple combinations for starters:

- To practice right turn: From basic step,
  - FO'OT (on 5)
  - LE'RT (on 1)
  - another FO'OT on the way back from that turn, lift FO'RH with LE'RH
- To practice left turn. From basic step
  - FO'IT (on 5)
  - LE'LT
  - FO'OT on the way back, by switching to LE'RH and lifting FO'RH

# 14.3 Variations of Cross-body leads

#### XBL w/FO'IT, XBL+IT

- different hand positions for this, hands behind neck
- XBL 360
- reverse XBL
- XBL tube
- XBL tube wrapped:
- when doing the tube wrapped, from double open hold, wait as long as possible to raise FO's arm over LE's head, on 5, or after;
- XBL tube w/ LE'RH blocking at LE's neck
- XBL+IT w/ LE'RH block at FO's neck, keep FO very close to you, on the next bar, raise LE'RH and carry out another XBL+IT. FO must keep her head up straight when blocking behind her neck.

#### XBL with foot extensions

When you do an XBL, LE does an extension #1 step on 7, and FO answers with an extension #2 step on 1. (Remember the counts are inverted for FO.) Do not move the pelvis for the extensions.

#### XBL+IT with foot extensions

When you do an XBL, FO does an extension #1 step on the 3 after the XBL, and LE answers with an extension #2 step on 5. (Remember the counts are inverted for FO.)

#### XBL+2xIT

Like XBL+IT, except on next 1-2-3, FO performs an additional IT with her hand in her back. The trick here is to lower the hand during the turn in a single motion in order for FO not to stop turning. You cannot have the hand above and then suddenly switch it below to induce the second turn, it has to be done in a single, smooth motion.

- 1-2-3: XBL preparation
- 5-6-7: XBL w/ FO'IT
- 1-2-3: FO'IT with FO'RH behind her back
- 5-6-7: FO steps forward on LE for basic step

## 14.4 Variations of Reverse cross-body leads

The simple rev.XBL is done like this:

- on 1-2-3: in single hold, LE and FO do a back break step, LE opens legs as for XBL
- on 5-6-7: FO walks, while LE steps in place RF-LF-RF.
- on 1-2-3: LE steps in front, and FO has done a half-turn to the left on 8, and is facing you on 1, stepping backwards with RF.

rev.XBL w/ LE'RT rev.XBL w/ LE'RT wrapped (from dbl.open hold)

- Practice combination: XBL tube wrapped + rev.XBL w/ both hands above + rev.XBL w/ LE'RT wrapped
  - 1-2-3, 5-6-7: from dbl.open hold, XBL tube wrapped
  - 1-2-3: still in dbl.open hold, pull for rev.XBL lifting both hands above
  - 5-6-7: pull for XBL lifting both hands above as well
  - 1-2-3: rev.XBL again
  - 5-6-7: complete with LE'RT wrapped. This is done as usual LE'RT with hands above but keep LE'LH+FO'RH on LE's left shoulder and wrap LE with LE'RH+FO'LH. Spot FO's face for balance.
    - 1-2-3: basic stepXBL w/FO'IT, XBL+IT

rev.XBL w/FO'OT & amp; LE'LT

#### 14.4.1 Important note about turn terminology

In spanish or french, an *outside* turn is called a *right* turn, and an *inside* turn is called a *left* turn. There is something very confusing about the terminology used with XBLs: an XBL+IT can be called XBL w/ *left* 

turn, but if you do an rev.XBL+IT, that should be called an XBL w/ *right* turn, even though FO is turning towards the left. Conversely, an XBL+OT can be called an XBL w/ *right* turn, but and rev.XBL+OT will then be called an XBL w/ *left* turn, even though FO is turning towards the right. The reasoning behind this is that when doing rev.XBLs, the feet movements to turn towards the left are the same as a the feet movements used to turn towards the right in a normal XBL.

I think the only difference pertains to which foot you're on when you start turning, which is not the same depending on XBL or rev.XBL. In any case, the *outside* vs. *inside* terminology is unambiguous, and we'd rather use that here.

#### 14.5 Variations of Paseas

Pasea means promenade, to take a walk. In these moves you "promenade" your FO around you.

- *Pasea abajo* ("the promenade with hands below"): start on 1-2-3 with an XBL, pulling FO'RH low and behind LE, while LE is going to face north throughout. On 5-6-7 and 1-2-3, keeping pulling FO'RH low, changing hands behind LE's back. FO should be back in basic step either stepping forward on LE on 5, or stepping backward on 1. FO has to walk around LE, in the CCW direction.
- *Pasea arriba* ("the promenade with hands above"): same as *pasea abajo*, except that LE leads with a single hold that moves above his head, and doesn't switch hands.
- Pasea arriba w/ FO'IT: some people call this the "rope spin". Same as pasea arriba, except that instead of starting with an XBL, start with XBL+IT. Right after the FO'IT, LE is facing south, and helps FO walk around him by pushing her behind his back to his left. LE's lead in single hold goes above his head (which is what makes it arriba). FO walks around him on 1-2-3, 5-6-7, and should be back in basic step position on the next 1, with LE stepping forward.

#### 14.6 Lateral moves

I think these moves are a good simple exercise for some more involved stuff. I think they probably serve as an exercise to learn how to behave when around your partner, that is, not in line facing her. There are three possibilities, with two exits each:

#### Lateral moves FO behind LE

The basic idea is that both LE and FO will be facing north, and will be doing lateral steps in alternance, LE in front of FO. This is the easiest lateral move of the three.

Entry: from basic step in closed hold, on 3 LE pushes FO to LE's left side and change hands in your back to be in single crossed hold. This entry is suggested to be done in closed hold, because of the distance that FO has to travel to get behind LE. As FO is walking on 5-6-7 LE enters lateral step starting with on 5. On 1-2-3, as LE does lateral step to the left, pull FO to the right, so that she is facing the same direction as he is

Latin Dance Study Guide 14.6. LATERAL MOVES

(north), but alternating left and right in his back, while doing lateral steps left and right. LE changes hands behind his back, to accommodate for this alternating motion of partners.

As partners are alternating, LE doesn't turn his body, keep facing north. Two possible exits:

- FO's exit: on 5, as FO is to his left and behind him, LE exits the lateral step with RF behind, getting back into basic step, FO keeps her lateral going to the left. On 1-2-3, LE steps in front with a normal basic step (this is important because this movement will be used for momentum in pulling FO just after) and as FO is doing lateral step to the right (or she does back break?), pull FO forward with LE'RH+FO'RH, making her do an FO'IT as she moves into closed position.
- LE's exit: on 1, as LE is doing lateral step to the left (side-stepping), keep LE'RH+FO'RH and LE does a full 1.5 turns spin to the right (a spin, LE is not stepping north), hand above his head. End up on 1 forward for basic step. FO stops lateral step when LE moves in front of her.

Practice combinations: the combinations helps get back in time at the right spot, because you have to be quite ready and stable for an 07 (I think). I think it is a good general idea to help insure getting back on time by chaining with one of the two possible LE's 07 turns. Orlando mentioned to do them in the same direction in which you were already turning when you finished the move, e.g.

- Combination:
  - lateral moves FO behind LE w/ FO's exit
  - go into rev.dbl.crossed hold and 07-FO'IT
  - then XBL+IT
- Combination:
  - lateral moves FO behind LE w/ LE's exit,
  - go into rev.dbl.crossed hold and 07-LE'RT
  - then XBL+IT

#### Lateral moves LE behind FO

The basic idea is that both LE and FO will be facing north, and will be doing lateral steps in alternance, FO in front of LE.

Entry: from basic step in double crossed hold, LE will initiate an FO'OT on 5, but will stop FO halfway through (this is the first lateral step), by resting both hands on her shoulders (this is a front-to-back hold) and pushing her to the right. In effect, FO is doing a parallel #2 step at this time. On 7, LE is crossing RF for a lateral step. Stay in this position, and keep front-to-back hold with hands on shoulders and do alternating lateral steps (i.e. when FO goes to the right, LE goes to the left). Two possible exits:

- FO's exit: on 1, when FO is to the right of LE, raise LE'RH+FO'RH and turn FO left for a half-turn so that she faces LE. On 5-6-7 step back for basic step, as FO steps forward on you. Pull early enough that FO faces you.
- LE's exit: on 1, when FO is to the right of LE, LE steps farther to the left with LF and performs half of a right turn on -2-3, in order to face FO, facing south, and then LE does a right spin turn on 5-6-7, with preparation. Use small steps and don't lift LE's feet too high when turning, otherwise the knees can knock when too close.

14.6. LATERAL MOVES

Latin Dance Study Guide

#### Lateral moves FO beside LE (zig-zags), hands kept low.

The idea here is that FO and LE hold hands with alternating lateral steps, with FO facing LE and hands kept low. This move has a lot of momentum and is more difficult to execute on fast music.

Entry: you can start in either of the double *crossed* holds. Don't do this in open hold, since FO will be moving to your sides, and you need to pull her strong to switch sides, so to maintain a short distance it is better to pull with the arm of LE opposite to the side that FO is on. Both crossed holds work equally well for hands kept low.

- start with XBL on 1-2-3
- on 5-6-7, step with RF-LF-RF just as in XBL, but leave RF on the 7 in-place
- on 8, tap the floor with LF

Also, the way the feet move is a little trickier here, the feet do a step similar step as the lateral step, except that the feet cross on 2 and 6, not on 3 and 7. The feet move faster, stepping twice in each bar. This step is not a lateral step, it's closer to a grapevine than a lateral step:

- with feet open, on 1 step in-place with LF
- on 2, cross RF to the left, in front of LF
- on 3, uncross LF by stepping to the left, feet should be open once again
- on 4, tap the floor with RF,
- on 5, step in-place with LF
- on 6, cross LF to the right, in front of RF
- on 7, uncross RF by stepping to the right, feet should be open once again
- on 8, tap the floor with LF
- (...repeat)

FO's exit: on 1-2-3, pull FO for an XBL+IT on 5-6-7, and finish on 1 with basic step again, LE looking south. After the XBL, grab FO'LH with LE'LH over it to bring her closer to LE. Use this whenever you want to bring your FO

## Lateral moves FO beside LE (zig-zags), hands going high.

Same as the previous move, except that FO is facing away from LE when turning, and hands are going over hands going over FO's head. Start in *reverse* double crossed hold, not in double crossed hold, because in the process FO makes a turn, and if you start in double crossed hold you'll end up in one of the doubly-crossed holds, which is not good for pulling FO. Also, raise the hands early, otherwise FO will lose her head.

#### Lateral moves LE around FO (zig-zags)

Same as the previous move, except that LE uses one hand only to pull FO, and when LE steps to the right on 5-6-7, he moves *in front of* FO. In effect, LE is moving in a circle around FO. In a way, the steps are similar to a rotation step, with different timing.

Latin Dance Study Guide 14.7. VARIATIONS OF DIPS

When LE moves behind FO, move hand above. When LE moves in front of FO, move hand above as well. Bend the knees when crossing the feet, to help FO when moving under her hand. Also, do small steps! Practice these moves on slow music at first, to grasp how the weight moves around and how the feet go, and then bring it up to speed.

## 14.7 Variations of Dips

#### Copacabanas

- from 2xFO'IT
- from extension (like estrella)
- from FO'1/2IT w/ LE'RH+FO'RH behind her back

#### Dips

• from extension

## 14.8 Setenta in a square

70-in-a-square are moves where you enter some 70 hold, move under an arm to a back-to-back hold and switch sides, move back under an arm into another 70 hold, and the other partner turns to get back into double open hold. Four simple versions: they start with either of FO'OT, LE'RT, FO'IT, LE'LT. The 70s that start with an LE's turn are a bit more difficult. Here is a description of 70 FO'OT-FO'OT:

- 5-6-7: from double open hold, FO'OT with LE'LH high and LE'RH low. You should end in 70 hold, with FO'LH behind her back, and FO'RH extended to her right in front of LE. Also, LE should be facing west and FO should be facing east.
- 1-2-3: back break for both. On 3, LE raises FO'RH and moves under it, going into back-to-back hold.
- 5-6-7: small, very small back break for both, while LE is moving to the right behind FO's back
- 1-2-3: on 1 LE raises FO'LH and moves backwards under it, going into the other 70 hold with FO'RH behind her back, and both partners do a back break step, still facing east/west.
- 5-6-7: do a FO'(3/4)OT to bring FO facing north and LE facing south. You can initiate this one early and have FO step forward on 5.
- 1-2-3: back into basic step

Keep arms bent at all times.

There is a very important trick to going back-to-back with the 70's that start with LE's turn: right after you've moved under the FO's arm into back-to-back hold, in order to avoid having your FO think that she should turn, you have to bring the other arm's elbow behind her back right away and lower that hand. Otherwise FO \*will\* think that she has to turn. This is a \*VERY\* important trick in back-to-back hold if you want things to go right behind your back.

Here are the simple types of square 70s:

- FO'OT, back-to-back, FO'OT
- LE'RT, back-to-back, LE'RT

14.9. ENCHUFLA'S Latin Dance Study Guide

- FO'IT, back-to-back, FO'IT
- LE'LT, back-to-back, LE'LT

Here are the more complex types of 70, where the other partner turns for the second turn. The back-to-back transitions are a little trickier here, the arms have to be adjusted.

- FO'OT, back-to-back, LE'RT
- LE'RT, back-to-back, FO'OT
- FO'IT, back-to-back, LE'LT
- LE'LT, back-to-back, FO'IT

#### 14.9 Enchufla's

*Enchufla's* are half-turns to the left of FO, while she's moving towards LE, can be done in any hold, typically in one of the single holds. On 1-2-3, LE does a back break, partners are moving away from each other somewhat, and on 3 pulls FO with whatever hold. On 5-6-7 LE can do many things:

- Enchufla (simple): LE steps to the left of FO, does another back break on 5-6-7, end you end up in basic step together again.
- Enchufla doble: on 5, LE doesn't move, doesn't turn his body at all and stops FO with a hand in her back, or with his right arm (i.e. when wrapping from double open hold), or with FO'RH behind her back (when leaving FO'RH low from single crossed hold).
- Enchufla with LE'3/2RT: on 5-6-7, LE performs 3/2 right turns while moving to the left of FO, often done from single crossed hold moving LE'RH over LE's head while doing this. LE can initiate the right turn before on -2-3 if desired. LE ends up in basic step facing south, facing FO, stepping forward on 1 with LF. This seems to be a very common exit for many moves.

Note that although very similar, *enchufla* is different than the simple rev.XBL. LE will step forward after a rev.XBL, while he will do a back break after an *enchufla*.

# 14.10 Synchronous steps

What I call the "synchronous steps" move (for lack of a better name, suggestions welcome) is a variant of the "together steps" where LE and FO step synchronously, i.e. when LE switches his step to step alongside FO, synchronously, with the same step she's doing (not the reverse, as in the basic step). Usually, this is enhanced by doing a rotation step together.

In order to get into synchronous step, the alternance of the LF-RF-LF has to be switched for the leader. When FO steps in front with LF, LE should also be stepping in front with LF. The way that I perform this switch from an LE's 1-2-3 in LF-RF-LF is by stepping with RF on the 4, and then right away with LF on the 5, for a 5-6-7 along with FO. You can also step with LF on the 8, it's the same idea. Use the same trick to get back into LE's step time.

You can be walking in front of your FO, or to one of her sides. Here are a few ways to get into this that I know about (I'm sure there are thousands of ways):

- FO'IT and LE turns right a half-turn. FO is facing LE's back, an should be grabbing his sides or something. Perhaps this works with FO'OT also.
- Start with preparation on 5 for 07-FO'RH. On 1-2-3, while she finisheds turning, LE has stepped on 4 to the left of FO and is facing south with her. On 5 step in front with LF with FO, crossing LF far to the right to drive FO into a synchronous rotation step. I don't really know exactly how to get out of this, but I sometimes manage to do a clean exit from it, perhaps with a turn of FO.
- From single crossed hold, do an *enchufla*, and directly after move in front of her to her right, ending up with LE'RH behind his back, offer LE'LH for FO'LH, and instead of turning together, LE does an extra step to get into the synchronous step.

## 14.11 FO sitting down on LE

LE initiates one or a few FO'IT in a row, and in the middle of an IT grabs FO close to him and sits her down on his knees. For style: grab FO'RH and lower it down and behind you. (I saw this in the Toronto Congress tape.). Or do an *enchufla*, and keep her going for an extra half-turn to the left right after the *enchufla*, and sit her down.

#### 14.12 Assisted FO shines

Assisted FO shines is when LE is holding FO's hands solid and still and guides her into doing footwork in-place, guiding her into going a little crazy. Contrary to what you often see in the clubs, LE must *not* stop dancing, and must not just hold the hands still. I often see LEs with feet anchored on the floor and offering still hands to their FO, which is wrong, according to the teaching I received.

- LE must guide and control the shines that FO does. LE is still in control, FO is not free to shine however she wants.
- LE guides with both hands, perhaps with different intensity, but the hands are moving, with the following timing:
  - on 1, push with LH and pull with RH
  - on 3, push with RH and pull with LH
  - on 5, push with LH and pull with RH
  - on 7, push with RH and pull with LH
- LE must continue dancing! You can do all the steps that you want, just don't stop stepping.

14.12. ASSISTED FO SHINES Latin Dance Study Guide

# Part IV Other Dances

# Chapter 15

# Cha-cha-chá

Cha-cha-chá is one of the more traditional cuban dances like són. Because the cha-cha-chá has been integrated in, modified and popularized outside of Cuba through the social dances, there is great confusion about what is the proper way to dance it.

# **15.1 Rhythm**

There is only one rhythmic pattern which is correct to dance over cha-cha-chá: the "cha-cha-chá" has to fall on the open tones of the tumbao, that is, beats 4, 4+ and 1. This is the *only* way that it fits entirely with the music.

Moreover, without the extra steps, this amounts exactly to dancing "on 2", which suits very well the jumpy upbeat feel of the cha-cha-chá. This is very nice when dancing to son-chá music, where you can switch between són and cha-cha-chá dancing within the same song.

In social dancing, people have the tendency to dance cha-chá on the downbeats, which looks awful. Learn the rhythm properly, there is only one to learn.

#### 15.2 Free format of cha-cha-chá

Dancing cha-cha-chá is a bit special compared to the other dances because its framework allows more freedom than the other dances. For Cubans dancers, cha-cha-chá is a very free and open dance.

While you can technically dance it with the usual forward and backward displacements of salsa dancing, it is equally danced sideways and in other directions as much. It is considered a medium where more daring improvisation can occur. Once you master the foot pattern and your lead is totally independent of it you can lead any turn in any direction you wish. I find that turns can be lead pretty much in any direction and at any moment, and one of the interesting parts of dancing cha-cha-chá is that of being able to ddo turns in equivalent places where you could not if dancing salsa.

15.3. BASIC STEP Latin Dance Study Guide

## 15.3 Basic Step

The basic step of cha-cha-chá can be described as similar to the salsa step, "on 2" (a contra-tiempo), adding two steps immediately following the last step in the main pattern (replacing the pause), and stepping forward on both sides.

#### 15.3.1 Starting the dance

You must *always* start the cha-chá step on beat 4, at the open tones of the tumbao, that is, at the "cha-chá-chá".

## 15.4 Disconnecting the feet

One of the most difficult aspects of the cha-cha-chá is the requirement to free the feet from the constant beat pattern. One must remain aware of the 4-beat pattern to lead the vueltas and improvise, yet one must also free the feet of that pattern because of the cha-cha-chá step.

Use the following rhythm exercises to break the pattern.

#### Exercise: Cha-cha-chá and hands

While doing the cha-cha-chá step,

- play maracas alternating a right-left-right-left pattern;
- play the clave

This is very difficult at first (which is also why it's so good). The hands invariably to play a 1,2,3,4,4+ sequence, because they are linked with the feet. This exercise will work the hands-feet independence and allow the dancer incerased perception to be able concentrate on the larger sequences and improvise during his lead.

If you can't think of the steps at the same time as the hands, do the steps in-place, and focus on the weight change pattern without moving the feet (just lift them a little bit).

#### ► Exercise: Cha-cha-chá vuelta

An exercise for equilibrium and balance during cha-cha-chá turns: do the cha-cha-chá step (sideways) with vuelta LE'RT on 78. Don't forget the cha-cha-chá feet. Also, search for equilibrium, and correct balance.

# **Chapter 16**

# **Bolero and Bachata**

Bolero<sup>1</sup> and bachatá (a dominican dance) are to be danced on the same rhythmic patterns. The bolero can use some of the patterns of són dancing, like the cajón. In bachatá, the difference is that there is an extra little kick of of the hips on beat *4*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>The cuban bolero is erroneously called "rhumba" in social dancing circles.

# Chapter 17

# Merengue

Merengue uses very similar moves than the ones shown for salsa dancing. Although the much simpler timing structure may not provide the excitement of salsa, merengue provides a great opportunity for a beginner to work on understanding the transitions between the different holds using turns. You can truly experiment with the arms here. Do your salsa combinations in slow-motion and internalize them!

(This section contains some old descriptions of moves and holds that I recorded in the first year that I started dancing. Consider these are complementary complex holds and combinations that you could apply to your merengue dancing in addition to all the knowledge you have about salsa dancing.)

# 17.1 Complex Holds for Merengue

I've seen two ways of dancing merengue out in the clubs. The first way, the "structured" way, is danced more like salsa, where the feet are marking a very definite pattern, and the moves are carried out relative to the feet. In other words, the feet and hand coordination matters. The second way, the "free" way, is slower, and decouples the feet and hands. You can do very slow transitions of the arms, and slow turns, regardless of the feet, since you're stepping mostly in-place, where the feet motions are not related directly to the rhythm of the turns.

All of the holds valid for salsa are valid and can be used in merengue. There are several holds, however, which are just unthinkable to perform in salsa timing. Sometimes I ask yourself, what is this position? How could I ever get my arms into this position? Sometimes I wonder while dancing...

#### 17.1.1 Sombrero opposite hold



Figure 17.1: Sombrero opposite hold.

This is just like a sombrero hold, but the partners are looking in opposite directions. Start from double hold facing each other, and just raise each other's arm behind your head. There are two possibilities: LE has FO to his right or FO has LE to her right. Possible transitions:

- noodles hold (either LE or FO noodled)
- simply raise both arms into double open hold
- sexy hand slide

#### 17.1.2 Sexy hand slide

From *sombrero opposite* hold, let go of both hands behind necks, and slowly move away from FO letting the extended arms slide on each other. Getting hand-to-hand at this point brings you into one of the single crossed holds.

#### 17.1.3 Sombresiete hold



Figure 17.2: Sombrerosiete.

Is this a sombrero hold or a 07 hold? It's neither, I guess, but also a little bit of both. I'll call this one *sombresiete*. One of the hands has a behind-the-neck sombrero hold and the other has a behind-the-back 07 hold.

#### 17.1.4 Underarm hold



Figure 17.3: Underarm hold.

**Underarm LE hold:** From double open hold, LE has raised both hands high and got his elbows first inside, then above FO's arms and then with elbows outside her arms. Hold both hands throughout. This gets you into a rather intimate position because of the proximity of the face of the other person, use your own judgement. **Underarm FO hold:** You can also do the opposite by raising FO's arms up and pushing her elbows outside yours by tucking your own elbows inside and pulling her towards you with both hands.

#### 17.1.5 Forced hug hold



Figure 17.4: Forced hug hold.

From double open hold, get yourself a hug (especially if you're much taller than she is) by lowering the arms to the sides and pulling gently behind. Hug, hug.

#### 17.1.6 Crossed-arms

There's a bunch of things you can do with crossed arms over heads:



Figure 17.5: Crossed arms over heads.

#### Either

- the arms are crossed when facing each other, which means they're uncrossed in front-to-back hold
- they uncrossed when facing each other (double open hold) and crossed in front-to-back hold

#### The hands can be

- between partners
- "outside" LE (where FO can't see them)
- "outside" FO (where LE can't see them)

A nice way to perform a switch between crossed and uncrossed arms is to move in reverse front-to-back hold, where FO is facing LE's back, and to switch hands on your belly.

#### 17.1.7 Hooked arms



Figure 17.6: Hooked Arms.

This is a little wicked. To understand easily how this one goes, start in double crossed hold, put LE'RH "inside" where LE'LH elbow is, raise LE'LH and bring it behind LE's neck, with FO'LH. This is like a

behind-the-neck haircomb but the hands are crossed. You can hook either of LE's hands, and either of FO's hands. The trick is to remember that from one of the double crossed holds, the hand that is under is the one that goes behind the neck.

#### 17.1.8 Noodles hold



Figure 17.7: Noodles hold.

This one is even more wicked, and allows you to get really close;—) See the noodles move below for a combination that uses this. Noodles LE'LH hold: FO is behind LE, looking at his back, with FO'LH holding LE'RH, wrapping up LE. FO'LH is *under* LE's right arm (this is the key, this arm is what I call the "noodles" arm), holding LE'LH behind his neck. LE'LH is simply bent with LE's left hand behind his neck. There are four possible noodle holds: LE'LH, LE'RH, FO'LH, FO'RH, where the hand refers to which hand is holding the other person's noodle, i.e. the hand that is under the armpit. The noodles hold belonds in the family of double open holds. You can move from this hold into:

- wrapped hold
- sombrero opposite hold

#### 17.1.9 Tunnel hold



Figure 17.8: Tunner Hold.

I all this one the "tunnel", because FO typically has to crouch to get into this one. LE and FO are facing opposite directions, like a back-to-back hold, except that one of the partners is wrapped up. Four possibilities:

- FO wrapped up, RH over LH
- FO wrapped up, LH over RH
- LE wrapped up, RH over LH
- LE wrapped up, LH over RH

See "tunnel" move for an application.

Exercise: is it possible to get into back-to-back hold with **both** partners wrapped up? (I have no clue what the answer is at this point...)

### 17.2 Merengue moves and variations

All of the salsa moves can be performed in merengue time and steps. I describe here moves that aren't used in salsa. Most of these are using weird, wicked arm combinations, you may want to stay away from that if you enjoy a simpler, more sober style.

#### 17.2.1 Crouch turn

When hands are crossed behind LE's back, one way to get out of it is to perform a turn *under* FO's arms, by crouching low and leaving his hands high in his back. You'll end up in one of the crossed holds. You can also do this with one hands, which has a specific style. For example, start with a sexy hand slide, and grab single crossed hold and perform a full LE's right turn, but crouching to get under LE'RH+FO'RH. Then FO'OT fits in well.

#### **17.2.2** The worm

What I call "the worm" starts from front-to-back hold, where LE is facing away from FO and FO is facing LE's back. FO dances in-place, and LE turns, crouching under one of the arms, bringing himself to face FO, with both arms crossed in his back, and raise his head "like a worm" to face FO. You should be face-to-face, close to FO, with LE's hands wrapped behind his back.

#### 17.2.3 Tunnel move

This move performs a turn of one of the partners behind the other's back. Hands end up twisted the same as for a full simple turn.

- start from front-to-back crossed hold, FO facing LE's back
- move FO somewhat more to the right of LE, and with LE'RH, get her wrapped into a 1/2LT and move LE'RH+FO'RH over her head. Arching LE's right arm will help make FO understand that she

has to crouch into that tunnel. Arching it high enough will allow you to do this without her actually having to crouch.

- at this point you should be in tunnel hold (see notes above), back-to-back.
- with FO still wrapped behind LE's back, move her towards your left.
- arch LE'LH high and help FO move out of the tunnel, she does a 1/2LT. This is harder to lead, because to be clear you would have to pull on LE'RH, but that would bring her back deeper into the tunnel. I find raising and arching LE'LH and turning myself slightly to the left will help. FO really has to crouch a bit to get out of this though.
- here you should be in front-to-back hold with FO facing LE's back, with LE's hands crossed behind his back
- to get out of this LE can crouch (a lot), bringing his hands up in his back, and turn to the right, moving under FO's arms. You end up in one of the crossed holds.

You could also do this starting with FO going into the tunnel from LE's left side. Everything is simply reversed.

#### 17.2.4 Noodles move

This is a cool move that allows you to get close to your partner: simply it moves from wrapped hold, to noodles hold, to sombrero opposite hold, to noodles hold of the other partner and finally to wrapped hold of the other partner. Do what you want to get into/out of the wrapped holds. Here is a sample description:

- start from double open hold
- [wrapped LE hold]: move into wrapped LE hold with LE'RH over LE'LH, by doing an LE'1/2LT
- [noodles LE hold]: with LE'LH, pull FO'RH in order to bring her right arm closer to you, and under LE's right arm, and bring LE'LH over LE's head and behind his neck
- LE does a 1/2RT, keeping LE'LH behind his neck, and unwrap LE by bringing LE'RH over his pphead. Bring LE'RH+FO'LH down right away to put LE'RH behind FO's neck.
- [sombrero opposite hold]: at this point, you should be in sombrero opposite hold, with LE'RH behind FO's neck, holding FO'LH.
- [noodles FO hold]: bring FO into noodles hold by LE turning a half-turn to the right, to face FO's back, and simultaneously raising LE'LH over LE's head and over FO's head, and bring it in front of your FO. She should be wrapped up in FO'LH hold
- [wrapped FO hold]: undo her noodles by raising LE'RH up over FO's head and bring it down in front of her.
- unwrap your FO by doing her a FO'1/2RT

There are two ways of doing the noodles, depending on the wrapped hold that you start in.

Part V

Notes

## **Chapter 18**

# **Concepts and Observations**

This section contains ideas and concepts that have captured my attention over time. Some of these are just thoughts that highlight a particular aspect of the dance. I consider it important to spend some time thinking about those ideas, because these greatly come into play on the floor, and it seems to me the importance of such consideration is greatly overlooked by dance teachers, who tend to focus too much on steps at that level rather than what is going on in the mind of the dancer. Many advanced dancers I know focus focus only on steps and they're just not improving at all (even their steps are not getting any better).

Note that I dub these "advanced" concepts, perhaps only because almost no dance instructor I've met is dealing with these in an explicit manner. None of my teachers ever adressed these issues in an amount of important detail.

## 18.1 Some ideas to tinker with

## **18.1.1** Principle of constant variation

When performing simple moves, always create subtle variations intentionally. Never repeat moves in identical sequences. This is easier to accomplish with simple basic moves. The idea is that you should try to avoid repeating the same combinations over and over again, out of lazyness. Keep your mind active by destabilizing it a little bit all the time.

Imagine each move has a different color, well, the game is to mix and match the colors in always unexpected ways, so that two colors never always lie next to each other. This applies to all aspects of the dance: the moves you decide to lead, the directions towards which you're dancing, the embellishments you add.

For example, if you're doing a series of basic steps or cross-body lead, never just stay in the same orientation, always vary the direction a little bit, or make little sudden stops, surprise here with simple but very clear intents. Bring your partner *here*, then *there*, then improvise, then bring her *here again*, then *stop*, do something funny with your feet, then leave her *there*, then move her.

This kind of simple variation can add a lot to the dance. This is something one is forced to learn when practicing to dance són, because in traditional són, you are not allowed fancy turns like in salsa (which allows you an exit to hide your dance in endless combinations of moves). You have to learn to make the dance interesting by using small variations on simple moves, and it can be very effective, but quite challenging at first. I think that this leads to a more important skill for dancers than learning complicated moves.

I love to watch dancers who have mastered this art, it makes for a very beautiful, relaxed style, something that even so-called "good" dancers often cannot implement in its simplest form. It mesmerizes me that so little can add so much.

## 18.1.2 Use repetition only with intent

Never use repetition because you're not focusing, rather, only use repetition with clear, sharp intent. If you use it, conclude it nicely and make the resolution clear.

Many dancers get in a rut and use too much repetition without noticing it, either by lack of imagination, or because too much energy is focused on themselves. It becomes quickly boring to watch someone repeat the same move over and over.

I used to classify moves into categories of likeliness, and to try to not do two moves in a row that lie in the same category. Then I started to notice that some people do that naturally. Now I don't think about it anymore. That trick helped me integrate some of it.

## 18.1.3 Quantity of movement

Create a union of *traveling* of bodies in space, across the floor. Given an unlimited amount space, how much distance *should* you travel forward and back?

Some dancers will make very small steps, to the point that it looks as if they're almost stepping in-place. This makes it easier for them to keep their balance but compromises on the dancing itself and doesn't look good since they tend to lack movement. This is a symptom that seems to affect more women that are often led to spin many turns.

Furthermore, it is not as enjoyable to dance with someone who is rather static. You should travel (and let yourself be travelled by the lead) forward and backward, with a fair amount of [upper body] dynamics/rotation. When a leader puts his foot forward, a follower has to step back, not just wait for the arms to initiate movement. Bodies should be *constantly* moving horizontally.

Herein also hides the secret of the highly complex Cuban moves: when performing those crazy arm movements, the dancers are constantly moving, advancing almost always in clockwise direction. This dynamic makes those moves much easier to accomplish (the leader can use the follower's forward movement to advantage) and nicer to watch as well.

## **18.1.4** Principle of Continuity

Legs should be stepping continuously, you cannot stop them from moving. You should *always*, whatever happens, continue stepping the alternating pattern, unless it is explicitly part of the move, and I mean explicitly.

This may seem like a basic concept that everyone who dances should know, but many advanced dancers I see get caught in the game of constantly dropping (or losing?) the beat, and "saving the move" with the leader doing a cross-body lead. This happens most often to those who try to achieve complex orchestrated moves in the ballroom/NY style, especially on fast music. They have become masters at "saving it" and "hiding it", and I've seen people drop the beat even every 4 bars or so. Even though the casual watcher may not always notice, this ruptures the continuity and caps the amount of energy that can get otherwise created by unity (see below).

## 18.1.5 Solo style should be good enough

The greatest dancers look *damn good* even just doing the basic step. You should strive to do the same. Observe yourself doing just some really basic step, whatever it is. You should make it so that you look awesome just doing this, nothing else. Learn to measure your amplitudes. Learn to channel the energy in ways that are not directly visible.

Forget shines and footwork for a while. Shines can add to basic moves, but subtle ways in which your body moves can make a much greater difference. You should look great even just continuously doing back breaks. Being relaxed makes a subtle yet immensely difference. Besides, shines really *only* look good if they're carried out with razor-sharp rhythmic precision (personally, I think that the majority of people I see try to do it cannot pull it off to the necessary level to make it look good and should practice their basics instead, but that is just an opinion).

### **18.1.6 Unity vs. Solo**

Synchronicity between two partners creates something new, an important vibration that is visible to the onlooker. Interlocked interaction between the two dancers adds a new element to the dancing experience, something radiates from the synchronicity, the same thing that is harvested by group choreographers.

Although free, single play (e.g. like shines) can be interesting during partner dancing, too much play can lead to lack of unity. Unity seems to show up at high levels of dancing only, you need both a good leader and good follower to attain it.

### 18.1.7 Slow tempo is harder

Dancing on slow music requires a greater sense of rhythm and is more difficult for most dancers. Practice on slow music, until you feel at home.

This may seem counter-intuitive to most, but a quick survey with your friends will reveal that most people find it much harder to dance to slow music than to fast music. I think this explains why many people don't enjoy modern Cuban dance music (timba): because it is very very slow and rhythmically complex and jazzyfied. In contrast, some older salsa that is very very fast and repetitive is easier to swing to.

When I was studying music in school I used to spend summers practicing a rhythmic precision exercise with a stick on a rubber pad and a loud metronome. I would try to hit the rubber pad, which would emit a rather faint "thud" exactly as my metronome was clicking. If you hit the pad at *precisely* the right moment for a few clicks, you wouldn't hear the metronome at all and after a few beats wonder if it had stopped. Doing this at slow speeds was significantly much much harder. Doing this down to 40 bpm requires one's full attention and focus, it is very difficult, you need to concentrate very hard and not let your mind sway, it is like meditation.

Dancing slow has another potential: it reveals your dancer's troubles. You feel more the things you do that annoy you; these are the very same things that you should let yourself observe carefully to improve. Perhaps this is why many people only favor fast music, because it can hide a great deal of imperfections.

#### 18.1.8 Dance behind the beat

Dancing slightly behind (i.e. after) the beat creates a good, relaxed feeling that appears to be dead-on. Perhaps this is what some people refer to as "groove". Dancing ahead of the music creates tension and unease for your dancing partner. One who dances constantly ahead of the music may even appear to be off-tempo.

This is a rule that practically all jazz musicians know and apply in their art. Musicians will actually take it a bit further and develop the ability to use this effect on purpose, sometimes creating tension, then release. Most jazz soloists have learned how to play "laid-back", behind the rhythm section, to create a relaxed feeling.

In order to be able to dance behind the beat, one's mind has to become totally relaxed and driven by the music. It is good to start practicing this at intermediate tempos, in front of a mirror. Play with it, look at your feet dancing behind and in-front of the beats, notice which looks better (dancing behind *always* looks better).

When in doubt, slow down: if you feel like you've lost the beat, do not accelerate, slow down. You will synchronize quicker. This is a rule that stems from the above principle that dancing behind the beat can only be done relaxed. If you've lost the beat, you're stressed out trying to find it again, and will *invariably* accelerate, thus you need to slow down.

### 18.1.9 Uniformity vs. variations

If the basic cells of dancing have been thoroughly learned and memorized, and they feel like second nature, doing the simple basic step can be avoided by always including variations in all your steps.

Start by always kicking on 4. Stop your feet for a bar. Try kicking on 3 instead. Dance on 2 for a few bars. You can add so much to that basic step. Try never to make a simple basic step without some variation of some sort.

How much simple step should you do? How much variations can you add? I've seen incredibly good dancers who add so much variations that when you stare at their feet, it is not obvious even which step they're on, yet they look and are dead-on the music.

But use it sparingly. This is food for thought, not a way of life.

## 18.1.10 Breaking patterns

Many good dancers lock into an alternating pattern of weight change or body movement. If you enjoy alternating patterns, breaking the pattern on purpose creates an interesting effect. e.g. body weight L, R, L, L\*, R, R\*, L, L, L\*, ... One cuban I know plays with this a lot, if you look carefully it adds infinite variation in his otherwise simple style, I never tire of watching him dance.

This is what the cuban engaño moves are all about: surprising your partner by not doing something she expects (often the expectation can be created by the leader, fun games).

## 18.1.11 Landing moves

Land your moves. If you don't, it looks horrible.

Some analogies:

- guitarists will often go for that easy high-pitched bend note after doing a flurry of fast notes. This is a lame escape.
- skateboarders/snowboarders will jump as high as they can (...especially when someone is taking a picture) and then fall on the way down.
- programmers will hack together the cool features of a product, but will leave flakes in the product in beta/alpha stage, where the finishing touch is missing.

In the same manner, dancers will go for the multiple turns with back-flip and double-whatever-twist, but fail to get back into the rhythm in a synchronized fashion, i.e. they screw up the landing. In my opinion, landing *is* the important part. I don't care if you can spin a jillion turns in one beat, if you cannot land it you will look bad. That's where the people whistle and go "waaaah". That finishing touch is what brings the elegance into it, what makes it look easy. This is related to the quality of continuity a greal deal.

#### 18.1.12 Stiffness vs. Looseness

How much arm pressure/stiffness is enough? It should be loose, yet it should resist in the right places. Consider stiffness of rotation vs. stiffness of translation or lateral movement. Stiffness of arms, stiffness of shoulders, stiffness of legs, of ankles.

I find a great deal of playing with your energy has to do with how one directs stiffness in his/her body. Being able to stiffen or relax different body parts with control is key.

## 18.1.13 Fluidity vs. Markedness

How much should one emphasize the pauses, and the rhythm accents?

Dancers who enjoy the 2 like to make it more fluid, while cubans like to mark the 4 very strongly when dancing the són. Both look good. How smooth and fluid should you dance? Can you play with it? Play with it

## 18.1.14 Equilibrium, Focused, Centered energy at the core

A good control of where the mass of the body go while moving is tantamount in achieving movements that look and feel good. One should be in perfect equilibrium at all times.

One's energy should be focused "inner-style", near the center of gravity, when it can be deployed easily to any part. I find that focusing that energy in the center of my body creates a feeling of wellness, of harmony, and it feels very natural to dance in this manner (and looks better too).

The body weight should roll on your feet and you can use byour toes and heels equally (I do not agree with what some teachers say about using only the toes during dancing, this looks really bad if it's not done properly). African dancing is flat-footed, salsa has some afro-cuban influences in it. Women with high heels should know how to use the heel part to rest some of their weight sometimes.

As a leader, I find that if my energy is well-centered, I can lead the larger women that offer lots of resistance with little effort. I feel solid as a rock and my own weight, even though submitted to great forces, does not seem to waver.

### 18.1.15 Principle of economy

Contain your energy below its capacity, and deliver it with intent at the right moment and in the appropriate amounts.

It quickly becomes tiring to watch someone spend all his energy during all moments of the dance. Very few people can maintain interest with their full energy being spent all out on the floor. One needs to obtain control over the delivery of energy.

Plus, someone who controls it inside will create more effect if he desires to present a forceful moment.

### 18.1.16 Invisible energy

Always remember and keep in mind that what people perceive of you dancing has very little to do with the actual moves that your body does. Rather, the resulting perception is a combination of your synchronization

Latin Dance Study Guide 18.2. ABOUT FOLLOWING

with rhythm, your energy focus and delivery, and what is going through your mind while dancing.

Just like the infamous "it" in jazz music is something that cannot be measured by scientific means, people will catch your vibe even though they might not understand what it is that makes you special, even though they might not tell you. Like in an improvised musical performance, there is just no lie: everyone pretty much understands what is going on even though their mouths could be saying other things.

## **18.1.17** Do every move with intent

Implement your actions with overt intent. Whatever the move, whether you mean to do it softly, roughly, sexily, surprisingly, romantically, flashingly, do it with all your might. Half-done actions, or actions where one feels half-awkward come out as looking less than half-as-good. There is a bit of acting in dancing.

## **18.1.18** Be wary of over-compensation

Over compensating for your partner's inability may look bad. If it is done by habit and not because the partner cannot handle the lead, it can look downright bad.

In the case where the partner's level cannot handle the lead, dancing within her limits usually creates a better vibe. Note that you can create some vibe by stretching her following by leading a little rougher, but that will only work with some women, some just cannot handle a hard lead.

## 18.2 About following

There is an important difference between learning *to follow*, to let go of control, and learning *to enjoy following*. Followers, especially north american women, should understand that following is not condescending in any way. To quote a friend: "cuban women take *pride* in following." **Take pride in following.** With anyone, good dancers and beginners. Because in the end, even if a follower learns how to let go, if she doesn't enjoy it the dancing will not be as much enjoyable.

If you are enthusiastic and you want to inject more energy in your dancing, taking the lead and anticipating moves is the *worst* possible way to do that. I see it on the dance floor all the time, those women that respond to "codes" very actively totally destroy the togetherness of the couple and break the whole feeling of the dance. It's not nice. Instead, add more "dancing" to it, step around more, move your arms more actively, try to be more sexy in your dancing, but *always* follow the lead of the man you're dancing with. You need to find the right channel for that extra energy: taking over the guy is destructive, ugly and achieves nothing.

### 18.3 About attitude

Somehow dancing is a deeper experience than it seems, and I believe that a subtle form of communication occurs when two people dance together.

18.3. ABOUT ATTITUDE Latin Dance Study Guide

While dancing, ask yourself the following questions:

• How much in sync with the other person are you? What could you do to improve your synchronicity with that person?

 How much attention are you giving to your partner while dancing? Too much or too little can both hurt. Too much can be bad if you don't have enough energy to focus on your own movements. Better dancers can afford themselves to spend more energy on their partner, although it can become annoying as well.

• ...

For example: sometimes after a few songs, when my energy level goes down, if I get a very specific, strong feeling that my partner is a little bored or tired of dancing with me (this happens sometimes), she will **invariably** thank me after the song. I never miss on that intuition, it is a very specific feeling that I now can recognize much easier, and it has never lied. But the signs aren't physical. How can that be? I think it's part of that more subtle form of communication: I'm bored, she feels it, that's it.

Furthermore, someone's dancing does not declare everything about that person's social attitude. Certainly it makes some traits of one's personality evident, through their expression of the dance, but not all. Talking to a dancer you've observed very often makes you discover a very different person you thought you knew a little bit. In other words, you can't really guess social attitude with dancing attitude.

## Chapter 19

## **Conclusion**

This concludes my personal notes on salsa and latin dancing in general. This document is certainly very much imperfect and incomplete. The original purpose for writing these notes was personal, and I did not originally plan to publish them. However, I hope it has served you in some way.

## 19.1 A note about learning and analysis

Some people will say that analysing prevents you from feeling. I very much believe that there is nothing further from the truth. Many people are afraid of analysis because of the effort it requires, or because they do not understand how you can create your own categorizations in order to organize your thoughts. Many feelings usually come into play when discussing an analytical approach to the arts, especially discussing with people without an academic background. Remember that it does not matter which naming conventions you use, in any language, as long as they conform nicely to the representation you make in your mind.

Analysis and organizing your thoughts consciously is a great tool to help you learn material, including artistic material such as dancing. It is true that trying to think very hard about technique can detract you temporarily from the greater goal because there is much information coming in in a short time, and you will be overwhelmed, but by making an extra effort to organize your thinking, you will reach the same conclusions, if only sooner. It is my experience that the dancing teachers certainly will not help with organizing your knowledge. They mostly disseminate disorganized bits of information with their own bent on the knowledge set. There are not many good mentors in this domain. Information about salsa dancing is very much confused and humans are not very good at explaining processes which involve the time variable.

Note that analysis is not the only tool. You could observe patiently and let your subconscious mind do the work. You could spend years among a population of experts and eventually absorb by osmosis (such as going to live in Cuba for a few years). Analysis by itself is not bad, but not sufficient to learn most art forms.

In any case, if you are going to go about this the way I did and put lots of focused attention into the minute details of latin dancing, you should do the most part of the analysis work yourself, and you should question

and doubt everything that is in my notes. The greatest benefitor of the analysis process is the person who does it. It is in the "process" of doing it that one learns.

Thus, even though these notes may help you out, I think they have helped me more than they will help you. Ultimately, you will find your own way to organize your thoughts, perhaps more appropriate to the specific material which you will focus on, and in the process, you will certainly discover new things. I hope you find your own vectors of simplification to make it tractable and synthesize a simple mental model for your dancing.

Good Luck!

# **APPENDIX**

# **Spanish Words Translations**

## A.1 General Glossary

Baile: Dance.

Bailarin: Dancer. This term is used for professional dancers.

**Bailador**: *Dancer*. This term can be used for street dancers.

Paso: Step.

Kick: Kick.

**Adorno**: Adornment. The little kick on the 4 in the basic step, is an adorno.

**Foto**: *Photo*. The cubans use this to refer to the effect of stopping suddenly.

Mezcla: mix.

Girón: Turn.

**Tornillo**: *Turn of the two together.* 

Vuelta: Turn, or turn combination.

Rueda: Wheel.

Pareja: Couple.

Alumno: Student.

**Principiante**: Beginner.

Pañuelo: Handkerchief. Often used in guaguancó to perform vanucaos.

**Vacunao**: *Vacination*. A gesture by the male dancer towards the female dancer's pelvis, like an attack. This

is performed in yambú and guaguancó.

En vivo: "live".

A.2. BODY PARTS

Latin Dance Study Guide

## A.2 Body parts

Cuerpo: Body.

Pies: Feet.

**Punta**: *Tip of the foot.* 

Planta: Ball of the foot.

**Talon**: Heel of the foot.

Pierna: Leg.

Rodilla: Knee.

Cintura: Pelvis area and movement. Used most often to describe pelvis rotation movement.

Hombros: Shoulders.

Cara: Face.

Cabeza: Head.

Mano: Hand.

Dedo: Finger.

## A.3 Some useful verbs

Bailar: To dance.

Marquar: To mark, to break. This term is used by the cubans to refer to the "break" step.

Sueltar: To leave.

(Re)coger: To take, to gather.

Parar: To stop.

Seguir: To continue.

Pasear, caminar: Promenade.

## A.4 Directions

Adelante, de lante: Forward, in front.

Atras, de tras: Backward, behind.

Latin Dance Study Guide A.4. DIRECTIONS

Al lado: To the side.

**De frente**: *In front of.* 

Arriba: Up.

Abajo: Down.

 ${\bf A\ dentro} : {\it Inside}.$ 

A fuera: Outside.

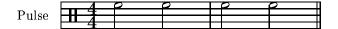
Cajón: Box, square.

A.4. DIRECTIONS Latin Dance Study Guide

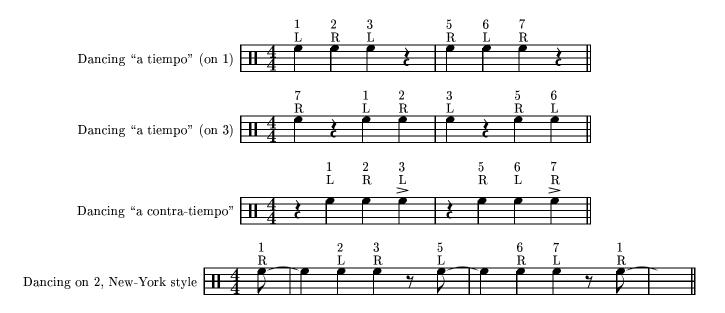
# Musical patterns reference

Some of the musical instrument patterns are presented here. They are united here for reference, for use during class, or as help in developing an ear for latin music.

## **B.1** Basic pulse



## **B.2** Foot patterns

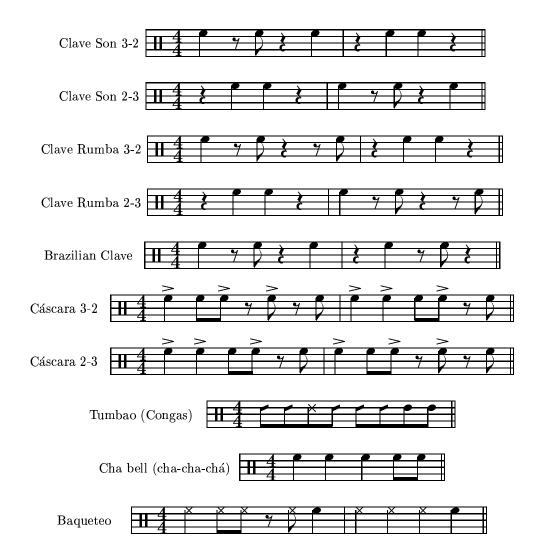


B.3. INSTRUMENT PATTERNS

Latin Dance Study Guide

## **B.3** Instrument patterns

## **B.3.1** Binary patterns



## **B.3.2** Ternary patterns



# Working with music

This section contains suggestions for music.

## C.1 Making practice CDs

A clever idea is to build practice CDs or MDs on which you order songs by increasing tempo. Use a metronome to measure the speed of each song. If you're teaching classes with these CDs, ordering your songs by speed will allow you to quickly find music at a tempo suited for the exercise at hand. You may also want to put similar music on each CD, e.g. a CD of timba, a CD of son, a CD of N.Y. salsa, etc.

Try to avoid songs which have intros, or strip off the intros of these songs. You may want to unfade or strip the fadeouts as well. In a teaching or practice setting, you want to be able to get into the exercise right away, without waiting for the music to start. Also, avoid songs which have many breaks, especially if you're going to use this tape for teaching. For teaching beginner's classes, choose music with a clear sencerro bell highlighting the pulse (stay away from timba).

## C.2 Recommended music

This section contains suggestions of albums that contain many songs in a homogeneous style and are useful for practice. Check out http://www.descarga.com for a comprehensive collection and source of latin music.

#### **C.2.1** Són

For són: Conjunto Chappottin Y Sus Estrellas, Seguimos Aquí...; Chappottineando! (Envidia 7010, 2000). All tracks are nice són songs at reasonable speeds.

C.2. RECOMMENDED MUSIC Latin Dance Study Guide

### C.2.2 Cha-cha-chá

For cha-chá: Tito Puente, Cha Cha Chas For Lovers, Tico 1005, 1959/1999. Pretty much all tracks are very danceable cha-chá-chá, the entire CD is filled with slow, nice cha-chá-chá.

## C.2.3 Timba, Salsa Cubana

For timba: many people find dancing on timba music difficult, because of the jazzier, more complex breaks, and the slow tempo. It is a good idea to select more moderate, clean timba for beginners, such as the music by

- Issac Delgado (Issac Delgado, Malecón / La Formula (Ahi-Nama Records 1030, 2000));
- Los Van Van (Los Van Van, Llego... Van Van Van Van Is Here (BC 2012, 1999));
- Manolito y su Trabuco (Manolito Y Su Trabuco, Marcando La Distancia (Eurotropical EUCD-9, 1998)).

Music by Paulito F.G. or Manolín el Médico is much more difficult to dance to for beginners.

## C.2.4 Straight Salsa

For straight salsa: the styles tend to vary a bit less, I find that almost any music from Oscar D'Leon (any compilation, really) and Gilberto Santa Rosa (Gilberto Santa Rosa, Intenso (Sony Discos 84469, 2001)) works well for teaching/practice.

## Silly Rueda Game Ideas

I've imagined some really silly game ideas to try to spice up a rueda in a small advanced group. I haven't tried out any of these.

- Alternate between two (or *n*) designated callers;
- Have two (or *n*) callers call at random, i.e. dancers must listen to all the callers at the same time. There is potential for collision. To lessen collision probability, require that a single caller can only call one move, or "at least *m*" moves;
- Draw a rather large spot on the floor, and the LE that is in that spot must call the next move;
- Throw a hat around, the one that has the hat must call the next move;
- For all the moves, go grab the opposite FO that you normally would;
- Alternate between guys leading and girls leading, using some move to perform switch (e.g. "69", from r.d.M.);
- Somehow make a switch and have LEs dancing for a couple of moves together and FOs together as well (need to create a move for making the switch);
- It would be interesting to create and practice moves where some dancers enter or leave the rueda, while dancing. ... in a way that doesn't stop the wheel;
- When dancing with two nested ruedas, is there a move to exchange partners between the two wheels?;
- Is it possible to add some of those salsa moves where one LE dances with multiple FOs?
- Constraints:
  - No two same moves be called in succession. Make a contest between callers, who can go farther;
  - One *dame* between each move (or *dame tres* :-));
- Dance rueda on cha-cha music, with cha-cha step (done that one, it works);
- Add some silly line dancing steps somewhere (think of the worst: macarena, achy-breaky heart, ... there's tons of terrible stuff out there to draw from ;-));
- For a big rueda: dance in a figure different than a circle. Can you dance in a figure of eight? How do you deal with the intersection?;
- Add some obstacles on the floor, or from the ceiling;

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Martin Blais' Latin Dance Study Guide. (End)