

Ballroom Dancing - The Tango

Staccato steps, and sharp head turns set the Tango apart from the Fox Trot and the Waltz. This dance is extremely sensual and provocative. In general the hold used by the dancers keeps the couple much closer together than in other dances.

At one time it was said that the Tango was a dance performed between a prostitute and her pimp in the brothels outside Buenos Aires Argentina. Another explanation for the stance and movements of the dance is that the Argentinean cowboys (Gauchos) would show up at night clubs without the benefit of a shower so when a lady agreed to a dance she would dance in the crook of his right arm keeping her head back. The knees bent stance of the dance was basically the way the Gauchos naturally walked as a result of wearing chaps that get soaked from the sweat of their horses then harden as they dry. The Milonga is the forerunner of the Tango. It also used the same sharp head and shoulder moves and the characteristic sudden stops of the Tango. The Milonga, early in the 20th century was entertainment meant for the high society of Brazil and it was during that time that the name was changed to the Tango. There is the American Ballroom Tango, the International Ballroom Tango and the Argentinean Tango. Unlike the American and International style of Tango the Argentinean Tango is danced in a close embrace utilizing intricate footwork and leg movements. Because the Argentinean Tango doesn't require a great deal of movement it is well suited for nightclubs and other places with small dance floors. Unlike the Waltz, the sway and the rise and fall motions are to be avoided at all costs. The desired movements are very sharp and well defined.

The music for this ballroom dance is usually provided by an orchestra that has a piano, guitar, violin, flute and a bandoneon (an offshoot of a koncertina, which looks a little like a small accordion). The bandoneon is essential to Tango music.

The Tango has always been a very popular dance with Hollywood moviemakers. For example Arnold Schwarzenegger and Tia Carrere danced a sexy, sultry Tango in True Lies , while Al Pacino showed Gabrielle Anwar the secrets of the Tango in Scent of a Woman and in a much earlier movie Rudolph Valentino Tangoed in The four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

What the judges will be looking for are lots of clipped movements, sharp head turns and stops, staccato actions, knees slightly bent at all times. They also expect the dancers to project the great emotion the dance needs to convey.

Although the Tango's moves are staccato you don't want your dance to look

mechanical, but rather give the impression of feline grace. The woman should project a haughty attitude while at the same time seeming to meld into the man's body. Your Tango should be firm and convincing, with catlike flexibility, the moves crisp with clear switches to complete stillness.