

I know it's long but please take the time to read all of this.

This is the info I sent to the Hilo dancers with some additions for greater detail and clarification. It describes basic structural elements of the dance. Essential qualities that we all need to "feel" before the steps become natural.

Also some very interesting reading. Read all the articles linked on this site for a deeper understanding of the evolution of Tango.

<http://www.bridgetothetango.com/daniel/articles.html>

Below is an excerpt from one of the articles. His language is precise and deeply descriptive. The underlines are mine for emphasis.

The Argentine Tango is built by leader and follower in three intertwined and overlapping parts:

1. The skeleton of the dance is a walk of the follower that is designed by the leader.
2. The leader creates the next layer by building a step of his (traditionally his, that is) or hers (I like that!) in the spaces between the followers confidently laid out pattern.
3. The follower, and the leader, now decorate these two interwoven steps with a layer of adornments.

Therefore, by this reading of the dance, the basics are as follows.

The follower:

1. Must learn Argentine frame, i.e. concepts of keeping space open for footwork, and of honoring the embrace.
2. Must learn how to keep a steady walk going while learning the limited vocabulary that is always used by the leader for the follower, that is:
 - Walks, forward and back
 - Ochos, forward and back
 - Giros, right and left
 - When to cross in response to the leader's choice of position
3. Must be able to walk all of these steps while interpreting the beat of the music.

The leader:

1. Must be able to lead the follower's steps so as to create the comfortable smooth walk which he or she will then use as the skeleton of his step.
2. Must have the basics of navigation down, meaning do these without stopping her walk, i.e.:
 - how to move forward and stay in place
 - how to turn right and left
 - how to look where he or she is going while leading the steps
3. Must understand how to change the orientation of his or her feet from parallel to crossed and back again, with out disturbing the followers walk, in various ways and with confidence.
4. Must learn to shift position from side to side without disturbing her walk, etc.
5. Must be able to give the follower a sense of the beat desired while also keeping his or her own steps in the music.
6. Must be striving for a minimum of force in the lead and an elegant attention to the follower's pleasure throughout.
7. And, oh yes, one must know how to walk to the cross.

I want to review and reinforce some key concepts with all of you. Memorize these.....there will be a test on the 31st!

If you have any clarifications, comments or questions, e-mail or call me.

Presence: Experiencing "tango moments" requires **100%** focus and attention of both partners to each other in **each present moment** through out the entire dance, one moment after another.

Embrace and Frame: Take a moment to establish your connection (embrace), breathe, shift weight, stand tall in front of your partner and lean forward (**lift and tighten your core often through out your dance**). Your frame should be stable (not rigid or tense) and not pushing or pulling, but rotating with your torso. Follower's right arm forward and outward at a 45° angle to shoulders, elbow downward, hand securely placed in leader's left hand (2# of pressure). Leader's left hand outward and elbow roughly in line with the plane of his chest (on his half of center), his right hand gently caressing the follower's back just below the shoulder blade. Both leader's and follower's arms should move as though holding a large beach ball.

Line of Dance: Just like driving! Stay in your lane, no swerving or other erratic maneuvers in close traffic. Smooth accelerating and braking. Don't tailgate. Avoid going so slow that dancers behind you wish they could pass! No horns! Leaders drive, followers enjoy the ride. Safety, skill and trust.

Walking (forward / backward): After shifting weight and establishing a cadence, begin walking. Having "soft" knees (slightly bent) helps the walk go smoothly (less up and down motion).

Leaders bend your moving leg, pointing the knee toward a center point just in front of you. Carve the floor around your standing foot and make your step near, parallel with and next to your follows sending foot. Walk "in line" in her tracks.

Follows walk backward with the toe of your stepping foot in line with the heel of your sending foot (single tracking). Carve the floor around your weighted foot with the inside of the ball of your foot and big toe. Maintain contact with the floor for added stability. Reach for the place of your step by extending the leg from the hip (even all the way up to your chest). Contact the spot and then transfer your weight and "collect".

Maintain a smooth flow "in a line" (no side sway, or bounce). Follows match your leader's amplitude and cadence. Avoid pulling (back leading) or bumping (not moving with his intention). Both maintain an upright (**lift and tighten your core often through out your dance**) forward leaning posture with weight on the balls of the feet. Each partner is responsible for their own neutral axis and balance point.

Who would think walking could be so complicated?

Side steps: Side steps are 90° to the right or left of the direction you are facing. Feet should be parallel and pointing forward anywhere from a few inches to 2 or 3 feet apart depending on the leader's interpretation of the music. A normal side step is about shoulder width apart. To make a side step place all your weight on one foot and extend your other foot out to the side touching the floor with the inside ball of the foot straight from the hip. Shift all your weight to the

stepping foot and collect. Follows must match the amplitude of the leader so that they are "toe to toe" in a "lead" side step. (There are exceptions.)

Shifting weight: Weight shifts occur with the feet in a slight "V" position with the heels touching. If there is even 2 inches between your feet, you are side stepping! There should be a straight line from the top of your head to the bottom of the weighted foot (like an upside down pendulum). Avoid side sway or rotating of the hips as this delays the communication of the tempo of shifts. Followers are responsible for "reading" the leader's weight shifts through the stable connection of the embrace and frame.

Patience: Leaders take enough time to communicate your intention clearly and allow your follow to understand, commit to and make the step (not pattern or figure) she interprets from your message. Followers must be attentive to the message the leader is sending and commit to the step (not pattern or figure) she understands (**one step ONLY** at a time). Avoid "speed reading" phrases, figures or patterns you think your leader is leading. He may have something quite different in his mind. If the leader is surprised by the message you received, allow **him** time to resolve the situation. Leaders like to fix things. Decorate and embellish while you wait. (A skilled leader, would never let on that he was surprised.)

Contra Body Movement (CBM): When walking outside partner (in parallel) or walking in cross system (cross system is always 1/2 outside partner), orienting your "heart" (upper body) toward your partner while your hips are perpendicular to and moving in the line of dance.

IN ADDITION TO THE LIST BELOW, MANY WAIMEA DANCERS HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO:

1. **BASIC SACADAS**
2. **BOLEO W/ SPIRAL CROSS**
3. **SISSORS**
4. **MEDIA VUELTA**
5. **ALL THE SKILLS BELOW ADAPTED FOR MILONGUERO (CLOSE EMBRACE) STYLE**
6. **STEPS ADAPTED FOR VALS** (listed on previous e-mail)
7. **OTHER PATTERNS (Paradas, Pasadas, Barridas)**

LIST OF SKILLS we have learned so far: If it seems like we've been working hard.....we have been!

1. **WALKING IN PARALLEL & SHIFTING WEIGHT:** Doing this in the line of dance, moving "to" the (tango) music while being 100% present with your partner constitutes dancing the Tango.
2. **SIDE STEPS:** To enter or end a figure or just to mark time.
3. **WALKING TO THE CRUZADA:** From a leader's left side step or walking in line to outside partner right with **Contra Body Movement (CBM)** leading follow to cross.

4. **WALKING IN CROSS SYSTEM:** Using a syncopated step to the side or in line to get in and out of "cross system" and walking to the cruzada in cross system.
5. **WALKING VARIATIONS OUTSIDE PARTNER RIGHT OR LEFT:** In parallel or cross system in lane 1, 2 and 3 using CBM.
6. **FORWARD & BACKWARD OCHOS:** From any step position.
7. **MOLINETES LEFT & RIGHT:** From any initiating step (side, forward cross or backward cross) sequenced front-side-back-side-fro.....
8. **ROCKING STEPS:** Forward and backward.
9. **OCHO CORTADO:** Cut ocho. Leader's rock step, CBM to right and return to front. Follows rock step, right front cross, left to side with weight, pivot & pull left cross in front of right. Quick,Quick,Slow...Quick,Quick,Slow
10. **WALKING W/ TURN (Caminada con Giro Izquierda):** Leader's left 1/4 turn to left, side right, pivot w/ CBM, back left, back right (transferring follow in front and to your left side), 1/4 turn to left and side left, pivot w/ CBM, right outside partner right, left forward to cruzada, collect right to left, walk out left, right.....
Follow's right 1/4 turn to left (counter clockwise), side left, pivot w/ CBM, forward right, forward left (in front and toward leader's left moving to your right), right side, pivot w/ CBM, left back, right back, left to cruzada, walk out right back, left back.....
11. **CAMINADA CON GIRO DERECHA (walking with turn to the right):** walking, leader's right outside partner right, left side (in front of and around [cutting off follow's backward movement]), right collect to left with weight, shift weight to left, then right (in place while rotating right to the line of dance), walk out left, right. Follow: back left (with leader outside your right), side right (rotating clockwise to right), left forward, right forward (around leader turning to right), pivot to face leader and weight left next to right, walk out right, left.....

combine above in a variety of ways for many memorable tango moments!

NEXT WEEK: I intend to finish up with the VALS for now and RETURN TO THE "STRUCTURE" OF THE DANCE for a couple of months before moving on to the MILONGA!