



## *The Beijing papers*

### **IV- how to correct the twelve most common mistakes in Argentine Tango**

(listed increasingly by order of importance)

#### **12-Moving on each and every beat.**

Correction: Please don't move all the time. Pause. Especially at the end of phrases, listen to the music, suspend, breath with it.

#### **11-Going faster than the music.**

Comment/Correction: For leader, invite follower to step on the beat but don't force her. The man proposes, the lady disposes. If she is slower, dance slower. You have to show rythmical precision in your lead but not impose your beat on her. Besides, being a little late in grounding the next step is better than anticipating it. Follower, please remember that you are responsible for the precision of the compass (rhythm). This is critical, in giros (turns) for example.

#### **10-Taking diagonal steps.**

Comment: Very common among beginner followers. Followers should not take diagonal steps in tango! Followers do that because they often are not too sure if the man wants a back or side step so they aim in the middle. Please do not allow this bad habit to creep in your technique and spoil it. Leaders: make sure that you are clearly indicating a back or side step. If you want her to go diagonally, lead a small pivot first than a back or front step.

#### **9-Go around step i.e. leader wants follower to take a front step and follower in fear of a collision tries to avoid him by going around leader.**

Same with leader who walks around follower for fear of hitting her.

Comment: Common among beginners of both roles. You must remember that, when walking, you are moving together. It means that you will take his or her spot and there will be no collisions. If you hit, it is because you are not properly grounded and your arms are spaghetti. For leaders, it means that you must feel that your follower has started moving before completing your step. For followers, do not collapse your arms and forget to ground.

#### **8-Trying to lead more than one step at the time, followers adding unled steps of their own, shifting weight unexpectedly etc. Leaders thinking that the follower should know the sequence, will lead first step and wait for her to complete it.**

Comment: For leaders, only think one action at the time i.e.: a weight shift, a pivot, a step.

For followers, do not try to resist where the energy takes you, be like water, go to the point of least resistance. Do not think! If you think you may change your mind and make a move of your own which will result in a bad situation. If your body feels it has to go sideways to the left for example, go sideways to the left. If the leader was expecting something different, he will rectify his lead. Please note that I am saying "If your body feels" and not "If you think".

#### **7-Fall on each step by inclining the axis instead of pressing the ground with conviction.**

Comment: You must never fall in tango. The same way you do not fall when going down stairs...

Tilting the axis is a mistake that can make you move when you should be using grounding and traction. Traction is like the rubber of tyres on the ground. Lose it, lose all. Aim at continuous traction in the sole (ball of foot) of the supporting leg.

**6-Using the arm on the open side to lead or, for the follower, to keep balance.**

Comment: again this is compensation for a lead that is not efficient and/or keeping balance for a follower who is not secure. Answer: Ground! The magic word.

**5-False pivots: pivots that are unled (no spiral), forced on, or self induced by the follower (instead of spiralling, follower swings her shoulders or hips back, or both.**

Comment: This is common to both roles who do not use the spiral to their advantage.

No spiral, no life. Please take a lesson (private preferably) on this whenever you can. Spiral, both in leading and in following makes those pivots natural and with an organic feel.

**4-Attacking the axis of partner. Leaders: hovering over, pushing with the upper part of torso. Followers: Arching your back, bending at the waist, shoulders, in a word not keeping your axis.**

Arching your back has terrible consequences: it will make both leader and follower to fall in their steps.

Comment: Both roles are responsible for their own axis. Both have to find, keep, offer and maintain their axis at all time.

No banana posture!

**3-Leading a step and not listening to the response of your follower. You end up dancing faster than her. Danger to hit her or spoil her dance.**

Comment: to talk (lead) is fine. To listen is even better. What is the use of all this florid language if it is not understood? Talk from the heart, in a simple, direct manner and wait to see if it is acknowledged. Talking alone is no good. And, you did not come that close to her (to him), not to listen...

**2-Dance alone: Narcissism/ Onanism:**

For him: not connecting with her, using her as a prop, a trophy or a tool at hand for showing off.

For her: not connecting, using him to get into a state of self induced trance, while being oblivious to her partner, oblivious to the moment, trying too look pretty and /or showing off.

Comment: It may take two to tango, but just one couple is even better!

A couple means two people who care and listen to each other. Not two solitudes that try to use each other to their own advantage.

And, please stop thinking visual. You are blind! You are inside your couple, your dance, your moment. If it looks good to onlookers it's a bonus (for them). If it's not looking much, who cares, you do not even think about that, you are to busy connecting, being in the moment.

Show tango might draw people to the dance but it's a plague on the social dance floor.

Want to show off? Try ballroom where everything, from your attitude, your dress, down to the hand placement (and the matching colour of your fingernails) is designed to please a judge with a score card in his hand... They even have their own kitchissimo tango... Plus, if you do good you will get a trophy with your name on it.

**1-Allow tension to build in/ contaminate your dance. Tension= self destruction.**

Comment: Need I say more?

Want to read more about tension? Please read *The Beijing papers no.1: how to maximize your experience during milongas*.

Next week, the title of the article of *The Beijing papers* will be:

**V- Your most precious asset in tango. Is argentine tango easy?**

Love to all and,

See you, all relaxed, on the dance floor.

Richard S.