



Larry's Corner

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

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

If you have anything you would like to write for us, just write it up and give to Barb or Larry.

I enjoy writing something for you. LARRY

How To Remember Dance Material

This real life drama happened about a year ago. Like many leaders, I have trouble maintaining our repertoire of dance material and patterns. Literally, I have trouble remembering what I remember. The number of patterns I know far exceeds the number that I can recall and execute on any give dance night. What's wrong with me? Is it brain damage?

Get out a legal pad and drew a six column grid. Label the columns 1) push, 2) pass, 3) underarm, 4) whip, 5) extended and matching patterns and 6) footwork patterns. Start writing.

THE MECHANICS OF RECALL

To get something newly learned from your short term memory into long term memory takes a lot of review and practice after the lesson. To ensure retention we should review material in the following sequence for optimum results. Review new material 1) ten minutes after the learning session, 2) twenty-four hours after the learning

session, 3) one week after the learning session, 4) one month after the learning session, 5) six months after the learning session, and 6) as needed after that. This may be enough review for a new word, or a new concept, but I believe even more review is necessary for dance material.

New learning which is not reinforced (practiced) declines so that only about 10 percent will be retained after two days. This means, as far as dance is concerned, that we will have virtually zero retention in two days if we don't practice within the first twenty-four hours.

MNEMONICS

According to memory experts, people think in images. It is much easier to remember a picture of a flower than it is to remember the word flower. So it is easier to remember a dance pattern named "the rose," than it is to remember one named "the reverse whip with double spin ending."

Imagine, for example, that you just learned the following pattern. Straight whip with three continuous close position turns. Looks like a little tornado on the dance floor. Call it the "tornado" and you'll never forget it.

If your instructor does not give patterns a name, or if she or he uses technical names change them. Give every new pattern name that you can picture in your mind. Use names like the pretzel, the bull whip, the race car, the splash, the run-in, the school bus. Any thing that you can see as a picture that relates to the move you are doing. It doesn't have to be an exact look-alike. The mnemonic is only used to spark your memory. A move named "the swan" need not have you diving to the floor. It might be some very subtle motion of the arm that reminds you of a swan.

CLUSTERING

In adults, all new memory is attached to existing memory. You can see this in everyday conversa-

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tion. Someone says, "I have a gray cat." You think, I used to have a tabby cat. "My gray cat has kittens." You think when I was a kid my tabby cat had eight kittens. And so it goes, all new memory links and connects, and relates to existing memory. The more memories and experiences we have to relate with the more new ones we can absorb. In this sense, the more we learn, the more we can learn.

Try this method for learning dance material. Cluster similar things together. Learn Three new endings to an old pattern. Discover five new ways to do a side-pass. Think of one body wrap and invent or borrow three similar moves to go with it. Every time you practice one, practice all the moves in the cluster.

LINKING

Dance competitors choreograph their material to a song. Every move is planned, every beat is filled. Three plus minutes of "linked" material. The partners practice together until the new material becomes second nature. When that song plays, their memories go to work.

Many styles of martial art use forms or choreographed patterns to help students learn technique. These linked patterns go together in a natural flow. At each level of development the student is asked to memorize and practice new and increasingly difficult patterns. After some time the martial arts student know dozens of fighting techniques. To recall them, he or she need only practice the forms.

Even if you don't compete, you can work with your regular partners to link material together. Combine a little bit of old stuff with a lot of new material to build a routine. Then, keep practicing over time. This material will be preserved in your memory forever. You can create several routines like this, each one containing over three minutes worth of new and different material. If you put together three routines filling three songs using only six count moves you would have approximately 160 patterns in your head!

NOTING

On a simpler scale, by simply writing down a description of each new pattern you can create a notebook full of memory aids.

Even better, if you have access to a video camera, set it up on a tripod. With a partner do each

new pattern very slowly and from different angles. Be sure to record your name for the pattern and any clues to help you remember better when you refer to the tape later on.

TEACHING

There is no better way to learn a thing than to teach it to others. If you can't find a friend willing to let you teach them your new material, set up an imaginary situation. Pretend that you are teaching someone else. Verbalize and demonstrate every detail of the pattern. This act of teaching will help seat the material into your long term memory. Furthermore, by teaching it, you will identify areas of uncertainty. You will find yourself returning to your instructor for clarification.

Teaching others is perhaps the most powerful of all the memory enhancement skills. Try to teach new material to someone else within the first twenty four hours of learning it.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

The popular conception is that followers are not responsible for remembering material. I've heard female dance students complain that pattern lessons are of no use to them. They say they cannot practice because they can't lead and the leaders don't remember the material very long after the lesson. This is a reasonable observation.

I believe, however, that followers can be very active in the memory process. By using the techniques described above, followers can cue their leader's memory. If, for example, a follower remembers the name of the pattern, what the pattern's "cluster group" is, links the new pattern to another similar pattern in her mind and takes notes on how she follows it, she can use any number of suggestions to help her partner remember. Followers find it easier to remember patterns when they are linked together to form routines. It takes two people to recall a routine.

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE

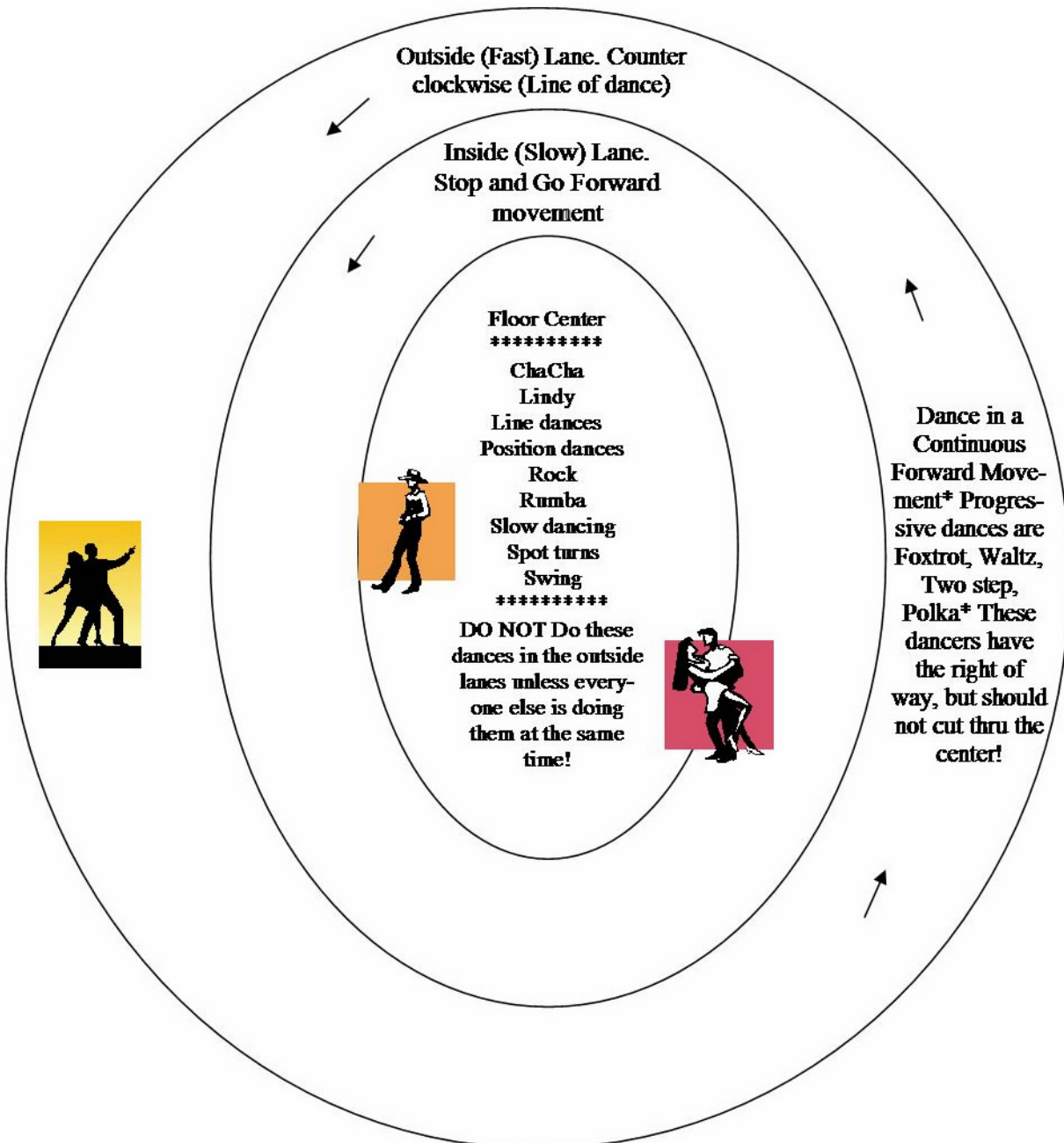
Just knowing and leading lots of patterns does not make us good dancers. We need proper technique and cool styling to be really great. Patterns alone are nothing without skill. However, most of us enjoy variety. Some of us are pattern "junkies," who just love the challenge of complexity. Patterns do add something to the experience. I believe that if we go to the trouble of learning them, we might as well remember them.

DANCE FLOOR ETIQUETTE

DANCERS! ENJOY DANCING TO THE FULLEST!

Let's All Practice Dance Floor Etiquette!

MANY DANCERS AND MANY STYLES OF DANCING CAN BE ACCOMODATED ON THE FLOOR AT THE SAME TIME, IF TRADITIONAL DANCE FLOOR ETIQUETTE IS FOLLOWED. LETS ALWAYS BE COURTEOUS, AND WE'LL ALL HAVE A GREAT TIME DANCING!



No-Fault Dancing

Never blame a partner for missed execution of figures. Once in a social dance I accidentally overheard a novice couple, where the lady said: "I can do this step with everyone but you!" The fact that she was wrong (I had seen her other attempts) is irrelevant. The point is that she was unkind and out of line. Even if the gentleman were at fault, she was not to say something like that.

Regardless of who is at fault when a dancing mishap occurs, both parties are supposed to smile and go on. This applies to the better dancer in particular, who bears a greater responsibility. Accepting the blame is especially a nice touch for the gentleman. But at the same time, do not apologize profusely. There is no time for it, and it makes your partner uncomfortable.

My personal preference is the following: whenever something untoward happens, I first see if my partner noticed. Sometimes the partner may not be aware, for example, that a figure was slightly off-time or that a fine point in technique was missed, in which case it is better to let it go. If she has noticed, I just smile and whisper "sorry..." and go on, regardless of whose fault it was.

Sharing the floor:

Responsible usage of the floor requires that one stays out of the way of others. Some figures require a momentary movement against line of dance. These figures should be executed with great caution on a social dance floor, and only when there is no danger of collision. Avoid getting too close to other couples, especially less experienced ones. Be prepared to change the directions of your patterns to avoid congested areas. This requires thinking ahead and matching your patterns to the free areas on the floor (floorcraft). While this may sound complicated to the novice dancer, it gradually becomes second nature.

Sharing the floor sometimes means leaving the

floor! For example, if there are too many dancers to fit on the floor, then a considerate dancer would withdraw every few dances to let everyone dance. The same idea applies if there aren't the same number of men and women. Then there is a mismatch and for each song some people will be left without a partner. If there aren't enough partners, it would be nice to voluntarily withdraw every few dances so that everyone gets a chance to dance.

Another aspect of sharing the floor is to match one's speed to that of others. In a recent social dance, a particularly tall and handsome couple caught my eye. They were moving with great speed and skill across the floor, and I began to enjoy watching them dance. But then I noticed they were coming dangerously close to other dancers on the crowded dance floor, and many times other couples came to a stop and moved out of their way. It was easy to see they were unhappy about this couple "taking over" the floor.

Come Dance With Us

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<http://www.dancempls.com>

If you want to read dance storys they are under Headlines.

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Teach Beginners at Singles All Together dance class on Monday night, at Lenox center on Minnetonka Blvd in St Louis Park.

Teach at Singles All Together on Tuesday night 8pm at Medina.

Teach Ballroom at Jefferson Community Ed on Thursday at 26th and Hennepin 612-668-2740
