

Larry's Corner

Volume 6, Issue 11

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November 2006

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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

One person called about what I had in my last newsletter comparing a great sex partner with being addicted to dancing. I apologize if any one else felt offended reading the word sex. I don't have anything else to compare with. Because I don't drink, do drugs, smoke, or any other addiction people have so had nothing else to compare with.

I didn't describe sex just the feeling. If you have another way of comparing being addicted to dancing let me know.

I talked to many people asking what they thought about the story. They all said there was nothing wrong with it except for one person who is supposed to be able to help people. But not her self.

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Where can I find a teacher ?

It's very important to find the right teacher, that suits your style and that you feel you can learn from. Luckily, the Twin Cities is home to over a dozen brilliant teachers. If you are looking for specific information on a teacher, often times the teachers link directly to their own websites so you can learn more. Feel free to ask people you run into.

Beginner Friendly Clubs

So, what makes a club beginner friendly? First, a beginner lesson that is well attended! Second, other beginners who come to the club. Third, a general lack of the "Dance is Competition" element replaced by a helpful "let's practice and have fun" element. Not all clubs are created equal in the dance scene. As a general rule, those clubs that don't have lessons before the club opens, are generally less "tolerant" of beginner dancers. Not to say you'll go there and have a bad time, but you'll certainly find fewer people to dance with at these venues than at other more "Beginner Friendly" places.

Dance Partners

What are they good for? Surely for fighting, but beyond that, dance partners serve numerous purposes, and it all depends on your level of dancing, and the goals that you hope to attain from the partnership.

Beginner Partnerships: As a beginner, partnership's are all about getting down the basics. If you can partner with someone slightly more proficient than yourself, so much the better. A partner simply gives you someone to practice with, and as a beginner, you need to get in a lot of practice. Without a partner, you have to get in a lot of practice with people you don't know at clubs, which can prove awkward for some people

(especially when you don't necessarily want to dance, but just practice new moves, or work things out). Where can beginner's find partners? At the classes! You dance with someone a few times, it's ok to ask them out to practice. Don't get overly crazy about this (there's plenty of time for that later), keep it very casual. You're not asking for super commitment, no rings or contracts are involved, you just want to speed up the learning process a little. Make sure to clearly state why you want to get together (to practice), so no hurt feelings are involved later (I thought this was a date).

Teaching Partnerships: When I decided to start teaching, it was a reasonably quick and easy decision. I felt I had something to give to other people who were learning how to dance. Later, I was dancing at Medina and my partner for the 2nd set didn't show up. I approached Barb and asked her to dance. We clicked, and since she was already dancing, I just came along for the ride. I found that I really enjoyed teaching, and dancing. That the classes were a lot of fun to do. Our classes were quite large, but the fear of public speaking was quickly overcome when I saw the eagerness of people to learn.

Teaching partnerships require a lot of give and take! Ideally, you both actually talk during class, thus giving students the benefits of both of your experiences. I honestly believe the best partnerships come from stylized dancers, and by that, I mean dancers who have developed, or are developing, a "form or style" in which they dance. A partnership needn't have both dancers dancing the exact same style, merely that both styles look good and work well together.

Communication! The best teaching partnerships come from people who can communicate well, not just to the class, but with each other as well. I took this Swing class with this couple, and these two were hysterical! Not only were they very good in depth teachers, but they were just so damn entertaining to watch! It was like paying for a stand up comedy act. The other extreme can be equally amusing, and make for a good partnership. People who are just ALWAYS fighting, and are always visibly angry with each other. This can prove very amusing as well. As long as the communication is there,

be it positive or negative, the results are usually pretty good.

The other side of the coin, which is no less valid and also can provide very good results, and the way I actually learned to dance, was the typical, "guy teaches, woman looks good" way of teaching. This is a very typical way of teaching, especially in dancing. This is basically, the guy talking the entire class, and the woman serving to help demonstrate the moves. As long as the two LOOK GOOD together AND are moving in-sync (she's doing the correct patters, at the correct times, with him), there's no problem! Totally valid way to teach . . . to each his own!

Enough ! So, you want to start teaching or dancing with someone, what do you look for?

1) Communication Skills - He/She should be a very good communicator, both with you, and in a group.

2) Mastery - He/She should understand the basics of dance! This means that being a good club dancer, or a top-notch competitor, may not necessarily make for the best teaching partnership. It doesn't take a brain surgeon to explain the basic step, but beyond that, there are a lot of nuances, tips, and dance fundamentals that a good teaching partnership should be able to get across to their students.

3) Connection - Ideally, the partner's dance well together and can demonstrate the patterns clearly and confidently.

Tip: Romance tip #1. For most partnerships, I wouldn't recommend sleeping with your partner, but hey, beginning partnership and teaching partnerships are a little more low key than others, so if you have to, by all means . . . It will probably add some spice to your classes. For some reason, there are more romantically involved teaching partnerships, than competition partnerships (probably all that stress of competition).

How do I ask that special someone to be my teaching partner? . . . "uhhhh . . . would you like to teach this class with me . . . please . . .", usually works . . . Don't forget to say please! Don't be offended if you get a "no", teaching isn't for everyone. It doesn't reflect on you.

The Golden Rule (for 95% of partnerships, except as noted): Don't sleep with your dance partner unless you absolutely have to. Ha. :)

(Dance) Etiquette - Male

How do I ask a lady to dance? The wrong way: Point to the lady, then point to the floor right in front of you. Snap your fingers a few times for effect, and grimace as if she is taking to long. As she's getting up, turn your back to her and march on to the floor (don't bother to check if she's actually following you).

The right way. Walk to the lady, make eye contact, ask her "May I have this dance". IF she say's yes, extend your hand and lead her onto the dance floor (walk with her on to the floor, don't march out there alone). After the dance (even if the dance was "bad") do not bolt for the exit. Take her and lead her, approximately, back to the place from where you picked her up. Thank her for the dance!

SOME BIG (AND NOT SO BIG) TIPS FOR ASKING WOMEN TO DANCE:

Here are some clues for asking that special someone to dance. These aren't rules, just tips you might want to think about.

1) Hygiene! Hello . . . Wear deodorant, after-shave, cologne (in REASONABLE AMOUNTS). Don't stink when you dance. ;) There's no reason to. If you are getting turned down a lot, check your breath and your body odor. One more tip, mailed in by one of our readers, don't overdo the cologne!

2) Make eye contact (if possible): If it appears as if she is avoiding looking at you, you're facing a possibility of being turned down. However, that shouldn't faze you necessarily. Only if it's obvious that she is avoiding looking at you, should you consider just staying away.

3) Never take being turned down to dance

personally. There are SO many dancers in this world, and not everyone wants to dance with everyone else. Just move on to the next person, you can even add a "Thanks anyway".

4) If it appears they are on the way to the bar, or the restroom, wait for a more opportune time.

5) If the woman is coming off the dance floor, and looks like she's about to pass out from dehydration, you might want to wait for a more opportune moment, or go buy her a water, and then ask her to dance.

6) If they are obviously with someone else, you may want to read the body language clearly before asking her to dance. I ask women to dance all the time that are "with" other people, however if I don't already know them, I acknowledge the guy, usually with a nod, to let him now it's cool. Opinions vary on this, but there are plenty of women who go to clubs with guy's (boyfriends) and dance with other people. Likewise, there are plenty of people who will not take kindly to you asking THEIR date to dance. Pay attention to the body language, and read the situation before asking women to dance that are obviously with significant others.

7) Don't interrupt a conversation that a woman is having! Now, I do this all the time. When a good song comes on, I will butt in, admittedly rudely, and ask one to dance (even though I can plainly see that two people are conversing). Well, I can't recommend this, even though I am guilty of it. It's rude and extremely bad manners. However, it's ok to park yourself close enough to the two that are talking so that she can see that you are anxious to dance. At that point, it's up to her, if she wants to talk, or wants to dance.

8) Look at the edges of the dance floor! That's generally where people stand that are waiting to be asked to dance. Look for the woman madly tapping her foot, or swaying back and

forth to the music. These are pretty telltale signs she's ready to dance, quite probably with the first guy that asks her, so GET MOVING!

What should my first dance with a new lady be like? The wrong way: Grab her and immediately start throwing her into every conceivable move you've ever learned in class. Forget about the closed position, just spin her absolutely as fast as you can, without stopping, in order to impress her with your amazing leading abilities. Forget about the rhythm, and through sheer force of will, get right into the most complicated and intricate patters that you know. Do all this as fast as humanly possible . . . If she can't keep up, she'll just be impressed with how good you are. HA;) If you're not very fast, grab the woman in as close an embrace as possible, pressing her body up against yours so she can tell exactly how many sit-ups and crunches you do every day. Enjoy the dance, because it will probably be the last one you have with this follower . . .

The RIGHT way. Once on the floor, take the lady in closed position. Try to actually keep your right hand up high, under her shoulder blade, and put some strength there (so she has a nice place to rest her arm). It's a pretty clear clue to ladies, when a guy takes her in closed position and puts his right hand on her ass, that he's not that great a dancer (or interested in something completely different). Likewise, give her some space. Now, I like to dance very close sometimes, but with new dancers, I always let THEM determine the distance of the dance with the thumb of the ladies left hand on front of mans shoulder. I'm not going to plaster them against my body right off the bat (I wait at least until the middle of the song . . .that's a joke). ;)

For those who have taken my classes, this should be familiar. Start with "The Rock" (TM). "The rock" is exactly what it sounds like! You rock back and forth, with the lady, to the rhythm of the music. This can last from 5 seconds, to a minute, but I don't recommend start-

ing to dance until you both are rocking (back and forth) in unison. This assures that you both are on the same beat (and listening to the same music). When you both are feeling the rhythm, start of with the basic step! Keep her in closed position for a while, play with it, try a few simple inside/outside turns. Get to feel each other for a while. At this point, you can actually stop staring at the floor (your feet) and take a gander at who you're dancing with! Smile . . . relax . . . the rest is up to you.

Important Note #1: Try and determine the level of experience the lady has with dancing. A good leader will always match his skills with that of his follower (i.e. making it easier for her (and you both) to have an enjoyable dance). Obviously, if she is a beginner you don't want to be dragging her forcefully around the floor with complicated arm movements, and vice versa, if she is advanced, you don't want to keep doing the basic forever (although this can be ok in some situations).

Come Dance With Us

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

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