



# Larrys Corner

Volume 8, Issue 8

August 2008

This is called Larrys Corner because when I teach I stand in the corner so I can see everyone.

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

[Http://www.comedancewithus.com](http://www.comedancewithus.com) Or  
<http://www.dancempls.com>

Larry L Ablin : 612-599-7856  
lablin@charter.net

Barb Johnson : 612-599-9915  
westcoast1@charter.net

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 about, just write it up and give to Barb or Larry. I enjoy writing something for you.

Come Dance With Us

*Inside this issue:*

American Merengue	1
<b>Description of Merengue</b>	1
<b>Rise and Fall</b>	2

## **American Merengue**

Merengue originated in the Dominican Republic in the early 19th century, and it is the only dance from that country to have made a significant impact on the United States. Merengue bands from the countryside typically included a vocalist backed by an accordion, a metal scraper and a double-headed drum played with a stick, elements which are mimicked in today's more modern orchestrations.

Legend has it that the dance got its characteristic look from an old hero who had returned from battle with a wounded leg. While dancing, he couldn't help but limp to one side. Whatever the true origins of the dance, it is, in fact, characterized by a strong "dragged-leg" feeling on every second step. An up-tempo dance, Merengue is noted for its Cuban Motion and side-to-side swinging feel.

Merengue was played in New York as early as the 1940's, gradually becoming a part of the Latin scene. The music has more recently evolved into an international phenomenon, with bands such as Juan Luis Guerra's 4.40 popularizing its simple, easy-to-follow beat. Merengue is in 2/4 time, with 55 to 60 beats to the bar.

## **Description of Merengue**

Merengue music essentially has the tempo and rhythm of marching music. This is appropriate for the even tempo left, right, left, right, step timing. The music and the basic step may be counted: 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4. Counting to eight is also very popular. The basic step can be thought of as step, close, step, close, step, close, step, close. Most patterns require 4 beats or eight beats of music. Like disco music, Merengue music has heavy down beats on every count. The music style is festive and happy and the music tempo is about 120 to 160 beats per minute.

## Rise and Fall

How do you describe the difference in the "rise & fall" in American Fox-Trot (box rhythm - SQQ, or Hover) as compared to the rise and fall in American Waltz.

The best people to ask about this one are actually international dancers, since the situation is exactly the same between Int'l Foxtrot and Waltz. However, I will take a stab at it here.

Foxtrot has a more linear and elongated quality than Waltz. Imagine for a second a string, which is situated in the shape of a sine wave (Waltz rise & fall). Now imagine pulling gently on the ends of the string. While the sine wave gets longer, it also gets shorter. It now represents Foxtrot rise & fall.

This is somewhat abstract, but it's the best representation I've heard so far.

In more concrete terms, (yet also more confusing to many beginners), leg and body swing help you to go in just about any direction you need to go, including forward, back, side, up, or around. In Waltz, I use it to take me primarily in an upward direction, while in Foxtrot I use it to take me outward (ie forward, back, or laterally). This does not mean that there is no rise in Foxtrot, nor does it mean that you want to pop straight up in Waltz. But it does give you an idea of where you want to place the emphasis, in order to get the right character.

Oh, I just got one more idea. But I may hear back from some people on it.

(1) Stand with your feet flat, weight over middle- to back of foot:  
TANGO.

(2) Shift weight forward slightly and rise ever so slightly: VIE. WALTZ

(3) Rise higher, about half way to 3/4 up on balls of feet: FOXTROT

(4) Rise almost all the way (as high as you comfortably go): WALTZ

(5) Hop up off the ground completely: QUICKSTEP.

This last example is an idea I've used as an illustration only, but not entirely accurate. And of course, #5 is a joke.