

CLINIC CORNER

This is a compilation of information from, Ballroom Dancing (A.E. Moore), Technique of Ballroom Dancing (Guy Howard), Just One Idea (Len Scrivener) & various personal contacts. This column is devoted to help promote comfortable dancing. - Chris & Terri Cantrell

FOXTROT CHARACTERISTICS - part 1

The following ideas have been collected in order to assist you in comfortable dancing and are not meant to be absolutes. Many of the following items may help the dancer's comfort & confidence.

CHARACTERISTICS: Foxtrot is one of the most beautiful and most difficult modern ballroom rhythms. There are several types of Foxtrot, two of these are the Social Foxtrot (also called American Foxtrot and Rhythm Dancing) and the Slow Foxtrot (International Foxtrot).

Social Foxtrot closely resembles slow quickstep. This is the type taught most often in many of the major dance studios, including Arthur Murray Dance Studios. The Social Foxtrot is more conducive to crowded dance floors.

The Slow Foxtrot is characterized by long, gliding, smooth steps. A great amount of control is needed in order to give the dance a lazy and unhurried appearance. It is more easily danced on a large, uncrowded ballroom. The slow Foxtrot is danced with smooth rises and falls. The rises and falls should happen as a normal result of the movement. The natural movement is also referred to as body flight.

TIMING: Foxtrot is generally played in 4/4 timing (four beats to each measure/bar) with three steps taken over the four beats of music. The tempo of foxtrot is most often 30 measures per minute. Beats one and three are generally accented, with beat one being the stronger.

RHYTHM: The basic rhythm of foxtrot is SLOW, QUICK, QUICK. For the purpose of this discussion, SLOW (S) equals two beats of music and QUICK (Q) equals one beat of music.

Interpretation of the music is largely a matter of personal taste, but a good general hint is to be a little late with the second QUICK.

BODY MECHANICS: Foxtrot is much easier to execute if correct body mechanics are used. We have listed a few key points. Keep your body weight well over your supporting leg, this is more easily accomplished if you keep your feet slightly apart from your partner's feet. Maintain a good top line (head to rib cage region). Keep the weight of your head over your feet. Keep your knees relaxed, never locked. Hold your partner with the back of the upper arm (tricep) instead of the front muscle (bicep).

SWAY: The sway is an inclination of the body towards the center of the turn, this action may assist dancers in maintaining their balance. The action of the sway should come from the diaphragm, not the shoulders.

Sways may be used on nearly all figures that curve, wave or turn, with the exception of quick spins. The sway is strongly associated with the Contrary Body Movement (CBM) step used in all turning figures. For example, if the CBM is achieved with the right foot, then the inclination of the sway should be to the right. The sway is generally changed during the SLOW step and then reestablished during the QUICK steps.