

A FEW NOTES ON BOLERO

Bolero is another “Latin” dance, but you will dance it better if you are in a foxtrot frame of mind. This is considered one of those “dancer’s dances,” where you can be expressive and play with the timing. It is characterized by slow, swoop-y, flirtatious movement befitting the ballads it is danced to, where the themes are love and yearning.

HISTORY

Bolero originally came from Spain, then made its way to Cuba as a folk dance. The English discovered it and took it home as the “rumba” and the Americans made it into “bolero.” The bolero in Spanish countries today appears more like flamenco.

MUSICAL TIMING

The time signature for bolero is 4/4. The timing for most figures is *Slow Quick Quick*. In the basic footwork, the dancer takes three steps in the four beats of each measure. When dancing the *Slow*, say to yourself: *AHHHH* so you will stretch out the movement to fill the music. This has been called “hang time,” meaning you hang onto the “slow” as long as possible. It does not mean that you step on beat 1 and hold it; use both beats of music to reach with the moving foot as you push off the standing foot and finish the step, all over two beats of music.

DANCE POSITION

The basic hold is closed position, as for foxtrot, with the Lady slightly offset. When in open position, body position is more like rumba and the hands and arms are used expressively.

FOOTWORK

The dance is characterized by strong rise through the body (not the ankle!) Steps are usually taken as “ball, flat.” Like rumba, there are few heel leads. Forward movement is preceded by an extended “long” leg before stepping onto the foot. Unlike rumba, “Cuban” hip action is not used, unless the dance specifically asks for a “hip rock.”

On the “slow” count, there is a sense of pushing onto the step with rise through the body. Lower on the “quick” counts. For example, on a spot turn, use body rise on the “slow” side step and lower on the two “quicks” for the cross step and turn back to face.

BASIC STEPS

Bolero has its own typical figures but borrows heavily from the rumba syllabus. Some typical bolero figures found in almost every routine are:

Turning Basic: Turns in bolero usually require the man to dance a slipping action

Lunge Break: Think big extension of arms and legs

Left Side Pass: Feels like a one-handed wrap, finished like a turning basic