

# Some hints on Tango etiquette & conventions

We hope these hints will help you to enjoy dancing at Tango dance nights ("Milongas"). They are based on commonly accepted Tango conventions and our own experience.

## Asking for a Dance – and being asked

- The usual convention is to accept invitations to dance, but you do not have a right to dance with everybody, so please don't abuse the goodwill of dancers by asking people thoughtlessly.
- There is a charming convention originating in Argentina, which uses eye contact alone to request a dance. This takes place at some distance so it avoids any embarrassment.
- More normal in the UK is walk up and ask: "Would you like to dance?". Traditionally it was the men who would invite a lady to dance, however it is becoming increasingly normal for ladies to ask as well.
- You have the right to decline to dance with anyone, at any time, but if you are hoping to dance with this partner at some other time, be sure to say so.

## Moving around the Dance Floor

- Couples dance in "The line of dance". around the floor in an anti-clockwise direction. Moving onto the dance floor during a song is like merging onto a motorway; wait for an open space, rather than forcing your way into the line of dancers.
- Avoid dancing in the middle of the floor (it is very easy to drift into the middle inadvertently).
- On a crowded floor, it is important not to allow a big gap to open up in front of you, whilst respecting the space of the couple in front. In this way everyone moves around the dance floor at a similar speed and collisions are avoided.
- Avoid taking backward steps; there is a risk of treading on someone. Stay aware of the dancers around you and use only the space that is safely available.
- It is the leader's fault if their follower hits someone. Avoid steps and movements on a crowded floor that could cause collisions or hit or injure other dancers: e.g. Ganchos, leg extensions etc.
- If you do bump into another couple, politely apologise whilst continuing to dance (even if you don't think it was your fault!)

## Whilst you're dancing

- Don't teach or stop to practice a step on the dance floor, and please avoid criticising your partner whilst dancing. The ideal place to work on technique is at the lessons or at our practice night in Eton on Wednesday evenings.
- To dance well requires your full attention, so don't try to have a conversation while dancing; focus on your dance, your partner, and floor traffic and save your talking until after the dance.

## Open Hold or Close Embrace?

- It is very important that dancers feel comfortable dancing with each other. Be sensitive and responsive with the style of Tango embrace. It is not appropriate to apply physical or verbal pressure to make someone dance in close embrace.
- Either partner may state their style preferences - open or close - by gently initiating the frame they prefer then "listening" to their partner's response.
- It often happens, especially with a new partner, that you dance in a more open hold initially. As the dancing progresses you can both move comfortably and easily into a close embrace. Some dances involve a naturally flow between open and close embrace in the course of a song, depending on the music and how the dancers feel the dance.

## How Many Dances with each Partner?

- At a Tango dance night ("Milonga") it is normal to dance three or perhaps four dances with a dance partner, but this is by no means obligatory. It's the normal custom to change partners after 3 or 4 dances.
- It's OK to stop after 2 songs (or even 1 song) if you do not feel comfortable or safe with your partner's dancing or other behaviour.

- o To say "thank you" to your dance partner after a song is often interpreted as a way of saying, "I want to stop dancing." Use other phrases of appreciation if you want to keep dancing.

## Personal Hygiene

- o Given the physical closeness in Tango, good hygiene is essential to ensure that people enjoy dancing with you. In particular, making good use of anti-perspirant and breath fresheners.
- o In hot conditions Men frequently bring an extra shirt, and change into it half way through the evening.

## Tango night terms:

<b>Cortina</b>	Short interlude of non-dancing music between Tandas.
<b>Milonga</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Dance to an early style of Tango music, usually quicker and more upbeat than Tango.</li><li>2. A dance night, where people go to dance Tango and Milonga.</li></ol>
<b>Milonguero</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. An older Tango dancer, one who frequented the milongas during the 1940's and 50's. Also refers to those frequenting the milongas and considered tango enthusiasts.</li><li>2. A style of dancing, from that period. Typically a very close embrace, with both partners forwards leaning slightly on to each other.</li></ol>
<b>Practica</b>	An informal dance event, normally with the purpose of allowing dancers to practice dance elements in a constructive atmosphere.
<b>Tanda</b>	Three or four dances to similar music – speed, rhythm, style etc – grouped together into a set
<b>Vals (Waltz)</b>	Tango dance style, done to Tango music with Waltz tempo.