



TECHNIQUE: Pulsing: Heartbeat of the Dance

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Every once in a while, I do a review of a few of the many critiques I've done from the US Open. Having done so many, and being able to watch the videotape, it is amazing how much I continue to learn. (You know you have ceased to grow, when you feel you have nothing more to learn). I always suggest to contestants that they study their own performance on videotape. They should view it as if the performers were someone else. You can pick out many things that need improvement when you are pretending it is someone else. Those same elements often elude us when we view ourselves.

Viewing recent competitions, Pulsing seems to be the one element that could take everyone's level of performance up a notch. In order to add *Pulsing* to your dance, it is important to know what pulsing is NOT - as well as what it is. *Pulsing* is described as a recurring *Accent* that magnifies the **essence** of the dance. Few dancers seem to realize that if the Swing music they have chosen *accents* the *Downbeats*, (1, 3, 5 & 7), that does NOT mean that the dancer should do the same. **West Coast Swing**, in particular, takes on an added excitement and a much more professional look when the *Pulse* can actually be observed (and felt) as emphasizing the *Upbeats*, (2, 4, 6 & 8 in the music).

There are those who understand a little bit about *Pulsing*, but do not practice it enough to make a significant difference. I can guarantee you that *Pulsing* any dance will not occur in a performance - unless it is already an integral part of that Dancer's regular social dancing. ***Pulsing* is not a bounce.** It does not require going up on your toes or making a loud noise. It is ***simply the firming of the muscles around the Center Point of Balance*** (CPB) on every *Upbeat* (2, 4, 6 & 8 in the music) and HOLDING the contraction through the "&a" that follows.

There are two different concepts that are often mistaken for each other: ***Pulsing & Musical Interpretation.*** *Pulsing* is that underlying basic contraction of the CPB, within the framework of the body. It is a subtle, heartbeat of the dance. ***Musical Interpretation*** is the added spice that creates interesting moves to interesting sounds in the music.

The correct use of *Pulsing* adds contrast, variety, and drama to every performance. We all know what happens when a person does not have a pulse. Without a pulse we no longer have life. It is possible to view a performance that is actually interesting - even borders on being exciting - and yet leaves you wondering what was missing. **The missing element is often *Pulsing.*** A pulse gives **life** to a performance. If you were to stand still and contract the muscles in the abdomen - up into the *Solar Plexus* on **every *Upbeat***, you would begin to experience the feeling that something more is happening than just keeping time. Pulsing more closely connects the dancer to the music.

Pulsing is not a quick fix. It takes time to develop, but is well worth the effort. I have never seen a performance in ANY dance that could not move up a notch, simply by adding the correct Pulse to the performance.

Famed cellist, Yo Yo Ma, in a television interview, was asked what he did with the notes that made his music the best in the world. He said that it was not the notes that he played, but the quality of the spaces between the notes that made the difference.

And so it is with DANCE – except that we are relating to ***Pulsing.*** *Pulsing* the *Upbeat* in West Coast Swing, makes the body come alive – and by holding the *Pulse* through each *Upbeat* and the "&" that follows each *Upbeat*, *magic happens.* *Pulsing* is now a significant part of GSDTA, upper level Teachers Training, in **EVERY Social Dance.**