



SYNCOATING RHYTHMS – Using Rolling Count Timing

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Recent inquiries still ask about the word & definition of **SYNCOPIATION**. The dictionary describes the musical term: “Syncopation” - as a rearrangement of the metered beat. George Griffin, famous Jazz drummer described “syncopation” the same way WE do, with a *Rolling Count*. He said that reading about *Rolling Count* in “Disco to Tango” he realized why the WCS Dancers follow him everywhere he goes. He said that “&a1 &a2” is the *mantra* that runs through his mind - whenever he plays the drums. Many Swing dancers know from experience that his Rolling Drum-count **pulls dancers out of their chairs - and onto the floor!**

MUSICIANS actually syncopate SOUND! Dancers syncopate “Weight Changes.” According to email & phone inquiries - many dancers are confused by reading articles that talk about **accenting** different beats - or **holding** beats for a syncopation. **That description of syncopation does not make sense for a Dancer.** Most of the musicians I interviewed understood the word “syncopation” as “rearranging the metered beat”. Several were also aware of the dancer’s use of syncopations. Picture the Dancer as a *VISUAL Rhythm Instrument* in the band. When a DJ plays the music - the orchestra is coming out of a little black box (a speaker). The DANCER is the only *Instrument* that onlookers can see. As such - the dancer gets to **rearrange the metered beat** with his feet (and his body)!

Dancers Sheet Music looks very different from that of a piano player. However, many people understand just enough about reading sheet music for piano - that they try to relate that same process to the dance. Although very few piano players can read a drum score – and different sheet music works for different instruments – they all blend together when the musicians play. That’s because ALL of the instruments play to the same BEAT. *Syncopations* for the DANCER rearranges the metered beat by changing the rhythm of the weight changes. How WELL those weight changes are arranged, determines the level of the Dancer’s performance.

Play a nice slow piece of 4/4 time music. Listen for the “*Sets-of-8*” Counting out those *Sets-of-8* can sharpen your perception of keeping time to music - and will condition your mind to hear where the *syncopations* should go. A simple maneuver like repeating “& Step touch - &Step touch” to a count of “&a1 &a2” will go a long way toward **feeling the thrill of matching the movement of your body to the rhythmic feel of the music:**

Lift your center on the &-Count - Step Side Left on the a-Count - and touch the Right FREE heel to the weighted foot on Count –1. Lift your center on the next &-Count - Step Side Right on the a-Count, and touch the Left FREE heel to the weighted foot on Count-2. Continue this *rhythmic pattern* through 8 beats of music. Repeat this basic *syncopation*, over and over, saying the *Rolling Count* out loud You will FEEL that subtle *Syncopated Rhythm*, way up in your *Center (CPB)*. **You are now one step closer to where you want to be.**

The quality of a *Syncopation* is very closely connected to how well you are able to SAY and also FEEL that rhythmic *Rolling Count*. Counting “& 1 & 2” is still a *syncopation* but is only a **Two Dimensional Movement**. (“1e&a 2e&a” makes the dancer busier, but is still a standard STRAIGHT COUNT). Counting “&a1 &a2” (**Rolling Count**) turns your *syncopation* into a **Three Dimensional Movement**. *Rolling Count* provides a separate count for lifting your *CPB* – (independent of the weight changes). The difference in the count may seem slight - but it creates a **WORLD** of difference in ANY dance performance.