

Asking a Woman To Dance! Written by Miles from Barefoot Tango

September 15th, 2011

(note: this is my opinion of how things should work, take it with a grain of salt. when applied, your mileage may vary!)

She walks into the room, kisses and hugs her friends on her way to putting down her shoe bag, and then finding her seat to put on her shoes. She's looking quite lovely tonight. It seems like she's kissing and hugging everyone in the room for cryin' out loud. Finally she finds a half a chair at the crowded milonga tonight, and slips off her street shoes into what appear to be brand new Comme Il Fauts, all sparkly and shiny new, and just as she finishes her right shoe, she looks up and is immediately whisked away out of her chair. One tanda, two tandas, three tandas, she comes off the floor to get some water, and no sooner does her foot hit the carpet, when another lead takes her by the hand, and off they go, one tanda, two tandas, and off the floor to head for water, and a chair! She's looking a little disheveled after that last leader. He was a bit rough on her, but she smiled through it, he had some nice qualities. She sits for the first time in 45 minutes, drinking her water, and finally catching up with a friend. Legs crossed, and eyeing the room, and avoiding it at the same time.

Gentlemen, how do you ask her for dance ?

Well to be honest with you there are many ways of asking a woman to dance as there are stars in the sky, and they all basically involve the same thing. But in tango there are some rules of the road as to how you do and don't do that. Things to keep in mind. So before we get to the HOW part, there are a few things we have to review first, such as 9 don'ts and 5 do's.

Nine Don'ts!

- 1.) Do not walk up to her and extend your hand and expect to get a dance!
- 2.) Do not stalk her around the room.
- 3.) Do not cross a dance floor to get to her.
- 4.) Do not walk up to her, stop 5 feet from her, and THEN Cabeceo her!
- 5.) Do not VERBALLY ask her for a dance (there are exceptions to this).
- 6.) Do not stand outside the ladies room and get her as she's coming out. (can you say "awwwwwkward!" ?)
- 7.) Do not sit 2 chairs away from her 'eyeing' her and expect her to dance with you. ("creeeeepy!" ewwww!)
- 8.) Do not come up BEHIND her and tap her on the shoulder.
- 9.) Do not sit down next to her and then out of the blue ask her to dance.

Five Do's!

- 1.) Make certain that you are reasonably dry, and not dripping sweat.

Nobody really likes to bathe in sweat, so for this reason always, always have a change of shirt if you're the profusely sweaty kind of man. Think of it this way, do you want to go home smelling of perfume ? Probably not. Well then she has absolutely ZERO desire to go home smelling like a gym locker! So keep the sweat to an absolute minimum.

- 2.) Have a pleasant 'odor' to you.

This doesn't mean aftershave but some deodorant is a good choice. Preferably one that doesn't

REEK!

3.) Make certain you are well manicured.

This means that your nails are clipped, hands washed, or cleaned with soap BEFORE you dance with her!

4.) Have pleasant breath.

Two words for you: BREATH MINTS. Need I say more ?

5.) Get a towel or something to use as a handkerchief!

Place it in your suit coat jacket as you're dancing, or in back right pocket, and at the end of each song, wipe the sweat from your hands, and from your neck and head. Keep your sweat to yourself...let's not share it, shall we ?

Ok, so now that we've read you the riot act about what to do, and how not to engage her...can you ask her for a dance yet ? Well no, not quite.

I strongly suggest you actually LISTEN to the music that you are asking her to dance to BEFORE you ask her to dance. I mean that just because there is music playing, its actually rather helpful for you to have some understanding of what you're listening to, and then 'dancing' to. Far too often men wander around the floor, no where close to the walking beat of the music. They think or believe that they need vocabulary to keep her entertained to 'dance' with her. This is NOT true. The thing you need to do, is walk her on the beat. Your mind in her feet. Which means that I don't care what your feet are doing...what I care about is what her feet are doing, her feet are the metronome by which you dance. She's the timekeeper her. She's also the reflection of your ability to keep time. So for every beat in the music, her feet should be on the floor. It also helps if you can keep time in the music. If you think you can do that, I'll bet you that you can't. Far too often on a social dance floor I see, 'wandering' off the beat or something not even close to a beat. For help on finding the beat, see my previous article on how to hit the upbeat! It goes into finding the downbeat as well, which is what you want to walk on!

While its a little late to be thinking of private lessons at a milonga, but I do strongly suggest private lessons BEFORE you go out social dancing, and what you want to focus on is your embrace, posture, and walk. No, seriously. Not kidding about this one. Its not about the steps and the patterns, its just not. I know you think you can 'dance', I know you believe that you've taken a few classes with (fill in the blank), and they've pronounced you 'passable', or taught you some really cool and fancy moves that god him/herself would deem as 'Yup! that's pretty cool!'. The fact is, that your embrace is more than likely the source of half of your issues with followers. I am almost willing to bet its like a vice grip and that you just don't realize it. I'll go out on a limb here and even go so far as to say that perhaps you use your left arm as a metronome (bouncing up and down in time to the music), and/or on top of that, you've been told that you must have 'resistance' from her, she has to push into your hand, otherwise she's just not doing it right. Am I Right ? There are some teachers that teach this, and there some are some of us that don't. Some of us, actually engage in a conversation, and some of us, well...let's just say its a monologue and leave it at that. Which is to say that most men, when they have the tables turned on them and their own embrace type and 'style' is mirrored back to them...they never want to do that again, ever. What we're wanting is 'intention' based dancing. You think, she goes. Not...you PUSH or PULL and she goes! Imagine a ballon floating in front of you, now exhale...what happens to the ballon ? It floats away from you. Same thing here. You do not want to

use your arms, or your hands, but rather your 'core' to SUGGEST movement. And speaking of core motions, this requires a 'clean' posture. That means being upright and not taking your chest away from your follower, among.....

"Ummm Miles ?"

Yes, is there a question ?

"Ummm, while I appreciate all this wonderful knowledge you're spouting, but how on earth does this have anything to do with ASKING a WOMAN to DANCE ? I mean don't get me wrong, Im sure this is all valid to someone, somewhere...and while you're belaboring the point...ok I need to get some privates, I just don't get why you're going on and on and on about this noise! Look dude, how do I ask her to dance ?".

(smile)

Well, ahem...ummmm, let's see now. Do you own a house, or live under some kind of a roof ?

"Yes. I have an apartment in the city".

Good. What would happen if say, tomorrow morning, you awoke to find that half of your building had crumbled away in the night, so that from your bedroom, what's left of it, you can now see the apartments above and below you and you now have a lovely vista of the rest of your city ? Would that be good ?

"Well the view would be nice, especially since there's the hottie in 9A..., but ummm no!"

There's a reason your apartment building crumbled over night. And that's because the guy who built your building, his 'foundation' was poorly constructed, so much so that it literally eroded and the building collapsed in around it! That building is your dance, and that foundation, is your embrace, your posture, and your walk! Get the them cleaned up, reinforced, and made clear, and your dance won't collapse around you in the first 3 steps! Because that's exactly what will happen, if you're not careful, especially with a more advanced and talented follower!

Enough preaching, this article was supposed to be about HOW TO ASK HER FOR A DANCE. And it is. But first, its about creating the right conditions for you to actually be able to dance with her once you actually get the dance. What you're doing is creating the right ground work so that you have a successful tanda BEFORE asking her to dance!

Now to the QUESTION: HOW ????

The right and proper way to ask her for a dance is to stand or sit approx. 30 to 40 ft from her, and make concerted, direct eye contact with her. Its her choice at that point to accept or deny your invitation. Give her lots of space my friend. This is elegance in practice. There is a code of operation here and you want use it. Now mind you, sometimes its a little dark in these rooms, and the milonga organizer just doesn't set up the room in such a way that you can actually send a cabeceo and actually have it seen. In BsAs its a little challenging in some rooms...but it does work.

What we're looking for is this:

Understand something else, that if she says "NO", that does not mean that you get up from your chair, and walk over to her and perform one of the 9 don'ts. No, no, no! Bad form. You simply move onto the next follower that you want to dance with. "NO" means "NO". It unfortunately means NOT EVER, IN THIS LIFETIME. DON'T EVEN THINK IT! Now to be fair, that's not entirely true, "NO" sometimes means NOT RIGHT NOW. How do you know the difference? You don't! Again, her call my friend, not yours. You've made your interest known at this point....move on. She'll either pick up the ball later, or not. However, don't sit there and be all mister pouty face, that's not going to get you anywhere! This also means don't ask again that night, again, at all. That also means that you don't eyeball her all night long either! Once and let it go. Got it? Trust me, she got the message.

Ok, now for a few exceptions to the rules.

- 1.) There are women out there, that a.) can't see that well 10 feet in front of them, (furthermore neither can you my friend!) and/or b.) Do NOT understand what cabeceo is and how it works. I've heard stories of women that go to BsAs and don't get that men are literally throwing spears at them in terms of cabeceo, and are completely oblivious to the practice, and yet when you ask them later, they're like "Huh ???? What? Cappa-what?". I've seen it happen, been party to it, and not surprised by it, its just a lack of understanding of the codigos and in some cases socially deliberate to feign ignorance. How do you know the difference? You don't. You have to take people at the word until proven otherwise. Which is to say, if she declines your invitation, and then accepts someone else's and then later on claims to be ignorant of the codigos...draw your own conclusions from there. To be fair there are some men who will not take 'no' as an answer, and will walk across the floor and extend their hands to her and get 'the' dance. Think nothing of it. Let's just say that if you watch her face while she's dancing with him, that should tell you everything you need to know about what she's enduring at that juncture!
- 2.) If you know her FAIRLY well, are on better than speaking terms with her, and have hung out with her, then you can verbally ask her for a dance.
- 3.) If you've just been introduced to her, you can verbally ask her for a dance right then and there.
- 4.) If you've been seated at her table (Mostly for BsAs folks), you can ask her for a dance, and truth be told I believe you're expected to dance at least ONE tanda with her, it would be rude not to do so. There are even exceptions to this 'suggestion'.
- 5.) If you have a friend that knows her fairly well, you can ask for an introduction but that's about it, and then employ rule #2.

Having said all of that....breathe, smile, cabeceo. See what happens!

[note: this is a companion piece to "Asking a Man To Dance"]