

Workshop: Hear it, Imagine it, Dance it – The Route to Improvisatory Dancing

Target Audience

Primary audience is those who have a working understanding of social salsa, up to and including more developed dancers seeking an alternative skills-structure to enhance their improvisatory ability.

Secondary audience is anticipated to comprise fellow educators in search of more material.

Prerequisites / Constraints

This workshop requires only the ability to execute basic salsa. However, prior experience of an improvisatory dance class would provide a usefully informative context.

Duration

Two hours at regular pacing, depending on the extent of thematic exploration. Attendee interaction is encouraged throughout.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the workshop, participants should be able to:

- understand the fundamental building-blocks of dance required for the development of improvisatory ability;
- appreciate the impact of personal choice *via* a variation-based approach to improvisation;
- experience the Acts of Creativity of an other using interpretive mimicry; and
- achieve synthesis by deconstructing the creative acts of another and utilising the strategy of storytelling.

(with the optional section)

- thread their own creative path through a passage of music; and
- appreciate a broader range of themes affecting the depth of dialogue with partner and song.

Educators should:

- understand how a 'natural', that is culturally acquired, activity can be deconstructed;
- appreciate the circumstances under which a highly contextual skills-based Hierarchy of Development is necessary;
- appreciate how a learning environment might can be established to stimulate the creative process in the individual; and
- be capable of replicating components of the Hierarchy as material additional to their established content.

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Materials

Required:

- a compact disc player suitable to address the size of room.

Recommended:

- each participant should bring a change to soft-soled flat shoes *e.g.* jazz shoes, or house socks; and
- a hard copy of this schedule.

Extended learning support, before and after the workshop, may be obtained from the author's website, specifically:

<http://www.salsa-merengue.co.uk/VidTutor/donline.html>

Schedule Information

- This workshop, normally delivered as a course of four sessions, is a component of the first part of Loo Yeo's 'Teaching and Salsa' dance development programme.
- The following schedule is indicative; content may be rearranged or omitted as necessary for emphasis.
- Time permitting, the optional sections of 'Beyond independence' and thereafter may be explored.

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Opening: The dancer's solo – originating the shine, understanding its meaning

Opening: 'Natural' virtuosity – surmounting an unfairness of expectation

- The two fundamental components of improvisation

Theme: *Parts of the foot*

Context: Salsa dance rhythm

Learning points: foot placement, toe, heel, weight transfer

- 'Hear It': a context for the work

Theme: Case-study 1 – *A step and a tap*

Context: Example salsa riff

Learning points: agreement synchrony, substitution, variation-based

- Counter-weighting the feet

Theme: *Moving from the heart*

Context: Linear torso isolation exercises

Learning points: control of separation of weights, cultural marker, the seat of timing

- Activating the internal world

Theme: *The emptiness between hand and foot*

Context: Salsa basics, linear torso movement

Learning points: *montuno* section, pulse rhythms, pulse tic

- Projecting the pulse – an aid to soloists
- Handling Power

Theme: *Levels of grounding*

Context: Lower-Body Joint Cascade, salsa basics

Learning points: modifications for solidity, dance base

- Delighting by every means: getting fully involved

Theme: Case-study 2 – *A step, a tap and a shimmy*

Context: Example salsa riff

Learning points: upper body accent, polyrhythmic dancing

Theme: *'My spine's a-stirring'*

Context: Circular torso movement

Learning points: joining the cardinal points, filling out the corners

Theme: *'And these hips are a-rocking...'*

Context: Linear hip movement

Learning points: hips as cradle, loops, gender differentiation

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Theme: *Pelvis as pendulum*

Context: Circular hip movement

Learning points: cardinal points, filling out, sole pressures, grounding

Theme: *The body wave*

Context: The Complete Joint Cascade

Learning points: upward, downward, interrupted, the root of co-ordination

Theme: *Body rolling*

Context: Co-ordinating the vertical and the lateral

Learning points: hula hooping

- The physical embodiment of music: expressing what's there
- 'Imagine It' a.k.a. 'playing in my mind': the phenomenon of modulation

Theme: *Medium scale (think 'sentences')*

Context: Salsa *moñas*, breaks

Learning points: locations, motifs, riffs

- Mimicking improvisation

Theme: *Large scale (we're talking 'passages')*

Context: Salsa *montuno* section

Learning points: *inspiraciones*, call-and-response, leg displacements

- 'Dance It': improvising while in partnership

Theme: *Small scale (stripping it all down)*

Context: Example salsa songs

Learning points: locations, stabs, *abanico*, *danzón* legacy

- "I'll tell you a story" – presenting a coherent solo

Theme: Case-study 3 – 'Caminando'

Context: An example salsa song

Learning points: song structures, four-bar combinations

- The use of dynamics: deciding when to dance

Theme: *Devices of storytelling*

Context: A *montuno* vamp

Learning points: ostinato, dilation, compression, iteration, simplification, *seis por ocho*

Theme: *Rhythmic motifs in storytelling*

Context: A *montuno* vamp

Learning points: Caribbean *cinquillo*, *clave*, *tresillo*, breaks

- The Creative Participant: expressing the implied

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Theme: Case-study 4 – ‘*Montunoeando*’

Context: Example salsa song

Learning points: transposition, common progressions

Optional Section

- Beyond independence
- The ball of string – traversing a maze of possibilities

Theme: *Maintaining orientation*

Context: Example salsa songs

Learning points: *clave*-pulse, rhythmic triangulation

- Overcoming time-keeping’s legacy

Theme: Case-study 5 – *Navigating the layers*

Context: Example salsa songs

Learning points: *tumbao*, intermittency

- “The dense pops of the *batá* drums nudge me playfully...”
– Katherine J. Hagedorn, *Divine Utterances*

Theme: Case-study 6 – *Partaking in a story*

Context: *Rumba guaguancó*

Learning points: role of the *quinto*, open tones, collective storytelling, who solos whom?

- The mature soloist – letting your partner speak: interjections and dialogue
- Stylistic interpretations of light and dark

Theme: Case-study 7 – *A compare and contrast moment*

Context: An example solo

Learning points: upbeat accents, vernacular parameters, attack

- ‘Frame yourself, then frame your partner’
- Phrasing: a dancer’s art