

BALLROOM DANCE INSTRUCTION - HOW TO AVOID DANCER'S BLOCK

You have probably heard of writer's block - when a writer stares at a blank page and can't think of anything to write. Well, that condition happens also to a dancer when he tries to think of what step pattern to lead next and nothing comes to mind. You might think this would only happen to dancers with limited step patterns; however, it is actually more common in dancers with a vast knowledge of step patterns.

Throughout our years of experience in dealing with this "condition" - both personally and with our students - we realized that the problem is not in the knowledge of patterns, but in the approach to the dance itself. If we start a dance concentrating on what patterns we are going to do next, two problems tend to arise:

1. We may not be able to think quickly enough for the next pattern.
2. We'll be ignoring the connection with our partner and the rhythmic expression of the dance

THE THREE Rs

We developed an approach that has been extremely successful to overcome the dancer's block and enhance the dance experience for you and your partner. We call it the three Rs:

- Rhythm
- Rapport
- Repertoire

There are two key elements in becoming a good leader: connection and clarity. You need to know how to establish connection with your partner, and you also need to have a clear understanding of the step patterns you wish to lead. (We will not be covering these two elements here inasmuch as we covered them in previous issues. We recommend you review them as they will be very helpful.)

1. RHYTHM

After you have established connection and are in a comfortable dance position, begin by listening to the music - letting it fill you and start to move you inside. Don't be in a rush to take the first step;

only after you are moved by the music will you be able to both express and convey that feeling to your partner.

2. RAPPORT

After you are moved by the music and have conveyed that movement to your partner, lead only the most basic steps in the dance.

Concentrate on maintaining your connection with your partner and making your leads easier for her to feel. Let your movement grow together gradually without effort .

3. REPERTOIRE

As your movement grows together, you will realize that you are actually dancing without thinking about the patterns; they just come naturally to you because you are there - in the moment - and they seem effortless. At this point it becomes easy to start concentrating on the patterns. However, if you find your rhythm and connection with your partner starting to deteriorate, don't worry. Begin concentrating once again on the Rhythm and Rapport with your partner, and the Repertoire will naturally flow back to you.

Happy Dancing,
Blanche & Emilio