Timing & Technique - Course Outline

Timing & Technique	Timing	Technique
Week 1 (Swing vs. Jive vs. R'n'R)	Rhythm - Counts, Beats, & Calls	Timing <> Pressure & Control
Week 2 (JS – Sequence 1: Beoly Oly)	Quarter Beats, Half-Beats, & Held Beats	Weight Distribution & Transfer
Week 3 (JS – Sequence 2: Pivots & Break Time)	Tempo - Smooth & Relaxed	Floor Pressure & Core Body Movement
Week 4 (JS – Sequence 3: Knee Slaps & Shorty George)	Through Body Timing - Using the Whole Beat	Hip Movement, Balance
Week 5 (JS – Sequence 4: Suzie Q's)	Tempo - Energy & Transitions; Stealing/Stretching the Beat	Complimentary Body Motion & Momentum
Week 6 (JS – Sequence 5: Tick-Tocks)	Keeping It Together - Back to Basic Rhythm	Non-Complimentary Actions & Preparation

Cool Cats Rock 'n' Roll
MOB: 0415 481 938 or 0411 049 813
WEB: www.coolcatsrocknroll.com
EMAIL: coolcats@coolcatsrocknroll.com

Week 1:

Rhythm - Counts, Beats, & Calls

- Rhythm may refer to both the patterned movement and actions within a dance or regular & irregular emphasis in the music due to stronger or weaker beats.
    - Rhythm is not tempo (pace of movement) or speed (pace of music), but describes how music and dance components (beats and actions) fit to a structure. Hence:
        - Many rhythms are possible using the same number of beats. *e.g. Rock 'n' Roll vs. Jive vs. Continental*
        - A variety of dance actions may be used to match or compliment a musical rhythm. *e.g. Feet vs. Body*
        - It is possible to employ a dance rhythm that does not truly match the musical rhythm. *e.g. Rock 'n' Roll vs. Jive*
        - Multiple dance rhythms may match different rhythms present within the same piece of music. *e.g. Single/Double Speed Rockabilly*
    - With respect to both dancing and music, rhythm need not remain static. However, some musical/dance styles are better suited to variation than others.
- A count typically refers to the number of principle actions required to complete a figure and is generally used to help define the performance of actions to the beat.
    - The count is not the beat. Fewer or greater counts (actions) may be used within the space of a beat. *e.g. Kick Ball Change, Sweep*
    - Musically, a beat refers to the basic unit of time by which the musical structure is defined.
    - Counts and beats are often confused, particularly when trying to maintain a count to music where the beat or the rhythm is 'soft'.
- A count may also be used with reference to the music to define a delay or hesitation in the dance. In this case, the count and the beat are usually the same.
- For some dance figures the count may change according to the tempo or rhythm of the music. This is particularly true for aerials where "air time" must often be adjusted to ensure that a lift is safe, unrushed, and matches the music.
- Due to the confusion between counts and beats, and the occasional variability of counts, it is often best to define a 'call' for a figure. Calls provide a naming reference for actions within the figure that may refer, as most applicable, to the rhythm, beats, or motion required. Generally:

- ‘1, 2, 3 ...’ - refer to the appropriate beat in a sequence.
- ‘a’ – a quarter beat
- ‘and’ – a half beat
- ‘quick’ – a full beat
- ‘slow’ – two full beats
- ‘down, up, etc.’ – refer to the appropriate direction of motion
- ‘kick, lift, step etc.’ – refer to the required action

- There are no set rules to defining a call; whatever helps you complete a figure consistently, in time, and in harmony with partner is a winner. However, use of the standard beat references and obvious descriptors for directions and actions will allow others (or yourselves) to understand the call at a later date.

Timing <> Pressure & Control

- When to do something, what motion(s), how to do it comfortably:
  - What is possible –
    - Control ... you can’t move in a certain direction or action if you are still trying to ‘pull it together’ from the last figure/action.
    - Control ... one action can be used to help perform the next (or simultaneous) action.
    - Pressure ... pushing with/against partner, momentum, or movement across the floor.
  - What flows –
    - The right action/motion at the wrong time will make it all come apart.
    - Even the slightest movement with momentum at the right time will make a significant difference.
    - Create momentum and ‘flow’ through body control and movement.
    - Connection pressure - working off partner for momentum, movement, and control.
  - Smooth and relaxed (Refer further to Timing: Tempo – Smooth & Relaxed)
- Points of Control for Timing (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 4)
  - Sensitivity & Speed
    - Partner - Frame.
    - Core Body – Lead/Follow, Quick Shifts, Rotation
    - Floor – Redistribution/Transfers of Weight, Percussion

- Feet vs. Legs
    - Feet can be fast or slow, with actions generated/initiated through the ankles, knees, and hips.
    - Leg motions are generally slow, actions being generated largely by the hips and requiring movement of the entire leg.
    - Due to variety of actions and speed, the feet are more often employed for timing control. A notable exception is the sweep, which is primarily controlled through the leg and body.
- Wrist/Fingers vs. Arms
    - Wrist/Fingers may be fast or slow and variable in pressure, movement and direction. Timing is primarily controlled into and through most figures using the partnership connection achieved through wrist and fingers.
    - Arms are slow and limited by two hinge points at elbows and shoulders. Arms are most important for establishing frame and enhanced body contact.
    - Arm actions are generally slow. However, connecting with the body, fast changes are possible when shifting through frame – particularly with high body contact.
    - Arm actions tend to be naturally large, as movement through the elbows/shoulders results in subsequent movement of the lower/whole arm.
    - Small movements initiated through the arm may be enhanced through the wrist and fingers, requiring less pressure/emphasis.
- Muscle Isolation vs. Whole of Body
    - Muscle isolation allows for distinct timing emphasis and reinforcement – the performance of staccato actions (taps, pops, shrugs), gathering/holding actions (blocks, slides, spins), and punctuation ('snappy' finishes etc.).
    - Whole of body action assists with establishing and maintaining the base rhythm and connection with partner (*refer to week 4; Lead/Follow).
    - Actions through the arms/legs/body are generally complimentary. Hence, timing is reinforced using whole of body action, not just a particular action/figure element (e.g. back-step, arm raised on 3, spin on 4 etc.).

- Preparation/Recovery
    - Slow actions will typically precede and/or follow fast(er) actions.
    - According to the dance structure, certain beats through the basic rhythm/footwork are easier or harder to change.

        - The last two beats in the basic dance pattern are commonly the easiest to "play with", as the core elements of most dance figures will have been executed at this point.
        - The first two beats are often used to enhance momentum, quicken tempo, and position for figure execution.
        - The first two beats may be used as part of completion/recovery for preceding figures/actions and may thus result in key footwork changes to maintain timing – or deliberately altered to emphasise timing.
- Floor & Body Pressures
    - Allows dancers to control their own actions individually, neither relying on the momentum of the dance nor their dance partners to bring them through a figure or action.
        - Control your actions, control the beat.
        - You decide when, not the music, not momentum – no more rushing and/or playing catch up with the music.
        - Control your movement – greater capacity to adjust to the positioning of other dancers or changes in the music.
    - Whole beat, whole motion – you do not get from A to B immediately! All the time in the beat should be used; actions and figures do not 'finish' on a particular count.
        - Beats are held, stretched, squeezed, stolen ... (active), not simply allowed to disappear (passive).
        - Beat awareness and maintenance is whole of body – as actions move through the body so the key point(s) of the body 'keeping' the beat may change. e.g. Feet → Body → Arms

Timing & Technique in Practice: Introduction to Music & Dance Rhythms

- Swing (4, 6, 8 counts – basic 4 beat rhythm)
- Jive (6 count – 'triple step' rhythm)
- Rock 'n' Roll (6 count – 'solid' beats and typically simple rhythm)
- 4Beat (4 count - 'solid' beats with variable rhythm and emphasis)
- Rockabilly (4 count – basic 4 beat rhythm; characteristic bop)
- All styles typically use music in common (4/4) time. Consequently, you can usually 'force' a dance style to the music, but it will not truly match if the rhythm of music and dance are not complimentary.
- Basic frame and connection in each style is important to matching and reinforcing body/dance rhythm with the music.

Week 2:

Quarter (¼), Half (½), Held (X+, 1¼, 1½, 1¾, 2) Beats

- Different music has different variation in it – ¼, ½, syncopated and held beats and rhythms may be more or less evident (Refer further to Timing: Rhythm).
    - RnR & R'billy are typically musically simple/steady and thus do not 'naturally' accommodate actions that are > or < 1 beat
    - Jive & Swing rhythms allow ready use of actions that are > or < 1 beat. As swing music is played intentionally with 'swung' notes (emphasised notes played slightly longer or shorter than the musical notation), it encourages corresponding variation through the dance.
    - While the music/dance style(s) may not encourage general use of action/timing variations, the music still has emphasis at certain points (e.g. chorus, end of phrase, instrumental breaks) and this should be reflected by variety in the actions, rhythm & tempo of the dance.
- According to the length of the beat to be used, different actions are appropriate and useful for maintaining or emphasising the rhythm & tempo of the dance.
    - Partial beats (¼, ½) – Actions are generally transitory, useful for preparation and positioning or the reinforcement of leads, momentum, or dance rhythm.
    - Held beats (X+...2) – Actions often involve the isolation of body parts and/or dance movement or shifts of momentum/tempo.
    - For dancing it can be useful to think of 'paired beats' (1,2) as this corresponds well with basic footwork structures. Where partial beats are used they tend to be 'balanced' by held beats to even the count (e.g. ½, 1½ ... 'and-slide'; ¼, 1¾ ... 'a-sweep'; 1+, -1 ... snappy spins).
        - More complex rhythms are possible, but typically work to maintain footwork transitions with basic dance structure (i.e. so that you don't end up 'wrong footed').
        - The concept can be applied to a single beat for quick transitions (e.g. ½, ½ or ¼, ¾ ... ball-change, push-offs, stomps, hip-shift). However, it remains likely to be most useful to consider such actions as part of the paired beat.
        - Most music is in 4/4 timing - 4 beats to the bar. It can therefore be useful to examine possible variation across 4 beat sets, providing greater capacity to match the dance to the music (musicality). This is partly why Swing and 4-Beat are 'naturally' expressive and innovative dance styles; however, the concept is applicable to all 'nostalgia' dance styles.

- Quarter Beats (¼)
    - Feet & Legs: Actions
        - Partial transfers of weight. e.g. push-off, shuffle, ball-change
            - *Jitterbug Stroll - Beoly Oly, Boogie Back...*
        - Taps, Brushes, Hits... Tap Footwork
        - Off the floor – wraps, crosses, hooks, flicks, hops, skips
    - Feet & Legs: Pressure
        - Sharp and heavy – directional change or momentum control.
        - Smooth and light – transition or movement with standard rhythm and tempo, working with momentum.
        - Relaxed vs. energetic... internal body pressure and muscle isolation (Refer further to Timing: Tempo – Smooth & Relaxed; Energy & Transitions).
    - Fingers & Wrists: Actions
        - Flick/Hook
        - Roll, Brace
        - "Nudges", Taps
    - Fingers & Wrists: Pressure
        - Flicks, Nudges, Taps – work with momentum, and thus typically require lighter pressure but may occasionally be strong.
        - Brace, Hook – shift or halt momentum, thus involve strong pressure or a gradual increase/redirection of pressure.
        - Roll – variable pressure, determined by momentum and tempo.
    - Body: Actions
        - Hip/Shoulder Shifts and 'Pops'
        - Head Shifts, Arms
    - Body: Pressure
        - Sharp actions are employed to emphasise the rhythm of the dance/music. Those actions working to partner or through the body will tend to be lighter, while those working through connection with the floor will tend to apply stronger pressures with partial transfers of weight.
        - Through body motion provides reinforcement of the lead (Refer further to Lead/Follow wks 5&6; Technique: Core Body Movement; Timing: Through Body Timing). Use of contra body movement and points of control allow for significant internal body pressure and positive application of the partnership connection.

- Half Beats (½)
    - ¼ beat actions may be performed as ½ beat actions, although certain emphasis may be lost with the typically more relaxed motion.
    - Feet & Legs: Actions
        - Partial or full transfers of weight. e.g. quick steps (rotation or positioning), shifts of weight (e.g. Elvis Legs), ¼ beat actions.
        - Typically for transition through footwork and to achieve positions quickly or that may be difficult using standard actions or timing.
        - Up Tempo shifts through the dance – "quick" figures.
        - Fundamental shifts of dance rhythm –
            - Advanced Kick-Step (ball change; hip motion)
            - Advanced 4-Beat (wrap/cross/hook; lead reinforcement)
            - Advanced Rockabilly (arm rhythms; double speed turns)
            - Continental Jive/RnR (ball change; bounce/hop)
    - Feet & Legs: Pressure
        - Solid or 'grounded' – active but not heavy pressure into the floor, typically as preparation for liftwork or to control rotational momentum.
    - Fingers, Wrists, & Arms: Actions
        - Preparation - Blocks, Frame Shifts, Hand Changes.
        - Reinforcement & Control - Holds, Pushes, Catches.
    - Fingers, Wrists, & Arms: Pressure (Refer further to Timing: Tempo – Energy & Transitions; Technique: Momentum)
        - "Quick" leads – application of pressure earlier than 'usual'.
        - Momentum leads – application of pressure longer than 'usual'.
        - Momentum leads – reapplication of pressure at certain points through an action to reinforce or continue momentum/direction. e.g. Double Spins
    - Body: Actions
        - Hip/Shoulder Rolls
        - Hip Lift/Crunch
    - Body: Pressure
        - Body motion may form part of the standard dance rhythm and thus be quite relaxed, with no pronounced application of internal body pressure and light partnership connection. Greater pressure may arise as the body motion is exaggerated to

emphasise the dance/music rhythm(s) (Refer further to Timing: Through Body Timing; Technique: Complimentary Body Motion).

- Body pressure may shift during the hip/shoulder action in accordance with preparation/momentum requirements. Internal body pressure and partnership pressure can thus often be isolated to certain areas and/or move between points. e.g. Counterbalance, Quick Slides (Refer further to Technique: wks 3-6).

- Held Beats (X+)
  - Held beats may be thought of as 'slow points' in the dance, although this may only be relative to faster actions. For example, a ¾ beat action will seem slow in comparison to a preceding ¼ beat action, yet remains faster than a standard full (1) beat action.
  - Feet & Legs: Actions
    - Recovery, Preparation – Rock/Sway, Stationary, Redistribution of Weight.
    - Presentation – Sweeps, Slides, Drags, Points, Lunge, Redistribution of Weight, Body Lines & Rounding.
  - Feet & Legs: Pressure
    - Actions that hold the beat typically apply a lot of floor pressure, either through the supporting foot or both feet. This may involve distinct distribution of weight.
    - All movement of weight through a 'held' action requires increased control through the body, and thus greater awareness of internal body pressures. *Slower is harder...*
  - Fingers, Wrists, & Arms: Actions
    - Actions generally reinforce or compliment the slower actions through the body, legs, and feet. These body parts are used to 'finish' the presentation of body lines and rounding.
    - Reinforcement & Control - Holds, Pushes, Pulls, 'Locks'.
  - Fingers, Wrists, & Arms: Pressure (Refer further to Timing: Through Body Timing).
    - Gathering or 'held' actions are useful for lead preparation, allowing for slow and gentle blocks, directional shifts, and establishment of correct partnership pressure prior to tempo changes.
  - Body: Actions
    - All the close stuff! Body Rolls, Rotation, Rocks etc.
    - Counterbalance, Flow (Refer further to Timing: Tempo – Smooth & Relaxed; Technique: Hip Movement, Balance).

- Body: Pressure
  - Presentation through a 'held' action often requires exaggerated body positioning and control. Floor pressure and internal body pressure may therefore be pronounced. However, connection pressure should remain light to firm.

Distribution & Transfer of Weight

- Definitions – Transfer vs. Distribution
  - Distribution of Weight (DoW) - where the weight exists in relation to the body.
    - Through the foot (front & back) – Heel vs. Flat vs. Ball vs. Toe
    - Through the foot (sides) – Inside Edge vs. Outside Edge
    - Through the body – Centre vs. Counter vs. Into Partner
    - Through the floor – Lift vs. Grounding
  - Transfer of Weight (ToW) – transition of weight from one part of the body to another.
    - Typically from foot to foot, side to side.
    - Other parts of the body where weight may be transferred include hands, hips, knees, and posterior; although the latter may often be unintentional!
    - In lifts, the transfer of weight may also occur between partners.
- ToWs may take place with a particular redistribution of weight.
  - Rolling through the feet -
    - Side to side, inside to outside edge.
    - Front to back, heel – flat – ball - toe.
  - Extensions – Sweeps & Slides
    - Partial pressure through the extended vs. supporting foot
    - Push-Off vs. Compression
  - Lifts
- Actions through the body may facilitate or necessitate certain transfers and/or redistributions of weight ... *this is good when it is deliberate!*
  - Hip Roll/Flick/Lift
    - Roll creates shift between inside/outside edge of the foot e.g. *Jitterbug Stroll - Hip Roll*
    - Lift necessitates partial ToW e.g. Rockabilly Tap

        - Flick creates a lot of momentum and facilitates quick transition.
    - Sweeps, Hooks, Jumps - rotation and momentum.
    - Counterbalance/Spring, Frame and Direction - towards/away from partner/floor, momentum and movement down line of dance.
    - Leads (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 6).
- Excepting deliberate pauses and hesitations, there should be constant redistribution of weight through the body (Refer further to Timing: Tempo – Smooth & Relaxed; Lead/Follow wk 5). This facilitates better awareness and application of:
    - Internal Body Pressure – e.g. *Jitterbug Stroll - Forward/Back Roll*
    - Pressure into the Floor.
    - Momentum - Position/Prepare (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 2).

Week 3:

Tempo – Smooth & Relaxed

- Dancing in a smooth and relaxed manner does not intrinsically require dancing 'slow'; although slower and more controlled movement will often help.
    - Fast actions can be executed in a smooth and relaxed manner, provided that individual movements are small and not rushed. Large motions cannot readily 'fit' the beat.
        - Actions may merge together through connected body parts, or overlap if isolated body parts are used.
        - Actions are controlled and deliberate, but executed with lower input of energy ... *Actions are **allowed** to happen, rather than **forced** to happen.*
    - Slower actions will tend to facilitate a smooth and relaxed motion and tempo to the dance. However, when staccato rhythms are employed or the motion is part of "winding up" (creating contra body pressure), the slower movement is often prelude to a sharper or more energetic action.
        - Smooth and relaxed does not mean 'zone out' (Refer further to Lead/Follow wks 1&5). *Be ready to lead/follow shifts of tempo and momentum.*
        - Smooth and relaxed does not mean 'keep it simple' (although this does help). It is establishing a fluid pattern of dance that is energy efficient and improves control (Refer further to Timing: Keeping It Together).
- How actions are executed is as important (arguably more important) as when the actions are executed.
    - Correct (direction, placement, energy) and controlled (internal body pressure, floor pressure, partnership connection) movement through an action helps achieve and maintain timing.
    - To achieve the best movement (in this case smooth/relaxed) through an action, appropriate positioning and preparation is necessary.
        - *The execution of actions with correct timing (and momentum) does not "just happen".*
        - *It is not sufficient to know what happens on a particular beat - it must also be understood how an action fits with those that precede and follow it.*
    - Smooth actions in practice: *Jitterbug Stroll - Pivots*
        - Redistribution of Weight
        - Floor Pressure

- Smooth & Relaxed = Fluid connection between actions ... *Flow*
    - Actions through one part of the body transition in a continuous motion to other parts of the body.
    - Actions in one direction do not abruptly shift to another direction - conservation of momentum.
        - Blocks are not sudden, but require suitable compression to soften the action and prepare movement.
        - Faster actions (e.g. swivels, double kicks etc.) typically move with the dance – they do not fight momentum.
    - Constant transition between body motions, directions, and momentum means that you are always working through the dance with your partner (provided that the partnership connection is active).
        - Lead/Follow does not stop (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 1).
        - A smooth and relaxed dance rhythm facilitates better preparation/awareness into the execution of figure (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 5).
- Tempo & Music: Smooth & Relaxed
    - Steady Rhythm – i.e. dancing smooth and relaxed is the 'default'.
    - Softer Phrases – relaxed or down tempo; dancing should not be energetic or rushed when this does not fit the music.
    - Emphasis – temporary shifts of tempo or energetic actions may be employed when appropriate highlights occur during the music.
    - Different musical styles have common rhythms and patterns of accentuation. Listening to music of a style and actively 'tuning in' to the beat and common musical changes allows better understanding of song structure and progression. This provides confidence to match your actions to the music without hesitation or rushing.
- Relax...
    - The majority of a dance may be up tempo (energetic), but there should always be opportunity to relax a little. These occasions should be used to reinforce timing.
    - When 'cruising' it can be easy to rush through the actions. Consistent rhythm through all figures, particularly through the footwork, is essential to staying in time. Footwork should be practiced until it does not require active thought and thus maintains itself.
        - *Smooth and relaxed footwork variations are possible only once you do not need to "think through" the individual changes.*
        - *Body movement may be practiced in a similar manner to footwork, such that it is ready to use when it suits the dance.*

Floor Pressure & Core Body Movement

- Foot Pressure: the 'weight' or amount of push into the floor occurring through given part(s) of the foot for a particular time.
- General Rules –
    - Body weight is kept over the feet (or supporting foot) at all times. Hence, the distribution of pressure through the feet shifts with body movement.
        - Counterbalance is an exception to the rule of body weight remaining over the feet. However, weight always returns to being over the feet and this position typically serves as the centre point for transitions of direction employing counterbalance. e.g. Push Pulls.
    - Redistributions of weight occur through the centre ball of foot –
        - Back ←→ Front
        - Inside → Outside
        - Redistribution of weight may also rarely be achieved through the heels/outside edge of foot e.g. Swish, Body Roll
    - More pressure provides more control, but also tends to slow transition through foot actions.
        - Different dance styles have (or can be given) different 'weight'.
        - 'Lighter' styles allow for faster foot movement but require more conscious control of actions and timing; it's easier to skip, shuffle, or fudge through the footwork.
        - 'Heavier' styles are more grounded (stable) and facilitate stronger partnership connection, but can tend to be limited in footwork variation and dance movement.
        - In any dance style there will be regular transition between more/less pressure into the floor. It is important to understand when to ease/release pressure to allow for smooth transition through the foot actions.
        - Greater foot pressure may be applied to achieve additional control (balance, preparation, recovery) or to slow momentum. e.g. spins/rotation – *Jitterbug Stroll: Pivots*
- Achieving control through foot pressure requires the use of many body parts, not just more push through the legs/feet.
    - Compression: Knees and Ankles
        - Your joints act like a sponge – don't lock up!
        - Transfers of weight do not usually happen all at once; release from one foot occurs as pressure is applied on the other foot.

        - Use of compression should be consistent and constant throughout the dance. This process is a component of the constant transition in Lead/Follow pressures and complimentary body motion (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 1,5).
    - Toes & Ball of Foot: Balance and Changes of Direction
        - "Grab" the floor for balance control and even distribution of pressure through the front of the foot.
        - Flex to generate push in complement to body motion and/or momentum, particularly during changes of direction.
        - Partial pressure into the floor through the non-supporting foot assists balance and body control.
    - Body: Connecting Feet, Legs, & Arms
        - Push into the floor is generated from the stomach.
        - While applying downwards pressure there is matching lift upwards through the body – this connects the legs and arms, providing positive pressure while preventing the dancer being 'heavy' (full weight falling or actively pushing into the floor).
        - A loose stomach impedes the generation of floor pressure and control through the body.
- Core Body Movement: the body must be allowed to move (flex) to allow smooth transitions between actions and redistribution of weight.
    - Movement into position.
    - A component of the constant Transmit/Receive process for Lead/Follow (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 1).
    - Timing is encouraged through the body, rather than in isolation or through specific body parts such as the legs/arms (Refer further to wk 4).
    - Movement through the body helps bring other body parts into an action and/or generate the partnership pressure required for suitable movement, frame, and momentum (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 6).
    - Smooth body movement is achieved by stretch and squeeze through the abdominals, hips, & upper torso.
        - Spring & Counterbalance
        - Curls & Rolls
        - Contra Body Movement – upper torso winding the opposite direction to the lower body. e.g. *Jitterbug Stroll: Pivots, Breaks*
    - Body movement should match, compliment, or reinforce the actions of a figure (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 6). Good body movement thus helps stabilise timing and should not be a source of confusion (Refer further to wk 4). Conversely, not using the body will often impede the flow of a figure and result in hesitations, delays or other loss of timing.

Week 4:

Through Body Timing – Using the Whole Beat

- Timing through different body parts (e.g. arms/legs) is usually matched, but should be varied to facilitate the execution of certain figures/actions and also to provide musicality.
    - Matching motions through the arms and legs provide a consistent connection and rhythm through the body. However, the arms and legs do not have to be moving to keep time:
        - Actions/pressure into the floor.
        - Actions through the body.
        - Internal count.
    - Actions may be complimentary in nature, reinforcing certain beats (e.g. Stomps, Syncopation) or work within base timing (e.g. Half/Double speed actions or rhythm).
    - Hesitation and halts are used for presentation and emphasis of certain body lines, positions, or actions. Held positions through one part of the body can facilitate complex timing and patterns through other body parts e.g. Isolated upper torso for complex footwork variation.
    - Held beats/actions are useful for preparation and recovery. However, actions will often be isolated as the overall dance rhythm and tempo is maintained.
- Body movement is essential for creating fluidity through the dance.
    - Compression to control movement and "soak up the beat". Similar to use of the knees/ankles for floor pressure, body compression is control primarily generated through the use of the stomach muscles pulling into the body. Tension is also applied through the outer body parts (wrist, elbows, shoulders, inner leg etc.) to smooth transition through actions.
        - Compression through the body should be used to reinforce leads, timing, and momentum. It provides both the anchor to stabilise actions/figures and the energy to generate movement.
        - Gradual transition into position or actions is achieved through compression. There is no advantage to finishing movement into position early. Rather there is benefit to easing into position, as there are no sudden halts or jerks through frame or into leads.
    - Smooth transition from one position, action, or direction is largely initiated through compression shifts in conjunction with controlled body movement and placement.
    - Shifts in compression and through the body may be generated much more quickly than larger or more forceful actions through the legs and

arms. This allows for quick changes to emphasise accents or highlights in the music.

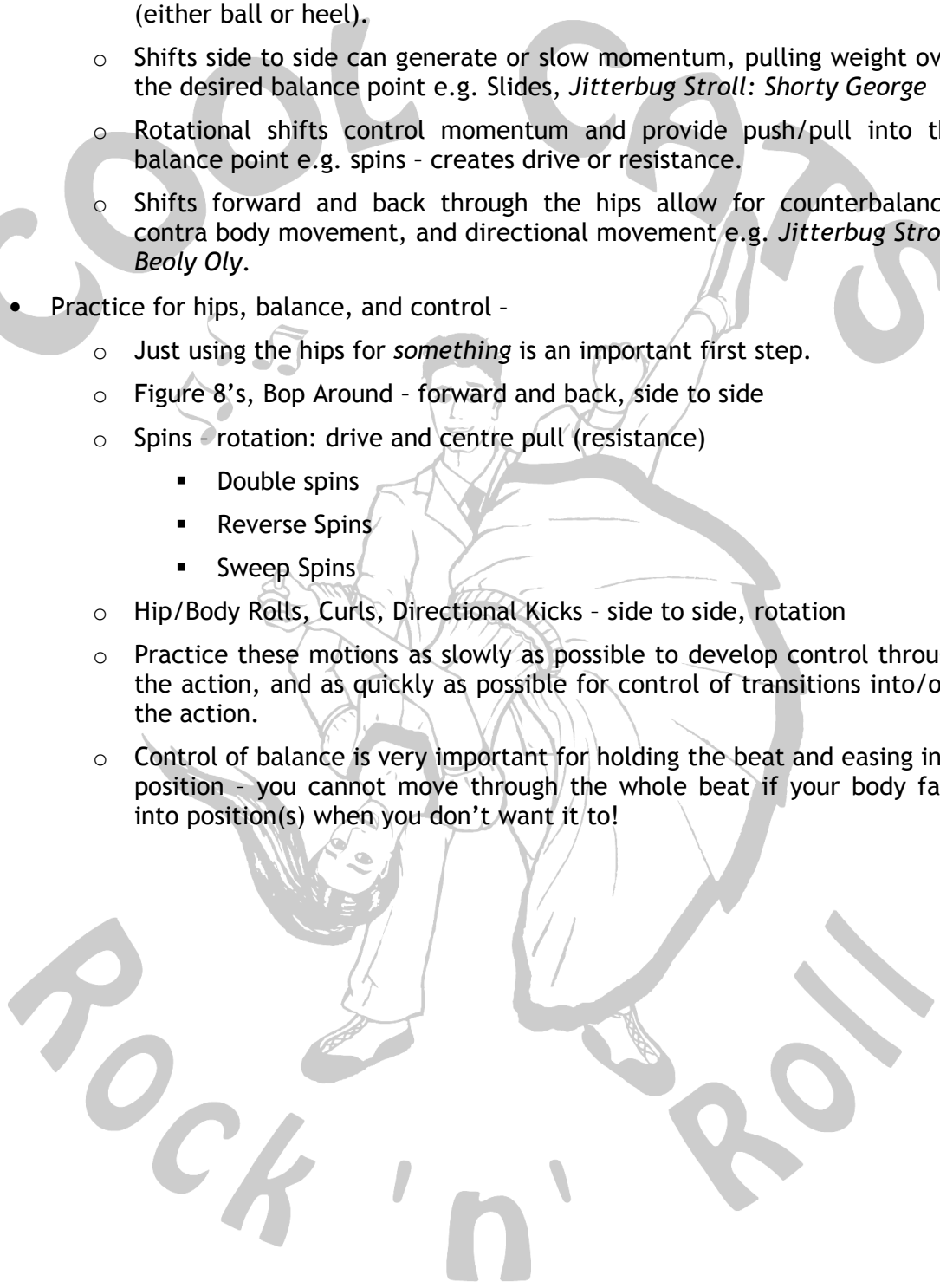
- You do not want to limit yourself to the timing of the principal actions required to complete figures; musical interpretation and timing is not dictated solely by the structure of a dance.
- Quick shifts can help adjust for the realities of social dancing, where sudden stops or rapid foot transfers are required to avoid/adjust for other dancers.
- Quick shifts are useful to provide Lead signals and to allow the Follow to respond, particularly when caught 'on the hop' (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 1, wk2, wk6).

- Using the whole beat is about not only avoiding rushing through figures and the dance, but also the awareness and preparation to match body movement and actions with accents into/out of/through the beat.
  - The more 'tools in the kit', the more options a dancer has for timing variation, reinforcement, and recovery. Learn to engage your whole body with the dance.
    - (L) Understanding the "when" of actions through/into figures and timing the lead accordingly helps the Follow be positioned and moving suitably to allow smooth execution (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk6). Encouraging and guiding the Follow through the dance (remember: she should be dancing *with* you) is much preferable to pushing/pulling her through the dance.
    - (F) Using the body through the whole beat is often important to generate the correct connection pressure to enable the Lead to direct/block your actions and momentum (e.g. Rockabilly Hip Lift). The best dancing is *with partner*; this means that without full movement by the Follow through and into the dance the capacity of the Lead to provide the best signal is impaired.
  - *It's difficult to steer a stationary ship - work the body!*

Hip Movement, Balance

- Hips provide the centre point for body movement:
  - Centre of body, centre of gravity.
  - Shift of weight through the hips can have a large effect on balance, thus momentum, thus position and direction.
  - Shifts through the hips have a large influence on body motion – and thus can help or hinder body movement into/through actions. e.g. *Jitterbug Stroll: Knee Slaps*

- Hips provide tools and reference points for balance:
    - At centre balance, hips should be placed over the supporting foot (either ball or heel).
    - Shifts side to side can generate or slow momentum, pulling weight over the desired balance point e.g. Slides, *Jitterbug Stroll: Shorty George*
    - Rotational shifts control momentum and provide push/pull into the balance point e.g. spins – creates drive or resistance.
    - Shifts forward and back through the hips allow for counterbalance, contra body movement, and directional movement e.g. *Jitterbug Stroll: Beoly Oly*.
- Practice for hips, balance, and control –
    - Just using the hips for *something* is an important first step.
    - Figure 8's, Bop Around – forward and back, side to side
    - Spins – rotation: drive and centre pull (resistance)
        - Double spins
        - Reverse Spins
        - Sweep Spins
    - Hip/Body Rolls, Curls, Directional Kicks – side to side, rotation
    - Practice these motions as slowly as possible to develop control through the action, and as quickly as possible for control of transitions into/out the action.
    - Control of balance is very important for holding the beat and easing into position – you cannot move through the whole beat if your body falls into position(s) when you don't want it to!



Week 5:

Tempo – Energy & Transitions

- Tempo: Refers to pace; with respect to dancing this is the rate of motion (energy) through the dance rather than the speed of the music.
    - Certain actions through the body will be faster or slower, according to momentum, muscles required, and degree of movement. Slower actions facilitate down tempo transitions, while faster actions are useful to shift the dance up tempo.
    - Larger actions require more pace & energy than smaller actions if they are to be accomplished within the same beat allocation. Making actions larger or smaller thus allows the tempo of the dance to be adjusted to match the music.
    - When a shift in the size, pace, and/or energy of an action is made affects how the transition between actions and tempo is achieved. How energy is applied is also important.
        - Spring – Big vs. Small <> More/Less/Same Energy
        - Slide – Quick vs. Slow / Big vs. Small <> Energy/Timing
- Up tempo transitions are typically generated by the use of greater energy into/through an action, often resulting in a larger action and/or greater movement. The tempo shift is often initiated by commencement of an action slightly earlier during the beat than the baseline rhythm would dictate.
    - 'Stealing the beat'.
    - The increase in energy may be momentary (emphasis, positioning) or sustained (through dance tempo shift).
    - The increase in energy frequently relates to an increase in floor and/or connection pressure. However, this should relax upon return to standard tempo and the baseline rhythm of the dance.
    - Muscle and body part isolation can allow for up tempo shifts without a large expenditure of energy. e.g. hips (Refer further to wk3). Up tempo shifts should not necessitate frantic motion or extensive effort – both large and small actions may be used, remaining controlled and relatively relaxed.
    - Up tempo transitions generally require good preparation and positioning (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 1) to be executed well. Faster, more energetic actions allow less room for error and correction.
- Down tempo transitions are associated with less (actual or apparent) energy. Fewer or smaller actions provide down tempo shifts with less actual use of energy, providing a welcome rest. In contrast, actively slowed/controlled/held motions can appear less energetic but require significant effort.

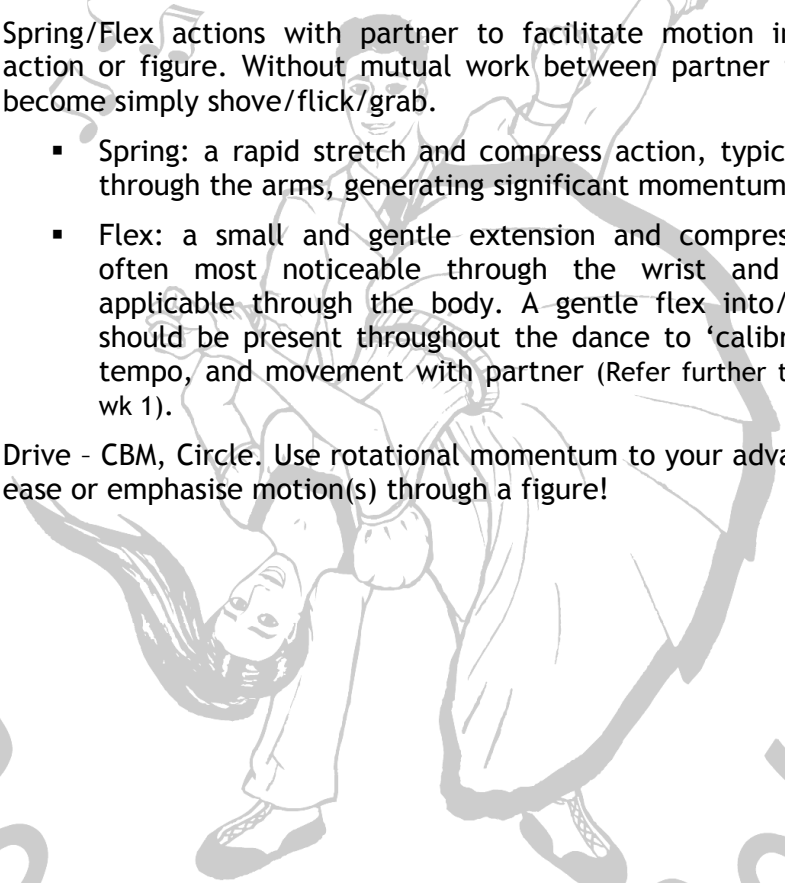
- Working to reduce or redirect momentum through/into actions requires control and thus considerable effort through the body. While the outward appearance of the dance should appear smooth and relaxed, the leg and core body muscles (and to a lesser extent the upper torso) work actively and continuously.
- Using less or smaller actions can reduce energy input without changing the rhythm of the dance. This is one component of learning to dance at speed (fast music) while maintaining a relaxed presentation.
    - At faster dance speeds it is difficult to achieve a down tempo shift through the use of less/smaller actions alone. Held beats, hesitations, pauses, and through body emphasis are required.
- Momentary down tempo shifts may be achieved by using a part beat slightly longer than normal through an action – 'Stretching the beat'. The 'stretched beat' is generally compensated for with a complimentary faster action.
    - Down tempo shifts using 'stretched' or 'held' beats are very useful for recovery, whether from simple mistakes or to return to musical phrase.
    - Provided the lead is clear and transitions are smooth, down tempo shifts provide great preparation for up tempo highlights and emphasis.
    - In conjunction with faster body movements, 'stretched' beats and actions should be used to enhance the musical rhythm. This often results in a balancing of the energy input required to execute up-tempo actions.
    - *'Light and shade' is possible within figures as well throughout the dance.*
- Similar to 'stretching the beat' is the concept of dancing 'late' on the beat, much like swung notes are played slightly longer than musically written. This is not a change of rhythm or tempo, but is about allowing actions to fully complete before rushing into the next.
    - Transitions between actions therefore smooth through from one position/direction to the next, rather than being executed discretely. *Actions are not disconnected.*
    - Leading late on the beat is important for the return to 'standard' rhythm from down tempo shifts without appearing sharp, rushed, or stilted. The Follow is given the opportunity to complete actions in a relaxed manner before 'shifting gears'.

Complimentary Body Motion & Momentum

- Work with your own body and your partner's body to allow more action to be achieved with less effort.
    - Faster dancing is achieved not just by moving yourself, but in mutual movement with partner. Each dancer in the partnership assists the movement of the other into/through figures.
    - Position/Prepare (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 1) – This is important to allow you to work effectively off/with partner.
    - Working off the body is important to reinforce lead signals and points of control, steady motion and balance through figures or holds, or provide a platform to generate push/rotation.
        - e.g. *Jitterbug Stroll – Suzie Q's (Side by Side)*
    - Working to the body is important to generate or reinforce directional pressure, rhythm of movement, momentum, and internal body pressure.
        - e.g. *Jitterbug Stroll – Suzie Q's (Change Direction – Leg Swing)*
- With, Into, or Through??? – Complimentary body motion can be broadly categorised as either enhancing the existing movement of the body (reinforcement/assisting momentum) or creating tension through the body to facilitate subsequent rapid or energetic movement (generation of internal energy potential).
    - With – 'Flow', Swing, Slide, Nudge
    - Into – Stretch, Squeeze, Spring, Flex
    - Through – 'Wind-Up' (CBM), Wrap, Circle
- Arms & Legs connect through the body...
    - Movement of arms and legs together will help move the body through into position. Conversely, moving the body can help move the arms/legs into the required position.
    - Isolation through the body can allow defined movement without pulling frame out of alignment or 'dragging' body parts through an action. However, such movement may be used deliberately as part of preparation for following actions (Refer further to wk 6).
- Arms & Legs balance each other...
    - Matching actions are easier to co-ordinate and also serve to reinforce momentum/direction.
        - e.g. *Jitterbug Stroll – Suzie Q's (Arms & Legs – StS & Into Floor)*
    - Using the arms with the legs improves CBM and body balance.
        - e.g. *Jitterbug Stroll – Pivots*

    - Squeeze/Stretch actions are often balanced through opposing motion through the arms and/or legs – either your own body or your partner's!
        - e.g. *Jitterbug Stroll – Suzie Q's (Legs - In/Out)*

- Arms/Legs/Body of your dance partner are connected with you... Consider your body and your partner's body as a single dance entity. A single entity does not fight itself and may use all relevant parts to assist or improve the completion of an action.
    - Counterbalance.
    - Gathering/Securing catches, holds, frame, & position.
    - Matching actions reinforce movement, rhythm, tempo and overall timing – provided that these actions are synchronised with partner!
    - Spring/Flex actions with partner to facilitate motion into the next action or figure. Without mutual work between partner these actions become simply shove/flick/grab.
        - Spring: a rapid stretch and compress action, typically achieved through the arms, generating significant momentum.
        - Flex: a small and gentle extension and compression motion, often most noticeable through the wrist and fingers but applicable through the body. A gentle flex into/with partner should be present throughout the dance to 'calibrate' rhythm, tempo, and movement with partner (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 1).
    - Drive – CBM, Circle. Use rotational momentum to your advantage and to ease or emphasise motion(s) through a figure!



Week 6:

Keeping It Together – Back to Basic Rhythm & Tempo

- 'Light and shade' is noticeable through music and the dance because the basic timing (music signature/count), rhythm (accents & emphasis/pattern) and tempo (pace/energy) provides a consistent base-line.
    - The 'musical base-line' should be complemented by a 'dance base-line'. This base-line comprises of actions, footwork, structure, tempo (energy), body motion, and partnership connection.
    - The 'dance base-line' provides the backdrop against which all other variation is made. Consequently, it should be consistently evident throughout the dance and serve to reinforce timing.
- Establish the basic rhythm and tempo of the dance early and clearly:
    - Basic figures and footwork are useful to establish a relaxed motion that matches the rhythm and tempo of the music. Basic figures should be among the first employed following the musical introduction.
    - Identify the 'musical base-line', particularly key instruments or identifiable musical sequences (such as the chorus) that establish the beat and musical phrasing.
    - Identify the 'dance base-line' of your dance partner – their 'natural' motion and individual accentuation through the dance.
        - Socially it is also useful to identify the pattern(s) of movement of other dancers. Good floor-craft and awareness means that the actions of other dancers are less likely to unsettle your movement.
- Return to the 'dance base-line' deliberately and frequently:
    - Both up tempo and down tempo shifts in the dance will prove physically and mentally draining if maintained too long. Fatigue diminishes the capacity to execute actions cleanly and creates difficulty in both recalling (mental) and re-establishing base-line movement (physical).
    - Working frequently at the 'dance base-line' helps reinforce the pattern and timing, which is particularly useful if the beat is soft or musical phrasing is complex.
    - Assists the Lead by allowing changes in the pattern and motion of the dance to be identified more clearly by the Follow (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 5).
- Help your partner return to the 'dance base-line':
    - (Lead) Nudge/Brace/Brake as necessary to identify or reinforce for your partner where you 'are' with respect to the beat. This is a key

application of Flex to help (*not force*) your partner neither rush nor drag through the dance.

- (Follow) Maintain and use your frame. If the Lead is consistently adjusting to position appropriately to you it is difficult to return to the 'dance base-line' –
  - Quick shifts to position become necessary.
  - The capacity to work with/off partner is significantly diminished or entirely constrained.
  - Focus through the lead shifts to correction of/for partner, rather than establishing clear signals. *Fire-fighting*.
- (Lead) Down tempo shifts, such as hesitations, pauses, or 'play' sequences, are useful to wait through difficult musical phrasing, rest, & recover. *A reset button*.
- (Follow) Dance "sticky". Provided your 'dance base-line' is solid and you have good connection with partner, your movement will help the Lead move with/to you – or vice versa.
  - vs. Dancing *Away* or *Passive* – no connection, no signal.
  - Increases the receiver volume (Refer further to Lead/Follow wk 1). This makes it easier to match partner, resulting in less interference and reducing/simplifying Lead effort – more attention may be paid to core timing.
- Ease into it and out of it. Transitions and tempo should be smooth and relaxed when returning to 'dance base-line'. *Don't throw your partner off with gaps in partnership connection*.

Non-Complimentary Actions & Preparation

- Non-complimentary actions are those that are cross-momentum (in part) or that require differing movement through directions, pressures or timing in usually complimentary body parts (e.g. feet/hands).
  - *Pat your head, rub your stomach...*
- To successfully execute NCAs it is useful to identify or establish a point of similarity or commonality between the actions:
  - Direction/Momentum
    - e.g. Roll-Over*
  - Timing/Rhythm
    - e.g. *Jitterbug Stroll – Suzie Q's; Tick Tocks (Feet/Arms)*
  - Pressure – into floor, through the body, with partner

- Usually there are multiple points of commonality* – there are just one or two elements that rub the 'wrong way'. For good musicality the actions should at least match or complement the music!

- Preparation is the key to performing NCAs smoothly as they are not 'natural' or intuitive in their motion.
  - Develop awareness of the music and understanding of the different rhythm(s) present.
  - Practice the actions – become comfortable with how your body can move & how to make corrections.
  - Position and prepare so that you are able to use/control momentum.
    - Use the beats prior to an action to establish direction and flow – ease into it.
    - Control your distribution of weight.
    - (Lead) Establish the pattern of movement.
    - (Follow) Go With It!
- With broader knowledge, understanding, and familiarity with the music your body movement, isolation of actions, and range of 'comfortable' motions will increase.
  - It is useful to keep working on actions that you 'don't get' or are uncomfortable with.
  - Actions you don't like or seem less relevant to your dance still will still inform and progress your overall dance. Motions and rhythms are established and create 'muscle memory'. Once the muscles know how to move, the different actions can be employed as desired in conjunction with the music.
  - Use it or lose it! Balance control and quality with attempting harder actions such as NCAs that expand your dance and improve musicality.