

North Houston Swing Dance Club

Friday March 14th, 2008

Club News

Well, lets get right to it.

This week was about *dancing!* You got the moves, you got the patterns, you got the smiles. Now we're gonna dance. All of our classes this week were about learning to count the music, and learning how to dance to the phrases in the songs we hear. We focused on arm catches as far as the moves go, but what the goal was, and will continue to be as we grow into better dancers, is to match up our dance moves with the song we're dancing to. The arm catch is a great place to start because it takes 2 steps to get there, and one more to hit or accent the music on the beat we want to highlight. Okay, here goes:

You know how a song has a beat right? You can hear the drums or the bass guitar usually pounding out a beat. Put 8 of those beats together, and you have a music phrase in swing music. A phrase has 8 beats - 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8. Then we start over, counting again on the first beat of the next phrase. This first beat, is a great place to do something while you are dancing which emphasizes this beginning. And many times, a song will have a break on this first beat. The music might actually stop while the band holds that quiet spot for a couple of beats. Or it might hit the beat hard with a drum and cymbal hit, then keep on going without actually stopping. In any case, this spot in the music is we can make our dance really fit the song. So what the group did Thursday, was start off with a 6-count basic. Next, begin the arm catch on 7. On count 7, The leader steps back and gives a J-hook lead. The follower steps forward and prepares for her 180 degree turn. On count 8, the leader focuses on the follower's left arm as she completes her half turn and grasps that arm, allowing her to turn another 1/4 to 1/2 turn on count 1. The follower completes her half turn on 8, but recognizes that she's being encouraged to over-rotate a bit, so that she is finally stopped 1/4 to 1/2 of a turn farther and is stopped finally on the 1.

This sets up all kinds of great possibilities because if the music stops, you're there, Baby! It's a great position to vamp, or strut or pose...whatever you choose! If the music doesn't stop on that count of 1, you can smoothly stretch the move a few beats, or spin out of it, or keep dancing into the next pattern as you see fit.

This is awesome stuff, but its one of the hardest things to teach, and many an instructor will shy away from this because its so hard to learn! This is HARD! This takes a lot of practice, a lot of trial and error. But when you get it.....you're gonna love it because you can *feel* it! Your fancy moves will fit the song, and you'll be dancing!

Awesome class y'all! Thank you Bobby and Ann! Keep after it. If you're like me, you've now been jinxed, and you're gonna start counting every song you hear. For that, we apologize. For the new way you're gonna be dancing....we applaud!!

Spotlight on Novice Invitational

In 2 more weeks, the Novice Invitational Dance Contest will be held here in Houston at Melody Club. That's the weekend of March 28th. This contest is focused on Novice or beginner dancers. But even if you don't enter a competition, make every effort to get down for at least one night if you can. See, the competition will last about 45 minutes, and then there'll be social dancing just like at our club for about an hour. Then the next contest will run, and you get to see some great dancing while you rest and re-hydrate (or whatever...duh!!), then its social dancing again. This goes on from afternoon until the place shuts downsometime around 2:00AM! And as if that isn't enough, check this out: There are workshops you can attend: one on Friday night and three on Saturday morning.

The Workshop instructors are pretty cool too. You already know Samantha Buckwalter, right? She taught at our club last year. Then you've got Bryan Spivey, Terry Roseborough, and Jeanne DeGeyter. Bryan is from right here in Houston, Texas. You can't miss Brian. He's tall, bald, usually has a big ol' smile on his face. Of course, there's a lot of us bald guys out there now too. But Bryan, or Bubba, well... you can't miss him! Then there's Terry is from Dallas, and you're gonna love his classes. He always adds some 'get-down' moves to style up your dancing. And then there's the oh-so-fine...Jeanne DeGeyter. Jeanne is from Tulsa and you're gonna love how she dances, andshe's pretty 'easy on the eyes' too! Each of these Pro's are available for private instruction too, so make contact with them and schedule a lesson while they're in town. I've taken a lesson with each of them at some point. If you've never taken a private lesson, its an awesome experience. I highly recommend that you try it if you can. (By the way, our own Bobby Pritchard teaches private lessons too, so be sure to talk with him too!)

Here's the link with the info for the weekend event.

<http://swwc.org/novice/?SID=07BA87DFB6C0217DCF220D96D7CF5CBB60B>

Instead of photos this week, I'm going to attach links to the folks I just talked about.

Here's Jeanne's site: <http://www.jeannedegeyter.com/>

Here's Terry's site: <http://www.terryswingprince.com/>

Samantha and Bryan don't have a website, but here's some YouTube videos you may enjoy. As you watch these videos, remember our lesson from this week. Count the music in 8's and watch how the dancers work the song.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pk9A6L8KN2U>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMPtyGNbbCM>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EZighHIVjA&feature=related>

See ya next week!

Wayne