

## THE RULES OF THE BUENOS AIRES MILONGA DANCEFLOOR

There seem to be more and more cuts and bruises incurred and tights laddered on the dancefloor, and increasingly angry and stressed milongueros.

Please remember that the original purpose of the milonga **códigos**, traditional rules, was to civilise the dancefloor...

It may help you enjoy the Buenos Aires milonga if you understand and follow these rules:

- The invitation to dance is by **cabeceo** - catching and holding the eye of a potential partner - the man nods his head to say that he wishes to dance, the lady agrees by nodding back;
- If you do not want to dance with someone, do not look directly at them;
- If you do want to dance with someone but they won't look at you, respect their decision not to dance with you. Do not approach them verbally and do not stare at them. The best way to get their attention is by dancing well with somebody else, then try to cabeceo them later;
- If someone is clearly busy – eating or changing her shoes, for example – she is not available to dance. Wait til she is finished before you try to cabeceo her;
- A lady sitting alone or with other ladies, looking out at the start of a tanda, is available to dance. A lady sitting with a gentleman is not available to dance unless her partner first gets up and leaves her alone;
- Once you have contracted a partner by cabeceo, the lady stays in her seat and waits for the man to approach her table. When he arrives, confirming the

arrangement, she gets up and joins him on the dancefloor;

- The tunes are arranged in sets of four, called **tandas**. These are generally themed by orchestra or epoch. When you agree to dance with someone, it is only for the current tanda. At the end of each tanda, there is some non-tango music called the **cortina**, when everyone returns to their seat to be available to dance with a new partner;
- It is very rude to leave your partner in the middle of a tanda, this should only be done in extreme circumstances, for example if the person is hurting you or being offensive. Beginners may find it useful to wait until a couple of tunes have passed in the tanda before contracting a dance, to make it easier for both dancers. Experienced dancers should be generous with their expertise, but it is kinder to limit it to half a tanda;
- When walking onto the dancefloor, take care not to step out in front of those already dancing;
- Follow the line of dance, which is ANTI-CLOCKWISE;
- Keep to your lane, no zig-zagging, no racing against other couples. Enjoy the space you have rather than covetting your neighbour's;
- Do not overtake the couple dancing in front of you, they are playing with the space available to them and have every right to dance slowly;
- If you bump into someone, don't look for who to blame, just apologise to the other couple and to your partner, and move on;
- Bear in mind that if you keep crashing, it may well be because of your own behaviour rather than everyone else's! Sit out a couple of tandas and observe the flow;
- Remember this is Salon Tango, not a show - dance

accordingly and safely within the space available...

e.g. no high kicks, no jumps, no big sweeps, and only modest adornments;

- Do not talk while dancing, save conversation for the space at the beginning of each tune and the cortina;
- There is no kissing on the dancefloor;
- At the end of the tanda, the gentleman accompanies the lady back to her table and thanks her for the dance. Old milongueros try to end the tanda where they began it to save the lady having to walk back across the dancefloor, though this is not always possible;
- The embrace ends when the music stops, the gentleman should let go of his partner and not continue touching her between tangos or during the cortina. Neither should he hold her hand walking back to her seat as this gives a signal to other men that there is some sort of relationship;
- If you agree to dance more than three tandas with someone you do not know, it implies that you are interested in them beyond the milonga! There is nothing wrong with that but don't be surprised or offended if you then receive a proposition. If you are not so inclined, simply stop at three tandas.

Remember that people live how they dance and dance how they live: an aggressive, selfish or inconsiderate person may bring those qualities to the dancefloor. By the same token, maybe a kind, generous and patient person will make a better partner, even with little experience. It can be better to say no than to accept and suffer a partner with no respect for the rules, other dancers or indeed the tango as a social dance.

**A better milonga for everyone!**

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