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[Tango Orchestra Rhythms – Dos, Cuatro, and Sincopa](#)

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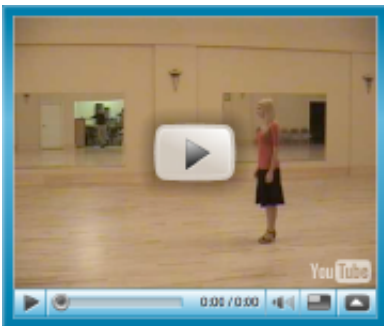
Tango Solstice Weekend – 6/27/09

Introduction to Musicality – 3:45-5:00pm

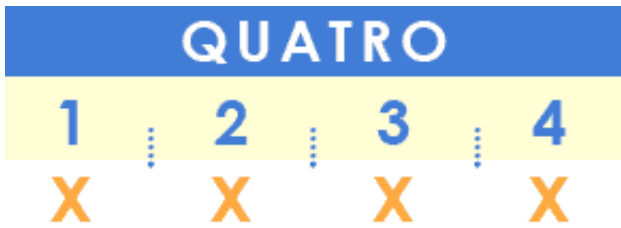
with teachers [Sharna Fabiano](#) & [Glover Gill](#)

Overview:

To notice the different rhythmic patterns used by the majority of Tango composers in the Golden Age. The three main rhythms discussed were *Cuatro*, *Dos*, and *Sincopa*. Each of these occur within 4 beats of music and were demonstrated by having the class walk on beats 1 and 3 and clapping on the appropriate beats for each rhythm.



The Cuatro Rhythm:



This rhythm accents each beat in the measure. If I count 1 2 3 4, I would be walking on beats 1 and 3, but clapping my hands on each of the four beats:

1. walk + clap
2. (pause) clap
3. walk + clap
4. (pause) clap

The Dos Rhythm:



This rhythm accents only beats 1 and 3, the same beats we walked on. If I count 1 2 3 4, I would be walking and clapping on beats 1 and 3, and pausing without clapping on beats 2 and 4:

1. walk + clap
2. pause
3. walk + clap
4. pause

The Sincopa Rhythm:



This rhythm was a little more complicated, but is present in all Golden Age Tango compositions. If you cut each of the four beats in the measure in half, you would count the measure like this:

1 (and) 2 (and) 3 (and) 4 (and)

You would say the number and the word **and** in between each beat. Once again, count the above measure

out loud and clap where you see **bold orange** text:

1 (and) 2 (and) 3 (and) 4 (and)

Another way of seeing it would be this way:

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

Incorporating the Rhythms into Walking:

Realize that the walking beats in Tango are musically accented by notes played on the piano and upright bass. Sometimes the two instruments will play different rhythms, but the improvisational nature of Tango music and dance says you can choose to step on whichever rhythm being played (or that you hear personally). The music used during these exercises is entitled Milongueando En El 40 by Anibal Troilo.

[Download the song here](#)

(left-click to play in your browser or right-click and choose **Save Link As...**)

Drill 1 – Finding Dos

In place, the teacher counts 1 2 3 4 while clapping only on beats 1 and 3. Then, everyone walks forward on beats 1 and 3 while the teacher continues to count and they clap. Students are pausing and silent on beats 2 and 4. Explain that each walking step occurs only on the 1 and 3 beat for now.

Summary: Clap and walk on beats 1 and 3, pause and be silent on beats 2 and 4.

Drill 2 – Finding Cuatro

In place, the teacher counts 1 2 3 4 while clapping only on each beat. Then, everyone takes walking steps on each beat while also clapping on each beat. Students continue walking and clapping, never pausing or being silent.

Summary: Clap and walk on each beat during the Cuatro rhythm.

Drill 3 – Finding Sincopa

In place, the teacher claps the rhythm first without explaining the musical breakdown. In the center of the counts 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + while clapping only on beats 1 and 3. Then, everyone walks forward on beats 1 and 3 while the teacher continues to count and they clap. Students are pausing and silent on beats 2 and 4. Explain that each walking step occurs only on the 1 and 3 beat for now.

Summary: Clap and walk on beats 1 and 3, pause and be silent on beats 2 and 4.

Drill 4 – walk and clap to song by Troilo

Follow the guide sheet to instruct students when to change clapping rhythms.

Drill 5 – Explain how the rhythms can be translated into the feet for walking.

Drill 6 – Practice walking the rhythms with a partner. Two measures of each rhythm in this order to start:

- dos
- cuatro
- dos
- sincopa

Keep dancing,
Panayiotis Pete Karabetis

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hi. great article!

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