

**2010 UK Congress**  
**THE LOST TANGO**  
by **ANDREW SINKINSON**

**MC:** We switch now to the ballroom style, and the first lecturer of this afternoon is renowned for his purist and classical approach to the ballroom dances. So his lecture is very aptly entitled, The Lost Tango. Mr. Andrew Sinkinson.

**Andrew:** Good afternoon everybody.  
Today's lecture, the Lost Tango.

Some years ago, a new style of Tango was introduced.

But a wrong impression of its execution and technique resulted to the present day of today's... the world of today's dancing cannot reap the full benefits of that new style.

Unfortunately today many teachers are unable to achieve the perfect understanding of this new style. And still hold on to incorrect theories.

Now that was written by Henry Jacques, former triple undefeated British Professional Champion and fellow examiner and life member of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing.

Now the new style consisted of five figures, and the year that he was talking about was the dance season of 1934 – 35.

Those five figures were the Habanera Change, the Argentine Change.

The Contra Twist, the Outside Link, and the Progressive Link.

Today they are commonly known as the Habanera Change, the Four Step Change, called four steps in Change.

The Argentine Change, is called the Brush Tap today.

The Contra Twist, is called our Progressive Link.

The Outside Link is... today called the Four Step.

And the last one, the Progressive Link, is called the Closed Promenade.

To dance those figures well, I believe that we should have knowledge and the skill of the following Tango components.

Those being, Hold, Action, Power in Legs, Stillness in the Top, Styling with the legs, and Learning how to close and open partner.  
Before we go on further, I'd also like to speak about the footwork today.

Presently in the current technique book, the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, on a Progressive Link, the footwork is

Step 1, heel.

And step 2, inside edge of foot. Inside edge ball of left foot.

In 1939, the Revised Technique Book, written by Henry Jacques, of the National Association of Teachers of Dance, for the same step, he has written "heel then flat, pressure outside of foot, finishing pressure inside edge of foot.

Step 2, flat, inside pressure of foot, pressure inside edge of left foot."

That suggests to me, ladies and gentlemen, that there was a greater value of footwork in that era.

And it suggests to me there's a greater value on detail, accuracy, and articulation of the feet.

Now we'll go back to those Five Components, and first of all may I speak about the Hold. It's six ideas that I was taught through my dance career to create a good Hold.

And number 1, is to make sure as in all dances, we stand tall and straight. But in the Tango, we're slightly lower to the floor, if we're in correct the position you can lift the left leg off the floor without changing weight. That's position number 1.

Position number 2, which is slightly head and body to the left.

And number 3, it's styling of the left arm.

In the case of the left arm, may I suggest it is a sharp elbow.

The arm is angled lower to the floor.

And in the Waltz, it might be suggested the angle is 90 degree angle at this point, 45, and 45 degree angle of the hand.

And in Tango it's a lot sharper and the hand, this placed closer to a parallel position to the floor and angle of the wrist.

So it's position, 1, 2, and 3.

With the lady, what you're looking for is to try to find a compact fit with partner.

If the lady presses down on my shoulders and the boy softly puts his arms around her hip

area, you create what called a compact fit.

Onto the side now, and look for the good space from head to head and shoulders being parallel to each other.

Notice the styling of the lady's arm.

May I recommend that the lady's elbow should be pointing to the floor.

And not to be angled up, and also not to be straightened.

The right arm is further around the girl in this dance.

In the Swing Dances, it could be close to the lady's shoulder blade, but in the Tango, it is further around the girl.

If the lady wears a strap, the good reference point is be-on that strap and the hand placed past the clip.

Lady's left hand connects the boy's arm. And three ideas here.

Elbow to elbow, not too high, lady has slight pressure towards herself, and tone on angle of the hand that is placed under the man's armpit area.

In the Waltz, we're looking for the arms to be balanced to the body, when in Tango the arms are supposed to be not balanced to the body,

But when the lady places her arms into place hopefully we give an image of balanced with each other.

So just put all together, this is 1, 2, 3. Lady walks in, connect, arms to the side, parallel, boy's arm, and lady's arm.

And the first idea if I may say, is to try to create look of Tango and right feel of Tango. And I hope you might agree that that is acceptable.

And hopefully the reason being is, that creates good line, good space on balance and no official stress.

The next idea is the Action.

When it comes to the Action, what we're looking for is, again to be lower to the floor, try to keep it to the same level, take the feet off the floor in this dance, and the idea is that have the weight centered from foot to foot.

In the Swing Dances, it might be suggested that the weight is on to the front foot, but in Tango the idea is to be centered.

If I do four Tango Walks Forward and four Tango Walks back, it should be the image of position 1, 2, again weight's centered 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

I'm moving back, & 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Musical term for the Tango is commonly used as being "in Staccato".

But in the Tango Walks, the idea is to be smooth forward and smooth back.

Whereas in another particular design for example, the Closed Promenade, it can be said try to offer more sharper action.

So Tango Walks forward and back smoothly now it goes, 1 & 2 & 1 & 2.

And back, 1 & 2 & 1 & 2.

We try that with partner now.

Creating good hold, forward and back, & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2, close &, 1 & 2 & 1 & 2.

And no arms now, & 1 & 2 & 1 & 2, close &, 1 & 2 & 1 & 2.

In the Tango Walks, the idea is try to produce stealth in those walks.

Key word for the Tango is also to be compact in base. There should be a small base. The idea is not to have any Rise and Fall, try to keep it flat. The idea is not to be progressive.

The next idea, is Power in the Legs and Stillness in the Top.

And the figure that I use as an example for this is the Closed Promenade.

We try to make sure that all the power is from center down, and in the legs.

And the upper part of the body, you try to keep that as still as possible.

And from well-known previous teachers in the past, a very famous expression is try to have "monumental stillness in the upper body".

So, with Natasha, we just try that with the hand, keeping the upper part in still, softness in the hands, so we've got S QQS, Promenade again, S &SQQS.

In practice, I can offer you eight positions here, so this is 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

And now at full speed, and ready so we have...&SQQS. S.

The only, the only motion there is the turn of the lady's head.  
&SQQS. S.

Also in my... in my personal dancing, it was often influenced to me to keep the head on this side of the hand.

So from lady's head to the connection of the hand, this is where the head should be placed. And I was taught never on this side of the arm.

In promenade position, if you look at the styling of the legs here, the ideas to have try to create a "V" from...from the knees.

The idea's to have a pressure in this front foot.  
The weight distribution in Promenade Position, a good idea is to have maybe let's say 70 and 30%.

At this point, I say to you "1",

and "1", I'll try to get a bit of an extra load up onto this right foot here, we're gonna call this the supporting leg, we drive out of that foot.

Also in a technical point of view here in Promenade Position, the feet are still pointing diagonal to wall, they are not pointing down line of dance.

Let's try one more time very quickly, &, so we've got &, SQQS S &SQQS S. Stillness in the top.

Next idea is styling of the legs.

If I may show you now, again in the Tango, non-progressive, compact, a good example to concentrate style in the legs is a Five Step.

So just quickly now, I'll offer a stationary position for each points on the Five Steps Close Promenade, this being 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

We'll try that with the lady.

And...hand on the hip, this is together now, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

With partner, a little rocking action on each of those numbers now, to find a good weight connection with each other, and start to learn how to lead and follow.

So this is, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 turn 6, 7, 8 and 9, 10, 11 and 12.

On the Five Step, technically written, turn between 1 and 2, CBMP 3, not necessarily written now but wind up 4, and turn 5.

Time in the Five Step that we use is QQQQS SQQS.  
So we try that.

And again we're trying to keep good frame, good action, ready...& QQQQS& SQQS

One more time. Ready...go & QQQQS&SQQS.  
Is the idea. And again trying to keep stillness in the top.

Now... The Tango, of course is a huge subject and I'll do my best for you as quickly as I can in a 30 minute period.

And, I just would like to go back to the Tango Walks because I wouldn't like you to think that those Tango Walks danced in a straight line.

Those Tango Walks should curve and that is left foot forward in CBMP.  
And the next step follows the direction of that left foot, and so right shoulder lead.

And approximately it's an eighth of a turn on those two Walks. A quarter for four Tango Walks.

And 16 (Walks) for one complete circle.

You know, dancing today we have many steps that are a little bit more complicated and the turn is tight.

And so I can also change that amount of turn to eight Tango Walks and also to four Tango Walks.

So ready? So 5678 &1&2&3&4 5&6&7&8 9&10&11&12 13, 14, 15, 16, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 1, 2, 3, 4.

Now when I was learning how to dance, the teacher emphasized Tango Walks was very important component of this dance.

And when I was taught that idea it was influenced to me that "if you can do it perfect you can do anything in the Tango".

The Tango Walks is the basic action of everything we do in this dance and also it's the first chance that we can try to achieve perfect timing with each other.

Now, the last component that is to make a Good Tango is to try to learn how to open and

close partner.

So we did the Hold, we did the Action, we did Power in Legs and Stillness in the Top, Styling of the Legs, and now this Open and Close Partner.

Now this right arm is not only in this position for styling but this is the best position to learn how to open and close partner.

So, what I'm gonna do first of all, is a lead Natasha to its Promenade Position, and ready & <action>

One more time & <action>.

Without the head...<action>

And slowly, <action>

Very important just to learn how to do Promenade Position.

Next one we could learn is the Progressive Link.

On a Progressive Link we have little bit more turn, little bit more wind up, timing being technically QQ, but the timing that I used would be S&.

One more time, & S&.

Another good step to practice would be Same Foot Lunge into the Swivel Actions.

So it goes, SSQQS, Same Foot Lunge, &S, Five Step, QQQQS.

Put the arms down, and the arms up.

Well, these are all popular figures that most people dance.

And this is basically the make-up of today's choreography.

So Same Foot Lunge one more time, & slowly, and...and again, and...and drop.

At this point here, put the arms down, arms up, normally it's a good chance to find balance, check posture and position, and release tension in the hands.

And... the other one, the last one, a bit more tricky, Same Foot Lunge, we're going to do Reverse Pivots this time, into the Contra Check.

And in the Contra Check, we, may I say, what we're looking for this try to find strong CBMP action, again weight centered, there's the boy's position and there's the lady's position.

So the legs are symmetrical to each other, weight centered, and just for practice right now, look at girl and now shape, and it's a 45 degree angle, looking towards partner.

So one more time, weight centered, strong CBMP, look at lady and 45 degree angle looking towards partner.

Now we'll do the Same Foot Lunge now, into that Contra Check.

And the idea is find the stability in the Contra Check, a little bit wind up to the right, left leg comes in, and this is a Reverse Pivot and the legs remain in what's called CBMP, knees tight to each other, and we arrive in the Contra Check as the same step as one step.

There is not an extra step.

So this is going to be big turn to the right and big turn to the left, sorry, big turn to the left big turn to the right and Promenade Position.

And...<dance>

One more time, ready, &.... <dance>

Third time lucky, <dance>,

I think the first one was the best one.

Now, it wasn't that long ago, that we were here, reminiscing about Bill and Bobby.

And... I'll tell you a little story.

When I was a youth competitor, the guys in front of me were people like, John Wood and Helen Stuart.

And I use to watch them and think, "oh, my god, they're so powerful and so strong and so fast, and I'd think how do you do that?"

So when it was my turn to dance, I used to dance with my partner <funny action>.

Yes!

As you know the Quickstep is the last dance in Blackpool, and I had no energy left for the Quickstep, and just through, brute wild dance around with no real style, no real line, but

survived it basically.

So we went to London and the first thing that Mr. and Mrs. Irvine said, "Tango is the easiest dance".

I thought, "you must be joking, it's killing me this dance".

And the next thing they said is "you don't need hands to dance"

I thought "that's not possible".

But anyway over the years, I believe that I was able to soften up a lot in the tension and the pressure in the hands.

But let's just have a look at this, just a little an idea, just to lead lady to Promenade Position now.

And arms down arms up.

We used to see Bill do that

Many times in his lessons with us and with other couples just try to flick the lady to Promenade Position, but not use the hands.

We'll just do that again now just with the palm of the hands, <action>,

with finger, <action>,

and now, no hands, <action>.

But a... today's dancing, very powerful, but I think that is important that you learn how to open lady's head. Very important.

Now next thing that I researched for this Lost Tango lecture, was I was thinking about what do...what do the competitors of yesterday dance.

And I was able to look up some Ballroom Dancing Times and they showed several competitive figures of yesterday.

And this is the first one that I'd like to show you

Basically, it's a Whisk, into a lady's Swivel, Reverse Pivot, into a Four Step Change. And it goes something like this, &...I'll just do two Walks, sorry.

&.. so we'll go two Walks, and now we'll just do it slowly into the Whisk, into the Swivel, Reverse Pivot, into Four Step Change.

So one more time.

Ready and... two Tango Walks, into the Whisk, into a Swivel, Reverse Pivot and Four Step Change, and finish.

How's that? That was made in 1952 by Alex Moore, a Fellow Examiner of Imperial Society of Dancing. And apparently that was commonly used in competitions.

Next figure, again by Mr. Alex Moore, it's a Fallaway into Forward Lock which I was surprised that, into what he calls "snakes" Into a Four Step Change.

So let's look at that now.

So two Tango Walks, walk walk, Fallaway, Forward Lock, and Flick Flick and Four Step Finished.

And the last one I chose to use was... that's also, that one was in 1959, and the other one that I've chosen that was chose from Mr. George Holden also a Fellow Examiner of National Association of Teachers of Dance in 1952.

And this was from Promenade Position, Promenade Link, SQQ.

Into Open Telemark, into Fallaway, and...Counter Point, into Twist, into (UHaa), Counter Promenade, and Close into a Brush Tap.

Now, I'm going to try to dance that to music, don't expect too much, though, OK?

**Lady:** Andrew, would you describe and explain about hip action :::? When they start Tango they all sit back and sits in Promenade????

**Andrew:** I thought Alberto did the hip action.

Okay, with music please.

So, if I may conclude.

Tradition is fantastic.

But surely that is our spring board for our progress for the future.

And the key question is, "Have we?"

And, "Of course we have", in many areas of our dancing today.

But I think it's important that we remind ourselves and teach others of our historical background, so we're not in danger of losing our most beautiful and precious heritage.

The technique books of old and new are a research of great information and the past of quality and beautiful steps that last through time and allow us to relive forms eras.

I hope in my lecture today I'm able to influence as in a small way in some ways back to the future.

Thank you.