

5 Strategies of Musicality

by Salsaventura

Foundation 1 - Rhythm & Timing

There are many ways in explaining how to dance in time with the music. At Salsaventura we use 3 main different strategies.

Strategy #1. Conga

If you listen to the conga you will notice that a double tone is played on 4 and on 4½ and on 8 and 8½. After that 4½ and after that 8½ there is respectively the 5 and the 1. Now imagine that there would be a third tone after the double tone. Then that third tone would be the 1 or 5.

Strategy #2. The song and the story

Just like a book a song can be divided in chapters, alinea's, dots and comma's. If you become able to hear those then you will soon find out that there is a 1 after every chapter, alinea, dot or comma.

Strategy #3. The 'Wals' strategy

If you look a little kids moving to Salsa music, you will notice that many of them bounce on the 1, 3, 5 and 7. then you will soon find out that there is a 1 after every chapter, alinea, dot or comma.

Foundation 2 - Skips of timing

Once you have found the 1 and 5 you will soon find out that some songs repeat the 1st part of the measure twice. Now why would musicians do this? Well, the answer is simple: for the musicians Salsa is not played in 8 bars but in 4 bars. So for a musician each measure has 4 bars, not 8. In other words, a dancer needs 2 measures to make a full basic step with the left and right leg.

Whenever the musicians choose to repeat the first measure you might want to 'skip' timing in order to keep dancing on the same part of the measure.

Foundation 3 - Structure of the song

Just like a book a song does not start immediately. Most songs, not all, are divided into the following parts:

1. Introduction
2. Beginning + melody
3. Montuno (where the campana enters)
4. Ending

Foundation 4 - The secret number 4

The song is divided and played into parts of 4. So most songs have a sequence that is repeated 4 times before it continues in a slightly different set of 4. Once you know how to recognize those parts it becomes easier to find the breaks within the song. This because most breaks are played at the end of the 4th part.

Now there are two ways this can happen. The song either finishes the 4 parts and then hits a break or the song repeats 3 parts and the entire 4th part is played as a break.

Foundation 5 - Breaks

A lot of songs have what we call 'breaks'. Now there is quite some difference between hearing a song and actively listening to it. Just hearing a song is most of the time not enough to hit a break. You need to actively listen. Now there are 2 ways to know a break is coming:

1. After a repetition of 4 (see above)
2. By the preparation within the song. Most of the time you can hear a break coming by listening to the build up withing certain parts of the music.