

UPPER LEFT EDGE

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FREE!

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If we had some ham, we could have 'ham & eggs', if we had some eggs.



On the Submissiveness of Women in the Tango

by Don Berry

The richness of tango lies in contrast; in the interplay of opposites. There is continual interweaving of slow beats and quick beats; of smooth, flowing motion and sharp turns; of moves of expansion and moves of contraction; of freedom and discipline. In one contrast the tango is unique among dances; and that is the contrast between its sensuality and the precision of its geometry. Sensuality and geometry are not often paired in aesthetics. The creative power of this pair of opposites, the vitality generated by their interaction, is seen in tango as nowhere else. And they point directly to the fundamental pair of opposites that are always at the secret heart of tango; man and woman. It is often said that the man "dominates" tango, and the woman's role is "submissive." There is some truth in that. But it is such a crude and superficial understanding of the relation between man and woman in the tango that it distorts the creative act that arises from them. Certainly the man creates the dance. From his own sensitivity to the music and to his partner, he recreates the history of tango every time he takes the floor. Unlike the more rigidly codified dances, every tango is a new tango. Each new pair of partners creates it from the beginning, according to the moment, the mood, the music, and their inner feeling. The state of the heart. But the very reason the man creates the dance is to evoke the beauty, the grace, and the inner spirit of the woman, without which tango is only empty geometry. He evokes this inner feminine spirit for his own enjoyment, but also so the woman can enjoy her own femininity. He creates the form, and she fills it with beauty. That is the shared experience of tango. In order to make this possible, the woman is not submissive, she is responsive. She is in a state of heightened awareness, watchful to the nuance of tempo and rhythm, sensitive not only to the music, but to the man's feeling about her and the music, and to the dance he is creating from those feelings. The art of following in tango is both more subtle and more mysterious than leading. And when a woman follows, she is not dragging along behind like a platypus on a chain. She follows as a cloud follows the wind, and her art is to be as responsive to the man as the cloud is responsive to the wind. This state of heightened responsiveness is not an exclusively feminine skill, by any means. It is also the state of the hunter tracking a wounded animal. (It is even the state of the defensive backfield of the L. A Rams, and I do not recall hearing the words "submissive" or "passive" used in that connection.) In the tango, it is the woman who plays this responsive role. In fact, the image of the feminine that is evoked in the tango is at the farthest pole from passive. It has the greatest feminine range of any dance, at one moment swooning languidly into his arms, at the next a sassy, pert and

rebellious flirtation. The tango can express a wider range of the feminine than any other dance, and this is the source of its power for both man and woman.

NOTES ON LEADING THE TANGO: All these things have certain practical consequences in tango, and in particular in the lead. In the vast majority of cases the reason a woman does not follow is because the man is not leading. First of all, when a woman is truly following, and in a highly responsive state, she is easily bored. If she always knows what is coming next, and with what timing you will lead any given figure, you will lose her attention and she will start dancing on her own. Perhaps that is acceptable for an exhibition dance, but there is a great difference between displaying the tango and dancing the tango. An exhibition dance may show the form of tango beautifully, but loses its heart, which is the moment to moment flow of energy between the dancers, in which the outcome is an adventure and a mystery. In an exhibition the meaning is for an audience; in a dance the meaning is for the dancers alone. That is tango. It is the man's responsibility to be creative enough to keep the woman's attention on the dance. She needs surprises, an occasional unexpected delight, or she will lapse into a routine of memorized steps, and the dance will not be a memorable one for either of you. (One way to improve a woman's following is to make her close her eyes, so that she can respond only to your lead, and not to mental images.)

The implication of this for the lead is clear. The man has to know what he is doing, and do it decisively, without ambiguity, and without giving confusing signals about it. The tango, like all arts, is a combination of freedom and discipline. The dancers cannot enjoy the rewards of tango freedom until they have mastered tango discipline; specifically, for the man, the discipline of leading with certainty. In tango, particularly, there is survival value in certainty. For example, when you lead the figure el gancho, you must place the woman's body very accurately. Otherwise, and let us be straightforward about this, you will be kicked in the groin by a three inch spike heel moving at an extremely high rate of speed. This is not good. And at such a moment the thought that the woman in tango is "submissive" will not even cross your mind. We can dispense with the superficial description of woman's role in tango as "passive." But we can also remember the seed of truth in the cliché: the heart of tango is in the contrast of opposites, and the more opposite the roles played by man and woman, the more creative the dance will be. Sensuality alone is limited. Geometry alone is limited. But in free and disciplined combination, together they are unlimited.

In the myths of tango it is said that two dancers have died from the overwhelming emotion generated by the dance, one in Buenos Aires in 1912, the other in Paris in 1926. Both were women.

I trust all joy.

Theodore Roethke

CORRECTED FOR PACIFIC BEACH TIDES				CORRECTED FOR PACIFIC BEACH TIDES							
JANUARY 1998				JANUARY 1998							
High Tides				Low Tides							
WASHINGTON & OREGON COAST TIDES				WASHINGTON & OREGON COAST TIDES							
DATE	A.M.	P.M.		DATE	A.M.	P.M.					
	time	ft.	time		time	ft.	time				
		ft.	ft.			ft.	ft.				
1 Th	2:33	5.4	1:36	6.3	1 Th	9:09	1.1	9:53	-0.3		
2 Fr	3:18	5.5	2:27	5.9	2 Fr	10:04	1.1	10:37	-0.1		
3 Sa	4:02	5.6	3:25	5.4	3 Sa	11:06	1.0	11:24	0.1		
4 Su	4:51	5.8	4:32	4.9	4 Su	12:15	0.9				
5 Mo	5:42	5.9	5:51	4.5	5 Mo	1q	0:15	0.3	1:29	0.8	
6 Tu	6:35	6.0	7:19	4.2	6 Tu	1:10	0.6	2:43	0.6		
7 We	7:29	6.2	8:44	4.3	7 We	2:11	0.8	3:51	0.3		
8 Th	8:22	6.4	9:56	4.5	8 Th	3:15	1.0	4:50	0.1		
9 Fr	9:13	6.5	10:56	4.7	9 Fr	4:18	1.1	5:42	-0.1		
10 Sa	10:02	6.5	11:46	5.0	10 Sa	5:17	1.1	6:29	-0.2		
11 Su	10:48	6.5			11 Su	6:10	1.1	7:12	-0.3		
12 Mo	1m	0:31	5:11	11:32	6.5	12 Mo	1m	6:58	1.1	7:52	-0.3
13 Tu	1:11	5:2	12:13	6.3	13 Tu	7:44	1.1	8:30	-0.2		
14 We	1:49	5:3	12:54	6.1	14 We	8:27	1.1	9:06	-0.1		
15 Th	2:28	5:3	1:33	5.7	15 Th	9:11	1.1	9:42	0.0		
16 Fr	3:02	5:3	2:14	5.4	16 Fr	9:55	1.1	10:18	0.2		
17 Sa	3:39	5:3	2:58	4.9	17 Sa	10:43	1.1	10:52	0.4		
18 Su	4:18	5:2	3:47	4.5	18 Su	11:36	1.1	11:28	0.5		
19 Mo	4:55	5:2	4:47	4.1	19 Mo	12:36	1.0				
20 Tu	5:38	5:2	5:02	3.8	20 Tu	3q	0:08	0.8	1:43	0.9	
21 We	6:23	5:3	7:29	3.7	21 We	0:54	1.0	2:50	0.8		
22 Th	7:12	5:4	8:50	3.8	22 Th	1:50	1.1	3:49	0.6		
23 Fr	8:01	5:6	9:54	4.1	23 Fr	2:52	1.2	4:41	0.4		
24 Sa	8:50	5:8	10:43	4.4	24 Sa	3:54	1.3	5:28	0.1		
25 Su	9:37	6.1	11:26	4.7	25 Su	4:51	1.3	6:08	0.1		
26 Mo	10:23	6.4			26 Mo	5:42	1.2	6:48	0.2		
27 Tu	1m	0:05	6:0	11:08	6.6	27 Tu	6:31	1.1	7:28	0.4	
28 We	0:43	6.3	11:54	6.7	28 We	7:18	1.0	8:08	0.4		
29 Th	1:22	6.5	12:41	6.8	29 Th	8:07	0.9	8:49	0.4		
30 Fr	2:01	6.7	1:30	6.4	30 Fr	8:57	0.8	9:30	-0.2		
31 Sa	2:42	6.9	2:23	5.9	31 Sa	9:51	0.7	10:13	0.0		

BASEBALL



In these dark days with no baseball, the trading goes on. The Cubs have a new second baseman, and Ryne Sanberg retires again to await his nomination to the Baseball Hall of Fame. We still wait and wonder if Jim Leyland will be in the dugout at the friendly confines of Wrigley Field when the opening day Umpire calls, "Play Ball." We wonder if he is the Cub manager next year, if this will be the next year Cubs fans have waited for so terrible long. Go Cubbies.

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Dear Reader—

It is now December, and *Wildlife on the Edge* finds itself at a temporary hitch in its printing proceedings. We have come to realize that the costs of the printing and binding we aspire to (seen signatures of linen weave paper, semi-hard cover, embossed front) are harder to achieve than hoped. This means in spite of the donations and orders that so many people kindly made, more time will be needed to reach our goal.

We offer all apologies that your copy was not available to you in time for the holiday season; you are no more disappointed than we. This is a letter asking you to continue to share in our wait, with the assurance that when the finished volume comes off the presses, you will be the first to know.

We trust that this revised, expanded, and perfected edition of *Wildlife on the Edge* will be worth the wait.

Sincerely, Sally Lackaff and Billy Hults of the Left Coast Group

WILDLIFE ON THE EDGE

BY SALLY L. LACKAFF

Illustration of a beaver in a circular frame.

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