

"CRITICAL TIMING"

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Critical timing and the "2-Beat" Rhythms: I do believe in "Staying within the Rules" - but there are times when I momentarily find exceptions to those rules. I say "momentarily" because I always stop - step back - and take a second look **whenever I seem to encounter "exceptions" to a RULE.**

So far, each experience has proven that RULES are more important than any momentary "shortcut". Many times we only think we are breaking a rule - when we are simply encountering a lack of understanding the depth of the rule.

I marvel at how rules unfold gradually, revealing their secrets one at a time.

Counting out a pattern - creating a new pattern - or teaching an old pattern, it saves time and effort when we stick to the "Rules of Timing" and "Rules of Movement". **Every pattern - in every dance that is danced to 4/4 time music - is composed of a series of "2-Beat" rhythms. There are no exceptions.** On occasion, I have found myself breaking down a pattern - stopping on count "3" to explain a foot position, a move, a lead, or a styling - and then continuing on, starting with count "4". In every instance, **without exception** - when I went back and took the same pattern apart in "2-Beat" increments, **I found a tiny "gem" that made the difference between a good performance and an exceptional one.** That "gem" always turns out to be that almost imperceptible "breath" that separates the "2-Beat" rhythms. Separating the rhythms in any dance encourages the dancer to discover "Pulsing." Accenting the Downbeat or the Upbeat - according to the dance being done, leads to the discovery of the "Heartbeat" of the dance.

Select one of your favorite Swing dance patterns. Determine what kind of an action is taking place on the "&a" before count "3" - as well as the action on the "&a" before count "4". I guarantee that you will make another important discovery. Do I always catch the "discovery" on the first try? Of course not! When we truly embark on the "learning path" - we learn something new with each new journey. A journey requires a destination. Our destination is always a new level of dance performance, but much of the joy is in the journey.

When working on "Critical count" it is amazing how much clarification and excitement is added simply by adhering to the "2-Beat" rhythm rule. Break down each pattern by stopping on every Upbeat (2, 4, 6, 8). Practice each individual rhythm. Start each rhythm on the "&a" prior to the Downbeat and END each rhythm precisely on the Upbeat. You will be rewarded by the things you discover about each individual rhythm. You will be even MORE rewarded by the improvement it will make in the performance of that pattern.

Yo Yo Ma, world-famous cellist, made an eye opening statement in a television interview. When asked: "What is it that makes you such a great musician?" He answered that it was not just knowing which notes to play - but rather the **quality of the spaces between the notes that made the difference.** What a statement and what a

fantastic observation! To me, that is a great description of "Critical Timing." Critical Timing is created by controlling the rhythmic flow of uneven, although precisely placed, spaces between weight changes. This is sometimes accomplished through a natural "inborn talent" - but more frequently acquired by the studied development of "**Rolling Count**." The ability to manipulate the spaces between the rhythms - and the spaces between the weight changes WITHIN the rhythms, always creates an exciting performance.

If you found this article interesting, you might also enjoy reading the article on "**Rolling Count**". This amazing discovery has solved timing problems for many dancers - and has given teachers a new tool for training those who have difficulty with "feeling" the pulse of the music.

Recently, I have made such a habit of continually updating my articles - that I have coined the phrase "Living Articles" - That means - they are never quite finished. The same article keeps growing as people send questions - and as I unearth new bits of information. If someone's question was not answered in the article - then I feel that I should add that information to the document. Right? **Communication between dancers - spawns discovery.** If you have topics that you would like to see in this spot - Please let us know. Thank you for participating in our "process".

Yours for better dancing through better education.

Sincerely,
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