

## Cha Cha – Concepts and Components

This document supports the three levels of cue sheets for “**Another Saturday Night**” choreographed by Larry Caves and Kaye West. The Phase 4+0+1 version includes mostly standard figures with a few modest variations and *one* unphased figure in Part B. The Phase 5+0+2 version builds on the Phase 4 routine by repeating Part A, adding a second unphased figure in Part B, and modifying some standard figures in the Intro which essentially repeats in the Interlude. The Phase 6+0+3 version builds on the Phase 5 routine, repeating the Intro, Interlude, and Part B, and introducing the third unphased figure and modifying some other basic figures in Part A.

The series is designed to provide a limited amount of information at each level to assist dancers who wish not only to dance some fun routines but also to work on their *techniques* for the various figures which are explained in these notes as well as the Supplemental Notes associated with each routine.

Each level limits the number of new elements to the “seven plus or minus two” which learning theory purports is generally the limit of new information people can process. Very new dancers might even concentrate on one of the three parts at a time, repeating the eight measures to any Cha Cha music. When dancers have completed the series, they have six eight-measure sequences all beginning facing the same direction which they can use interchangeably on a social dance floor!

While there are different approaches to dancing Cha Cha, the ideas in these documents supplement the document ***The Character of Cha Cha*** and provide information gleaned over a hundred years combined of dancing, studying dancing, and teaching dance which comports with natural body movement and principles of physics and body mechanics. The information addresses what the *whole body* does, rather than concentrating on just the feet. Additionally, it describes how to *lead* the various figures.

Learning to dance is a “sculpting process” so dancers begin with the timing and where the feet go (“the beat and the feet”), then they add layers of additional technique if they choose to. Information included in our notes represents *many years* of ballroom lessons. It is hoped that it can inform dance enthusiasts and teachers of helpful practices to shorten the time required to learn them. It takes practice to incorporate new techniques and transfer the knowledge to other routines, so dancers should be patient with themselves and realize they can gradually substitute new techniques for older practices as they concentrate on *only a few changes at a time* in the process of continual refinement of their dancing.

Years ago, when round dancing began (growing out of folk dances, with friends and neighbors teaching others what they knew), all cues were described as “step cues,” meaning naming one change of weight at a time. As choreographers began incorporating more complex patterns from ballroom dancing, “figure cues” were used to name what to do a measure or more at a time, since once dancers are familiar with the figures it is easier to process the larger chunks of information than the individual changes of weight (though there are occasions, including in these routines, when step cues are necessary).

At the end of each of our cue sheets is a list of figures used in the routine including their phase level (defined by Roundalab) and whether or not they are modified. The Supplemental Notes for each version also flag the modified figures, detailing how they are different from standard. *This* document describes some of the *concepts* needed to add a great deal of knowledge about dance technique which apply in many different settings, and even other rhythms.

It also introduces a number of *components* used in many of the Cha Cha figures which describe what *bodies* do (not just the feet) to implement the figures. When dancers learn the components, they can readily process the consistent techniques in many other figures. Often when such body awareness is used, it makes the figures

much more natural to perform, though it can take effort to replace previous habits and to transfer the information to other situations.

As we have gained insight about ideas shared here, we each have experienced “cognitive dissonance” (“blowing our mind”) when we first encountered concepts which did not match our previous beliefs, so it caused us to reshape our thinking. Readers may have the same experience.

## CONCEPTS

### Timing

Round dance timing for Cha Cha is used in these routines (changing weight on beats 1, 2, 3/&, 4) with five changes of weight in each measure, with limited exceptions, as noted on the cue sheets. In ballroom situations, what round dancers do on counts 123/&4 (keeping the whole figure within one measure of music) they do on counts 234&1. The patterns are often the same in ballroom, just one count later. Their choice of timing corresponds with the historical origin of Cha Cha music as well as the notion that both Cha Cha and Rumba accent beats three and one. The round dance timing convention provides for the figure to begin at the downbeat and facilitates cuing, because cues are announced midway in the preceding measure, as well as describing in writing what is done in each measure of music.

In addition to that basic timing, dancers should be aware of some additional concepts regarding timing, which are described here by beats and parts of a beat:

- (1) On occasions when dancers *turn* after taking weight, the turn occurs on the second half of that count. Thus, if the count was a Quick, that count is divided in half, so the turn occurs midway into that count at a position defined as “and.” (One can count repeatedly 1/&, 2/&, 3/&, 4/& to understand that any of the counts can be divided in half, not just beat 3!) For example, if a turn is made on count one, timing could also be counted 1/(&), 2, 3/&, 4 to identify the spots where both weight changes **and** actions without a change of weight are performed. The latter are rendered in parentheses. A turn can also occur after taking weight on other changes of weight. Whenever it occurs, the count of the weight change is divided in two and the turn is actually made on the *second half* of that count. When the count is the “and” after count three, the “and” is divided into two halves, each one-fourth of count three. That mid-point is named “a” and pronounced “uh.”
- (2) There are also figures where there is a turn made on the standing foot which is generally considered part of the beginning of a figure. Since in Cha Cha most body *weight is taken on count one*, where there is such a turn, it must occur *after weight is taken on the last weight change of the previous measure*. Therefore, the count for a typical measure could be rendered as /( & ); 1, 2, 3/& 4. Note that the slash mark [/] indicates that a count has been divided in two and the semicolon [:] shows that the “and” count is part of the previous measure, and the parentheses [( )] indicate no additional weight change is made..
- (3) The **Lead** must provide a warning, or **lead time**, for the **Follow** as to what figure will come next by moving his body *prior to taking weight on his foot on count one* of the measure. Two separate actions (first moving a hip and then the full torso) are done sequentially. Checkpoints for the actions could be described as follows: The first action begins midway through the previous count (on “and”), so the second action occurs midway through the “and” count, on “a.” And because these actions begin prior to count one of the measure, the timing can be described as “/( & -a ); 1” beginning on the last half of count four of the previous measure after the weight change. The arm/hand signals for various turns also begin at the count of “/( & );” or midway through the last count of the previous measure.

## Contra Body

One of the most important concepts to understand in dancing is that of *Contra Body*, which simply means that one's shoulders and hips are on two different vertical planes simultaneously, which happens *nearly all the time*. Imagine that a horizontal bar extends outward from one's right shoulder and through the body to the left shoulder, and another horizontal bar extends outward from one's right hip through the body and to the left hip. When the two bars are exactly on top of one another, as viewed from above, the body is in "*neutral*" or "*square*" position. When those two bars intersect (again looking from above) or cross each other, either a little or a lot, the body is in contra body. *Contra body* is created by the shoulders rotating and hips rotating in opposition to each other resulting in a twisting at the waist (in its extreme it is described as torsion). When a dance position change involves *contra body* action to achieve, either the shoulders, or the hips, or both shoulders and hips rotating in opposition simultaneously are used to create it.

Whether dancers are aware of it or not, contra body exists each and every time that a normal forward or back walk occurs. There is a very brief instant as steps are taken when the body moves *through* neutral position.

In Cha Cha (and Rumba) walking is done with *exaggerated* hip motion, meaning that when moving forward dancers attempt to make the hips move with a step in such a way that the hips are as nearly parallel with an imaginary line from one foot directly in front of the other as possible. At the same time, dancers are cautioned to "keep their shoulders in place" or not moving, which literally would mean having a twist at the waist of a full quarter turn, which is more than most people can produce when walking, so even at the point where hips are at their most extreme point there is contra body with the upper body slanted and the hips slanted more. Also notice that to create that extreme hip motion when walking, feet are actually placed nearly in front of one another as steps are taken making the *tracks the feet are on* very close together, in contrast with normal walking.

Generally what occurs in "keeping the shoulders in place" is that dancers must fight to keep them relatively stable, but inevitably there is some slant in the shoulders. Dancers then *keep their elbows in front of the center of their waist* which creates the *illusion* that the shoulders do not move. Much of dancing is illusion (or what you think you see may not actually be what is happening).

### Experiencing Contra Body

To experience the limits of *contra body*, sit in a chair so that the hips are stabilized and the body is in a neutral position. Then rotate the shoulders first in one direction and then the other. Most people can comfortably rotate about 1/8 of a turn to their left and 1/8 of a turn to their right. When one leg and hip are forward to an extreme degree, the slant of the shoulders is still present but is less than 1/8 of a rotation.

When standing, however, one can turn more because other parts of the body also turn. If the feet are pointing straight ahead, the hips can rotate (for example, to the left) approximately 1/8 of a turn. The shoulders can rotate 1/8 of a turn further to the left. The head can continue to rotate another 1/8 of a turn, and the eyes can actually look 1/8 of a turn further (so directly opposite of the pointed toes).

Because often the body is in contra body (as any of the above positions represent) one's "*facing direction*" can also be ambiguous because even though one portion of the body is facing a particular direction, another part of the body may be 1/8 of a turn away from that direction. This phenomenon is apparent in turns when the feet often change direction more than the shoulders at first, then the shoulders "catch up" on a subsequent step.

### ***Same Side Leading***

As dancers walk forward in Cha Cha, because of the normal *contra body* action of the body, they do so with what is described as “same side leading” which is rather prominent because of the exaggerated hip movement (more akin to *power walking*). That means that as the *left leg* moves forward, *the left hip is forward*, which invariably means that the left shoulder also is a bit forward, or that the shoulders are slanted slightly toward the right (still in *contra body* since the shoulder line cannot match the hip line). When the *right leg* moves forward, *the right hip is forward* so the shoulders are slanted slightly to the left.

When back walks are taken, there is also a side that is “leading,” which is defined by the side of the body which is most prominent. So, walking back with the left leg means the left side is leading, the left hip is back, and the shoulders invariably are slanted somewhat to the left; and the opposite directions are apparent when walking back with the right leg.

While on occasions (such as three consecutive forward or back Chassés) when dancers do a “pattycake action” with their arms, their shoulder line corresponds with the side leading. However, in most cases (and throughout our routines) the arms move *in opposition* to the side leading.

Same side leading occurs in most Cha Cha figures with the common exception of when a *forward walk involves a turn* in what ballroom dancers call “delayed forward walk turning.” which is included in the terms ***Switch Turn*** and ***Switch Rock*** (both of which are very useful components). These components demonstrate two terms which have been defined by *example* in the ballroom world and consequently are sometimes misinterpreted: *Contrary Body Movement Position* (CBMP) and *Contra Body Movement* (CBM).

### ***Contra Body Movement Position (CBMP)***

Essentially the term simply means that the body is in a *position to move* which is different (contrary) from normal. In Latins, that means as a left leg (for example) is moving forward the *left hip is back* (just opposite of normal). We have described that position in relationship to the Switch Turn and called it a “preparatory pose” or a “wind-up.” Of course, it can also be made with the right leg moving forward with the right hip back.

### ***Contra Body Movement (CBM)***

*Movement* is the operative word in the term *Contra Body Movement*. It is a term which describes the phenomenon that one side of the body (for example, the right hip) is a pivot point and the other side of the body (the left hip) moves (or swings) from being *back* behind the other hip to a point after turning so it is still back of the right hip because the facing direction is one-half of a turn different from the starting position. The left hip, in this example, makes a path in space of a half circle. This is contrary to normal walking where the pivot point is the *center* of the body rather than one hip. See Switch Turn (under the “Turn” heading) for a more thorough explanation.

### ***Dancing Leg***

When first learning to dance, attention necessarily is placed on the moving foot (for example, the left foot moving forward). Understanding how the body moves changes how dancers move as they refine their practice. When additional attention is placed on the many details of what the *whole body* does, dancers realize that the *opposite side* of the body (the right in this example) is responsible for propelling the body so is considered the “dancing leg.” There are no muscles or invisible ropes in the front of the hip or leg to move the left hip forward. Rather, the muscles in the right gluteus maximus contract to push the right leg against the floor (“push off”) to move the body forward. The muscles in the left thigh elevate the knee and extend the lower leg further.

# COMPONENTS

In Cha Cha (and Rumba), steps are typically taken first on the ball of the foot followed by taking full weight on the foot so the entire foot is “flat” on the floor. This is described as “ball-flat.” There are many nuances of how the body moves in the stylized walking in Latins. It is so fundamental to the character of Cha Cha and Rumba that competitors spend literally hundreds of hours just practicing walking!

Body posture, for the **Follow**, to facilitate movement is also different from normal standing posture. She pushes her lower ribcage forward (with the muscles in her back) which causes both the shoulders and tailbone to move back so that there is a larger curve than normal from her shoulders through the waist to her tailbone.

Various ways the body moves are *components* grouped here as *movements*, *actions*, and *turns*.

## Movements

There are only so many ways that one can move, which for Cha Cha and Rumba are called Walks in ballroom. In round dancing they are described by the *direction* they move or how the foot or leg is placed. Basic Walks are Forward, Back, and Side. Others include Close, Cross, Lock, Lunge, Press, Run(s), Slip, and Step in Place.

### BASIC WALKS

**Forward** (*fwd*). “Forward” is simply a walking step forward. When first learning to dance, the walk is done like a normal walking step forward.

As dancers learn more about dancing, they recognize that there is more to it than that. In Cha Cha and Rumba, a step *begins* as body weight is taken over a standing leg. That step is not complete until weight is taken over the next leg. It is useful to realize that there is continuous movement as a step is taken, which can be described during four critical *checkpoints* defined as the parts of a count divided into quarter counts (named *n-e-&-a*), with *n* standing for the numeric count (e.g., count two). One can count 1-e/&-a, 2-e/&-a, 3-e/&-a, 4-e/&-a repeatedly with an equal amount of time between each word. Note that the count in time begins with the numeric count, just as the four quarters of an hour (also time) begins when “the clock strikes the hour.”

When beginning to implement nuances of walking, dancers are advised to first concentrate on how the body is on the numeric count. Once that is practiced they can add how the body is midway through the count (on &), and later they can refine the two points in between.

*n* = The majority of body weight is taken directly above the walking foot (e.g., the left) because the right “dancing” leg pushed off from the floor to propel the body forward. In International style the walking leg ends straight, and in American style the walking leg ends bent. The toe of the other foot remains on the floor as long as possible (so at this point it continues to have some weight, so there is “split weight” or “shared weight”). The right foot swivels so that the hip associated with the walking foot (left) can be as far forward as possible creating the “same side lead” (some dancers can have sufficient contra body so that their hips are actually parallel with an imaginary line connecting their two feet!).

*e* = As the right foot moves forward, the inside edge of the ball of the right foot grazes the floor and the hips swing in a pendulum motion diagonally from back right to left front so that the left hip can circle around the left toe in a counterclockwise arc moving back. The appearance of a hip moving out to the side is an illusion created because human bodies generally are wider from side to side than from front to back as the hip moves in a counterclockwise half-circle. The spine does NOT “break” sideways to create the hip action (doing so can cause the ball of the leg bone to dislodge from the hip socket). Differences in hip motion are the result of how

bodies are constructed. When one's dimension from side to side is greater than one's dimension from front to back, one's hip motion appears greater than when those two dimensions are very similar, which explains why men's hip motion often appears less prominent than women's.

& = Midway through the count, the left foot is flat (the left heel reaches the floor) and the right leg has moved forward so that the tip of the right toe is at the left instep, the right knee is bent and veers in front of the left knee, and the hips are in a neutral or "square" position. In both International and American styles the left leg is straight at this point. It is at this point that full weight has transferred to the moving (left) foot.

a = After bending again, the right leg straightens as the lower leg reaches forward, with the *outside edge of the ball of the foot* grazing the floor and ending approximately in front of the standing foot to the spot where the foot will take weight, and the left hip continues its counterclockwise arc to the back in preparation for another Forward Walk.

The process is then repeated with the opposite side of the body (the hip circling around the right toe in a clockwise arc moving back) for another forward Walk. The hip (of the side that is leading) makes a partial circle with each step (some say a half, presumably counting some of the straight diagonal path).

In "keeping their shoulders in place" as described above, the elbows keep in front of the *waist* (or the midpoint of the waist, but because the hip is left behind, a *hip* can be behind the elbows. Notice also that walking in this way creates longer steps than is often done by beginning dancers.

Because the hips change position from front to back with each forward step (hips slant diagonally forward in one direction then diagonally forward in the opposite direction), that action is described as "hip twist action." The pivot point is the *center of the body*.

In the alternative *delayed forward walk turning* (described below as part of the **Switch Turn** where a turn is made in the *opposite direction of the moving leg*, the hip action is *contrary* to, or different from, normal walking because the pivot point is *a hip*.

**Back** (*bk*). Walking backwards in Cha Cha and Rumba when first learning these rhythms is done as in normal walking backwards. As dancers gain experience, they can make sure that the side (meaning the hip) with the moving leg is leading. So if the left leg is walking backwards, the *left* side is leading.

There is contra body action with the hip moving as the leg does since dancers attempt to keep their shoulders as still as possible (their elbows in front of the midpoint of their body at their waist), and the *inside edge of the ball of the foot* hits the floor first. Initially there is split (or shared) weight with some weight remaining on the forward foot; full weight occurs midway through the step (on the "&" count of a Quick). There is a slight swivel as weight rolls to be over the whole ball.

As the right leg moves back the right hip moves from front to back in a clockwise arc; as the left leg moves back the left hip moves in a counterclockwise arc from front to back.

Additionally, in both forward and back walks, because of the hip action and the narrowing of tracks, when dancers have one foot in place in front of the body and the other foot in place in back of the body, the feet *automatically* point  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a turn away from each other. Attempting to manufacture toes pointed out without having narrowing tracks for the feet to walk on (walking on two parallel tracks as in normal walking) can damage the knees.

Again there is "hip twist action" with back walks.

**Side** (*sd*). Initially when learning to dance no distinction is made about how one steps (walks) to the side. With additional experience, dancers learn that there is a characteristic way of moving in order to create exaggerated hip movement in Cha Cha and Rumba. The Side walks can be described on the numeric count and half-way through that count on the “&” of a Quick, though some of the action does occur at those in-between spots. Note that consecutive side steps include a “close” between them, so the *n* count below represents the side step and the & represents the close to set up for another side step in the same direction. These steps essentially are “merengue side walks.”

*n* = A Side step to the left begins with the right foot pushing the body onto the left foot (on the last quarter count of the previous beat). At the beginning of the count (e.g., on “1”) the left foot arrives directly to the side of the standing foot with the *inside edge of the ball of the foot* hitting the floor first, body weight is midway between feet with split or shared weight, the left knee is bent and veers to the right, the right leg is straight (the foot swivels as it pushes off and the body rotates right-face so that the right hip is back. Because the body is rotated to the right, it feels like the side step is a back step.

& = The left ball swivels left-face and the right foot “touches” (without weight) the instep of the left foot with the inside edge of the ball of the right foot hitting the floor first, the right knee is bent and veers in front of the left leg, the left leg is straight, the left ball swivels left-face then the left heel reaches the floor, the body is rotated slightly left-face, and the left hip is back. Full weight is on the left foot.

Thinking of the hips, as weight is transferred to the left foot, it swivels and the left knee and hip rotate counterclockwise above the left toe and move in an arc to end back. As weight is taken on the right foot (it swivels as it closes and the body moves left), the right knee and hip rotate clockwise around the right toe and in an arc toward the back. From the back position the hips have a pendulum motion, moving in a straight diagonal line and rocking from back to front, creating a figure-8 path.

Also notice that as weight is taken on one side of the foot first, the body weight “rolls through the ball of the foot” as weight is taken onto it.

To add the hands, which also have a path of a figure-8 in space:

*n* = The left hand is down at the left side with the palm facing forward; the right hand is in front of the body with the back of the hand toward the left and fingers pointed down. Hands then “flip” and move in a circle (the left hand clockwise and the right hand counterclockwise).

& = The left hand is in front of the body with the back of the hand toward the right and fingers pointed down, and the right hand is down at the right side with the palm facing forward. Hands then “flip” and move in a circle, again with the left hand moving clockwise and the right hand moving counterclockwise.

(Further descriptions of hand and arm motion are included in the document **Body Awareness: Cuban Motion / Latin Hip Action** on the main page of the [Walk In, Dance Out](#) website.)

In a series of side walks, in order to avoid the head bobbing up and down, dancers need to find a critical balance point as knees bend and a hip goes back to absorb the changing heights as weight shifts from one leg to the other. Additionally, in taking weight on the left foot, the foot swivels left-face; and in taking weight on the right foot, the foot swivels right-face.

Note that as the hips change from being rotated on one diagonal to the other it creates “hip twist action.” Also note the Hip Twist in the “Turns” section.

To acquire the action of the side walks in layers, one might consider the following sequence, adding the subsequent layer to what was previously done (practicing with side walks in one direction and then the other at each layer):

1. Take side steps thinking of keeping both knees bent and avoiding bobbing the head.

2. Add the swivels: place the left foot so it is “toed in” and swivel the left foot left-face or counterclockwise to close the right foot. Placing the right foot “toed in,” swivel it right-face or clockwise to step to the side.
3. Add veering the knees in as placing the foot (the lower left leg extends beyond the left knee to step side left so the thigh is vertical;; the right knee crosses strongly in front of the left knee to close.
4. Concentrate on the hip rotation and the pendulum swing of the hips diagonally from back to front and circling the knee and hip around the toe. The knees and hips compensate for the elevation change of the pendulum swing so the head can remain level.

## OTHER WALKS

**Close** (*cl*). When closing the feet (or bringing the feet “together”) and taking weight, action of the body is like that described above in (&) of the Side step. The foot swivels again to take the following step. There is “hip twist action” in a Close by both the **Lead** and the **Follow**. The World DanceSport Federation (WDSF) defines this as a walk in place.

**Cross** (*XLiF, XRiF, XLiB, XRiB*). Round dance uses abbreviations to tell which foot is moving (L for left and R for right), X means cross, and iF stands for in front and iB means in back. A foot crosses in front for a Switch Turn. Feet cross in front and in back in the component called a Vine (note that the standing foot swivels so “crossing” steps are actually made straight forward or back for comfortable dancing and to create hip action).

**Lock** (*lk*). When a forward step with one side leading (e.g., the left) is followed by a second change of weight with that same side leading, the second step ends with the (right) knee bumping into the knee of the first step and both knees bend. Thighs are strongly crossed and the majority of right foot is behind and slightly to the left of the left foot. That second step is known as a *lock* or Cross in Back (XiB). Similar action occurs when a back step with one side leading (left) is followed by a second change of weight with that same side leading; the second step ends with the (right) knee bumping into the knee of the first step and again both knees bend, thighs are strongly crossed, and the right foot is in front of and slightly to the left of the left foot. This lock is also described as Cross in Front (XiF). The lock can be made with either foot and occurs because the tracks the feet are on in Cha Cha and Rumba are so close together.

**Lunge** (*lun*). A strong (long) step, generally to the side, ending with the lunging leg bent and the other leg straight with that foot remaining in place.

**Press**. A Press is a forward movement to place a foot with partial weight initially (with body weight approximately between the feet) then taking weight on that foot after a momentary delay. The leg has a bent knee and only the ball of the foot is on the floor during the Press. In all three of these Cha Cha routines both partners do it in a wind-up for a turn in the Unphased figure in Part B.

**Runs**. In ballroom when a figure has a number of *consecutive* forward (or back) steps, regardless of the timing pattern, they are called *runs*. These routines include running (passing) steps in the Wheel action (where dancers move in a circle around a central imaginary pole between them). There are five changes of weight in the measure, using the normal Cha Cha timing. As consecutive forward or back steps, they include “hip twist action.” Such forward steps are also called “Merengue Walks.” In round dancing, the term “run” generally refers to a quick step (taking one count) as opposed to a “walk” which takes two counts.



**Slip.** There are occasions when the **Lead** must adjust his foot placement (move it slightly from its normal position) in order to accommodate the **Follow's** movement in an adjustment called a *slip*. Sometimes that means moving his foot so that her left foot can be placed between his feet instead of outside his right foot, sometimes so that her left foot can end outside his left foot, sometimes it facilitates an open path so that she can step forward where he had been, and sometimes it occurs so that they can be close enough to lead an Underarm Turn. In Cha Cha, the Slip can be part of a *Slip Rock* (on the first two counts) or a *Slip Chassé* (on counts 3/4).

**Step in Place** (*sip*). This term is used when a free foot is already next to the other foot, so as weight is taken, it essentially “closes.” Again, this creates a “hip twist” action. In other words, on the first “close,” the knee of the moving leg veers in front of the standing leg. Then when stepping in place, the knee of that leg veers in front of the other knee, switching the direction of the hips. WDSF also describes this as a walk in place.

## Actions

The following are movements of the *body* without an extra change of weight.

**Brush.** When the feet end slightly apart (to the Side) at the end of a figure, and the first step of the next measure moves forward or back, the newly free foot moves toward the weighted foot (in an action called a “Brush”) in order for the body to feel balanced prior to that next step. In Latins, the knee of the moving leg moves slightly in front of the standing leg in a Brush. In these routines, this concept is implemented after the Hip Rocks. In early round dancing an action termed a “brush” is more accurately described by Webster’s dictionary as a “scuff,” which is grazing the foot along the floor in a forward or back direction.

**Hip Twist Action.** An action created when one *knee* (e.g., the left) is forward and veered in front of the right knee (so the right leg is straight and the right hip is back), then the left leg straightens which causes the left hip to go back and the right knee bends and veers in front of the left knee. This Hip Twist Action occurs anytime a forward or backward step is taken. It also occurs anytime a forward step is taken and the body subsequently turns in the same direction as the foot that stepped (e.g., a left foot forward turning left-face). See also the description of the Hip Twist in the Turns section.

**Knee Lift.** Dancer moves free foot alongside the standing leg with the toe pointed down until ending so the knee is bent prominently in front of the body.

**Wind-Up.** In order to facilitate a turn of a half or more, a “wind-up” action, moving the body in the *opposite direction* first, is used to provide momentum for the turn. There are some figures which automatically end in such a way that the “wind-up” is “built in.” In other situations, one must intentionally create the wind-up by rotating a side of the body to create residual energy, preparing for the turn upon release of the energy on the next change of weight. Attempting a large turn without a wind-up makes the turn much more difficult. A wind-up is useful regardless of whether the turn is a *spiral* (such as in a Switch Turn) where the moving leg (e.g., the right) turns in the *opposite* direction (left-face) or a *hip twist*, where the moving leg (e.g., the right) turns in the *same* direction (right-face),

## Turns

Turns occur often in Cha Cha and Rumba. The *body can turn* separately from the feet (as in one side leading as described above) and a weighted foot **swivels** against the floor turning the whole body to facilitate comfortable body movement or to begin figures such as the New Yorker (aka Crossover Break) and Hand to Hand (aka 5<sup>th</sup> Position Break). Thus, such swivels can turn approximately 1/8, 1/4 or sometimes more. When feet are close together, both feet can swivel simultaneously such as in a closing step followed by stepping to the side.

When a step is taken associated with a turn, the turn is made on the *ball* of the foot (the heel is off the floor to minimize drag) on the second half of the count, as full weight is taken over the foot. Often when making a turn, the foot turns more than the body; and as needed, the body “catches up” later.

In Latins, forward steps with accompanying turns are made either in the *same direction as the walking foot* (creating a “hip twist”) or in the *opposite direction of the walking foot* (creating a “spiral”).

In higher levels of dancing, a back walk can be accompanied by a turn. In that case, the turn is like a spiral (turning in the opposite direction of the moving foot) and the free foot moves close to the weighted foot and remains “touching” the weighted foot to make the turn, freeing the leg for a subsequent move.

**Directional Names.** Turns of one’s body, whether swivels, spirals, or hip twists are described as right-face (RF) or left-face (LF). Turns occur *between* steps or, in other words, after gaining weight at a helpful balance point.

Some also use the terms RF and LF to describe paths on the floor (such as a circle), but it would be less confusing to dancers for circular paths to be described as Clockwise (CW) or Counter-Clockwise (CCW) (aka Anti-Clockwise). The reason for the latter is that a circular path on the floor commences as if the dancer is on the circumference of the circle, so describing a “right-face circle” (instead of a clockwise circle) begins by moving to the *left!!!*

Arm movements are described in relationship to the person whose arms are moving and could also be described as moving clockwise or counterclockwise, but often they are described in terms such as moving “up and out” or “out and up” since those terms (in contrast to the terms clockwise and counterclockwise) can be applicable to both dancers simultaneously.

**Swivel.** When weight is on a foot and the foot must move in place on the floor in order to turn, the action is called a *swivel*. Such swivels usually have 1/8 to 3/8 of a rotation. Of course, a foot can have a greater rotation and the action technically is a swivel, but other terms are often used to indicate a greater amount of turn and/or specific movement associated with them. There is a *swivel* action in both *spirals* and *hip twists*.

When one steps *forward and turns 1/4* to subsequently *step to the side* on the next count, the foot must swivel. Similarly, when one has stepped to the *side and turns 1/4* to subsequently *step forward or back*, the foot must swivel. However, when one steps *back and turns 1/4* to step to the side, the foot does not need to swivel because of how human legs are constructed.

**Hip Twist.** This term is used to describe a step which occurs when a foot moves forward (such as the left foot) and when weight is over the foot the body turns in the same direction as the moving foot (left-face). While there is *hip twist action* with every change of weight, to specify a Hip Twist *with* a change of weight, it is sometimes described as “Forward/swivel” or “Close/Swivel.”

**Turn Close.** There are occasions when a Hip Twist is made quickly followed by a closing of the opposite foot such as that in our Cha Cha version 4 as part of the unphased figure and refined in the Phase 5 version. A Hip Twist begins with a same side lead, so to prepare for such a turn, a Press step (partial weight) is used so the opposite side of the body remains back for a *wind-up* to facilitate the turn. The *closing* step occurs very naturally as the free foot is directly underneath the body during the turn.

**Spiral.** When there is a forward step with one foot (e.g., the left) turning on the second half of the count in the *opposite* direction (right-face), it is known as a *spiral* and is sometimes cued “*step-spiral*” to indicate that the turn is on the *moving* foot. The Spiral begins with a component called a *Switch Turn* which is described in ballroom as a *delayed forward walk turning*. It turns *more than*  $\frac{1}{2}$  (up to  $\frac{7}{8}$ , so in other words, it continues to turn) so the “spiral” ends with the legs in a position resembling the numeral 4. When stepping forward with a left foot the (right) free leg ends bent with the foot on the other side of the standing foot. The Spiral begins with a Preparatory Pose (a wind-up) and a Switch Turn.

**Preparatory Pose.** A special set-up of the body is made prior to the action of a *Switch Turn* (which in ballroom is described as a *delayed forward walk turning*) and is the first step of a *Switch Rock* which begins many figures, including a Spot Turn, an Underarm Turn, a Reverse Underarm Turn, etc. It is a pose of the body which is different from (*contrary to*) the normal position of the body prior to the forward step. So, instead of having the same side leading, the *opposite side of the body*, particularly the opposite *hip* remains back (it is delayed) while the foot on that delayed side moves forward so the leg crosses in front of or beyond the other leg with the foot pointed ready to step forward, take weight and turn  $\frac{1}{2}$  on count one. In the pose the thighs are tightly crossed and the contra body action is extreme. This pose is used because it provides a “wind-up” for the body (which is first turned in a way opposite from the direction of the turn) creating residual energy which is released in taking the forward step and providing a great deal of momentum to make the half turn effortless.

**Switch Turn.** This specialized turn involves taking one step forward while *leaving the other foot in place* (both feet swivel) and turning  $\frac{1}{2}$  to face the opposite direction as measured by the shoulders. A *preparatory pose* with strong contra body action creating a *wind-up* facilitates the action. In the *Switch Turn* the hip which begins *back* rotates around the *other hip* and after the turn again ends back after what is described as “contrary body movement” or CBM. This action is different from how the hips normally operate with the *center of the body* as the pivot point of a normal twist of the hips. Therefore, in a Switch Turn the hips cannot be described as “twisting,” so the term “switch” is used.

The turn may be made with *partial* weight on both feet to provide maximum balance during the change of weight, though some prefer to turn after full weight is over the foot, which is more difficult on the body because of increased drag (frictional resistance) created by the additional body weight as well as the need to obtain a new balance point over one foot. Since the timing differential of the two techniques is negligible, dancers should feel free to choose which they prefer.

The Switch Turn can be made with either foot and can be followed in numerous ways:

- **Switch Rock.** Body weight Recovers back to the previously-weighted foot.
- **Walk Back.** The unweighted foot is released for a Back step such as in the Aida (in version 5 and 6).
- **Spiral.** The turn continues more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  (typically  $\frac{7}{8}$ ).
- **Draw Back.** As the turn is made, the free foot is pulled back to reach the standing foot. It can end with a *touch* or with a *close* (in the latter case it is a **Turn Close**).

To create the illusion of a very quick turn characteristic of Cha Cha, in the Switch Turn dancers first look in the direction they are moving, then change the shoulders and lastly snap the head to the new direction.

## COMPOUND COMPONENTS

In Cha Cha there are two categories of compound components which are composed of two or more single components: **Rocks** and **Chassés**. There are also occasions when step cues (single components) are substituted for a Rock or Chassé.

### ROCKS

Most of the first two counts in these routines have a *component* called “Rock, Recover” (rk, rec) in round dancing. Ballroom teachers sometimes call it a “**Rock Step**,” and the DanceSport series describes it as a “Checked Walk” and “Weight Transfer in Place.” Regardless of what it is called, there are *two changes of weight* with the opposite foot *remaining on the floor* as one takes a step (changing weight) on the first count so that a dancer can *Recover* (or regain weight again) easily to that other foot on the second count.

Therefore, descriptions and cues should differentiate a Rock from a directional movement (back, forward, side) by including the term “Rock” as well as the direction so dancers realize their other foot remains in place instead of moving in preparation to pass the standing foot. Whether or not it is cued, a Rock *always* implies that there is a Recover.

The *Rock* portion is made by taking a walking step in the direction indicated (forward, back, side, or across the other foot) with the body moving more like a glider than a rocking chair. In other words, the body remains erect, and it is as if one decides midway in the step to forego the opposite foot moving, so it remains in place to receive weight again on the next count (direction of movement changes). The Forward and Back Rocks are made with regular body action, so with the “same side leading” and hip action as described above. When the Rock is made with a crossing step, the foot is placed on a diagonal (or directly in front of or behind their other foot). XRiF, XLiF, XRiB, or XLiB are the abbreviations used to designate whether the Left or Right foot is moving and whether it crosses in Front or in Back.

**Hip Rock.** This variation occurs in all three routines. While it can be danced with feet together, it is often easier to produce the hip action when the feet are slightly apart. In these routines, weight is taken on the lead foot (**Lead’s** left and **Follow’s** right) on count one, and the *Recover and the second Rock* is made on count two (the Recover *is also* the next Rock, and in the second Rock the Brush substitutes for the Recover. As split weight is taken on the left foot the left hip ends forward above the left toe and then rotates in a counterclockwise arc ending back above the left heel on “and.” To take weight on the right foot, the right hip moves diagonally forward, ending above the right toe then rotates in a clockwise arc ending back above the right heel on “and.” (These actions occur regardless of which step is taken first.) Knees bend and straighten to facilitate the movement of the body. The shoulders also make a figure-8 action above the hips, with the shoulder and hip on the same side moving simultaneously; the hips do not move in isolation.

**Quick Rock.** In the Phase 5 version this component is introduced. It is the same as other Rocks but is accomplished twice as fast (both actions on one beat, with the Rock done on the count and the Recover on the “and”). Because it is usually done as part of two counts, it creates a triple (three changes of weight on the two counts). In versions 5 and 6 the Quick Rock is on counts 3/& and the Recover also includes a turn to face

partner, so count 4 has a natural step to the side. The triple is at its normal place in a Cha Cha measure. There is also a Quick Rock with a Lunge (or close for the Follow) in the unphased figure introduced in version 6.

The *quick rock* can also be called a “ball-change” since during the first half count the foot has time only to be on the *ball of the foot* and the term “change” essentially means to Recover weight, changing it to the other foot.

**Slip Rock.** In this component the **Lead** Rocks as normal, leaving his other foot in place, and then moves the foot slightly for the Recover to facilitate the next action for the **Follow**, such as in the **Lead’s** second measure of the Alemana in the Phase 4 and 5 versions. There is also a *slip rock* as part of the **Lead’s Slip Chassé** in the first measure of his Alemana, though *how he slips* in these two places is different.

**Switch Rock** is another version of a Rock Step which again has two weight changes: a Switch Turn and a Recover.

The forward step is made with action described in ballroom as “*delayed forward walk turning*” meaning that as the foot is in place the side of the body making that step is “delayed” or back (so the *opposite side* of the body is forward instead of “same side leading”), creating a strong *contra body* feel with the thighs tightly crossed and the ball of the moving foot in front of or across the standing foot ready to take weight. Essentially the hips slant in opposite directions to provide a “*wind-up*” for the Turn of  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

This action thus results in a “*preparatory pose*” or a set-up for the Switch Turn, and the body is in a position sometimes described as “CBMP” which stands for Contrary Body Movement *Position*. The body is *positioned for movement* in a way different from normal. As the first step of the Switch Turn is made, the body *moves* in a way contrary to normal and there is a “swinging” of the body around a central pivot point of the opposite hip. Such *movement* is called CBM or Contrary Body Movement (note that *movement* is the operative word); this term always implies a very large *swing* of the body, changing directions by a half-turn as measured by the shoulders.

Timing on the first two beats of a Switch Rock could be described as 1/(&),2. Often, but not always, there is an additional turning as part of the Recover, so the timing would be 1/(&),2/(&), with the turn occurring on the second half of each count on the same foot which took weight (on the numerals, or the first part of each count). The Switch Turn is a spiral; the Recover that turns is a Hip Twist.

For example, if the Switch Turn begins with the left foot free, weight begins above the right hip, which is forward and the left hip is back; there is a rotation of the body  $\frac{1}{8}$  to the left (the wind-up) with the hip rotated even more, creating very strong *contra body* and thighs tightly crossed as the left leg is placed forward without weight in front of or across the right foot. As the body moves forward, takes weight, and turns 180 degrees on the left foot (right-face) on count one, body weight ends over the left hip which is now back; the right foot remains on the floor (but has swiveled to face the opposite direction). The body has thus turned  $\frac{1}{2}$  RF with the left side *still back*. Because the body has *turned*, the hips have *switched* position in space (hence the name).

The turn may be made with *partial* weight on both feet to provide maximum balance during the change of weight, though some prefer to turn after full weight is over the foot, which is more difficult on the body because of increased drag (frictional resistance) created by the additional weight as well as the need to obtain a new balance point over one foot. Since the timing differential of the two techniques is negligible, dancers should feel free to choose which they prefer.

Contrasting this action, if dancers step forward with the left foot and the normal *same side leading* (creating a slight slant to the right), their turn (measured by the shoulders) would end still slanted to the right, so after turning would have rotated only  $\frac{1}{4}$  instead of  $\frac{1}{2}$ . This action would be like a **Basketball Turn** danced in the

Two-Step rhythm. While that technique is fine, especially initially, it makes the turn appear slow, when the Switch Turn technique creates a very “snappy” turn, more characteristic of Cha Cha.

## CHASSE’S

The second **component** of nearly every measure in these routines occurs on the last two beats of the measure where there are *three changes of weight* (the Cha Cha Cha); it is called a **Chassé**. The timing is two *very quick steps* (each taking ½ of a count) and one *quick count*. This term has been borrowed from ballet where a second step in the same general direction as the first is made very quickly so that the second step “chases” the first and literally bumps into the first leg so that the first leg takes a third weight change in the same direction. All three routines use three varieties: *Back Chassé*, *Forward Chassé*, and *Side Chassé*.

### INITIAL CHASSE’S

**Back Chassé** In step cues this component is a *Back/Lock, Back*. WDSF calls it a *Cha Cha Cha Lock Back*. There is “same side leading,” so the side of the body stepping back is prominent. Additionally, the tracks of the feet are very close together in this rhythm because of the hip motion and same side lead, so the lock occurs very naturally with the knee of the forward leg pressed against the knee of the back leg and both are bent. Some use *Back/Close, Back*, which can be acceptable initially, but it does not have the action characteristic of Cha Cha.

**Forward Chassé**. In step cues this component is a *Forward/Lock, Forward*. WDSF calls it a *Cha Cha Cha Lock Forward*. There is “same side leading,” so the side of the body stepping forward is prominent. Additionally, the tracks of the feet are very close together in this rhythm because of the hip motion and same side lead, so the lock occurs very naturally with the knee of the back leg pressed against the knee of the forward leg and both are bent. Some use *Forward/Close, Forward*, which can be acceptable initially, but it does not have the action characteristic of Cha Cha.

**Side Chassé** is defined by steps as *Side/Close, Side*. WDSF calls it a *Cha Cha Cha Lock Left* or a *Cha Cha Cha Lock Right*. See **Side** and **Close** above for techniques used in Side steps and Close steps. The first two steps are made very quickly (each taking half of a count) followed by a side step taking a slow count. Beginning dancers sometimes slur the three steps together with fairly equivalent time to each weight change and no hip action which makes the action appear slow instead of snappy as characteristic of Cha Cha.

### ADDITIONAL CHASSE’S

**Compact Chassé**. Three weight changes in place. WDSF (World DanceSport Federation) states this chassé can substitute for a Hip Twist Chassé, a Rondé Chassé, or a Slip Chassé. It often is taught as the **Lead’s** footwork initially.

**Slip Chassé** (aka *Slip Close Chassé*) includes a Slip (moving the foot) as part of a Chassé (during the 3/4 counts). It occurs on the **Lead’s** first measure of an Alemana: Rock Forward L, Recover R, Rock Back L (leaving right foot in place)/move R slightly Back (slip) & take weight, Close L as he rotates slightly RF to end in Sidecar Position with both dancers’ bodies slanted on the same diagonal. This allows the **Follow’s** subsequent step (with her left foot) to move forward outside his left foot in Sidecar (called “Partner Outside” in ballroom). Additionally, it allows their bodies to be close enough for him to be able to lead the Underarm Turn.

**Turning Chassé.** This Chassé is introduced in the Phase 5 version. It involves three changes of weight while turning  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$ . The first step is Forward (or side, if it follows a Recover which included a  $\frac{1}{4}$  turn), then crossing in front with a lock action (to end Back, so involving more turn), and ending with stepping Back. The locking action ends exactly the same way as the lock in a **Back Chassé**.

**Vine** (aka grapevine or vine-3). In step cues, a Vine typically is side/cross behind, side. While not technically a chassé since the second change of weight doesn't "chase" the first, it is used with the chassé timing on counts 3/&4. Vines alternate side steps with a step crossing in front or a step crossing behind and can start with either a side step or a crossing step. In round dancing the standard convention is to begin with a side step and cross behind, or when the *crossing step* is in front (generally with the **Follow** crossing in front), it is called a Twist Vine. It is also common to include the number of weight changes when it is different from three.

Typically, the feet swivel to facilitate taking steps in the new direction, so the "cross" steps are made straight forward or back. In the unphased figure in version 6, the vine also curves in order to change positions from an unnamed position to Banjo (aka outside partner). The **Lead** has action of a Vine, and the **Follow's** Vine is modified slightly because the **Lead** keeps her in Banjo Position.

**Whisk Chassé.** WDSF describes a Whisk Chassé as Rock Cross in Back, Recover, Side. Since the timing has three changes of weight during two counts, the Rock is a Quick Rock (both changes of weight occurring on one count). Like a Latin Whisk, the Rock crosses back to begin the figure. This chassé is introduced in version 6 and is modified so the **Lead** can create the Pullback (he substitutes a Lunge for the Side, keeping the **Follow** in place so she Closes).