

Advanced Figures in NY/LA & Cuban Style

This page contains the "Script" (that is the spoken part) of the DVD "Advanced Figures". This may help non English speaking students to follow the video, as well as all students to practise the figures when you are not in front of the TV. Translations into Italian and Japanese are available at <http://www.salsaisgood.com/scripts.htm>

Introduction

This video is about exploring the different styles in which salsa is danced.

Knowing many styles adds to the repertoire of emotions and expressivity you can incorporate into your dance. Don't make the salsa style you know best determine how you dance. Make the music and your mood determine which style you dance and how you dance it.

This video aims to help you to achieve this. We will show you 15 moves, and demonstrate them in both NY-LA style (slot style) and in Cuban style (on a circle). We will show you that it is very easy to adapt moves to different styles. All that is needed is to change the structure of the dance in the way the dancers relate to one another.

Each routine is first shown in NY/LA style. The ideas contained in the routine are then broken down and explained individually. The routine is then reassembled and showed in Cuban style.

In order to maintain consistency and to make it easier to transfer from one style to another, all moves are danced on '1', independent of the style.

A crucial feature of this video is the use of the salsa time counting on the top left. Make use of it to time your figure properly. The counting is particularly useful in the slow motion sections.

Before we go into the main content of this video, it is useful to say a few words on the difference between NY/ LA salsa and Cuban salsa.

The most obvious is that NY/LA salsa is danced along a line, in slot position. Turns are performed mostly on the spot, and transitions happen mostly during a cross body lead (XBL). Occasionally, but more rarely, the woman may perform the equivalent of a XBL passing on the right hand side of the man. The result is a linear, mostly counterclockwise motion of the lady with respect to the man's position. Cuban salsa is also danced with the man holding a fixed position, but now the lady's motion defines a circle around the man. The motion of the lady is mostly clockwise, occasionally interrupted by the counter clockwise motion of the Dile Que No (Cuban equivalent of XBL).

Another difference lies in the attitude and expressivity used in the dance. In NY/LA salsa several challenging moves are executed on the spot. This allows dancers to modulate the dance with frequent stops, slowing down and accelerating, as well as to decorate moves with several gestures and styling ornaments. This results in a very elegant, refined and sophisticated style.

Cuban salsa, instead, forces the lady to continuously 'walk ' around the man. Consequently the dance becomes more regular, the pace more constant. Decorations mostly involve the body movements during the walk including more emphasis on the hips and the dance become more spontaneous, more 'earthy', somehow more genuine.

A stylistic rather than technical difference lies in the way the dancers relate to one another. In NY/LA style the partners are encouraged to look at one another and to connect visually. As a result, dancers tend to face one another whenever possible. In Cuban salsa, dancers tend to face opposite directions, avoiding eye contact.

Routine 1

Figure 1

We are now going to explain the details of the first figure. Remember to use the counting on the top left to time the figure properly.

During the XBL, the man changes hand position by catching Right to Right and Left to Left, with the Right hand on top. While keeping the left hand down, he leads the lady into a Right turn. At the end of the turn he throws the right hand of the lady and catches it at his left. We can see this better in slower motion... the man throws the hand . and catches it at his left, above his own right arm.

The lady goes into a XBL, ducking down with a half Right Turn, finishing with a comb. Here the man switches hands again, going back to normal hand hold, and leads a double right turn in hammer lock position. In order to do this, he needs to release and then catch the left hand of the lady with his right.

The man leads the lady into a XBL with inside turn. At the same time he releases the right hand and catches it again in front of the lady. Here he leads the lady into a double right turn while he performs a left turn, finishing with the right hand down and the left hand behind his neck. Notice that in order to do this, the man needs to switch hands again during the double turn.

The man leads the lady into another XBL with inside turn. By simply generating momentum with his own body and twisting the left hand of the lady.. notice the left hand twisting, the lady is lead to turn left. and he turns right to face her. Now by holding her on the shoulder, they go into a rotating XBL, which is completed by the man's left turn into the final XBL.

Figure 2

After a XBL with normal hand hold, the dancers swap positions with a half left turn for the lady. the man goes into a right underarm turn bringing the left down and raising the right hand. Using the right hand he leads the lady into two left turns, while the left hand is kept down and the right hand is also brought down during the second half of the second turn. This is a challenging move. We can see it better from the top. Here is the lady's first left turn with the man dancing on the spot. During the second turn of the lady the man walks around the lady, which helps him to lower the right hand. The lady has been on the spot for the entire two

turns. Now the man gets out of the lady's way, releasing the left hand, in order to lead her into another XBL. During the XBL he swaps hand hold from right to left, performs a comb and leads the lady into the final XBL.

Figure 3

The third figure also starts with the dancers swapping positions, but this time we have a right to right hand hold and the man performs a left turn. At this point, he quickly takes the left hand of the lady with his left hand underneath the lady's right arm. Note that the man's left hand must be underneath the lady's right arm. Now the lady lowers down and, with knees bent, goes into a 1½ left turn, performing what is effectively a double tunnel. The man then releases the left hand and leads the lady into a XBL with inside turn which finishes with a check.

Figure 4

From the check, the man leads the lady into a 1+1/2 right turn, with his right hand while taking the lady's left hand with his left down. He brings the right hand behind the lady's neck. While keeping the right hand behind the lady's neck, he goes behind the lady, and with a wide circling of his left hand, leads her into a full right turn. At the same time he performs a half left turn into a back-to-back position, and brings both hands down. This is also a challenging move, which requires relaxed shoulders, and the dancers to be very close to one another.. We can see the figure from the top. Notice that the man is really close to the lady, almost leaning on her, while he leads her into the right turn. He goes into his half left turn into the back-to-back position only after he has finished the lead for her right turn. Notice also that throughout the lead the right hand stays behind the lady's neck. Both hands are lowered at the same time... and then they are raised at the same time. the lady then performs a half right turn and the man a half left to face the lady and brings both hands behind her neck. From this position, while keeping the hand hold, the lady is lead into a XBL with inside turn, while the man turns right to face the lady again... and brings both arms behind his own neck.. before the final XBL.

Routine 1, Comparison NY/LA versus Cuban Style.

Now that we have seen each individual figure, let's compare how they are executed in NY/LA and in Cuban Style. On the right hand side of the screen, notice how Thea executes most of her turns on the spot and changes position via frequent XBLs. This is typical of NY style. On the contrary, Yisney, on the left, constantly walks around Fabio, in typical Cuban style. Notice also how Thea's motion is mostly counter clockwise. Yisney's motion is mostly clockwise, due also to the fewer DQNs in the Cuban version than XBLs in the NY one. Notice finally how Fabio's pace is more regular in the Cuban version, and the rhythm interpretation more free in the NY one.

Apart from these stylistic differences, the mechanics of ideas 1 & 2 are the same in both styles. The first difference arises towards the end of idea n 3. After the double tunnel it is quite natural to execute another XBL in NY style, which we decided to finish with a check into the new figure. This would have surely felt unnatural to a Cuban dancer like Yisney, so in Cuban style we decided to exit the double tunnel with a typically Cuban intricate arm movement and an extra left turn for the guy.

Similarly, after the double head comb in idea 4, we chose to complete the figure with a XBL with inside turn in the NY version and with a more standard lady's right turn in Cuban style. The different final arm movement of the guy in the closing XBL and DQN are simply a consequence of this different exit.

Routine 2

Figure 5

The lady is lead into a Hammer Lock, followed by a half left turn which is lead by him twisting his left hand, as we learnt in a previous move. The man then ducks inbetween his right arm and the lady's left arm, and finds himself with both his arms crossed under his chest and with the lady's left arm over his back. Be sure you perform this move correctly. We can see this from the top. Once the man is in the embrace he comes up whilst carefully turning left. Then he lifts the left hand, while still holding the lady's right, and releases himself from the knot. Should your body shape not allow this action, you may simply release the left hand hold..

From the third angle we can see the lady's action. By the man coming up he leads the lady into a gentle duck , which greatly eases the man's unknotted of the left arm.

The man then brings the left hand down and releases its hold, while still holding the lady's left behind her neck with his right. The lady goes into a XBL with inside turn, which is more comfortably performed by gently bending the knees, and the man goes into a full left turn before the final XBL.

Figure 6

After the XBL the man holds both hands in crossed position with the right hand on top. The lady goes into a half left turn, while the man performs a full right turn, keeping his left hand down, and bringing his right hand behind his neck. While holding the position with the right hand, he lifts the left hand, lowers it in front of the lady and leads the lady into a half right turn. He then performs a half left underarm turn and brings both hands down in front of him, while the arms cross behind his back. we can see this from the top. Notice that these sorts of moves can not be performed unless you really relax your shoulders and keep very close to your partner.

Now comes the most challenging move in the video. With the right hand down, the man leads the lady into a XBL with inside turn, and then brings his left arm behind her back. The left arm is lowered only after the lady has completed her turn before leading her into the next XBL. From the side we can clearly see the lady's action and recognize the XBL with inside turn. The man must be sure to actually lead this move. The lead happens by driving the lady with the left arm and the man being very strong with the right arm to maintain the position. The move is completed by releasing the right hand, and leading the lady into one more XBL with inside turn, finishing with a comb and closing XBL.

Figure 7

After the XBL the man leads the lady into the usual half left turn and the dancers swap positions. Here the man performs a $\frac{3}{4}$ right turn, and brings both hands down at the same time, forcing the lady to go into a back-to-back position and swapping positions again. We can see this from the top. For the man, the main lead happens with the right hand which brings the lady in front of you. Here we surprise the lady by releasing the right hand and leading the lady forward with the left, into 4 left turns, before the closing XBL. Make sure the figure is lead and not performed by memory, and make sure you create the surprise effect on beat no. 7.

Figure 8

The man leads the lady into a Hammer Lock. He then lifts the left hand and brings it down behind his back. Here the man performs a full right turn, while keeping the right hand of the lady still. He swaps his hand hold by releasing the left and catching with the right. He then walks around the lady, gently holding her shoulder to bring her back into the closing XBL position. During the last 3 bars of music the lady does not perform any turn.

Routine 2, Comparison NY/LA versus Cuban Style

The basic difference between NY and Cuban style is quite clear in the second routine as well. Notice Thea on the right, dancing strictly along a line despite being forced into quite difficult positions. Now we go back to the beginning and notice Yisney's motion. For 6 bars of music she continuously walks clockwise around Fabio. Then, following a DQN she walks counter clockwise for 4 bars of music before being led into another clockwise walk for the next 8 bars of music.

Here we notice the first difference in the mechanics of the moves. After the embrace it feels natural in Cuban style to prolong the walk in this bizarre position. It's unlikely that any dancer would do so in NY/LA style.

The second difference occurs at the beginning of the second bar of idea n 7. The movement of the guy's arm in NY style is smooth, helped by a slight body movement allowing the dancers to face each other. In Cuban style the movement is challenging, sharp and somehow surprising, resulting from the dancers not facing each other. The exit is also typically different and challenging in quite different ways. In NY style the lady is led into 3 and a half left turns which emphasize good technique, balance and elegance. In Cuban style the dancers execute a 'knot' passage which requires flexibility and good sense of timing.

Idea n 8 is technically the same in both styles apart from the usual circular motion of the lady in Cuban style versus the linear one in NY style.

Routine 3

Figure 9

After the XBL, the man holds crossed hands with the right on top. He leads one XBL with lady's half right turn, followed by another XBL with left turn into a check. While keeping the lady in position, the man carefully ducks down and walks past the lady. Whilst performing a 1/2 right turn, he leads the lady into a full left turn, without releasing the hand hold. The man then releases the left hand and invites the lady to catch it in front above his right arm.. We can see this from the top. guys, make sure you bring both arms fully down during the check... Let the hand holds be flexible by not gripping the fingers in order to perform the turns without releasing the hold until beat no 3. The lady is now lead into a XBL with inside turn while ducking , and the man releases the left hand only after the lady has completed her turn. By using only the right hand, the lady is lead into a XBL with 1/2 right turn, while the man performs a 1+1/2 right turn. Now the man catches both of the lady's hands with his left and leads the lady into 2 right turns. At the end of the turns he catches both hands in crossed hold, with the left on top. He then leads the lady around himself, finishing by leading a left turn into a comb on the man. We see the move from the side. Notice the man catching the hand underneath the lady's right arm, and forcing the lady's right hand to rest on her left arm.. The lady's left turn. and the comb.

Figure 10

The 10th idea starts with the man catching the lady's right hand with his left after the comb, and going into a double left turn, while holding the right hand down and the left up. In order to do this he has to release and catch with the right, finishing with a Hammer Lock for himself. At this point he keeps his position still, while leading the lady into a walk . The lady performs one full circle.. a second one. and then a third one. Notice the man's hand hold. From the man's Hammer Lock position, he brings both hands in front, then passes both hands, one after the other, over his head, which allows the second circle.

The third circle is possible only thanks to a little cheat, by the man releasing his right hand hold from underneath his left arm to catch again above it.. He now lifts both hands up, exiting the embrace , and leads the lady into a XBL with inside turn.

Figure 11

This is a short move.. The lady goes into a XBL with inside turn, while the man keeps the left hand down and the right up, which he brings behind the lady's neck. While keeping both hand holds, he leads the lady into a standard XBL, moves slightly to the right to face the lady and brings the right hand behind her neck again. He then releases the left hand and leads another XBL with inside turn.

From the top we see the first inside turn. Notice the quick touch and go of the man's right hand behind the neck, the XBL and the right hand now resting longer behind the lady's neck. During the next XBL the man changes hands, catching with his left, into a comb and closing XBL.

Routine 3, Comparison NY/LA versus Cuban Style

Routine n. 3 is surely the simplest. The mechanics of idea n 9 are very similar both in NY and Cuban style. Notice again how the Cuban version is smoother, and more continuous, while the NY version is somehow more elegant and more refined. The Cuban version looks more earthy and a bit rougher. To Yisney's credit, it should be said that Fabio met her only a few days before the filming and that they had only a couple of short practices together to digest the 4 routines.

The first difference is at the beginning of idea n 10. The man's double left turn on the right hand side would have felt very unnatural in the Cuban version, and avoiding it in the Cuban part allows them to enter the next pattern earlier. Idea 10 ends differently as well. In NY style we decided to execute an extra XBL, while in Cuban style we prefer to flow smoothly into idea n 11. Here again, in order to make the Cuban version feel smoother, we go into the first lady's comb via a simple left turn, whereas in the NY version, on the right hand side, we use a XBL with inside turn to achieve the same. The last difference is in the second comb. This is held only very shortly in the Cuban style, while we hold it into the final XBL in the NY version.

Routine 4

Figure 12

During the XBL the man goes into a crossed hand hold and then into an underarm right turn. He then leads another XBL with inside turn, by bringing the left hand first up, and then down behind the lady's back. Now another challenging action.. the man first lifts the right hand up and then the left.. We can see this from the side. the right hand of the man is down, the turn is lead with the left hand and then the left hand goes behind the lady's back. notice that both dancers need to bend slightly and face one another in order to perform this move, which is obviously not possible without their staying very close. Now the man goes into a half left turn, and embraces himself by bringing both hands down. He then quickly changes hand hold, ducks down by performing a full right turn which is completed by bringing the right hand behind the lady's neck. At this point he releases the left hold, puts his elbow underneath the lady's right arm and flips it to the other side, where he catches it again.. Ladies you have to keep your arm loose to allow the flip to be effective and look nice . here is the hand switch again.. the right turn and the flip, which needs to be lead, not performed artificially by the lady. Here there's another little cheat: the man releases the hand hold with his right from below the lady's right arm and catches again above. This allows the next XBL with inside turn to start and finish with the man's hand still behind the lady's neck. Notice again the cheat, with the man's right hand catching and releasing. The cheat works even better if the man distracts the attention from his right hand, and focuses it on the lady's right hand instead, by looking carefully at it, for example. kissing the hand could be a more flamboyant alternative. The move is then completed with a simple lady's right turn.

Figure 13

This idea starts with a common LA style move, followed by the man ducking down, turning and walking around the lady. We can see this from the top as well. Now the man performs a double left turn. The first turn is under both arms, while during the second the right is lowered down. The lady then goes into 3 left turns. Notice how the man needs to finish his last turn to the side of the lady, in order to give her space to perform her 3 travelling turns.

Figure 14

This figure is our favorite. It looks nice and it feels even better. After the XBL, the man changes hand hold, leads the lady into a right turn with his right hand. At the same time he keeps the left hand down and brings the right behind the lady's neck. Now here is the fun bit: the man leads a XBL with inside turn and, while the lady turns, he sneaks behind her to perform another XBL with inside turn. He performs a check on the lady's left shoulder and leads her into 1+1/2 right turn. During the entire sequence the left hand stays down.

Here is the view from the top.. the coupled XBLs need to be lead very smoothly, gently and continuously, and the man's action should have a touch of surprise in almost disorienting the lady.. The 1+1/2 turn finishes with the right hand again behind the lady's neck,.. here the man travels around the lady... Notice the man's right hand gently holding the lady's right elbow with his fingertips, in order to keep her in position.. And the lady's left hand brought to rest over his shoulder. A XBL completes the move.

Figure 15

This is the last move of the video. The man leads a XBL with lady's half right turn. Then he makes a half left turn and brings both hands down simultaneously. Now he brings both hands up and quickly brings them in front of the lady, who has been lead into another half turn. here is the move from the top. This is a typical Cuban action. .. and needs to be executed quickly so that it carries a touch of surprise. Here we again need to have very relaxed and loose shoulders. The man brings the arms up and lowers them behind the lady's back. Make sure that no pressure goes into the hands, so that the lady is not unwittingly lead to turn. Now the man brings his left arm holding the lady's right behind his back. He performs a basic step and leads the lady into a XBL with double inside turn. Here again is the action of the man moving the lady' right arm and clearing the space for the XBL.

Routine 4, Comparison NY/LA versus Cuban Style

The last routine is surely the most interesting and the one which emphasizes the difference between NY and Cuban style the most. The first position in idea n 12 is reached in NY style (on the right hand side) via a XBL with inside turn, which needs to be performed very sharply and quickly to allow the difficult arm movement. Cuban dancers normally prefer to execute moves more smoothly. For this reason we get into it via an enchufle, or lady's left turn. the differences in the remaining part of the routine are also the result of our attempt to make the

Cuban version more fluid and smooth, allowing more sharp action and freedom in the rhythm interpretation in the NY style. In the Cuban version Fabio first ducks one bar earlier, which obviously allows for more time. Secondly, he avoids the arm flick (a very typical NY/LA feature) by releasing the left hand and catching in front. In order to detract the attention from this action he alternates three combs over Yisney and over himself. By looking at the right hand side, remember how the arm flick was followed by a release and catch of the hand hold in the lady's comb position. At this point in the Cuban version we avoid the further XBL and go directly into idea n 13. The NY/LA characteristic 'embrace push and lady's duck ' is obviously avoided in the Cuban version, and Fabio anticipates, once more, the duck , which again, allows for more time and a smoother execution of the following action.

The end of idea 13 is decorated in different way in the two styles. In NY style (on the right) we lead the lady into 3 left turns, while in the Cuban style we go into some free left turns without hand hold. Figure 14 is executed in very similar way, we just emphasize the circular motion of the lady in the Cuban style. Finally, the last idea feels very different in the two styles. By dancing it you will realise it feels more different than it looks. First, in Cuban style Fabio brings the arms down after a standard lady's right turn, while in the NY version, the lady's' right turn is executed during a XBL, which is slightly unusual. In the rest of the figure notice how Thea and Fabio in the NY version, on the right hand side, both dance the entire move on the spot. In the Cuban version, both dancers walk around each other, which make the figure much smoother.

We hope you enjoyed the material and we encourage you to practice both versions of each routine. Remember, *“if all you know is Cuban salsa, all songs will feel like Cuban salsa...!!”*