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THE ARGENTINE TANGO

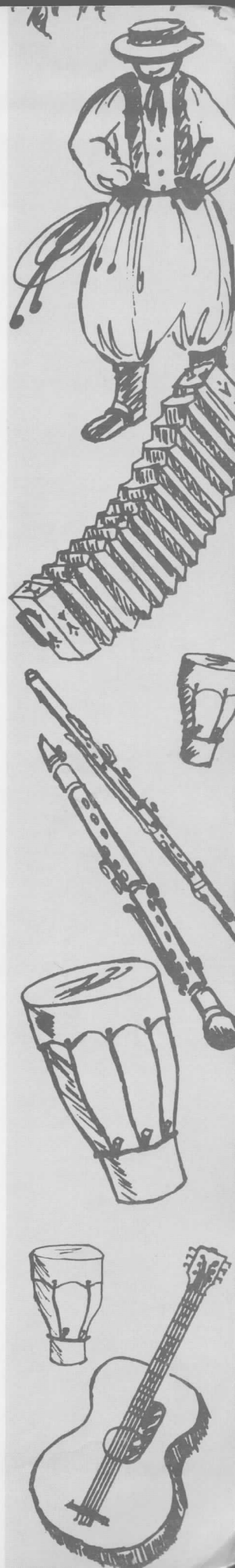


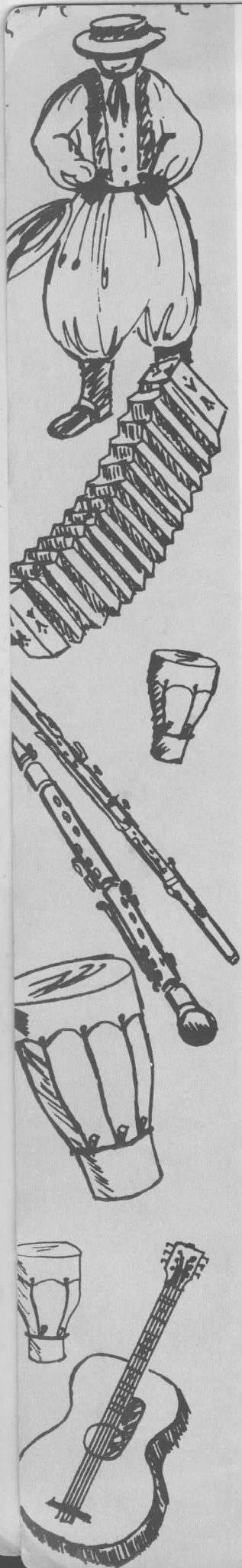
by ROBERT LUIS

THE ARGENTINE TANGO

By ROBERT LUIS

LATIN DANCE STUDIO, Publishers
36 Central Park South, New York





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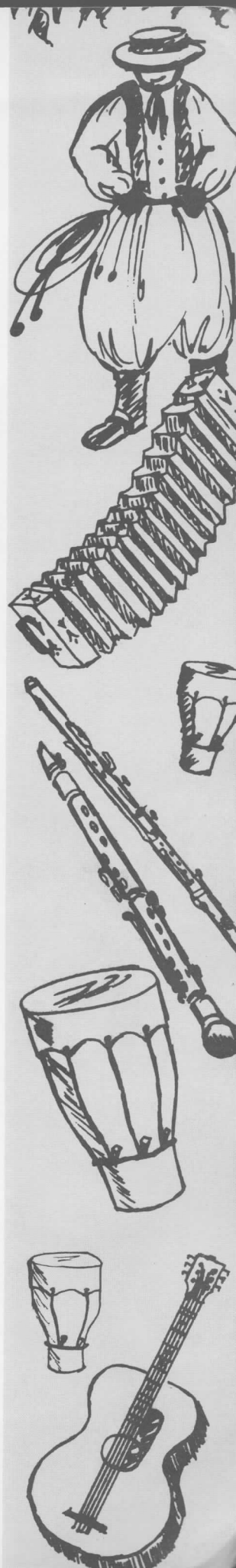
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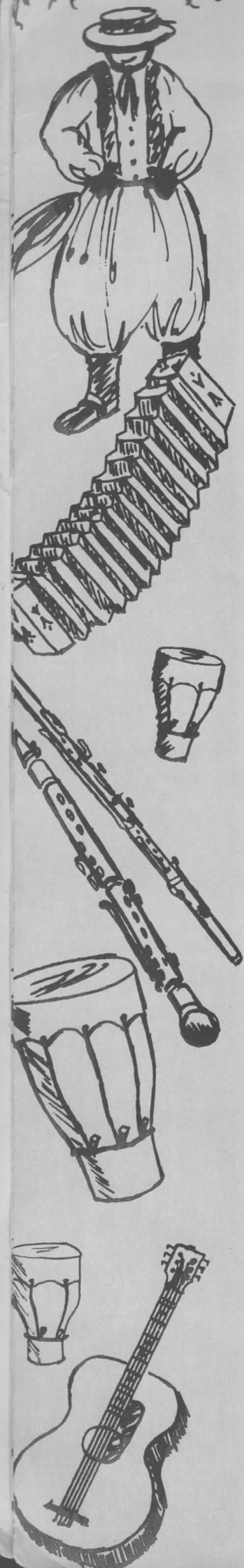
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TO
RODOLFO D'AVALOS
A PIONEER
OF THE ARGENTINE TANGO
WHOSE DEDICATED
ENTHUSIASM
HAS BEEN A
CONSTANT SOURCE OF
INSPIRATION





FOREWORD

We hope this work will fill a lacuna in our library of the dance.

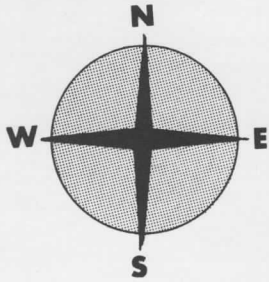
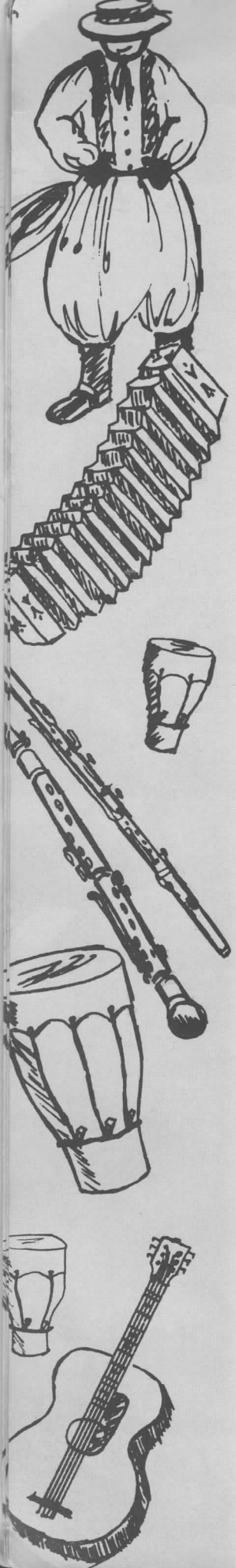
Look as we may, we have been unable to find any book on the Argentine Tango outside of passing references and commercial booklets which treat the Tango as a glorified Foxtrot.

Acknowledgment

We wish to express our gratitude to Juan Carlos Copes, head of the Argentine Ballet Troupe for contributing valuable authentic data and enriching our pages with his photographs.

Robert Luis





ARGENTINA

URUGUAY

Buenos Aires

Rio de la Plata

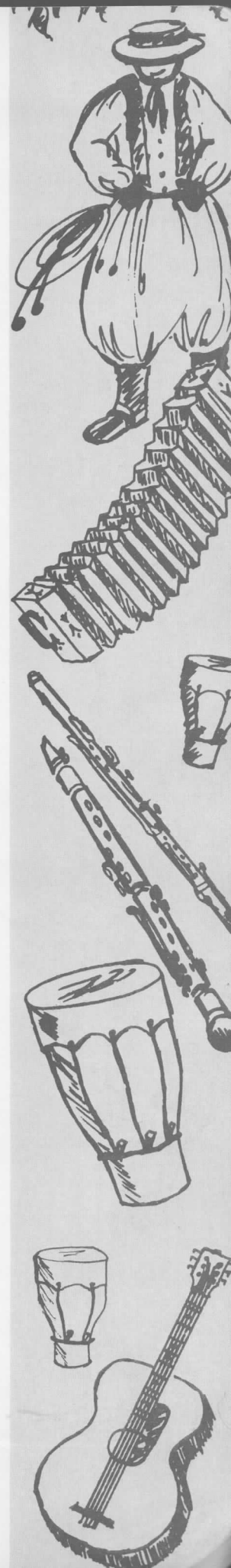
THE ARGENTINE TANGO

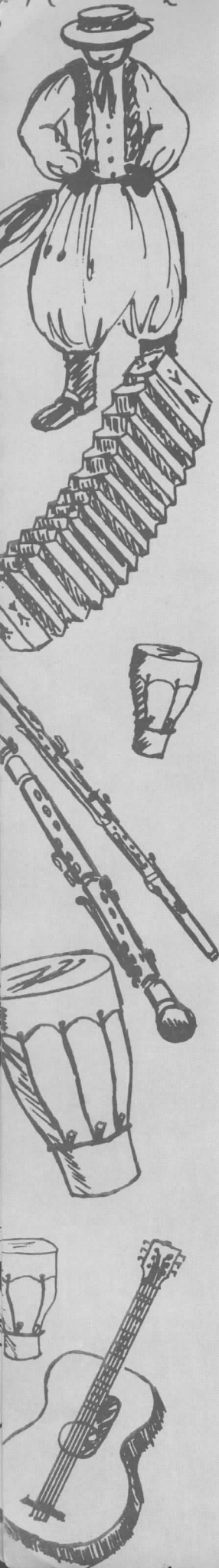
PART I SYNOPSIS

The banks of the Rio de la Plata saw the birth of the Tango. Many years were to pass however before this lusty dance, spawned in the slums of the water front, became the epitome of patrician elegance and sensual sophistication that is today's Argentine Tango.

Space does not permit us to go into the innumerable, more or less imaginative, versions of the Tango. Suffice is to say that the best authorities on the subject seem to agree upon the following facts.

The ancestry of the Tango can be traced back two centuries and many of us may be surprised to learn that the African influence has been far from inconsiderable. The name itself is of African origin; it was at first pronounced Tan-goó' with the accent on the last syllable, an onomatopoeic rendition of the drum beats.





Three dances have contributed to the formative years of the Tango, namely:

A. THE "CANDOMBE"

A syncopated dance of African origin, characterized by convulsive movements; it was danced to the rhythm of Tamboriles and Masacallas (small African drums). Its rhythm bears a marked resemblance to that of the Tango.

B. THE "HABANERA"

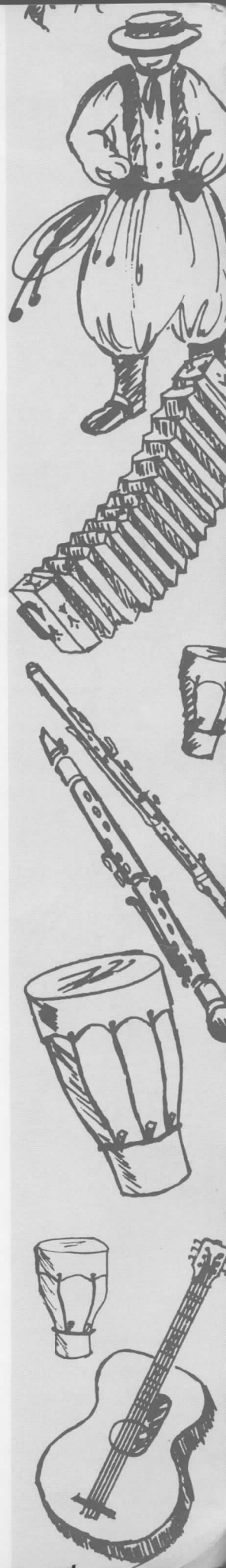
The Habanera can be traced back to eighteenth century Europe. By the year 1850 it had made its way to the New World and had gained great popularity in Havana where it became known as the "Danza Habanera". Its sweet, sentimental melody found a ready echo in the nostalgia of the Negro and the profound melancholy of the Gaucho. On both banks of the Rio de la Plata the Habanera was quickly taken up by mariners, stevedores, Negros, etc. In this riparian environment the tempo of the dance began to quicken to meet the exigencies of the expert dancers, the choreography grew more complex and "cortes"*, "quebradas" (breaks) and "Sentales"** made their first appearance.

* May be described as the familiar American "dip", but without the lowering of the center of gravity.

** The girl sitting on her partner's thigh.



MR. JUAN COPES AT THE MASACALLA





TYPICAL MILONGA MUSIC

WRITTEN IN THE ARGENTINE MANNER



WRITTEN IN THE AMERICAN MANNER



C. THE "MILONGA"

Few will care to dispute the profound influence of the Milonga upon the Tango. Here we are for the first time confronted with a dance purely indigenous. The name, technique, rhythm and lyrics all bear the unmistakable imprint of the denizens of the River Plate. The Milonga began to flourish circa 1860 and has reached our present day with very few ups and downs. The Negroes deserve the credit for disseminating the Milonga, which at first is believed to have been devoid of lyrics. The rhythm was a fast 2/4 time. Today's Milonga has lost many of its pristine characteristics and is now usually referred to in the hyphenated form of "Tango-Milonga".

The advent of the "Milonga displaced such then popular dances as Mazurkas, Polkas, Schottisches, Lanceros, etc. Some of the steps were retained however and adapted to the new idiosyncrasy into patterns at times lascivious and at times picaresque.

The modern Milonga could be summarized as a 2/4 dance in a tempo twice as fast as that of an average Tango. It is danced in both close and open positions. It is characterized by lively kicks, quebradas and sentales. The intricacies of the steps and the difficulties in securing the required native rhythms seem to militate against the possibility of this dance ever becoming popular outside of Argentina.

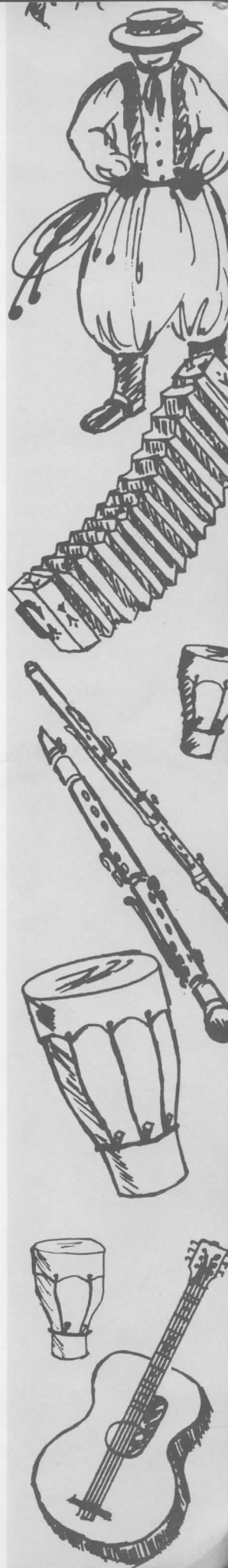


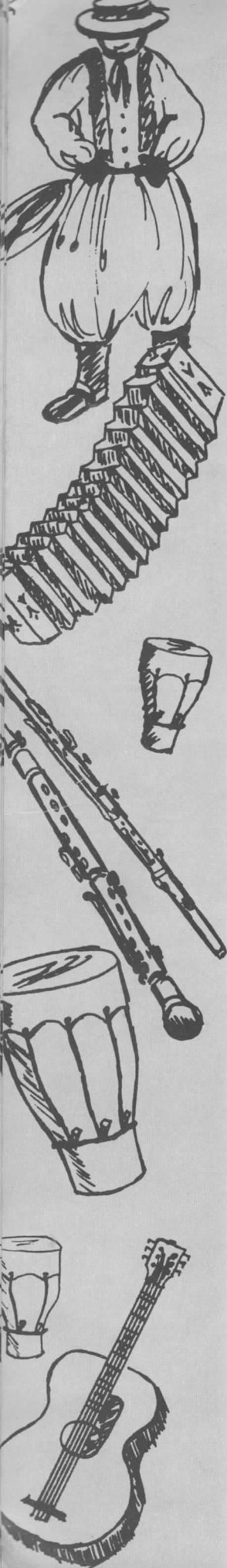
SENTAL



QUEBRADA

with "GANCHO" (HOOK)





By the year 1910 the Milonga had tamed down considerably and with its fusion with the aforementioned dances had reached the status of a new dance then known as "Tango Arrabalero".

Strangely enough, the Tango of those days was never accepted by the upper classes of Buenos Aires and it took the enthusiasm of Paris to make it palatable to the Argentine society.

World War I brought in its wake a crop of wealthy South Americans to Europe; the polo playing wheat and cattle barons flocked to Paris and the Riviera, their pockets bursting with pesos. They brought with them the Tango and native orchestras. New clubs sprang up that were exclusively dedicated to the exotic Argentine rhythms. This lascivious and soul stirring music spread like fire among war weary people who sought only pleasure and oblivion. The Tango craze spread all over Europe and crossed the Atlantic to North America. Incidentally this turn of events made the Argentinians appreciate and value the music that was to become Argentina's national dance.

The advent of the Tango on the international dance scene was far from peaceful. Everywhere rose a hue and cry of moral decadence; gloomy forecasters saw in the Tango the end of family life and the complete breakdown of morality and decency.

It was during the first World War that Vernon and Irene Castle gave their version of the old fashioned Argentine Tango to New York audiences and the dance found immediate favor among the dancers. But to Rudolph Valentino must go our thanks for making America nationally aware of the Tango in his epoch making film "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse", the which, however, was in itself a mixed blessing as it established an exhibitionistic standard that, to this day, too many of our dancers try to emulate.

It is our purpose here to acquaint American audiences with the beautiful simplicity and emotional experience of the Argentine Tango.

THE MODERN TANGO

In considering the modern Tango two eras and two schools of thought must be taken into account; they are referred to as: the "GUARDIA-VIEJA" (Old Guard) and the "VANGUARDIA" (Avant-garde).

THE GUARDIA VIEJA *

The orchestrations prior to 1920 used exclusively high pitched instruments; piccolo, flute, clarinet and harp which made for lightness and vivacity. As long as these instruments were in use, the Tango remained lighthearted and playful. The later orchestrations however forced the maestri to have recourse to instruments of lower register that brought us the mournful and plaintive Tango with which we are all familiar.

Orchestral groups composed of flute, bandoneon*, violin and guitar are also regarded as belonging to the Guardia Vieja.

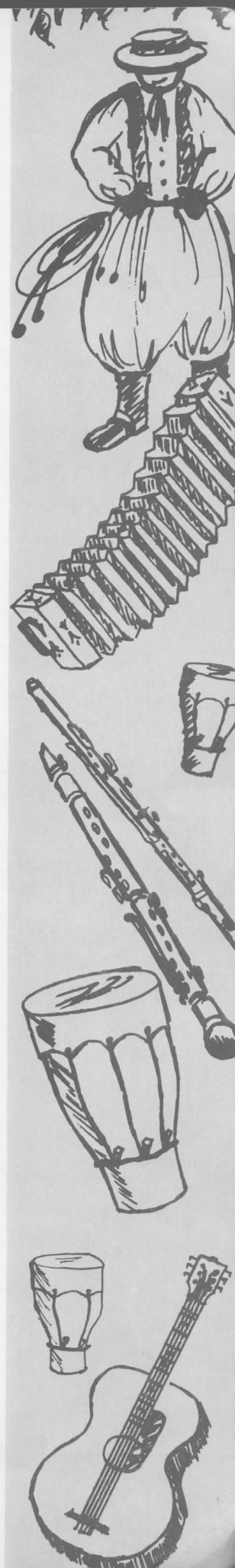
TYPICAL TANGO MUSIC WRITTEN IN THE ARGENTINE MANNER

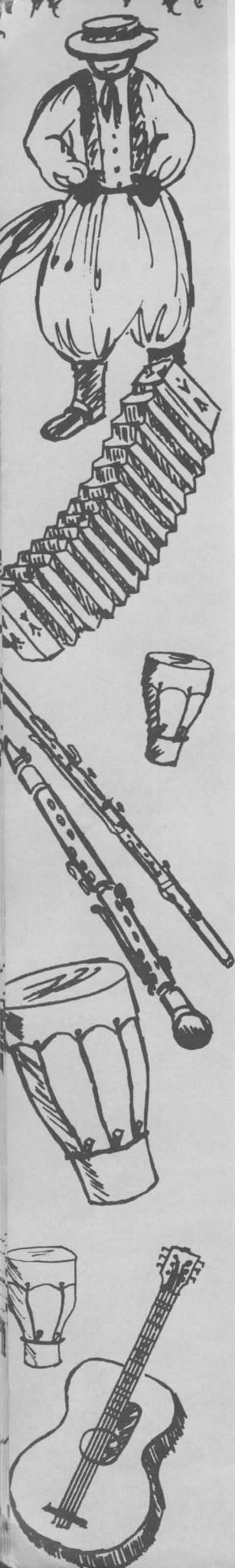


WRITTEN IN THE AMERICAN MANNER



*A special type of accordion or large concertina, the backbone of any Tango orchestra.





Another interesting aspect is the development of the lyrics and their dramatic theme due to the advent of the phonograph and the subsequent commercialization of the Tango disc. A new type of Tango, the "TANGO CANCION", had an immediate and immense popular appeal; it received its greatest impetus from a voice never to be equalled, that of Carlos Gardel.

THE VANGUARDIA

The inclusion of any musical instrument other than the ones previously mentioned automatically labels a Tango orchestra as "vanguardista". Some of the most famous leaders in this group are: Julio de Caro who originated the movement, Vicente Greco, Arolas Canaro, Firpo, Piazzola, Fresedo and all those that are to follow.

They broke away from the traditional pattern and through the introduction of new arrangements and orchestrations created the "Tango Sinfónico".

These new arrangements give the choreography greater flexibility and allow for an almost infinite number of "figuras" (patterns) and interpretations.

We are to regret the internecine war that is still being waged between the two factions as the end result may be a slow deterioration of the primitive fabric.

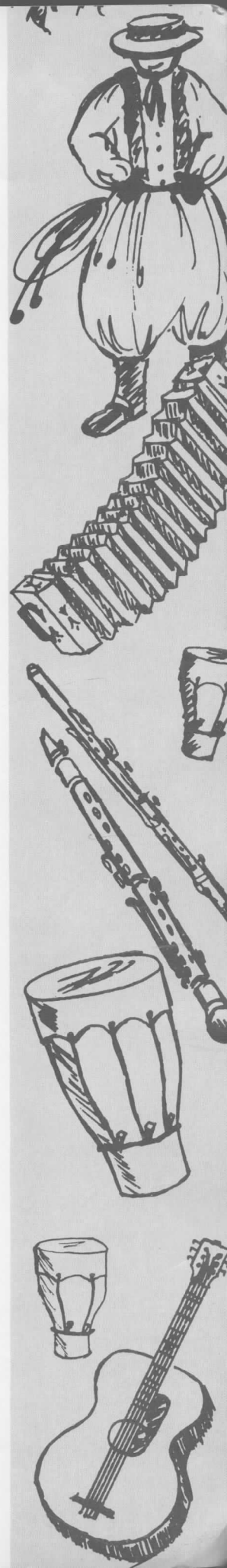
At the time of this writing, two of the most celebrated bands in Buenos Aires are Alfredo de Angelis and Osvaldo Fresedo. The former enjoys the wider popular appeal, while the older and more conservative Fresedo is the idol of the more sophisticated cafe society.

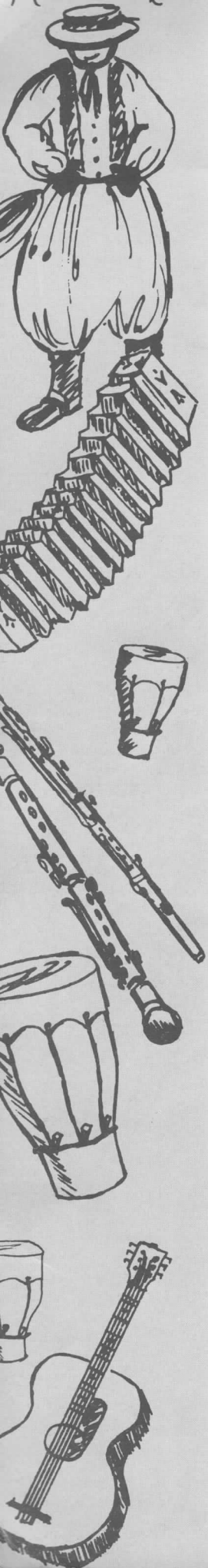
There are many other noted Tango orchestras which space does not allow us to name. Mention must be made however of the indestructible Francisco Canaro and Juan d'Arienzo, noted for his staccato rhythm, who retain their perennial popularity among Tango dancers.

Naturally the development of the dance paralleled that of the music and time has exerted its polishing and refining influence. // Today's Tango is a thing of classic beauty and stark simplicity; a far cry from the erstwhile violent performance. *Quose*

As previously stated, the Tango is first and foremost an emotional experience and therefore difficult to analyze. Perhaps the leitmotif is "masculinity" and therein may lie the special fascination the Tango holds over women. The dance is made up of a series of "figuras" but the execution of intricate patterns should never be the dancer's prime objective. His first concern is with the expression and the "imposition" of his emotional will; it calls for masterful leadership and does not allow for errors or uncertainty.

Today the Tango is danced in close position. It is performed on a perfectly even keel, but the steps have retained from their ancestry the springy, catlike quality indispensable to the proper rendition of the Tango.





PART II

THE DANCE

The controlled passion and intensity of the Tango do not leave room for the obvious or the eccentric. Style is of the essence and matters more than intricacy of steps.

In the Tango the body is closer to the floor than in any other dance and the "feline" control is exercised through the thighs and ankles. Avoid open or semi-open positions which are alien to the Tango.

The rhythm is 2/4 time, the first beat being more heavily accented. Rhythm patterns will vary according to the figures. The proper execution of the dance requires a great deal of practice as the matching of the figures to the musical phrase is a prerequisite to proper enjoyment.

THE STANCE

Standard ballroom position, but torsos erect and parallel, knees forward and slightly bent, partner held closely. Please note that this position is to be maintained throughout the execution of the dance.

THE LIN

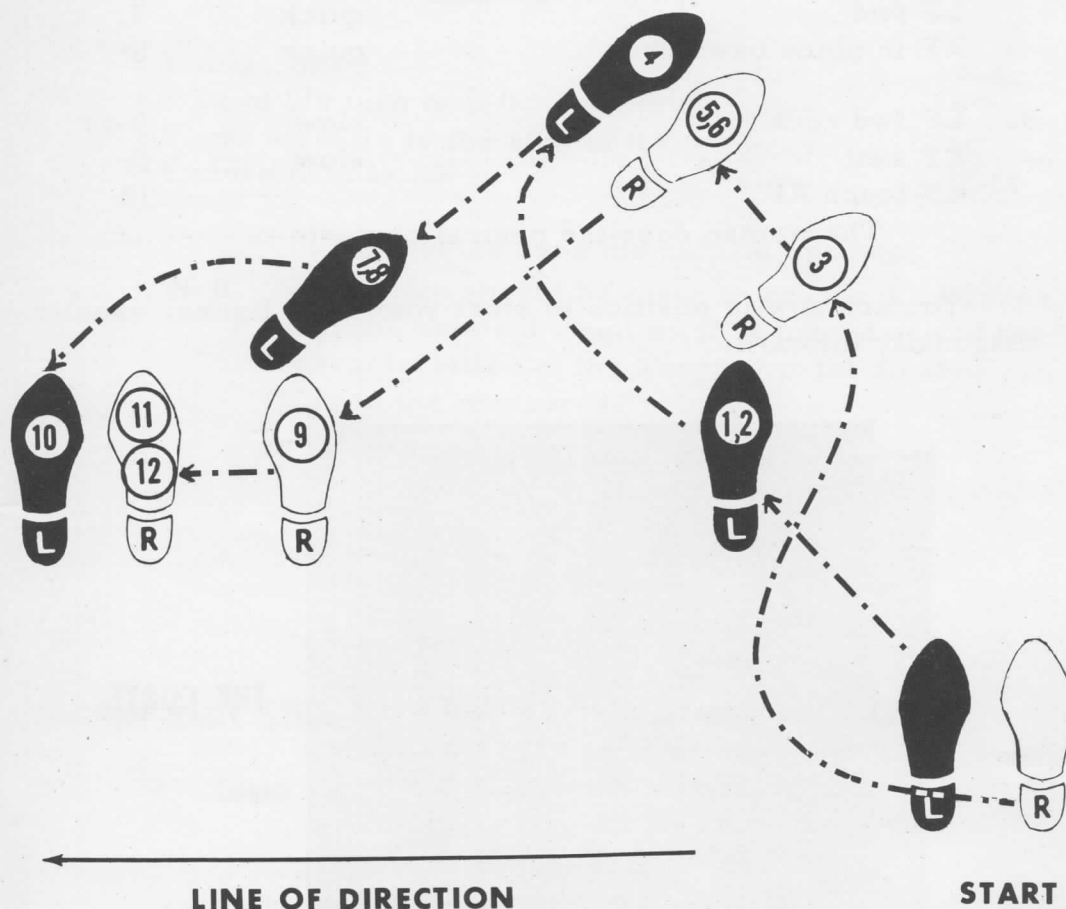
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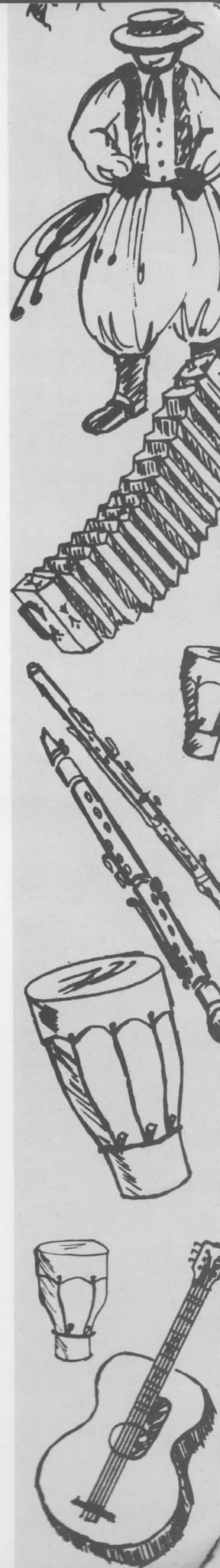
THE LINE OF DIRECTION

For correct styling and proper execution of the dance it is essential to understand the line of direction, which is unique in the Tango. While the line of direction is, as usual, counter-clockwise, progress is made either diagonally forward or diagonally backward, not unlike the tacking of a ship. In other words, the man starts with his back to the center of the room in the line of direction and proceeds on a zig-zag course toward one or the other of the two corners ahead in the room.

THE BASIC STEP MAN'S PART



THE WOMAN DOES THE NATURAL OPPOSITE



THE START

The importance of a good entry cannot be overstressed, as a fumbled start will immediately destroy the woman's confidence in her partner's ability to lead her, thereby causing her to be less amenable to his lead.

Always start with the man's back to the center of the room.

MEASURES	Man's Part	RHYTHM	MUSICAL COUNTS
1.	RF swd	slow	1
	LF touch RF		2
	LF diag. bkwd (corte)*	slow	3-4
2.	RF in place	slow	5-6
	LF fwd	quick	7
	RF in place bkwd rock	quick	8
3.	LF fwd rock	slow	9-10
	RF swd	slow	11
	LF touch RF		12

The woman does the natural opposite

You are now in position to start your first figure, usually diagonally forward.



THE CORTE

*When corteing the woman taps floor with left toe behind RF, count 4.

THE BASIC STEP

Like the basic Rumba pattern, the basic Tango pattern is made up of two halves, the second being the exact reverse of the first part. Each half covers one and a half measures of music and the complete pattern, three measures.

Man's first part

MEASURES	RHYTHM	MUSICAL COUNTS
1. LF diag. fwd	slow	1-2
RF diag. fwd outside of woman, 1/8 right turn, landing on heel	quick	3
LF swd directly to the side of RF	quick	4
2. RF close next to LF	slow	5-6

Man's second part

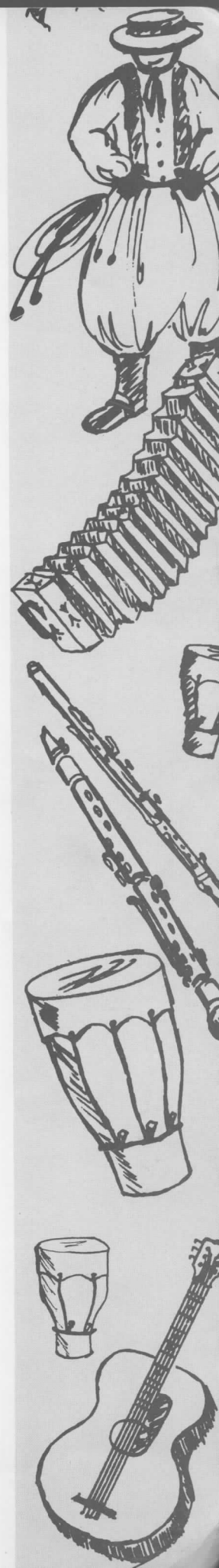
3. LF diag. bkwd	slow	7-8
RF bkwd 1/8 turn to left	quick	9
LF swd directly to the side of RF	quick	10
RF close next to LF	slow	11-12

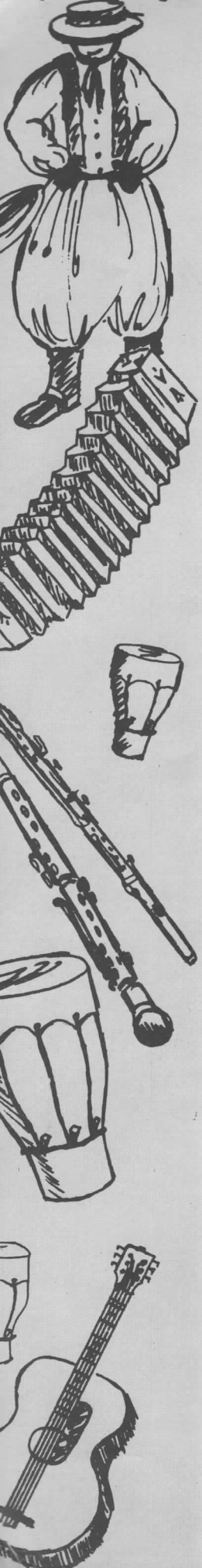
The woman does the natural opposite

N.B. No attempt should be made to equate the figures with the musical count as it is indeed one of the characteristics of the Tango that the figures run across the measures.

THE BASIC STEP

Count 3





THE ARGENTINE WALK

While basically very simple, this step requires a great deal of practice to maintain the controlled muscular energy and the panther-like, springy, but not bouncy quality of the step.

On the quick count of 2, make certain that the body moves over the foot so as not to disturb the vertical balance.

The step takes up one and a half measures of the music, and may be repeated at will.

MEASURES	RHYTHM	MUSICAL COUNTS
1. LF diag. fwd	quick	1
RF swd	quick	2
LF diag. fwd	slow	3-4
2. RF diag. fwd, outside the woman	slow	5-6

The woman does the natural opposite



THE ARGENTINE WALK

on count 1

THE BACK ROCK

MEASURES

RHYTHM

MUSICAL COUNTS

- | | | | |
|----|--|-------|-----|
| 1. | LF diag. bkwd | slow | 1-2 |
| | RF bkwd | quick | 3 |
| | LF fwd rock (LF inches slightly forward) | quick | 4 |
| 2. | RF rock in place | slow | 5-6 |
| | LF bkwd | slow | 7-8 |
| 3. | RF bkwd 1/8 turn to left | quick | 9 |
| | LF in place 1/8 turn to left | quick | 10 |
| | RF swd | slow | 11 |
| | LF touch RF | | 12 |

start new pattern in L. O. D.

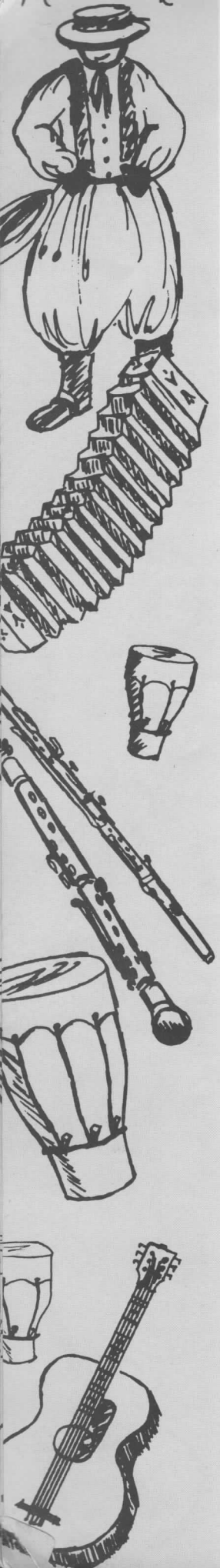
The woman does the natural opposite



THE BACK ROCK

on Counts 5 - 6





THE FULL TURN

The sweeping beauty of this step requires exact footwork. When properly executed, dancers finish the step facing in the same direction as at the start, i.e., the man's back to the center of the room, ready to start new pattern in L.O.D.

MEASURES	RHYTHM	MUSICAL COUNTS
1. LF diag. fwd	slow	1-2
RF diag. fwd (outside woman)	slow	3-4
2. LF fwd toeing out; $\frac{1}{4}$ turn to left	quick	5
RF bkwd rock toeing in; $\frac{1}{4}$ turn to left	quick	6
LF fwd rock toeing out; $\frac{1}{4}$ turn to left	slow	7-8
3. RF bkwd rock toeing in; $\frac{1}{4}$ turn to left	quick	9
LF swd directly to the side of RF	quick	10
RF close next to LF	slow	11-12

The woman does the natural opposite



THE FULL TURN

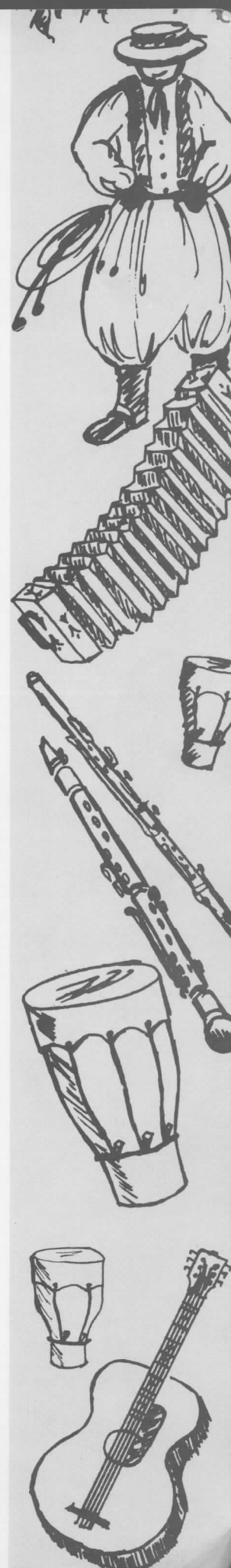
on Count 6

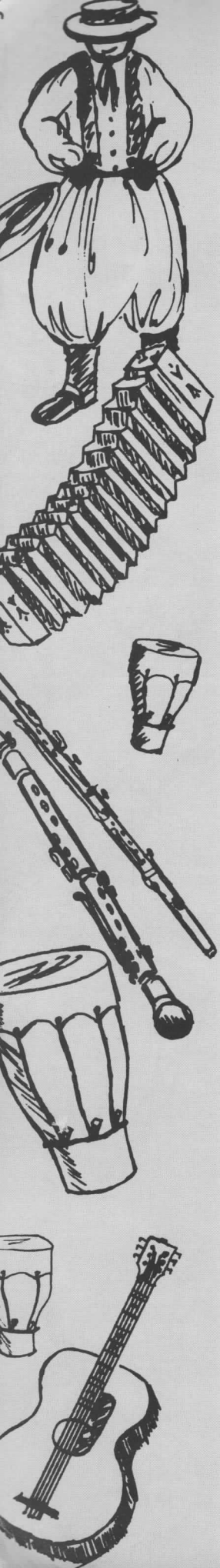
THE LEFT & RIGHT SPOT TURNS

(I) Left turn, Man's part

MEASURES	RHYTHM	MUSICAL COUNTS
1. LF diag. fwd RF toeing in, cross over LF, no weight & start <u>full turn</u> to left (pivot), gradually	slow	1-2 3 4
2. shifting weight onto RF LF diag. bkwd (corte)	slow	5-6 7-8

THE LEFT TURN
on Count 3





(II) Right turn, Man's part

MEASURES	RHYTHM	MUSICAL COUNTS
3. RF bkwd	quick	9
LF rock in place toeing out	quick	10
RF bkwd rock. Start leading	slow	11
woman into <u>full</u> right turn		12
4. Pivot on RF; weight remains on RF		13-14
LF diag. bkwd (corte)	slow	15-16
5. RF bkwd 1/8 turn to left	quick	17
LF fwd rock 1/8 turn to left	quick	18
RF swd	slow	19
LF touch RF		20



RIGHT TURN

on Count 12

(I) Left turn, Woman's part

MEASURES

RHYTHM

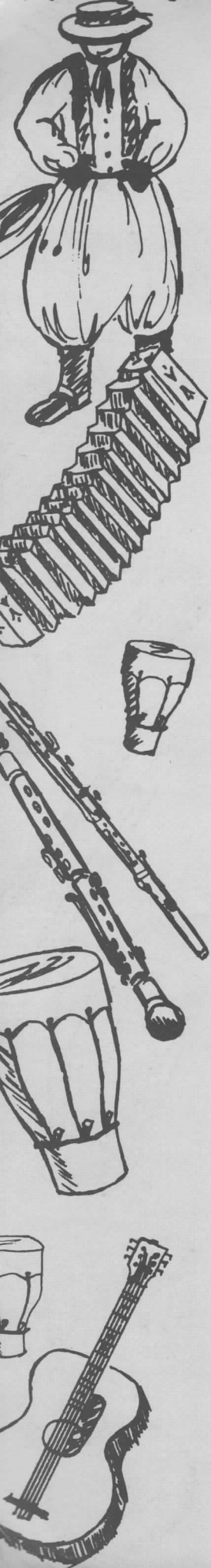
**MUSICAL
COUNTS**

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|-------|-----|
| 1. | RF diag bkwd | slow | 1-2 |
| | LF bkwd in a tight circle | quick | 3 |
| | RF bkwd in a tight circle | quick | 4 |
| 2. | LF bkwd crossing in front of RF | slow | 5 |
| | RF taps floor with toe | | 6 |
| | RF diag. fwd (corte) | slow | 7 |
| | LF taps floor by right heel | | 8 |

RIGHT TURN

on Count 12





(II) Right turn, Woman's part

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|-------|----|
| 3. | LF fwd | quick | 9 |
| | RF bkwd rock (in place) | quick | 10 |
| | LF fwd in a tight circle | quick | 11 |
| | RF fwd in a tight circle | quick | 12 |
| 4. | LF fwd in a tight circle | slow | 13 |
| | RF taps floor behind LF | | 14 |
| | RF diag. fwd (corte) | slow | 15 |
| | LF taps floor behind RF | | 16 |
| 5. | LF fwd 1/8 turn to left | quick | 17 |
| | RF rock in place 1/8 turn to left | quick | 18 |
| | LF swd directly to side of RF | slow | 19 |
| | RF touch LF | | 20 |

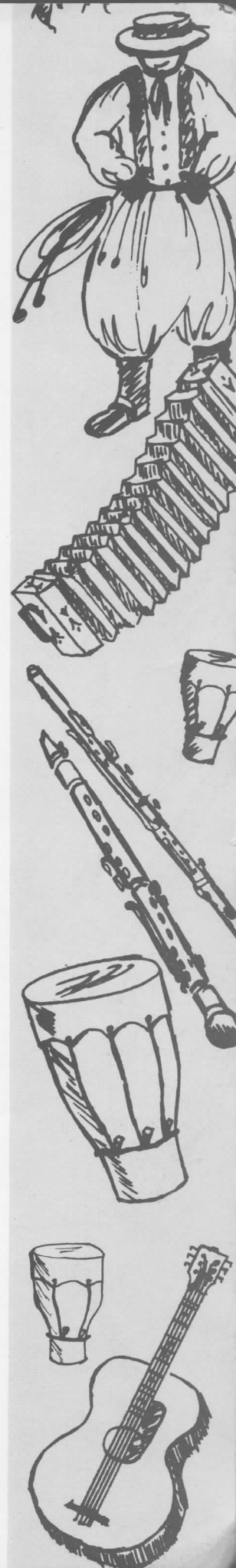


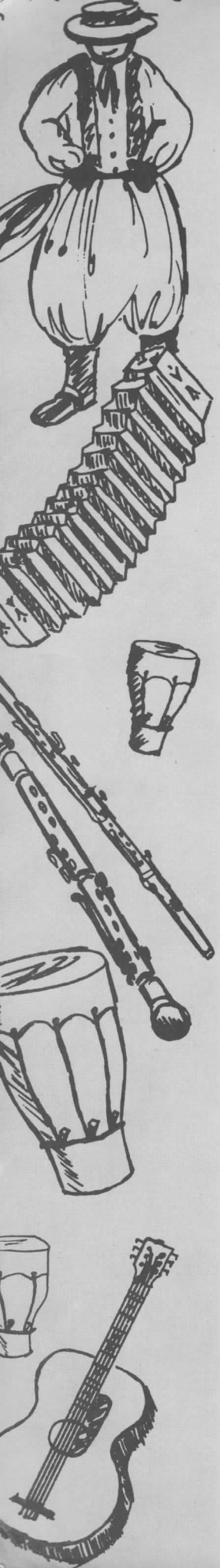
THE FANS
on Count 10

THE FANS

MEASURES	<u>Man's part</u>	RHYTHM	MUSICAL MUSICAL COUNTS
1. LF diag. bkwd		slow	1-2
RF bkwd 1/8 turn to left		quick	3
LF fwd rock 1/8 turn to left		quick	4
2. RF swd		slow	5
LF touch RF			6
LF diag. bkwd		slow	7-8
3. RF bkwd behind LF, lead woman into R fan		slow	9-10
LF bkwd crossing over RF, lead woman into L fan		slow	11
4. RF fans			12
RF swd crossing over LF		quick	13
LF swd		quick	14
RF closes next to LF		slow	15-16

THE FANS
on Count 11





Woman's part

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|-------|-------|
| 1. | RF diag. fwd | slow | 1-2 |
| | LF fwd 1/8 turn to left | quick | 3 |
| | RF bkwd rock 1/8 turn to left | quick | 4 |
| 2. | LF swd | slow | 5 |
| | RF touch LF | | 6 |
| | RF diag. fwd | slow | 7-8 |
| 3. | LF diag. fwd crossing over RF | slow | 9 |
| | RF swd toe touches floor | | 10 |
| | RF swd crossing over LF | slow | 11 |
| | LF swd toe touches floor | | 12 |
| | LF swd crossing over RF | quick | 13 |
| | RF swd | quick | 14 |
| | LF closes next to RF | slow | 15-16 |

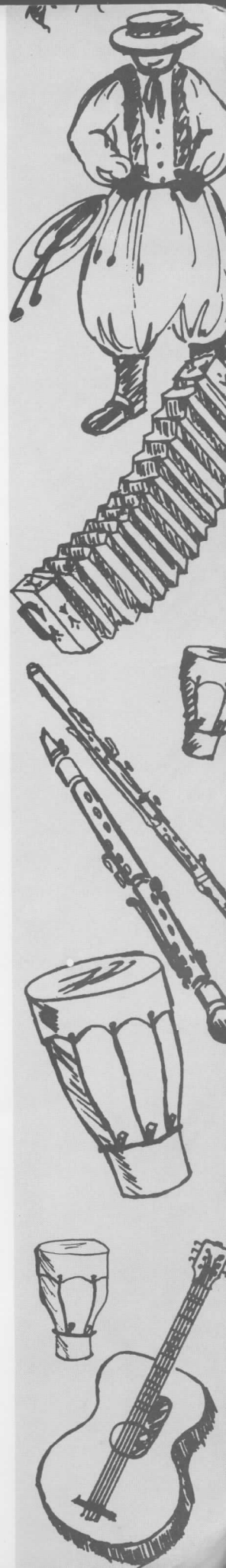
When properly executed, the position of the torso should remain undisturbed by the fans.

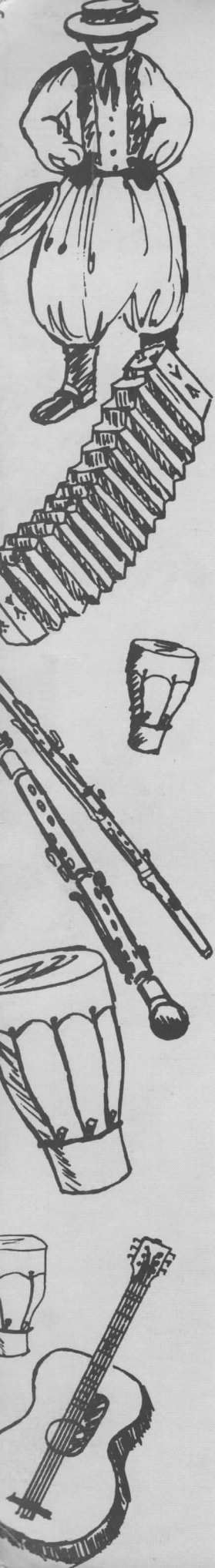


THE FANS
Count 12



TYPICAL CORTE





CONCLUSION

The above described steps are but a few of the standard figures. Combinations and rearrangements of them permit an almost limitless creation of new patterns. Bear in mind however, that more important are the correct phrasing and the emotional response to the music.

It is to be hoped that, in spite of the limitations of the printed word, this precis may have left ajar for you, the door to the wonderful world of Tango. This dance is one of the most difficult to execute. Once you have understood and mastered it, you will come to the realization that few dances can give you greater enjoyment.

RECOMMENDED TANGO DISCS

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>LABEL</u>	<u>ORCHESTRA</u>
PASTORA	Odeon	Alfredo de Angelis
PREGONERA	"	Francisco Canaro
MALA JUNTA	"	Osvaldo Pugliese
DON JUAN	"	Francisco Canaro
RECUERDO	"	Osvaldo Pugliese
ADIOS PAMPA MIA	"	Francisco Canaro
TIERRA MEGRA	Victor	Juan D'Arienzo
LA CUMPARSITA	"	Angel D'Agostino
EL 11	"	Carlos di Sarli
GARUFA	"	Juan D'Arienzo
MAMA YO QUIERO NOVIO	"	Juan D'Arienzo
EL ENTERRIANO ^R	"	FRESEDO
C. T. V.	"	Anibal Troilo
LA MALEVA	"	Anibal Troilo
ORGANITO DE LA TARDE	"	Carlos di Sarli

