

Dance Styles

SALSA

Salsa is not easily defined. What is Salsa? A sauce, a recipe, a dance? Who invented salsa? The Cubans, Puerto Ricans? Salsa is a distillation of many Latin and Afro-Caribbean dances. Each played a large part in its evolution. Salsa is similar to Mambo in that both have a pattern of six steps danced over eight counts of music. The dances share many of the same moves. In Salsa, turns have become an important feature, so the overall look and feel are quite different from those of Mambo. Mambo moves generally forward and backward, whereas, Salsa has more of a side to side feel.

It is not only Cuban; nevertheless we must give credit to Cuba for the origin and ancestry of creation. It is here where Contra-Danza (Country Dance) of England/France, later called Danzón, which was brought by the French who fled from Haiti, begins to mix itself with Rhumbas of African origin (Guaguanco, Colombia, Yambú). Add Són of the Cuban people, which was a mixture of the Spanish troubadour (sonero) and the African drumbeats and flavor and a partner dance flowered to the beat of the clave.

Salsa dance entered into peak of its popularity in 1970s when the influx Dominican and Puerto Rican immigrants to the US. Their new dancing style was popularized with the exploits of the musical stars Johnny Pacheco, Fania All-Stars, Willie Colon and Reuben Blades.

As decades went on, several distinct styles of Salsa appeared. Here are some of the most popular ones:

Los Angeles ("L.A.") Style New York Style "Casino" style Miami-Style Casino Colombian / Cali style Rueda de Casino Ballroom Salsa

Sources: <http://www.centralhome.com/ballroomcountry/salsa.htm> <http://www.dancefacts.net/dance-history/history-of-salsa/>

View Salsa choreography by Go Salsa: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFowbTmVtGA>

CHACHA

Cha-cha is the newcomer of the Latin American Dances. This dance was first seen in the dance-halls of America, in the early fifties, following closely Mambo, from which it was developed. The music is slower than Mambo.

Chonque was the grandfather of Rumba and Cha cha with African rhythms and Spanish guitar, but Enrique Joren came up with the first full-fledged Cha cha in 1951. He wanted it to be a medium rhythm, very recognizable and not too frenetic. His creation came from the idea that there should be a music created specifically for dance and participation, not only for listening, or for a select elite.

The name Cha cha is an imitation of the "rhythm" from dancing Cuban side steps. From the less inhibited night clubs and dance halls the Mambo underwent subtle changes. It was triple Mambo, and then peculiar scraping and shuffling sounds during the "tripling" produced the imitative sound of Cha cha. This then became a dance in itself. Mambo or triple Mambo or cha cha as it is now called, is but an advanced stage in interpretive social dancing born of the fusion of progressive American and Latin music.

After the World War II the Mambo was pushed aside by the Cha cha which became popular around 1956. According to its roots the Cha cha should be played passionately without any seriousness and with staccato allowing the dancers to project an atmosphere of 'naughtiness' to the audience.

Source: http://www.dancedancedance.com/history_of_salsa.html

View Chacha choreography By GoSalsa: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCgXpppRFKU>

MERENGUE

The Merengue is the national dance of the Dominican Republic, and also to some extent, of Haiti, the neighbor sharing the island. There are two popular versions of the origin of the Merengue.

One story alleges the dance originated with slaves who were chained together and, of necessity, were forced to drag one leg as they cut sugar to the beat of drums. The second story alleges that a great hero was wounded in the leg during one of the many revolutions in the Dominican Republic. A party of villagers welcomed him home with a victory celebration and, out of sympathy, everyone dancing felt obliged to limp and drag one foot. Merengue has existed since the early years of the Dominican Republic (in Haiti, a similar dance is called the Meringue).

It is possible the dance took its name from the confection made of sugar and egg whites because of the light and frothy character of the dance or because of its short, precise rhythms. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Merengue was very popular in the Dominican Republic. Not only is it used on every dancing occasion in the Republic, but it is very popular throughout the Caribbean and South American, and is one of the standard Latin-American dances.

There is a lot of variety in Merengue music. Tempos vary a great deal and the Dominicans enjoy a sharp quickening in pace towards the latter part of the dance. The most favored routine at the clubs and restaurants that run a dance floor is a slow Bolero, breaking into a Merengue, which becomes akin to a bright, fast Jive in its closing stages. Ballroom Merengue is slower and has a modified hip action. Merengue was introduced in the United States in the New York area. However, it did not become well known until several years later. Ideally suited to small, crowded dance floors, it is a dance that is easy to learn and essentially a "fun" dance.

Source: http://www.dancedancedance.com/history_of_salsa.html

RUEDA

During the late 1950's in Cuba, there was a popular dance -- some might call it a "dance craze!" -- that was done in the streets and in the clubs, and in people's homes. It was called Casino Rueda, or Rueda de Casino, or simply Rueda. Rueda means "wheel". Casino refers to the kinds of turns and breaks you might normally see in ordinary partner Salsa dancing.

"Swing Your Partner Round and Round..." If the first few words of this notorious dance command ring a bell, then open your ears, as you may start to hear phrases like "dame una" (give me one), "dame dos con vuelta" (give me two with a turn), and "exíbela" (show her off)... the list is endless. Rueda de Casino is Country and Western square dancing SALSA STYLE! If you like dancing Salsa, then imagine the sensation of doing so not with one person but with an entire group. Picture this... you step out to your favorite Latin nightclub. Later in the evening, the floor opens as couples gather in a circle. You know the moves, the names, the signals. You grab a

partner and you're about to enter into the most incredible Salsa experience. Rueda de Casino was originally danced in the 1950's to the Cha cha beat in members-only clubs in Cuba known as casinos deportivos. These casinos sponsored dances with live orchestras where dancers would get together and create new styles. It was in these casinos that "la rueda" was born. Unfortunately, the Castro regime stifled a lot of popular cultural activities, forcing them underground. Rueda de Casino eventually resurfaced in people's living rooms, on the street, at clubs and parties. It was first introduced to Miami in the early 90's and is rapidly making its way across the United States.

Rueda de Casino, in its truest form, is an art of communication that requires dancers be alert and quick. A leader calls out or signals the dancers to a short combination of intricate steps followed by commands such as "adios", "enchufa", or "dame..." which are patterns that lead dancers to a change of partners. There are reportedly more than 150 moves, each with a name that often has a double entendre or some cross-cultural humor buried in it. Each pattern also comes with a hand signal or gestures which are well needed in large circles and/or loud night clubs. It's incredible to watch but certainly much more so to participate. Everyone in the wheel, including followers, keep their eyes peeled to the caller. When the dancers are on in "la rueda" it is intoxicating and addictive.

The form of the Rueda -- passing partners in a wheel -- hints at its early, colonial origins, which were probably a "mezcla", a blend of French Court Dances (brought to Cuba by Haitians) and the indigenous Afro-Cuban dance movements. With Cuban emigration to the US -- with an especially large influx into Miami -- the Cuban culture, music and dance blossomed here, and, along with Mambo, Cha cha, and Salsa, Rueda has reemerged. Recently, Rueda has sprung up in Los Angeles and here in San Francisco (a dance group from L.A., led by Tomas Montero, performed Rueda at last year's SF Carnival Parade!)

Source: http://www.dancedancedance.com/history_of_salsa.html#rueda

BACHATA

Bachata is a form of music and dance that originated in the countryside and rural marginal neighborhoods of the Dominican Republic. Its subjects are usually romantic; especially prevalent are tales of heartbreak. The music is in 4/4 timing and is influenced by rumba and Son, while remaining of distinctive sound.

It is danced widely all over the world but not identically. The basics to the dance are three-step with a Cuban hip motion, followed by a tap including a hip movement on the 4th beat. The knees should be slightly bent so the performer can sway the hips easier. Generally, most of the dancer's movement is in the lower body up to the hips, and the upper body moves much less. In partnering, the lead can decide whether to perform in open or closed position. Dance moves, or step variety, during performance strongly depends on the music (such as the rhythms played by the different instruments), setting, mood, and interpretation. Unlike Salsa, Bachata dance does not usually include complex turn patterns but they are used more and more as the dance evolves. The leading is done just like in most other social dances, with a "pushing and pulling" hand and arm communication. Hand and arm communication is better conveyed when most of the movement is performed by the lower body (from waist down); i.e. hips and footwork. Bachata is commonly known by many as a very sensual dance. To most it may seem that way, however, that is not what it is intended to be taken as. Bachata is a dance, done by a person with another, to express the feelings one has for a specific other. It is believed by most, that the more smoothly and more frequently the hips are used and moved, the more feelings the individual has for the other.

Source: <http://www.2step2.net/history%20Bachata.htm>

xa.yimg.com/.../name/Bachata -- Dance Description.pdf

PACHANGA DANCE

Pachanga is a genre of music which is described as a mixture of son montuno and merengue. This type of music has a festive, lively style and is marked by jocular, mischievous lyrics. The name came about to describe the genre in Cuba in 1959. Dance : As a dance, pachanga has been described as "a happy-golucky dance" of Cuban origin with a Charleston flavor due to the double bending and straightening of the knees. It is danced to the downbeat of four-four time to the usual mambo offbeat music characterized by the charanga instrumentation of flutes, violins, and drums.

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pachanga>