

Dancing and Romance

By Aria Nosratinia

Dancing by its nature is a romantic activity. It involves music, and the close proximity of (usually) the opposite sex. For most of us, this is part of the attraction of dancing. Where else is the opportunity of having an attractive stranger in your arms within a few seconds of meeting them? However, the connection of dancing and romance can unfortunately also lead to misunderstanding and unhappiness.

Much of this unhappiness can be avoided by awareness of the basic premises of social dancing. Social dancing is exactly that, social. A dance is like a brief chat in a cocktail party, after which one moves on to the next conversation. Each of these conversations may in turn be funny, heated, professional, elegant, or provocative. Nevertheless, they are nothing but brief conversations, enjoyable at the moment, but certainly not signifying or requiring a long-term interaction.

The same principle applies to social dancing: Each dance is a brief, and hopefully enjoyable, social encounter. Newcomers to dancing sometimes have a hard time understanding this, but to ask or accept a dance does not necessarily indicate a personal interest, even though the dance itself might look passionate or provocative.

Dancing is about fun and fantasy and make-believe. It often involves imagination and the telling of a story: the majesty of Waltz, sensuality of Tango, aristocratic nobility of International Foxtrot, or the irreverent fun attitude of Swing. A particular dance may look alternatively elegant, provocative, strong, or sexy, but it is only a role-playing game. Correspondingly, a social dance event is a safe haven where one can play these games and have a degree of uninhibited fun, with the understanding that our actions on the dance floor, especially during a dance, are not to be interpreted according to the more serious (and conservative) standards of the outside world.

The common understanding of the dance community makes this level of fun possible; it has been agreed that we come together, enjoy our dancing, and that our dancing activities have no implications beyond the dancing itself. To read more into what happens on the dance floor would be a mistake.

Two facets of this mistake that can be particularly hurtful: The first is to misread the attention and mannerisms of a partner, during dancing, as genuine romantic interest. While romances do develop in the dancing community (as anywhere else), be careful about making any assumptions. You will save yourself from an awkward moment, or worse, endangering your dancing friendships.

The second facet of this problem involves romantic partners that both dance. The key to their dancing and romantic happiness is, once again, that dancing is merely role-playing, and that what happens on the dance floor is not for real. Each of them should feel free to dance with other members of the dance community. Realizing this, they can spare themselves much pain and anguish, and build a stronger relationship.

Despite the fact that much of dancing is fantasy and make-believe, and that many dancers keep their romantic and dancing lives separate, there is nothing against looking for romance in the dancing circles. If that is your purpose, best of luck! Don't forget to learn dancing and have fun along the way.

(Source: <http://www.utdallas.edu/~aria/dance/beyond.html>)