

Edwin Li & Libbat Shaham Workshop October 26, 2003

It was back to the basics. Yes, that's what the Edwin Li and Libbat Shaham seminar was all about. As dancers we were hungry for more information and this seminar had the right "mix" for all levels of dancers. From walking exercises to dancing musicality, this workshop covered it all.



Photo courtesy of Dave Head

Here are some of the highlights:

Walking - The workshop started with a simple walking exercise. Ah, but there was much more to it than just taking steps – the particular rolling of the foot.....the smaller steps even during the accelerated triple step.....remaining smooth was the goal.

Connection – How much of your hand are you offering your partner for a good connection? Could you follow him with your eyes closed? A fingertip-to-fingertip connection was replaced with a solid hand-to-hand connection (no thumbs). We practiced maintaining a smooth fluid motion of the hands through the patterns (no bouncing) and returning back to the neutral position.

Posture – Maintaining good posture was practiced keeping the body "up" and stretched above the diaphragm. Imagine holding a beach ball in front of you.

Getting in Touch - We got acquainted with our partners' body movements. Followers imitated the movements of their leaders during the sugar push without a hand-to-hand connection. Think about it.

Does your body movement mirror your partners' style and movement? How in tune are you to your partner while dancing?

Musicality – What do you hear when you listen to the music – the bass, drums, vocals, or perhaps tempo? How do you incorporate each of them into your dance? If your leader is dancing to the drums, are you complementing them by dancing to the drums also? Are you remaining smooth despite the variations of speed in your step? We did some great exercises to place musical emphasis on one part of the body at a time to keep from looking "too busy" in our dance. And lastly, we abandoned all footwork and practiced our new walking techniques to the many components of music. Have you ever tried stepping on every syllable of the words in the vocals? Challenging!

Lead/Follow – Leaders learned how the energy for the lead should begin through the body and into the arm for count "one" while slowing at count "four" signaling the end of the pattern. There should be consistency in the "quietness" and smoothness of the lead, pattern by pattern. Leaders also had the opportunity to become followers, and followers had a chance to become leaders

illustrating the ebb and flow of the dance and the importance of paying attention to your partner.

Consciousness – It really boiled down to getting in synch with your partner – feeling your partner's connection, listening to the music together, making eye connection, reading each other's body movements and complementing one another in the dance. After all, west coast swing isn't a solo performance – it's a dance where making the connection with your partner can create a moving piece of art shared in a moment of time.

Edwin and Libbat graciously assisted dancers during the breaks and after the workshop. Their courteous approach to all levels of dancers was something we could all aspire to emulate.

On behalf of all the attendees, I would like to thank Bob Brown and the Board for bringing our club a great seminar. Edwin and Libbat provided a fun and challenging "return to the basics." From the attendance (!) and the comments I heard, we are anxiously awaiting the date of the next workshop!

Vicki Christensen

If you have questions or are interested in other workshops by these champions, contact them at:
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