



Tango Serpiente

by Harold & Meredith Sears

The Serpiente (Roundalab Standard, Phase III) begins in a facing position, perhaps butterfly wall or a loose closed position. The man steps side left (W sd R) toward line of dance, crosses the trail foot behind (W behind also), and fans the lead foot counterclockwise (W

CW). The timing of this first measure is quick, quick, slow -- no weight taken on the slow count. During the second measure, the man crosses behind left (W behind R), both step side with the trail foot, both step through with the lead foot, and finally he fans his trail foot counterclockwise (W CW). The timing of the second measure is QQQQ, again with no weight taken on the last count. We might end in butterfly with heads open toward line of dance or in semi-closed position LOD, with the trail feet free.

That is the Standard, but the term Serpiente is actually used for a variety of thru-side-behind-fan patterns in a variety of dance rhythms. A slight variation on the above description is side left (W sd R), cross right in back of left, fan left CCW, cross left in back of right (W mirrors); side right, cross left in front, fan right CCW, thru right. This sequence has the timing QQQQ; QQQQ; - 8 quicks - and leaves the lead rather than trail feet free.

We can do the Serpiente in a bit less than two measures. In *I Won't Send Roses*, a phase III rumba by Bill & Martha Buck, we are in left open facing position, man facing center, with trail feet free, and the cue is Thru To Serpiente. We step thru R toward reverse line of dance (W mirrors), sd L, cross R behind, fan L CCW; cross L behind, sd R, thru L, fan R CCW. The initial thru step takes the first quick count in these two measures, so the Serpiente itself is done in the remaining 7 quicks. We find the same Thru To Serpiente in *The Breeze and I*, a phase III cha by Bob & Debbie Pyles, but in this dance, we begin facing wall and initially step thru toward line. It is also done in *You've Got A Friend In Me*, a phase III foxtrot by Joe & Pat Hilton.

In *Hymne*, a phase VI waltz by Don Waldal & Ellie Bushue, the same steps are cued Serpiente and Step Thru. We begin in semi-closed position LOD with trail feet free, and the steps are thru R (W mirrors), sd L, behind R; fan L CCW, behind L, sd R; thru L, fan R CCW, and then the separately cued thru R. The Serpiente itself includes the initial thru step this time and consists of a total of 8 waltz counts.

In bolero, we would expect the Serpiente to look different because so many figures are preceded by the characteristic preparatory slow step. In *Solamente Una Vez*, by Bill & Carol Goss, we are in butterfly position, man facing wall, with lead feet free, and we step sd L (W mirrors), cross R in front, sd L; cross R in back and fan the L CCW, cross L behind, sd R. You can think of this (and it is cued) as a "bolero" Serpiente with a timing of SQQ; SQQ; or, thinking of the other latin Serpientes we have looked at, we could see it as a bolero side step (S) and thru (Q) to a truncated Serpiente -- side, behind, fan, behind, side (5 quicks). We end with lead feet free.

In *Hernando's Hideaway*, a phase IV tango by Jim & Adele Chico, we find yet another version. We are facing partner and wall with lead feet free, and we step side L (W mirrors), tap R, sd R to RLOD, fan L CCW; behind L, sd R, thru L, fan R CCW; (8 quicks). We end with trail feet free. The tap and the strong progression to reverse make this this Serpiente quite different from the Standard.

And finally, while we're thinking about variations on a theme, let's just glance at the **Doble Cruz**, a phase IV tango figure that is very Serpiente-like. Here, we begin in or we blend to semi-closed position and step forward L (W fwd R), step through with the trail feet, and step side to closed position, man facing wall (SQQ). During the second measure, we both cross behind with the trail feet, fan the lead foot CCW (W CW), cross behind with the lead feet beginning to turn left-face, and finally step back (W fwd) to banjo position LOD (QQQQ). Often, the Doble Cruz is followed by a step back to an Outside Swivel. In *My Heart Belongs To Daddy* by the DeChennes, there is a Doble Cruz;; and back to a Left Whisk. The Doble Cruz is very like a forward and thru to a Serpiente, and our steps and movements mirror one another during the first measure, but during the second measure, we blend from a mirrored relationship to a following one (the lady follows the man's final back step with her forward step).