



JOAN SAWYER TANGO

Reconstruction by Richard Powers

Joan Sawyer was famous on four fronts – as a Broadway stage dancer, as a nightclub manager (running her New York dance club The Persian Gardens), as a composer (she wrote "Persian Gardens Tango") and as a noted feminist and Suffragette who traveled across the country for the cause of women's rights. This latter focus may explain why the tango steps she described were especially enjoyable for women. Unlike most 1913 tango steps, which could only be done if the woman learned and practiced them in a class, Joan Sawyer's steps could all be followed easily in freestyle dancing, and therefore were more fun for the woman.

These are tango steps described by Joan Sawyer in a series of 1913 and 1914 newspaper articles.

Steps described are for man unless specified otherwise. Lady dances opposite steps.

Part 1 Tango Promenade (Many women prefer forward promenades to being backed up.)

The Nip-Up (like a Tango Chassé)

- In Closed Promenade Position, shown above, walk forward LOD 2 slow steps, L and R.
- Step forward L, stopping, and rock back R. QQ.
- Repeat the Nip-Up. S-S-QQ
- Walk forward LOD 2 slow steps L,R.

Part 2 The Major Scissors

Man:

- Step forward L, stopping, replace R back, step back L. QQ-S. (Similar to a salsa step today.)
- Step Back R, stopping, replace L forward, step forward L. QQ-S.

Lady:

- Face partner and step side R, replace L while pulling it back, cross R over L. QQ-S.
- Repeat opposite, crossing L over R for the slow step. QQ-S.

The Feather Stitch (a woman's solo)

Man:

- Step forward L, stopping, replace R back, step back L. QQ-S.
- Hold as she does a solo step at his side, then step forward R. 2 slow counts.

Lady:

- Face partner and step side R, replace L while pulling it back, cross R over L. QQ-S.
- Sweep L toe to the floor, at the left side, in a CW ronde-de-jambe circle. Cross L over R. S-S.

Part 3 The Scissors

Man:

- Walk L toward LOD, cross R over L toward LOD while facing partner. S-S.
- Take a small side L, replace R while pulling it back, cross L over R. QQ-S.
- Take a small side R, replace L while pulling it back, cross R over R. QQ-S.

Lady mirrors all of this, beginning R foot.

The Cortez

Lady:

- She sweeps her free R toe in a CCW arc into stepping side R past his left side, and makes a dramatic lunge R toward the center of the room. S
- Replace weight L, facing partner squarely in Closed Position, man facing LOD. S

Man:

He helps her do this sweeping lunge, stepping L to the center, then replacing R. S-S.

Part 4 The Throw-Away (with gent facing LOD)

- Walk forward LOD 2 slow steps (lady backing).
- The Throw-Away: Step forward L and replace back R, step back L, replace forward R (QQ-S-S), as the woman pulls her R shoulder back to open back away from him while rocking back R, replace forward L, lunge forward R toward man, replace back L (QQ-S-S).
- Repeat the Throw-Away, sharply flipping (turn) CW 1/4 to face LOD on the final step. QQ-S-S.

Repeat the tango from the beginning.

Improvised Variations

- In Part 2, the man can also cross in front, mirroring her, and he can also do the Feather Stitch. Conversely, he can cross behind in Part 3. i.e., play with crossing in front or behind.
- In Part 4, the man may only take the first two walking steps, then stop, keeping his feet in place, leading her away from him merely by shifting his weight forward and back with her.
- For a finale, modify Part 4 by omitting the first two slow steps, and beginning with the Throw-Away. This allows three Throw-Aways, concluding with the lunge.
- Then a variation of that variation is to make each of the three Throw-Aways more dramatic. The first is a straight lunge; the second a side sway toward his left side, and the third a side dip.