

# Tango DJ 101

"A Long Dark Night in Dabney Hall"

guided by Homer G Ladas

Through a reality based situation we will explore the good, better, not so good, and worst ways to tango DJ.

Let Us Begin:

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You are the guest **DJ** tonight at Dabney Hall! The milonga is about to start (**class is ending**) and you just arrived...

## As a 'mental DJ exercise' before set-up:

While the teachers are wrapping up, you hear from a trusted source that they played only late 50's Carlos Di Sarli instrumentals for the entire class.

### **What music do you start the evening with?**

- A. Juan D'Arienzo early Instr &/or w/ Echague
- B. Carlos Di Sarli - instrumentals
- C. Tango Fusion - alternative set
- D. a Milonga or Vals tanda
- E. Edgardo Donato (mixed 30's & 40's) w/ lyrics
- F. Juan D'Arienzo with Maure

**You have about 3 minutes to decide...**

# Time Out: Let's Briefly Talk DJ Equipment

1. Laptop(s), iPhone, etc, vs. CD's
  - What equipment to use?
2. Sound Cards & Cleaning Software
  - Do they make a difference?
3. Headphones (& thus previewing)
  - Does this help your DJing or not?
4. Any other questions?

# Tango DJ 101: Tandas

What is a Tanda? Why do we use Tandas?  
(Listen to Examples)

How Many Songs (2, 3, 4)?

**A**-List vs **B**-List Songs?

**Power Songs** - The What, Why, and When!  
& **Jinx Songs**...

**Exercise**: Let's build two tanda's together...

- A. Traditional
- B. Alternative

# Back to Reality: The Initial Set-Up

## Some Questions to Ask Yourself include...

1. - Do you know your sound-system & environment?  
(amp quality, room/speaker layout & height rule, etc)
2. - Are you strategically & comfortably located?  
(i.e. where's the best place to sit?)
3. - Did they provide, or do you have, the cable(s)?
4. - Do you have a power outlet to use nearby?
5. - Is there a fan plugged in nearby (i.e. noise)?  
(also beware of laptop 'cooling fan' noise)

**Warning:** Plugging In & Out can lead to...

[**Demonstration**]

"The Beginner DJ **POP!**"

DJ 101 **Equipment Mantra:**

at START, Amp **On** first & Volume **Up** last

at END, Volume **Down** first & Amp **OFF** last

# Let the Music **Play!**

## Sound Check & EQ'ing

- 1. What is the best EQ set-up at start?

In a pinch try - Traditional :( & Alternative :|

[**Demonstration:** iTunes Examples]

- 2. What is the best volume to start the night?

Lower vs Higher & The **Energy Wave!**

- 3. What happens when more folks are dancing?

Volume wise & Sound (EQ) wise

# Tango DJ 101: Cortinas

What is a Cortina? Why break between Tandras?  
([Listen to Examples](#))

To Use or Not to Use is the Question!

How Long? ~25 to 45 seconds ave.

What Kinds of Music to Use?

non-danceable, danceable, high or low energy,  
thematic use, etc

[The Cortina Trick](#) - additionally used to help with  
initial sound check and later to stall...



Now that your first **Tanda** is playing, and people are dancing, you decide to...

1. Take a walk (around the dance floor)
2. Preview or search for your next set
3. Get a drink & eat your sandwich
4. Cabaceo someone and go dance
5. Chat with your DJ side-kick
6. Watch & listen
7. None of the above
8. Some of the above (1-6)

You're DJing **on-the-fly** tonight, but you know the following **facts**:

1. The milonga lasts from 9:30pm to 3am, hence
2. most advanced dancers will show up after 11pm
3. This community likes a little bit of alternative

**Your second set of the night is:**

- A. Juan D'Arienzo with Maure
- B. Ricardo Tanturi with Castillo
- C. Tango Fusion - alternative set
- D. a Milonga or Vals tanda
- E. None of the Above

## 3rd Set of the night - Time to talk tanda flow...

1. What **System** will you use?

TTVTTM, TVTM, TTVATM, TAVATAMAT, etc.

(T=tango, V=vals, M=Milonga, A=Alternative)

2. How will you create your **Energy Wave!**

[**Show** Shorey Myer's Approach]

3. Keys: 1. **Be Transparent** - Advertise your mix!  
(i.e. 100% Trad, 50/50, 100% Alt)

2. **Be Consistent** - Stick with **System!**  
- but, know when to diverge/make changes.

4. **So What's the 3rd Set of the Night Going to Be?**

First **Alt Set** of the night...are you ready?

1. When and how often do you play alternative?
2. How do you transition to & from traditional?
3. How long should your alt tanda be?
4. What's the genre/theme?
5. What songs do you pick?
6. **Let's build our first Alt Set...**

**Advice** - Let your knowledge of traditional DJing be your guide...

# Tango DJ 101: Advice to New DJs

- Equipment - Less is More!
- Dance to your music...before you DJ it.
- Study (see reference list)
- Don't obsess over obscure details
- Learn who your audience is (& don't over educate)
- Listen & Watch (even when not DJing) vs. Previewing
- Walk the floor often to check sound &
- Ask other dancers for feedback
- Seek mentorship (locally or online)
- Create library of tandas, different orchestras & alt music
- Be prepared before hand but also be ready to improvise

# Homer's DJ Philosophy

1. Remember you are 'Providing a Service'
2. Always Be Transparent & Consistent
3. Study Tanda Creation & **Energy Flow**...
- 3.5 Sometimes it's When you play it, not What
4. Have a **Style** but keep your **Ego** in check!
5. Know/Learn Your Audience - Watch & Listen
6. Balance Community Education vs. Fun
7. Develop the Art of Mixed Music (trad/alt/live)
8. Know when to Break the Rules...
9. Don't be Afraid to take a Chance and Fail, then Learn From your Mistakes!

# Tango DJ 101: Starter Resource List

1. TheOrganicTangoSchool.org/DJ\_Resource
  - a. DJ Presentation + Reference List, Perth Tango Club, Australia 2010
  - b. Alternative & Mixed Music DJ Reference Material (w/ PDF Playlists)
2. Tango DJ Yahoo Group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TangoDJ/>
2. [www.TODOtango.com](http://www.TODOtango.com) - An online mega source for tango music history, lyrics, discography, scores, interviews, articles, etc (est. 1999).
3. [Orchestra Handout](http://tango trance.blogspot.com/) by Dan Boccia, download at [tango trance.blogspot.com/](http://tango trance.blogspot.com/)