

And Uh ?
By Barbara & Jim German

Sometimes it is easy to assume everybody knows. Of course we all know what happens when we assume something, especially when teaching or learning a dance. Not only does the figure go south but the desired timing may also go south. We have been asked to identify the difference between "And" and "uh" in dance and how it is written, how it is danced and what is the difference.

First, let's represent "And" with the symbol "&" and represent "uh" with the symbol "a". We can define "&" as a time duration equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the preceding musical note. We can also define "a" as a time duration equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the preceding musical note. In dance we use the time expressed by musical notes to transfer weight and move across the dance floor. Some rhythms and figures require us to take two weight changes during one musical note. This is conveyed in writing by the use of "&" or "a" and verbally as "And" or "uh". A common musical signature for dance is 4/4 time. This means the basic structure of the music has 4 beats to a measure of music. Each beat takes a quarter of the measure of music and at the end of the fourth beat, the end of the measure will be achieved. Some examples include fox trot, quickstep, two step, rumba, cha cha, jive, and swing. However, we do not dance all of these rhythms the same way. This is in part due to the way the music is written on paper and in part how we interpret the written music to a body action or movement or weight change.

To achieve a sense of time to a musical note, I would like to use one inch of the ruler. This inch will represent a musical measure and can be divided into 4 sections of a quarter inch each. Each quarter inch can represent the musical time to complete a quarter note. Therefore, we can take four weight changes in one measure of 4/4 timed music. In dancing, we assign the value of quick to a quarter note and can indicate four quick steps or weight changes with the cue "run four". Each step or weight change will take $\frac{1}{4}$ of the measure of music or $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch of the ruler to execute. Slow is another term used in dance and is defined as having the same time value as two quick or $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch. For example, the cue "forward run two" would mean to take the first step slow and the next two steps quick. The slow, the first step, would occupy $\frac{1}{2}$ of our inch in time and each quick would occupy $\frac{1}{4}$ of our inch in time. We have completed the measure of music with three weight changes instead of four weight changes when using the cue "run four". Another cue, "walk two", would mean to move forward using two slow steps. The first step would occupy $\frac{1}{2}$ inch and the second step would occupy $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in time with our ruler or each weight change would use $\frac{1}{2}$ a measure. This concept of distance to represent musical time will help us in working with "&" and "a".

Cha Cha is a very popular dance and one to look at. First, we are asked to take five weight changes in one measure of 4/4 music. This means one of the four notes must be changed. Using quick to represent a quarter note, Cha timing could be written as "quick, quick, quick and, quick;" or Q,Q,Q&,Q. The first quick will take $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch to execute; the second quick will also take $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch to execute. The third quick is altered with the attached "&" symbol. The "&" symbol, by definition, will take $\frac{1}{2}$ of the time value of the preceding note. This means we will divide the quarter note in half and each half will be equal to $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch in duration. The last quick will take the last $\frac{1}{4}$ of the inch to execute. Some cues reflect the 1/4, 1/4, 1/8 1/8, 1/4 timing in sound by saying: quick, quick, Cha Cha,Cha UH.

Another popular rhythm to dance is the jive. Jive is written as "quick, quick, quick "uh", quick" or Q,Q,Qa Q. The first and second quick will each take $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch to execute. The third quick has the "a" attached to its musical value. This time the attached "a" will equal $\frac{1}{4}$ of the preceding note. By looking at the line on our ruler, we can see that $\frac{1}{2}$ of the quick or quarter note would be an $\frac{1}{8}$ note and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the $\frac{1}{8}$ note would equal a $\frac{1}{16}$ note. The $\frac{1}{16}$ note is the value of the "a" when the preceding note is a quick or a quarter note. Therefore, the third step in jive has two weight changes with the first taking $\frac{3}{4}$ of the quarter note and the other taking $\frac{1}{4}$ of the quarter note or a $\frac{1}{16}$ note - not very much time. The last step is still $\frac{1}{4}$ note is a quick and will take a full $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch.

Why the difference between Cha and Jive? The answer is actually the way the step is taken in ballroom. In Cha, the "&" count allows just enough time for the dancer to perform the foot action and hip action. This means each step in Cha has a ball, flat action. We can see this when we watch ballroom dance competition on TV. Although I must admit I do not watch the foot action but I do see the action of the lady's hips as the

foot action is taken. It's always nice to watch the lady's hips to verify proper foot action!

Jive has another story for its timing. Jive is still written in 4/4 timing but the basic dance figure needs more than one measure of music to complete. Jive takes 1 ½ measures of music and can be written as "quick, quick, quick "uh", quick; quick "uh", quick," or Q, Q, Qa, Q; Qa, Q,. The first two steps each use a quarter note to execute. The third quarter note is divided into two weight changes with the first weight change taking $\frac{3}{4}$ of the quarter note and the second weight change taking the remainder of the note or a 1/16 of an inch on our ruler. This is not very much time to execute a weight change and the ballroom technique reflects this lack of time. In standard jive dance position, the rock back and recover each take a quarter note to execute. The next quarter note is divided with most of the action on the first weight change (i.e. the side step on the ball of the left foot for the man). The next weight change is so fast the man's right foot can only move slightly toward his left foot retaining weight on the ball of the foot. The last quarter note commences with the man's left foot moving to the left onto the ball of the foot then lowering to whole foot. To finish the jive basic, the man will take weight on the ball of the right foot using $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time available. He will move his left foot toward his right and remain on the ball of the foot for the "a" count. His last step is a quarter note and he will move his right foot sideways to the ball of the foot then lower to whole foot while closing his left foot toward the right foot. In other words, the jive action could resemble: ball flat, ball flat, ball ball, ball flat; ball ball, ball flat,. However, in watching the competitors, the action is quite different. Today the competitors are more up on the ball of their feet throughout the jive patterns. This allows them to incorporate high knee action to "fill" in the time it would take to lower. The combination of fast jive music and high knee action makes the dancers appear "light and refreshed" even though they are working very hard.

While we as round dancers are not competitive dancers, we do want our actions to reflect the desired timing of Round Dancing. Next time you think of Cha or Jive timing, remember your ruler and measure your time! Happy dancing!