

# CLUB MILONGA NEWS

Brought to you by Toronto's Longest Running Argentine Tango Club

VOLUME 13, MAY/2001



ORQUESTA FIORENTINO - PIAZZOLLA (1945)  
Francisco Fiorentino (cantor); Asor Piazzolla, Roberto Di Filippo, Fernando Tell y Angel Genia (bandoneones); Carlos Figari (piano); Hugo Burali, Ernesto Gimnet, Juan Bibiloni y Carlos Lucero (violines); Angel Nollo (violoncello) y José Díaz (contrabajo).

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### The Board

Chair  
Executive Secretary Kay Randewich  
Treasurer Marlene Jackson  
Publicity Director Clive Randewich  
Thanks to our photographer at large Tamara Arenowich  
Ed Grandy

### From the Chair

Club Milonga has gone through an interesting winter, having had the benefit of regular teachers, several successful workshops and also some special fun dances. We appreciate the support that Bryant and Natalia have given us in making the club their home base this year. We look forward to providing the tango community with continued exposure to instructors from abroad.

The Club's mandate is to make the Argentine tango accessible to the larger Toronto community while maintaining artistic standards. The popularity of tango is growing in Toronto and it will be wonderful if the community can work together to support each other and continue to expand.

We are reaching the end of the membership year and our membership continues to grow. In this current Club year, ending on 31/May, we hope to exceed 2000 door-admissions. The Club can be proud to offer an important first step for beginners as well as valuable and interesting classes for the more experienced dancers.

Thanks to all our members, visitors, supporters and teachers. Many thanks to my colleagues on the Board for the hard work during the winter and to those who are always ready to step in and lend a helping hand. We appreciate your support. In order to accomplish all that we would like to do for the club, we need as much help as possible. Please consider joining us on the executive committee.

This edition has several articles about dancing tango in other cities, mostly in Latin America. If you have experience in dancing anywhere outside of Toronto, why not make a submission for the next newsletter?

*Hasta luego*  
Kay Randewich

### Tango, The Dance Of Love

You can sail on a ship by yourself  
You can croon to the moon by yourself  
Lots of things that you can do alone  
But it takes two to tango  
To really get the feeling of romance  
Let's do the tango, do the dance of love

*Sang Louis Armstrong in "It Takes Two to Tango."*

Here in Toronto today you can even go to tango practice alone in one of its several Argentine tango clubs, and meet a partner there. Better still, you can drop by with your sweetheart and learn and practice the dance of love together. Toronto has a vibrant tango community with lessons at all levels and practices as well as parties.

Born among the poor classes of Buenos Aires in the 1800s, tango has as its essence, non-verbal communication and harmony between partners. Sounds like true love, doesn't it? But the way these are achieved in tango may not necessarily nourish true love in real life. Namely, in tango the man leads and the woman follows. Tango dancers generally agree that equality between man and woman on the dance floor would lead to chaos. So, even though dancing tango can bring you closer as a couple, some of its principles may be harder to apply at home!

Rather than have man and woman memorize their separate steps and perform them, tango requires the man to think on his feet. He must lead, or invite, the woman to do the learned steps or his improvised versions of them. To lead, he uses body language, including subtle movements of his chest, arms, legs and hands. Following the lead on the woman's part requires a lot of instinct, good posture and ability to respond in a split second. The man also uses these same skills to follow the music, which is the ultimate leader of the dance. To lead well, the man must be fully aware of the woman and, some say, "listen to her heart." Ah, that must be ideal love. And that only happens in tango, doesn't it?

The deeply emotional sounds of bandoneon, violin, piano, other instruments and sometimes vocals, and the flexibility of dance steps make it easy to express one's emotions through tango. Love, sadness, happiness, anger, humour all find an outlet. Tango also calls for drama and a certain vanity, so one is free to fantasize and express oneself or the self he or she wishes to be.

Through tango a couple can create and express a moving story, using only a few simple steps. It is almost always a story between a man and a woman, about their relationship and passion for each other. Different styles of tango, such as the rhythmic milonga, tango-waltz and older or more modern tangos also determine the mood in which the story is set.

Toronto's tango community consists of enthusiasts, some of whom actually go as far as Argentina to learn dance steps and styles.

Beginner classes are taught on a drop-in basis in Club Milonga, which focuses on social style tango. Los Milongueros, on the other hand, teaches show style tango and provides opportunities for its members to perform for the public at such venues as CNE's International Stage and the First Night celebrations of New Year's eve. For more information on this beautiful and sensual dance and places to go, please visit [www.tangotoronto.com](http://www.tangotoronto.com) or call 416-444-0794.

*Rehan Nisanyan*  
Rehan is a Club member whose article appeared in the Feb. 2001 edition of the *Bluffs Monitor* newspaper.

### Tango Lyrics

*For non-Spanish speakers, here is another in our series of translations. Carlos Gardel's much-loved song deals with the heart of the immigrant experience that is the tango's essence.*

#### Volver To return (1935)

Music by: Carlos Gardel  
Lyrics by: Alfredo Lepera  
Translated by: Walter Kane

I imagine the flickering  
of the lights that in the distance  
will be marking my return.  
They're the same that lit,  
with their pale reflections,  
deep hours of pain  
And even though I didn't want to come back,  
you always return to your first love  
The tranquil street where the echo said  
yours is her life, yours is her love,  
under the mocking gaze of the stars  
that, with indifference, today see me return.

To return,  
with withered face,  
the snows of time  
have whitened my temples.  
To feel... that life is a puff of wind,  
that twenty years is nothing,  
that the feverish look,  
wandering in the shadow,  
looks for you and names you.

To live...  
with the soul clutched  
to a sweet memory  
that I cry once again

I am afraid of the encounter  
with the past that returns  
to confront my life

I am afraid of the nights  
that, filled with memories,  
shackle my dreams.

But the traveler that flees

sooner or later stops his walking

And although forgetfulness, which destroys all,  
has killed my old dream,

I keep concealed a humble hope  
that is my heart's whole fortune.

To live... with the soul clutched  
to a sweet memory  
that I cry once again

*For this and many other songs, check <http://www.planet-tango.com>*

*Kay Randewich*

### Dancing Around The World

#### ARGENTINA

Tango in Buenos Aires is a living dream for those who love tango. It is an experience. And I suppose that each individual would have his or her own experience. But for me the most important experience was going to La Ideal and watching the mature dancers dance. I do not know exactly what to compare it to, but what was impressive was that there would be so many good dancers at one place at one given time, that being there watching was most enjoyable.

You may wonder what this "La Ideal" is? Well, La Ideal is really La Confetteria Ideal, located at Suipacha 384. It consists of a very large bar or restaurant on the first floor and a second floor of the same size, where the dancing takes place. This building has antique type walnut panels with mouldings on the walls, it has smooth terrazzo or marble floor, it has an old-fashioned semi-circular gallery-type ceiling with fans hanging from the ceiling similar to what you might see in New Orleans. This building alone is worth a trip to Buenos Aires. In this building they dance Argentine tango almost every day. This building is like the flea market of Argentine tango. Here people come to dance, instructors come to promote their schools, D J's come to show their music, and people come to meet other people.

Group instructions usually start at 12:00 noon and last till 3:00 PM. From 3:00 to 10 PM you have general dancing.

There seems to be some apprehension, perhaps intimidation about dancing in Buenos Aires. I did not experience it. We must always remember that we are dancing with other human beings who have their own needs, norms and desires. These are people who go dancing to enjoy themselves and meet other people. They are very much like us. Consequently it is normal that they would prefer to dance with people that they know, and people that they can share something with. However if you can smile and be generous you will find that people will respond in kind.

I have talked about La Ideal. La Ideal is only one place here you can take lessons and dance. But there are many, many others. There may be 50 or 100 places where one can actually do Argentine tango. La Ideal is like Union Station. A place where you go when you arrive. From there you meet other instructors. You get these tango magazines, usually distributed free at places like La Ideal, and you find out where the rest of the action is at.

*Leonard Scavuzzo*

#### CUBA

This winter we began a quest to find tango in as many Central American cities as we can visit in our short holidays. Our first attempt was in the old city of Havana. There really isn't any tango dancing there to speak of, but we did find a gem in Casaron del Tango. This is a club where the residents of the city go to sing once a week. It is really a remarkable place. We took a look during the afternoon, just to make sure it really was there and spoke to a couple of women who were practicing their singing accompanied by a guitar. It was simple and lovely. They were very friendly, even though our Spanish is extremely limited and they had zero English. We told them that we don't sing, but we can dance. They were very eager for us to go back when they opened at 5.30. As you enter this place you can see just inside two archways. Flanking the archways are large photos of their two most revered heroes: Che Guevara and Carlos Gardel.

Passing through an archway, we came to a small courtyard filled with tiny tables and chairs. On one side was the bar and on the other a terrace with a marble floor. At the front was a trio: guitar, bass and accordion. When we arrived in the late afternoon, we were greeted by one of the women whom we had met earlier. She asked if we would dance. How could we refuse? We watched and listened as the people one by one took their turn to sing. Each one sang very well and the musicians played beautifully. They were highly talented people and sang with great feeling. I will never complain about tango songs again after hearing them as they were meant to be heard. Our turn came to 'perform'. "Solo"? I asked, hoping that others would join in. Kitty said that we were all 'amigos' there, so we took courage.

The musicians played La Comparsita and we danced on the marble terrace. Afterwards, people were kind. Well, at least we understood 'perfecto', as some of the gentlemen came to kiss my hand. We stayed until the end, enjoying every performance. Everyone was very friendly to us and made us feel at home. Just as many other things in Old Havana are in a time warp, I felt, sitting there in Casaron del Tango, as if I were in Buenos Aires of the 1940's.

They did tell us that there is one dance teacher, Sujyra, and a very small group of students who meet informally. They also said that a group was expected to arrive from San Francisco the following week. Perhaps the dancing community will expand in the future. In the meantime, if you get a chance, go and visit Casaron del Tango. You will be sure of a warm welcome.

*Casaron del Tango*

*Justicia, 21 Bajos. Weds. And Fridays, 5pm.*

*Kay Randewich*

#### MEXICO

*Mexico City*

There are pockets of tango in Mexico, but at the moment they are very small, perhaps because the Mexican culture itself is very strong. We found that there was dancing three nights a week in Jalapa, a small university town about 500 kms from Mexico City, near the Gulf Coast. Unfortunately, our schedule prevented us from being there at the right time. In Mexico City, we found a tango community much smaller than ours in Toronto. However, they manage to have a regular Friday night milonga with live music! There were no more than eighty people at the milonga and we were told they comprised almost the whole of the Mexico City tango community. The standard of dancing there was about the same as ours, with some people more experienced than others and some people unpracticed in the line of dance. Dancers were also making good use of the bar, so that may explain a great deal. People at the milonga were extremely friendly and relaxed, as Mexicans are on the whole. As well as the Friday night milonga, there is an informal tango in the park, in Parque Mexico every Sunday afternoon. *Fridays, Club Arrabalero (first floor) at the corner of streets "Dinamarca" and "Marsella" between the Areas "Alameda" and the "Zona Rosa"*

*Kay Randewich*

*Kay Randewich*

## ARGENTINA

Our trip to Buenos Aires was well planned and organized by our wonderful friend, Sandra Rocha.

We were treated to a great variety of experiences - many of them to do with tango, but also cultural museums, churches, and trips to the country for an asado; also, great walks in the city and suburbs, subways, parks, meeting great people dead and alive ...and a short respite at The Mada del Plato sea resort. Sandra generously shared the spirit of her people and her city, as you will read.

Our group of 8 arrived in Buenos Aires in the early hours on Monday, March 12th and were taken to our hotel -- Hotel Victoria - a quaint and homely place and were warmly welcomed by our hosts with hot fresh coffee and pastries. I had a room on the main floor facing a courtyard. My bedroom was en suite - with a wash basin, bidet, toilet and shower. It was self-cleaning but only when I took a shower. Due to a lack of a shower curtain, everything was treated to a shower including the toilet paper (which gets wet eventually). With clean linen and towels every day, the price was right at \$15 a night.

Here are some of my observations on the various dance venues. It is customary to be invited to dance through eye contact - a little unnerving to some of us Canadians. If you are an habitue you get known and you get to know the local dancers and making eye contact becomes easier.

I had various experiences with the custom of eye contact. For instance, what I thought was an eye contact invitation was someone staring at me because I was new and also I was the only one in a red hat. Another time eye contact didn't seem to raise an eyebrow for several minutes with a man across the floor. I realized his intention was for one of the three ladies behind me!

At the various clubs, I noticed that the dance sets were: all tango, all waltzes, all milongas, separated by 3 or 4 Latin songs. Some dance to those but a lot of dancers clear the floor. Our instructor Zoraida suggested at one of our practices, that we dance no less than 2 dances and no more than 5 dances with the same partner. This was a good idea. If the partner was incompatible for whatever reason, one could end it after the second dance. I also found that when dancing with new partners in the first couple of dances, the leader danced mostly the basic to see the technical level that I was at and accordingly progressed with appropriate leads and pauses etc. Then came the break and time to be invited by the next partner.

In general the dance floors were crowded so dancing was mostly close embrace and the footwork contained. I seemed to dance open embrace without a problem.

Tango was all around us - in the subway stations, shops, taxis, parks, in the beach pavilion.

Some of the other highlights of the trip: A visit to the tango greats' graves. The singer Carlos Gardel with plaques and memorials from all over the world. Musicians - Troilo Di Sarli, Magaldi, and my favourite Oswaldo Pugliese. We share the same birthday (but not the same year, of course!). There was a bronze statue of Pugliese sitting at a piano with the real carnations strewn over the piano keys. This was a tradition when Pugliese was blacklisted and sent to jail. The musicians of his orchestra continued to play without him, and on the nights they played they left a single red carnation on the idle piano in his absence.

We were treated to an Asado in Estancia where we were served various cuts of roasted beef as different courses, including: matambre (a piece of rolled beef, filled with vegetables cooked and sliced paper thin with a rainbow of peppers arranged in the middle - delicious).

Another highlight was that Sandra arranged for a well-known Tango shoemaker to make shoes for us. Each foot was measured and then I planned my design - a black and red colour combination in a suede patent and leather material. A week later our shoes were ready. I was delighted with my very first pair of tango shoes: "I'm dancing in Angels' shoes!"

The most memorable highlight on a personal note was when Sandra took me to spend a very special afternoon with Maria Nieves, Queen of Tango, the world's most adored and famous tango dancer. We sat and chatted in her cosy apartment and chatted over maté, a wonderful Argentine tea sipped through a silver hollow spoon from a small, hollowed out gourd. I thanked her for the cup of maté and she was insistent that I drink another one. She explained that one always has an even number of cups. 1, 3 or 5 is very unlucky. She was relieved when I accepted the 2nd cup. Even Malena, her cat, rubbed my leg purring her sentiments. During that afternoon with Maria, I admired her gracefulness in movement. The sparkle in her soulful eyes reflected her warm loving smile while she explained and showed her proud tango mementos. Maria imprinted her spirit of life through tango in my soul. She could see that. She told me so.

On March 24th, it was Saturday and time to leave. Can you believe our trip ended with a dance lesson with Stella Barba just minutes before leaving for the airport.

I was very happy to be with such a caring and enthusiastic group of friends on this trip. A special thanks from the ladies to Ron and Ed, aka Ronaldo and Eduardo, who got us on our feet and kept us on our toes. Thanks very much for the 7 am wake up calls, gentlemen.

Finally, Sandra, your generosity and hard work should not go unrecognized. You are the tops. Adiós Buenos Aires, esperamos verte pronto!

*Myra Winton*

## CALIFORNIA

### San Diego

San Diego is a charming city, providing an ideal environment for tango. From the gaslamps gently illuminating the street-corners, to the horse-carriages leisurely strolling down the roads, this city transports you to another dimension of time and space. You can't help but fall in love with it at first sight.

What struck me most about the tango scene in San Diego were the unusual similarities between their group and our own community. The first tango venue we came across was in a café, located just on the edge of the downtown core. Large bay windows, dim lighting, and a huge wooden dance floor. It was the perfect atmosphere for a night of romance, intrigue, and tango. The crowd was moderate in size, maybe about 40 people or so. We didn't dance for a while after arriving, rather we just sat at one of the many tables lining the dance floor, and observed. And what I found was that the dancers were incredibly similar to our own community, both in dancing style and in character. For example, a charming gentleman who clearly had his finger on the pulse of the tango community, approached us shortly thereafter, welcomed us, and began telling us all about the local tango events. He was an instructor, and an ambassador of sorts for the tango community. And he reminded me so much of our own Richard Dini! After that encounter, I began to notice the other similarities present there that night. And I danced with "their" Keith Elshaw for close to an hour, in order to redeem myself for the little incident that occurred when I was dancing with the real Keith about a year ago.

The woman hosting the evening was very beautiful, and a very talented dancer. She reminded me of Sandra, except for the fact that she had blue hair. (This was downtown San Diego, after all!)

The parallels went on and on. It was really quite interesting. It was as if different actors had been assigned to play the characters that I was already familiar with. But they didn't have a Tamara, and I think they enjoyed our visit that evening as much as we enjoyed it. The women kept trying to coax me to surrender the dress I was wearing that evening. Some things are universal, I suppose!

On Sunday nights, they have a large, formal tango event, complete with a full orchestra, just outside of town. Unfortunately I never quite made it that far, as I got distracted by, umm, some of the other attractions the city held to offer. Local rumor has it that the bandoneon player is the son of Astor Piazzolla. Some swear it's true, others say it's all just a myth. Having never seen him, I don't know. Clearly I need to return to San Diego to investigate this mystery. The truth is out there.

*Tamara Arenovich*

## CALIFORNIA

### Long Beach

Long Beach is a moderate-sized suburb of Los Angeles, located right on the shoreline, about a half-hour south of L.A. My first exposure to Long Beach tango occurred on the very night my plane arrived. Tango in Long Beach starts late, and runs throughout the entire evening. Since I was very jet-lagged, I only lasted until about 3:30am (which is 6:30am, our time). The location for this particular adventure was a dance studio, situated above some stores in the arts district. It was an amazing room with a HUGE wooden dance floor. It reminded me of Moonlight Dance Studio, back in it's glory days. Ahhh, memories...

The host for the evening was a gentleman named Alfredo de Jesus. Is that a great name or what? He was very gracious, as were all of the dancers there that evening. The crowd was fairly small, maybe about 25 people. This was a Friday night, and there were many competing dances going on in and around the LA area that evening. I had a wonderful time, and enjoyed the challenge of understanding and following people that I had never danced with before in my life. They seemed to enjoy it as well, as I didn't have the chance to rest for a single song during the time that I was there! I definitely think we could all take a page from their book and set up an after-hours tango club somewhere in Toronto, for those of us who really only come alive after the sun goes down.

*Tamara Arenovich*

## CALIFORNIA

### Los Angeles

... I'll let you know in about a month ☺

*Tamara Arenovich*

## An 8-Point Tango Program

*This article originally appeared in the Tango-L Internet discussion forum. For more information about tango in Colorado, check <http://www.tango.org/dance>*

I have been thinking about how to speed up learning and the quality of the learning process for students. In Colorado, our first generation took 3 or 4 years to get to intermediate stage; our newest generation takes less than a year. Becoming an "advanced" dancer is something else. It is much more individual, and some never get there. It is common to get stuck at intermediate for years.

After I put this list together I notice that two themes emerged. There is no single "Tango Truth". Tango has multiple layers, many styles, different people, different personalities, different kinds of music, etc. To dance tango well means to be adaptable enough to enjoy tango in its wide variety. There is no final moment of arrival at "Tango Truth".

Here is my 8 Point List:

(1) *Listen to the music.*

Unless you grew up with tango it will take a long time to hear and be able to express the music. This is the single thing that will most speed up your learning.

(2) *Dance a minimum of 10 hours per week for 1 year.*

That probably means 3 days per week. If you only dance 3 hours per week, than anticipate 3 1/3 years of work to get to the same point. This is very simple mathematics!

(3) *Take privates, and group classes, and change partners and go to dances*

Only taking privates, only taking group classes and only dancing with one partner are sure formulas for failure.

(4) *Men should take classes from multiple teachers with different styles.*

Men have to see a variety of styles and technique before they can understand and develop their own style. Without multiple conceptions of tango, guys look wooden and stiff or are very limited in their expressive capabilities, no matter how much skill they might have with a single particular style. Parroting one teacher's version, no matter if he is the greatest of the great, is not the same thing as really dancing tango.

(5) *Women should take classes from multiple teachers with different styles.*

Women have to be adaptable. One mistake I see frequently is for women to study "Tango Technique" intensively with one teacher, and then try to use that technique for everyone. They don't realize that Tango has many styles, many kinds of dancers, many different personalities, and many techniques. Five private lessons from this week's "great master" teaches you how to dance with him in his style, not with the next 50 dancers you meet.

It is not easy to differentiate between specific techniques for one style, and universal techniques that fit many styles. Especially because so many master teachers say it absolutely 'must' be 'this' way, often contradicting diametrically the 'absolute truth' from the previous great master.

(6) *Visit other tango communities.*

The dancing in one local whether defined by a single city a single studio, a single teacher, or a single neighborhood is almost always inbred and self-referential.

(7) *Revisit your vision of what tango is all about.*

Tango has many layers, each one seemingly more profound than the previous one. The first clue that you have not yet "arrived" is the moment you think you have tango figured out and you start teaching others what you know. I was one who started teaching before I was ready (the community was very young at the time, so I have an excuse). After beginning to teach I restarted tango from scratch multiple times. I will testify, that 4 years later, the most important thing I have realized is how much more I have to learn.

(8) *Visit Argentina.*

This doesn't mean that the Argentines have a monopoly on the knowledge of tango, but you have to see and feel tango as a cultural expression in its native environment. Imagine studying Salsa in a ballroom studio and never going downtown to see how the natives do it. What makes you think you know salsa, let alone tango?

Outside of Argentina, Tango is an "acquired dance," something we are learning "second culture," and we have very few local examples of what tango 'really' feels or looks like. I don't care how good the visiting master teachers are or how well you can duplicate their steps, tango is a language and like a language to speak fluently with a good (I didn't say perfect) accent means listening to how it is "spoken" down there.

For example, even some teachers say that tango doesn't have latin hips. Anyone who has seen tango in Argentina would have noticed that there is a lot of latin body language, including hip play.

Tom Sternitz

## An Interview with Ruben Bustamante

*If you are part of Toronto's tango community, you have probably seen Ruben's elegant and playful dancing. If you have talked with him, you have also felt his grace and charm. You may also know about his considerable contribution to the tango in Toronto.*

**Ruben, we know you are from Argentina. How long have you lived in Canada?**

I have been here for eleven years. I find this country safe, organized, clean and its system is great. I notice that the cultures are not integrated. In my country all the different immigrants proudly become Argentinean. On the other hand, with the tango community it is obvious that the tango dance has become a uniting element.

**We have seen you performing folk dances. Did you learn folk dancing before tango?**

I became a professional folk dancer when I was nineteen. I worked in a troupe called "Los Gauchos Argentinos". When I was young, the tango didn't exist in Buenos Aires. Disco music was in. Tango was only seen in shows or in a few salons or pick-up bars where tango shared equal tandas (several songs of the same rhythm played consecutively one after another) with folk music and cumbia. Tango enthusiasts had very few venues for a city the size of B. A., with nine million inhabitants (in 1975). It meant tango didn't exist.

**When did you start dancing?**

In every Argentinean home you would always find one or several family members that could play an instrument, usually the guitar. Therefore one grew up dancing, singing and playing musical instruments. But to answer your question, I was six years old when my grandmother sent me to a dance academy. Three months later, I started to perform.

**Which of your tango teachers have you gained the most from?**

In 1989, I signed a contract to come to Canada as a folk dancer with a musical called "A Rose for Mr. Tango" which ran for six months at the Music Hall Theatre on Danforth. My part involved an 8-minute folk presentation. I also did some tango. Juan Carlos Copes, the choreographer, sent me to Cristina Rey to learn the movements that he needed from me. The company paid for my classes. I was very lucky. Cristina Rey was my only instructor. In a few lessons she showed the basic figures. I realized then that in this dance there is a partner that can not be ignored. There is a move and a proper way of dancing this move. There is a defining lead, and there is a relational distance.

**What do you mean by 'relational distance'?**

I mean that it is of elemental importance for the couple to maintain the relational distance that the embrace proposes (whether it be close or open embrace) in order for the couple to accomplish a polished, smooth move and a sustained balance. The rest starts to happen on its own. We rehearsed for two months and I was lucky to have shared six months of work with Juan Carlos Copes. Working with a master with forty years of experience under his belt, one can only learn and learn. As if all this learning were not enough, I was sharing my apartment with Tito, the Bandoneon player, and with Pepito Avellaneda, the greatest milonga dancer ever. Today, he is a legend. It was here that I had no choice but to listen to tango all day long, and listen to tango discussions all day long. Pepito's favorite was Troilo. He played a lot of Troilo. Pepito made me a Troilo addict and he himself became my idol: the milonga dancer to beat (right, in my dreams!). Since then I have dedicated my efforts to learning and teaching tango. I love collecting videotapes of all levels of tango dancing. Good or bad tango, as long as it is tango, I love it. To me it is an enjoyable challenge.

To continue with your original question, on one of my visits to Buenos Aires, three years ago, I saw two guys that got my attention: Gustavo Naveira and Tete. Naveira drove me crazy with the bizarre way in which he linked his movements. He danced for three hours non-stop in his practice. One gets dizzy trying to follow him. I just sat and watched and learned. The following day, I attended his advanced class. I was lucky; he taught the same combination I had watched him dance the evening before. He uses every possibility. He also plays within the rhythm. For instance, he masters all his combinations (thousands of them) in both directions to the right or to the left. He dances in the beat, against the beat, double fast, double slow, syncopation, and pauses. One must know some tango in order to understand him and his interpretation of the tango dances. The other amazing dancer I mentioned is Tete. What makes him dance in the way he does is the craziness in his brain and he translates this madness into an ingenious and amazingly complicated way of dancing. Almost all these people danced tango 'cruzado', crossed tango. I like this kind of tango because there is no basic step and because even with all the rules tango has, when I dance with a partner who is at my level, I feel free.

**What do you mean by 'crossed tango'?**

Crossed Tango is a product of years of tango dance evolution. What determines and guides the evolution of a dance is the evolution of the music and the society that gave it birth. Allow me to explain. Today, a hundred years since the tango's birth, certain schools of tango in Buenos Aires encourage the woman to propose a tango move whenever she sees it fit, allowing her, in a way, to lead the next step. This gives us a clear indication of how the equality of women in today's society is also reflected in the tango dance. This is part of the historical socio-economical evolution that I am referring to. To understand the dance you ought to know its culture. The tango was born as 'canyengue', in the brothels located in the arrabales (the slums and poor districts surrounding the city). The bands were trios composed of guitar, flute and fiddle. The beginning of the 20th century saw the addition of the German bandoneon and the transformation of trios into quartets. When the piano is added, the quartet turns into a quintet and the orchestras now move from the brothels to the sophisticated dance halls in the city. This change of environment coupled with the richer quintet demands that the dancer adopt a more elegant and polished position but always conserving the close embrace which had already moved from the low left hand position of the man in the canyengue to a higher-holding level position. It is in this way that the canyengue was shaped into tango salon. The quintets paved the road for the great orchestras and the 1920's saw the influx of many conservatory-educated musicians who enriched the tango tradition by adding greater complexity to orchestration. These innovations once again mark another defining change in the complexity and the sophistication of the dancers. The music obliged the dancer to give more. It demanded a lot more from them. Just imagine for a moment one bandoneon that plays the accompaniment to another, a third one that plays the melody, a fourth one that does the duet, and a fifth one that plays the special arrangements. Add to the depth and complexity of five bandoneons, two violins,

one viola, the piano and the bass. Now imagine yourself dancing to the sounds of this magnificent live orchestra. Add to this scenario the competitive spirit of the porteno dancer who was expected to showcase a new figure every Saturday in order to be considered a good dancer. It is against this background that the search for more begins. The innovations in the music were perfectly fitted by the movements of the dancers. The embrace opened up. The woman no longer could complacently lean on the man's chest. The embrace changed to what dancers call the "v" shape or triangle. The hips separated and more intricate footwork and combinations started to interweave into what is known as *verdura* (vegetable). It is in this period, by the end of the 1940's, that we see a very fruitful period as many dancers reached their zenith. When I was small, this style was called the Crossed Tango. Today it is also called Tango Danza. What is important to comprehend is that both styles, *salon* or *crossed*, are authentic tango. This authenticity is backed up by the socio-economical history that shaped them into being. Both styles played an important role in its development. It is also relevant to understand that for the highly respected *milonguero* in Buenos Aires, when it comes down to demonstrating on the dance floor how he has earned his place among the greatest, he chooses to dance the *crossed tango*.

To go back to your question, from which tango teacher have I gained the most, I only had one instructor and from there on I continued learning from absolutely everybody. The knowledge I have as a professional dancer allows me to be self-taught.

**Why do you like the tango? What do you enjoy best about it?**

From a very early age I listened to tango songs and music and it just didn't catch my attention. I used to hate the lyrics. When I turned 17 I saw Juan Carlos Copes dancing with Maria Nieves and I was absolutely astonished. I believe at that point I realized that each of the dancers were more amazingly skilled than the dance they were interpreting. I was more tantalized by their presence, their elegance, their speed, their technique, their harmony as a couple and their precision, than the dance itself. Years later, I found myself dancing tango. My constant desire to improve and excel and master every move pushes me forward to continue exploring the tango. In so doing, I discover that it is a fascinating dance and a very intricate one, a dance that is danced by two and becomes even more complicated when all the rules to go by must be respected. Once these elements are mastered you start realizing that this is your dance, that one is not alone because you have a partner to do what you enjoy the most, to dance and even within the limitations of the embrace, one feels free to accomplish the most intricate moves. Tango keeps my mind busy. For me, it is a highly intellectual activity. I am constantly searching, imagining new moves, creating new combinations, trying links in unusual ways. Nowadays, I never get tired of listening to tango music. I particularly enjoy Troilo's orchestration and arrangements. For performances I choose to go with *D'Arienzo*. Tango lyrics are no longer boring.

**Can you recommend a teacher for anyone visiting Argentina?**

If it is your first visit to Buenos Aires, I would recommend watching how other Argentinians dance, how they feel, how they move, how they walk. Study their expressions, their ways. Study everything that you may find interesting. Keep in mind that the tango is a popular dance. It involves and evolves from a people's culture. Tango is not only a dance; it is the dance of a people. It is their music, their song, their poetry, their paintings, their milieu. I see the tango as the artistic expression of the porteno's nightlife. If you see that someone dances better than another one it is because they know more, or because they spend more hours dancing or because they have better dancing technique. All these elements are framed within a popular way of moving and being of the porteno (from the port of Buenos Aires). I suggest that you listen to all instructors and arrive at your own conclusions.

**If you could give a beginner one piece of advice, what would it be?**

Please note that when I am talking tango, I am always referring to the 'crossed' tango. Tango students must understand that a dance is a corporeal expression. Each movement has a code, a lead, and an execution of that particular lead. The man must be very clear in his lead because there are many similar leads. The woman must be super sensitive to perceive and execute the particular lead. In tango, there are three areas of equilibrium to be attained: the balance of oneself, the balance of the partner, and the balance of the couple. Remember that you must accomplish your balance leaning forward. For the man, if he loses any of these three balances, he loses his timing. As well, a lot of patience and perseverance is needed. Above all, keep your enthusiasm. Crossed tango is the most difficult of all popular dances. It can be danced with ten or with a thousand combinations. It is necessary to know what you are doing in order to get started in crossed tango. After a while, you start savouring its flavour and you become addicted.

**What about advice for intermediate dancers?**

It is very difficult to give advice to an intermediate dancer. I believe we have a high percentage of intermediate dancers in our Toronto tango community, some because of how much they know, others because of how long they have been dancing. We see the same faces. It is good to know each other, but to see always the same steps, to me is very boring. I cannot tolerate dancing always the same. To each their own. Each dancer is entitled to dance the style and the steps of their choosing. In any event, I see that most steps are poorly danced. The lack of technique and good style takes away from the beauty of the steps and this fact is a pity. Dirty dancing, I believe, is bad dancing.

There are other dancers that enjoy dancing only to a particular orchestra. In a whole night, they only dance two tandas, or eight tangos. For these tangos, they only know 1.5 steps. It's beautiful to watch them. It can be said they are excellent

at doing those fifteen steps. Because they only dance to those particular pieces of music they know the music well. They excel at what they do.

I am not saying that people should learn more if they don't care to do so, but you are asking me for advice for an intermediate, and to be regarded as such, the dancer should perfect what he or she already has. At an intermediate level, people should also gain some knowledge of the music and its meaning. An intermediate dancer shouldn't be dancing a canyengue while doing steps belonging to crossed tango. It must be understood that canyengue style and salon style both are the beginning stages in the development of the tango dance and as with all beginnings, are simple styles. If, as an intermediate, you are not interested in taking lessons in canyengue or salon style, yet you care to get up and dance these styles to this type of music, all you have to do is watch those who dance these styles. Copy their embrace, and try this basic rhythm - slow-slow-quick-quick-quick as far as the restraint or the limitations of this close embrace allows you to do so. Try to play with this rhythm trying your own moves. You will soon get it. Just don't get on the dance floor and dance open tango to canyengue or salon music. As soon as you loosen the embrace to accommodate a more difficult figure, you are no longer dancing 'salon', you are dancing crossed tango. This is because you lost the so-called salon look by losing the close contact of the upper body or the close embrace. Do I make myself clear?

Perfectly. Thank you for the advice.

*Kay Randewich*

## Tango Discussion on the Internet

Every few days, I put my finger on the pulse of the beating heart of Tango. How, you ask? By being a member of a discussion group

Tango-L is an e-mail forum. This means that any member can send an e-mail that is delivered to the entire group. It's not an interactive, real-time chat group. I think there are about 1,000 members, although many only read and never actively participate. People write from all over the world, although the majority of e-mails are from North America, with a good minority from Buenos Aires.

There is a wide range of subjects, including tango styles, music, etiquette, history, factual information on events classified by geographic area, and many, many other aspects of the dance. Some of the opinions expressed are intelligent, thoughtful and positive, others are petty and negative. Typically, you get about 20 messages daily. They are often interesting, and you can use your delete button easily to skip what you don't like.

Our tango community in Toronto is small, so I really like the feeling of being part of a larger group of enthusiasts.

If you want to try putting your finger on Tango's pulse by joining Tango-L, it's easy and free. Simply send an e-mail to [LISTSERV@MITVMA.MIT.EDU](mailto:LISTSERV@MITVMA.MIT.EDU) that simply says "subscribe Tango-L Firstname Lastname"

Don't worry, it's equally easy to unsubscribe.

*Clive Randewich*

## Club Information

Club Milonga meets every Tuesday at Danforth Baptist Church. Enter on Bowden St. between Chester and Broadview.

Beginner lesson 7.30pm to 8.15pm

Intermediate lesson 8.15pm to 9.00pm

Dancing (practica) 9.00pm to 10.30pm

Cover charge for non-members is \$6.

Website [www.tangotoronto.com](http://www.tangotoronto.com)

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## Would you like to contribute?

Suggestions and contributions for the next newsletter are welcome.

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