



Club Milonga's
Tango Heartbeat



Tango Heartbeat

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Here's our new logo/design by friend of tango, Andrew Bee. Coming soon on t-shirts to a milonga near you!

THE CLUB M EXEC for '03

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From the Prez ... We're Lookin' Good!

by Jayne Patterson

Since the last magazine in late spring, Club M has been lookin' good! We held the **Second Annual Moonlight Ball** on Argentine Flag Day, June 20, and three days before, we were sold out! One hundred people attended this spectacular event in the gorgeous Hart House Music Room, made even more delightful with Marlene's hand-fashioned decorations. Luckily we had enough volunteers to hang them all up a few seconds before people arrived.

Gary and Sahori performed beautifully despite the fact that Gary had to swivel in rubber-soled shoes because the floor was so slippery! But not to worry, we did a lot of bending and swooping but no slipping and cracking. Check out the pics on our website - <http://tangotoronto.com/>



Hey, we even have twirling hearts on the home page as well as CURRENT information about what's happening in the tango community.

And *who is Richard?* you may ask. He's the husband of our lovely and efficient receptionist, Marilyn. What a relief it is to not worry about the desk! Marilyn comes early to help set up and stays late to close up—way above and beyond the call of duty. Thank you so much Marilyn for being so hard-working, pleasant and reliable! Believe me, you make us all look good.

We also want to look better electronically and in print. Marlene and I worked with an artist, Andrew Bee, to create the funky tango image you see above you. Yep, we now have our very own logo. In a few weeks you'll also see the logo on our new Club Milonga T-shirts. I know you'll want to buy one so you can, you guessed it, LOOK GOOD!

Strictly Tango has been going strong for eight months now. Marlene continues to make improvements on the decorations each month while John, Pam and Nabil make sure the food is fresh and yummy. The Strictly Tango committee stands watch over each dance to see how we can make improvements. Then there's all the decorators who come early to set up and stay late to wrap up. Oh yes, and the cool looking streetlamp ... John purchased it, made the stand from scratch and somehow transported it to the Club!

As you know, we have talented dancers who volunteer to perform at each Strictly Tango. A special thanks to them all: Nelson, Savio and Noris, Doug and Create, Lisa Romain, Miguel and Erika and Lisandro's Sur Theatre. These performances really add that special flare to our milongas and give them a nice community feel.



Miguel Pla and partner

Are the members looking good?
Sure we are!
That's because all of our teachers are kicking tango ass to get us in shape.

So thank you dear instructors for being patient: Gary and Sahori, Miguel and Erika and Ruben and Sandra. By the way, I'm making contacts with teachers in Montreal to see if we can bring in someone new to teach us. I'll let you know what happens. Since we brought in a bit of money in the last few months, we turned it back into the Club and purchased some instructional tango DVDs as well as show and movie videos. Hope you enjoy them.

We looked spectacular at Tango Halloween on October 28...WOW! And...drum roll...the four costume-winners were:

Most elegant: Clive as Fred in his cool tux with his lovely partner Ginger (Kay of course)

Scariest: Our very own Cecilia, the Wicked Witch of the East End

Best Tango Theme: Renée the tango cat (church mice beware!)

Most Original: VP Marlene in her awesome costume, handmade of course, of Cleopatra, Queen of the Tango Nile. Clive remarked that she has a very nice asp.

Honourable Mention: The two balls of the ball, Sue and Steve, who rolled in as a very fat sumo wrestler and very, veeerry fat lady.

None of these wonderful things could happen without the too-many-to-mention volunteers and dedicated Executive.

A special thanks to the executive:
Marlene—what talent!
Bernice—what cakes!
Nabil—what great homemade salads!



The Prez with Marlene and Michael

John—what a great tight-fisted treasurer you are.
Joan—what wonderful videos and DVDs she bought us.
Ed—not only is he our trusty Membership Secretary, but he also makes sure all the ladies get a chance to dance with one of the best!

OK, nothing's perfect. The walls and washrooms at the Club do not look good. We are negotiating hard with the Church Building Committee to make improvements, and we're slowly getting there, so please be patient with us.

Thank you so much **all of you** for a fun-filled six months. The joints' jumpin', let's keep it that way!

Hugs and kisses,
Jayne

AN INTERVIEW with ROXANA AND FABIAN

By Kay and Clive Randewich



Roxana and Fabian taught a very exciting and well-attended series of classes at Club Milonga in the spring of this year. Their love of the tango was clear for all to see, and they were very generous and giving in every way. We hope their busy schedule will soon permit them to return to us.

These wonderful dancers have taken their art to many legendary tango halls in Argentina such as Palais De Glace, Astral Theatre, La Confiteria Del Molino, Almagro, Glorias Argentinas, Negracha. One of their most recent performances took place at the prestigious tango bar, 'Homero Manzi'.

They have also performed internationally in Canada, the United States, Uruguay, Dominican Republic, Cuba and 20 European cities.

A Quebec reviewer, Jake Brennan, recently said: "...Known worldwide for their passionate dancing of Argentine tango, the pair have been named 'Stars of the Future-1998' by the American Spanish-language television show, Sabado Gigante, and 'Best Latin Artist' by the Hispanic Canadian newspaper, El Popular. They most recently appeared in the film The Tuxedo, dancing alongside stars Jackie Chan and Jennifer Love Hewitt..."

Check out their site at www.tangodeoro.com or email them at tangodeoro@hotmail.com.

Kay and Clive: Fabian, your father Julio played the bandoneon and your mother Catalina sang tango lyrics. How do you feel that affected you?

Fabian: I was born in a house where the tango was heard at all times. My mother was a beautiful singer.

Many singers and dancers showed up there. I got all my feelings for tango from my parents. Tango is my life. Roxana and I were both born and grew up in a neighborhood called Villa Pueyrredon. I met many famous people at my house and in the local clubs, for example Juan Carlos Copes and Hector Mayoral, who were also born in our neighborhood. Mayoral was taught by my uncle, Rodolfo Tarquini, when he was young.

Kay and Clive: Roxana, you began when very young as an Argentine folk dancer. Did that help you with tango dancing?

Roxana: Argentine folk and tango both represent our culture, but I was captured more by the art and the magic of the tango.

Kay and Clive: How did you meet? And when did you begin dancing together?

Fabian: My parents knew Roxanne's parents, and our grandparents knew each other also. We actually met in the clubs, when I was 15 and Roxanne was 13.

Kay and Clive: What do you enjoy best about tango?

Fabian: We love tango's lyrics. They show you the history of Buenos Aires. They tell about the parents that immigrants to Argentina left behind when they left their country. I know about this kind of emotion myself, I lost my mother while I was away performing outside Buenos Aires. Lyrics bring memories and feelings and reflections. Feelings are everything. When I see people dance, I can see if they're dancing with all their feelings, from the inside out, with the heart.

Kay and Clive: Who has been your most memorable teacher and why?

Roxana: My father, he was my first teacher and the relationship was so close. My mother was a very good dancer, too. My father, Oscar Callegari, passed away, that's why to dance for me brings me closer to my dad's memories, especially steps that were taught by him, or his favorite tango lyrics.

Fabian: I had three different roots in tango. First, the chords of Argentine Tango were introduced by the bandoneon played by my father, Julio Cesar Belmonte, which led me to play the instrument. Then the lyrics interpreted by my mother inspired me to begin singing. And third, about dancing, for me also it was my father-in-law. I watched how he danced. It was all related to the lead. He and his friends were so specific, if I couldn't do it right, they wouldn't teach me anything else till I got it. My father-in-law, Oscar Callegari, started the first tango school in Toronto in 1984. It was called 'Escuela de Tango Buenos Aires'.

Kay and Clive: You make the dance look so easy but is there anything in tango that is still difficult for you?

Fabian: There are always things you can learn. Not technique, but by watching older dancers in Buenos Aires. Free movements are good. When I perform on stage, I never fully choreograph our solos, because I think that will cool down my feelings. I just plan the beginning and the ending. Leading is very important. And for advanced dancers, the woman can lead into the dance, too. In the past, people did practice with family members. I also practiced dancing in the woman's role for a long time, to learn the technique of leading. My father-in-law made me walk the tango rhythm for months, which is a good way to learn.

Kay and Clive: What would you say has been your most memorable experience as a tango dancer?

Roxana: We have had many great experiences. One example is when we did a show in homage to the great soccer player, Diego Maradona. When he watched our show, I saw him crying! He said our dancing bring him special emotions, through our style.

Fabian: We won the 1998 'Stars Of The Future' International Dance Contest, produced by the biggest Spanish TV show in the United States, in Miami. Later, a guy who had a worldwide TV program for Spanish-speaking people was doing one of his many telethons for children with cancer, and we were on the show. A man who had seen us dance in Miami recognized us and said he'd pay a very large amount of money to the telethon if we would dance again, which we did. The money was donated to the fundraising.

Kay and Clive: You have said that you want to teach people tango "from the inside out". What do you mean?

Fabian: First, you have to incorporate all the leads inside the body. This incorporation is very important. Your lead must come from the brain, but also from the heart, and it must come at once and in a natural way. That's what I want to see from people, nothing mechanical, just the dance and the feeling from the heart.

Kay and Clive: What do you feel that you can best contribute as teachers to your students?

Fabian: I want to show them the passion of the dance. Take everything slowly, step by step, don't skip anything. When you build a house, you build the foundation and then the walls before the ceiling and the roof. Tango is a feeling, not a fashion. You have to love it, and understand it.

Kay and Clive: If you could give people in Toronto some advice to help them improve their dancing, what would that be?

Fabian: Get a book on the history of the tango, there are some good ones in English.

Kay and Clive: In Toronto, many of us have attended and enjoyed your Gold Tango shows. When will you do another one?

Fabian: We'd love to, and we will, but it's very difficult. We try to do everything as perfectly as we can.

You need a big, big sponsor, because it's a very expensive production. We have been doing similar shows throughout Canada (Quebec, Jonquière, Sherbrooke, Chicoutimi, etc.) very successfully, with the well-known Canadian group 'Quartango'.

Kay and Clive: Thank you both, very much, for talking to us. When we hear your emotion and enthusiasm, you make us want to go and dance right away!



ISTANBUL TANGO TOUR – AUGUST 2003

By Dawn Jantzi

... Dancing to the haunting sounds of Turkish tangos on a rooftop cafe overlooking Istanbul, with its magnificent mosques and palaces shimmering in the distance...

... Milonga on a patio under the stars, surrounded by twinkling trees, with a live tango band setting the mood...

... Intoxicating experience of the hamam (Turkish bath) amidst marble columns and fountains with shafts of sunlight falling through openings in the domed ceiling...

... Sounds of Turkey heard as I walked along Istiklal - Songs in Hebrew, Arabic, French, English; salsa, classical, pop, and rock music mixed with the calls to prayer echoing across the city...

... Surprised reaction of Turkish locals and tourists alike as Nicolai and Lorraine tangoed down the aisles of a music store to try out the new Turkish tango CD...

These are just a few of the many memories I have of my tango trip to Istanbul in the summer of 2003.

**"BAILA TANGO TOUR TO ISTANBUL –
WORKSHOPS & MILONGAS –
ONE BIG PASSION = TANGO IN ISTANBUL"**

This is what the website said. After reading the testimonials about Metin's teaching, I decided to go. There was something about the lure of this ancient culture that grabbed onto me, and wouldn't let me go.

Later I learned that Metin Yazir is the founder of Baila Tango and has 16 franchise studios worldwide. He trains each of his teachers (now over 50 strong); many of his teachers-in-training became our dance partners during our 10 days in Istanbul. He travels frequently, giving classes and workshops all over the world; he was in the Toronto area in September.

One of his New York teachers, Jak Karako, is his manager and publicist. He is responsible, mainly, for organizing these annual Baila Tango tours to Istanbul - 2003 was the fourth such tour. It attracted tango dancers from Turkey, Italy, France, Spain, Australia, England, USA, and Canada. From Canada there were five participants - three from Toronto, one from Waterloo, and one from Montreal.

We were housed in a historic hotel - the Pera Pala. It was built in 1893, and became a "home away from home" for many of the famous travellers on the Orient Express. A brass plaque in the lobby lists notable guests, such as: Ataturk (father of modern Turkey), Agatha Christie (wrote Murder on the Orient Express during a stay there), King Edward VIII of England, President Tito of Yugoslavia, Jacqueline Kennedy, Mata Hari, Greta Garbo, Yehudi Menuhin, and last on the list is Loreena McKennit. Marble is everywhere in this hotel - white, pink, rose, grey, charcoal - from the walls and floors in the lobby to the walls and floors in the bathrooms. Istanbul is on the Sea of Marmara - source of most of the marble. Meeting rooms, ballrooms, dining rooms, feature elaborate chandeliers on the ceilings and Turkish carpets covering the floors. Carpets must be taken up frequently for receptions and dances. Unique to the hotel is the Schindler elevator lift - an elaborate "cage" which carries guests, in style, to the upper floors, should you decide to forego the 10-foot wide red carpeted, mirror-framed, brass-railed staircase. Worthy of note, too, is the buffet breakfast served to us every morning. Tables were laden with fresh and dried fruit, olives, local yogurt, meat/cheese trays, pastries, along with egg and pancake offerings. Our pattern was to eat our fill for breakfast, then carry away fresh fruit for lunch.

Over the 10-day stay, workshops were scheduled on the weekends, and milongas were offered every night - in different venues across the city. Other than a technique

class on Wednesday, week days were filled with fascinating tours - Topkapi Palace, three different mosques (Haghia Sophia, Blue Mosque, the Suleymaniye), the impressive aqueduct and underground cistern system (complete with head of Medusa). A few scenes from the James Bond film "Greetings from Moscow" were shot in the cistern. Then there were the amazing bazaars and spice markets - which drew serious shoppers and people-watchers alike. One day we were treated to a boat cruise on the Bosphorus - a tributary of the Black Sea leading to the Marmara Sea. In addition to enjoying the view of the amazing palaces and castles along its shores, we had the unexpected excitement of being boarded and inspected by the "river police". Our guide for these tours was Umur Cakar, one of the local tango dancers, and an experienced professional tour guide. There was also a day on the beach at the Black Sea, and a visit to a Turkish bath - a subject worthy of an article all its own.

Although there was opportunity to dance every day at the evening milongas, we were not offered practicas. With a number of people mentioning this oversight to the organizers, we've been assured the next year's tour will include practicas each day.

All in all, this was an exhilarating dance experience. Most participants came without partners, yet there didn't seem to be any wallflowers. Members of the local Baila Tango group, and teachers-in-training became enthusiastic dance partners. There is an energy to Turkish tango which took some getting used to. Students are taught to be decisive - to move without hesitation. and women are invited, and expected, to play with the dance with their partners. Each Turkish partner I danced with offered unique differences in style, and required an energy to keep up with the individual's creative approach. I've returned with a broader picture of dance options and a heightened self-confidence in the "play" between partners in tango.



Milongas in Istanbul

DAVID HARVEY, HOOFING IT FOR 85 YEARS

By Michael Craig

Dave Harvey is or has been, well, a whole bunch of things: singer, actor, comedian, prize fighter, world traveler and, of course, dancer. And you better believe, at 94 and going strong, he's still performing. You can catch his tap routine this fall in a Nokia commercial.

Most Tuesday nights, Dave's at Club Milonga putting the moves on ladies who are as much as seventy years his junior. A good friend says she has tried to steer him into the arms of someone near his age bracket, 70+ say, but he has gently rebuffed the matchmaking, preferring to devote his energy and charm to the kids of 40 or 50.

But let's begin at the beginning, September 9, 1909 in Edinburgh when Dave tap danced his way out of his mother's womb and squalled so mightily that she knew she had a Caruso on her hands. He came from a family of six kids. One of his older sisters, Betty, is still causing a ruckus at a nursing home in Pickering. She's 103.

Betty and another older sister taught Dave to dance when he was nine or ten. He hated it, but they were bigger, stronger and meaner, and they needed a guy. As it turned out, he had talent - in record time he picked up the waltz, foxtrot and, yes, the original tango from Argentina. As kids they loved the exaggerated tango dips made famous in the movies by the likes of Rudolph Valentino.

Dave was introduced to tango before the Americans sanitized it with the jerky head movements and exaggerated, stretched-out posture. Dave learned American tango too, but he says people mostly regarded it as the comedy version.

One day when he was eleven, and still in Edinburgh, Dave was goofing around in music class with a buddy, Kenny Mackenzie. Kenny came from a family of singers and, as the youngest kid, he was always forced to sing harmony. The teacher pointed at the two smart alecks and announced that they were going to sing a duet the following week for Parents' Night.

As with the dancing, Dave hated the idea. He says, "I would much have preferred to get the strap." But, once again, he had talent. He and Kenny were a hit and ended up doing a bunch of gigs, singing songs like "Bonnie Loch Lomond" and "All Through the Night". The only down side of these first paying performances was that the older kids who took them around, one of whom played the concertina, stole the proceeds, giving them just a penny each for a meat pie.

The "act" broke up a year or so later because Kenny moved away, but Dave wasn't very disappointed. He liked soccer, hockey and boxing more than singing.

Dave's dad was a Scots farmer who took to the sea, stopped in at ports around the world, and brought his family to Toronto around 1922. Dave didn't ever get to go to school in Canada. At thirteen he found himself working in the Glidden Paint factory, pouring paint into cans and tamping down the lids.



This was the vaudeville era - no TV and no sound at the movies, so people amused themselves at house parties. As a singer/dancer, Dave was quite popular. He remembers the first time, aged 14, that he approached a girl in a dance hall who was maybe 20. She looked him over skeptically and said "Does your mother know you're out dancing with older women?" But she slid into his arms as women have been doing ever since.

He also remembers being turned down, shortly after that, by four or five girls when he asked them to dance at the Masonic Temple. He was about to give up and go home when he spied a tall, beautiful model named Hilary who had already rejected several guys. As a last-ditch effort as he was heading for the door, he sidled up and said cheekily, "Is it cold up there?" She stared stonily at him and said, "Cold where?", but by that time he had her elbow and steered her to the dance floor.

Around that time Dave performed in an amateur talent contest at the Beaver Theatre at the Junction of Toronto. A girl did acrobatics, a boy played the violin and Dave sang "The Bells Are Ringing for Me and My Gal". He won first prize, three dollars, and concluded that performing was a better deal than pouring paint. For years after that he picked up a few dollars here and there as a singer at the Roxy and Casino Theatres in Toronto, and even did a comedic waltz-clog dance with other young hoofers.

At the Beaver shows he saw some guys tap dancing and thought he'd give it a try. He learned tap second hand from a friend who was taking lessons, and soon found himself doing a soft shoe routine in the Carlton Minstrel Show. He loved comedy - a bunch of people in black face and absurd southern accents doing Negro skits. Songs like "Oh What a Time I Had with Minnie the Mermaid Down at the Bottom of the Sea" put more than one audience in stitches.

At the Columbus Hall they had orchestras and, now and then, a dance contest based on one specific step. When a rather stout girl asked him to go in a foxtrot contest, he discovered that she danced "like a feather". They did a perfect pivot and won the contest.

The Charleston came along - the newest thing. It was a breeze for Dave with his tap background. One winter night about eighty years ago, he left a dance at the Playter Hall, corner of Broadview and Danforth, with a young couple who wanted to learn the Charleston. As they walked down Logan, a new street at the time, he showed them the foot-flopping steps of the dance, but they kept sliding into the snow banks. They must have been a good teacher because, in the following months, their Charleston won them several contests. Singing and dancing brought in a few dollars, but Dave worked during his teens at other jobs - for a crazy inventor, for instance. He also worked the lake boats, the Cayuga and the Chippewa, on excursions around the lake, and even travelled up the St. Lawrence to Saguenay as a 'mess boy' serving the crew on a tour boat. The famous Romanelli orchestra worked on this fancy boat and, on occasion, Dave did his song and dance routine.

Dave was 20 when the stock market crashed. Jobs were few and far between so, with thousands of other young men, he rood the rails, "lived rough" as he puts it, on trips all over Canada and even up to Alaska and the Yukon. He had to watch out for the railway cops and the sharp teeth of their German shepherds.

In Vancouver a friend talked him into boxing at the Young Communist Club - three rounds at 25¢ a round. He stepped into the ring when another competitor proved most adept at running away, and Dave demonstrated that he, at least, knew how to tape a boxer's hands. He fought a good but dirty fighter named Patterson who hit him below the belt. Dave, who wasn't always the gentleman dancer, was so infuriated that he beat the hell out of him.

To attract crowds, the fight promoter often had singers doing acapella bits. So naturally Dave found himself double-employed - as singer and fighter. The first time he stepped into the ring to sing, a cantankerous old gent was all set to make fun of him.

So, leaning over to the wizened heckler, he sang "Baby Face, you've got the cutest little baby face". Another number that brought the depression-era house down was "You'll get pie in the sky when you die."

Dave Harvey, the "professional" prize fighter was found to be '4F' when WWII broke out, thanks to wonkey eyes, so he couldn't get into the army. However, he did serve as a performer, visiting bases as far away as Goose Bay, Labrador with a variety show. He sang, danced, created some of the choreography for the chorus line, and even did the old "Chinese Laundry" comedy routine. Multi-talented, our Dave, and he only had to dodge tomatoes and eggs, no bullets!

For seven years in the '50s and '60s, Dave lived in Australia and New Zealand, crewing on yachts and working, when they needed an "American" accent as an actor. He was the "Gumption Man" in a TV commercial for a paste cleaner because he ad-libbed the line, "no waste, it's paste" with a little click of his tongue, and that caught on. He's been all over Europe, and in the 70s he traveled to South Africa: you name it, like his dad the sailor, he's been there.

Dave left school at thirteen but, over the years he took lots of night school courses. About twenty years ago, walking past a high school gym, he heard tango music and met Roxana's parents, Lydia and Oscar, who were teaching. It wasn't long before Dave had resumed his love and life of tango.

Then, in '88 "A Rose for Mr. Tango" came to town - and the rest is history, as the world, Toronto in particular, rediscovered tango. Dave was central to the formation of Club Milonga around 1990 and he even helped Fabian, Roxana's partner and husband, to get his start teaching tango in Toronto high schools.



David with Fabian at Club M

So, based on his 80 plus years of groovin' to the music, what dance advice does Dave Harvey have for youngsters who are still shy of the old age pension? You could sum it up as KISS: Keep It Simple Stupid! Dave tells a story about dancing tango at Club Milonga very simply, very elegantly, with a minimum of fancy steps. Each time he and his partner passed people seated around the room, they applauded.

For performer Dave Harvey, that's dance, that's life. Keep it simple!

POPPING THE QUESTION: WOMEN ASKING MEN TO DANCE

By Jayne Patterson

The first person I interviewed about this topic was Miguel Pla. In Argentina, he said,
women rarely ask men to dance, but if a woman has been dancing for many years, she may ask someone she knows well. The situation is similar in London, Sweden and Finland.



When I asked what an inexperienced woman should do, he said

If a woman really wants to be asked to dance, she has to be either very pretty or a very good dancer. But it's not just the young, beautiful women who are asked. At a Club I go to very often, I know a 70-year old woman named Marguerita who is so excellent that she has

professionals and teachers fighting to dance with her.

Miguel, who comes from a different culture with long-established tango traditions, has the right to his opinions. But how, I ask, if she seldom dances, can a woman become good enough? In my opinion, whether women should ask men to dance in our society is not worthy of debate. Of course they should! Clive explains it beautifully...

Obviously, the notion that the man pursues and the woman accepts or refuses is embedded in our North American culture. In tango circles, the result is that men dance whenever they want to, while the women often wait, and wait, and wait. Or, they can take matters into their own hands I support the idea of women asking men to dance -- 100%! I think it's great. I understand that in Argentina this is not done, but we live in our North American culture

which has been moving with much success towards more equality for women. As tango dancers I don't think our goal should be simply to replicate all the details of life in Buenos Aires; we don't live there. A woman asking a man to dance doesn't undermine the tango in any way.

Clive's got it right! Viva Canada!

So you tangueras may be thinking, why am I writing this article? I believe it's quite useful to look at ways in which women ask men to dance and how we all feel about it. Rather than writing this subjectively, I simply interviewed a small group at the Club.

What is the experience like for men to be asked?

Here is what Nicolai, our editor, has to say...

This is a complex issue for me. I suppose like most men, I like to be in control! So it is very nice for me to approach whoever "I" choose-- something we men have been programmed to do. However, I have noticed that when I have been asked by women, at Club Milonga or the San Telmo Milonga, I experienced an inner satisfaction. One source of that satisfaction has been "the fairness of it all". Why shouldn't women also be able to ask?

It is nice to be able to mix and share your unique style with others. This connection can be satisfying and enriching. Thus, accepting the notion that both sexes may approach each to dance propagates the 'sharing'.

The real complexity comes, of course, if you are asked to dance by someone you may not wish to dance with! Women have faced this challenge for eons and have developed a response, but for us men this is new stuff. I hope that in these situations I will be able to grow, learn and handle the circumstances with kindness and tact. However, having said that... it is a tad scary!

Ed Grandy, our Membership Secretary, has comments that are very close to Nicolai's...

When the women ask me, it is great thing! I like being asked! I find it rewarding and a great compliment. If I have already asked another lady or another lady has asked me, I will indicate I will dance with them next or later in the evening. Or, if I need to take a station break desperately, then I will ask them not to leave, as I will come to them after my break.

Because I know what it feels like to be rejected, I will not refuse a dance! It takes women just as much courage to ask me as it does for me to ask them. It works both ways! It is almost like leading and following in tango. If you don't know what it is like to do the opposite, then you cannot grow and appreciate the whole situation.

The most memorable occasion where I was asked by a lady occurred in Buenos Aires (Yes, Argentina!). I went with our Toronto group to a place called El Golfo. I was sooo exhausted by the time we got to the dance (still fighting the heat and jet lag), but I wanted to see the place. I was not intending to dance; however, a lady came up to the table and asked me. I thought to myself, as 'totally' exhausted as I am, I'm NOT going to turn her down. I danced with her for 2 or 3 dances, and in spite of my exhaustion, she complimented me on my dancing and my lead. That made me feel great!!!

Nicolai usually comes to the Club alone because his wife doesn't dance very much, YET! And Ed is Mr. Single Mingle. Is the experience the same for one half of a tango couple? Yes it is, at least for Clive...



I see it as a compliment every single time a woman asks me. Whether they see it that way when I ask, I don't know! I never turn a woman down if she asks me (and in fairness I have to say the vast majority of women seem to have the same philosophy). Every tango is a rewarding and pleasant experience, while some are sublime. In addition, I think it's a matter of good manners.

I'm happy to dance with beginners who ask, because it's always a new and unique experience and sometimes a wonderful surprise. I also think we have a responsibility to encourage beginners (but not to teach them on the dance floor, which is a subject for another article) and furthermore, it makes the man a better leader.

OK tangueras, some of the men like to be asked some of the time, but there's a right and a wrong way to ask and we need to be sensitive to it....

Ed says

The most awkward and upsetting situation I have experienced was when the lady was aggressive. She took me by the hand and pulled me towards her while I was standing on the dance floor with another lady. This has happened a couple of times! Needless to say, it really upsets the first lady! The best thing for the second lady to do is wait and see if I will be dancing the next song with the same lady or

if I separate from that partner. If I separate, then she can approach and ask me.

Here are some very frank and helpful comments from Clive...

I dance a lot when I go to a dance, and my style is to put a lot of physical and mental energy into my dancing. I sometimes get tired later in the evening. After dancing three fast milongas, I prefer not to be asked to dance again while I'm still walking off the dance floor to rest or when I'm just pouring myself a drink of water.

More than once, I've walked across the floor purposefully, had a woman's attention, opened my mouth to ask her to dance, and then had another woman 'jump in' and ask me. I know these situations can be a little confusing for everyone, but still, I think women could sometimes be a little more sensitive to the situation they're entering.

Despite what women may think, men can be responsive to subtle signals. Sometimes the man knows the woman is open to his asking, while at other times she isn't. Perhaps because they haven't had as much practice, some women do not seem as good at reading the "vibes". And no doubt, I'm not good at giving off the right signals, particularly the ones that say 'I don't want to dance with you'. On rare occasions, I'll see that someone is thinking about asking me, I'll "vibe" like crazy that "I don't want to", even go to the other end of the dance floor, but get relentlessly followed and confronted. It's maybe just a tad like being 'stalked'.

Although I feel I may be a little unfair here, I welcome being asked by a woman, but only once per evening by the same woman. If I want to dance with her again later in the evening, I prefer to be the one who asks the second time, although if she asks me again, I'll dance again. Please note this rule doesn't apply to some women (perhaps you know who you are, thank you for being so great to dance with!)

Again, I may be a chauvinist swine, but if a woman asks me and we dance two or three times and then I say "Thank you", I prefer not to be asked to continue.

When a woman asks me to dance, it would be great to get "You're a wonderful dancer, please make my evening complete" but I'm still waiting for a woman to come up with that one. You'd think Kay would have managed it at least once in all these years, but

I'm still waiting. "Hi, would you like to dance" is perfectly adequate. However, I do appreciate humour or originality, as I imagine women do, too, but I'm not going to make suggestions about how to ask, as I prefer not to give away all my own good lines here!

So ladies, I don't think Clive is being chauvinist swine, he's just being honest. Let's appreciate what he has to say. Hey, if we wear out the guys they won't come back!! Don't look a gift tango in the mouth!!

Is it easy for the ladies to ask?

Guys, the next time a lady asks you, please be aware of the incredible amount of courage it takes. I'm still nervous myself, though naturally I'm comfortable asking guys who are my friends, including my husband (how can he say no!). I often ask the men who are beginners or newcomers and I really love helping them. As Clive says, it makes you a better dancer.

Kay seems to be on my wave length:

*The people I ask are either good friends, people who have made it **very clear** that they enjoy dancing with me (I know both of these **SMALL** groups would get around to asking me anyway), or they are beginners and I want to make them welcome. Since the club usually has a 'ladies choice' period, that's when I tend to ask. Apart from at the club, I rarely ask men to dance these days – maybe once in an evening, if that.*

There have been times when I have sat out a lot of dances, especially since other women are more forward about asking my take-home partner (That's not a complaint – most of the time).

When there are several women sitting around waiting for a dance, it seems a shame that men are sitting idle (thinking great thoughts?) for a long time. However, they may have good reasons for doing it, so I rarely ask.

One comment to the tangueros: Please try to be sensitive to women who sit patiently (or impatiently) watching the dance. Perhaps these women hesitate to ask because they are a little old-fashioned, but they really are enthusiastic.

*Simply put, I think it is **very, very** bad manners to turn down anyone when asked. This goes for either sex.*

Kay is a wonderful dancer with many years of experience. So you can imagine how difficult it is for a relative beginner like Terri. Here's her experience:

At Milongas I'm asked to dance sometimes, and the only guy I ask is Ed. Why? Because he never says NO, he is very nice and a good dancer. I would dance with anyone that asks me to, the good, the bad, and the ugly.

I believe that a true gentleman will dance if asked, at least for one dance. I have noticed that there are some men that think they are too good to be true, and those I do not even want to talk to, let alone ask them to dance.

The last comment, and perhaps the bravest, comes from Joan:

Sometimes asking the men to dance is the only way to get to dance. I suspect the men are getting spoiled because the surplus of women lately at the Club forces women to ask the men. I then see men sitting around and now only dance when they are asked. We have spared them the humiliation and risk of rejection. Now we feel it.

Sometimes men will say no - that hurts a little. To be truthful, I'd rather they always do the asking and spare me the threat of rejection. But that is a totally unfair expectation!

There are many men at the Club that I avoid approaching because they have turned me down while immediately after approaching a certain kind of dance partner- the young, petite and beautiful type. I got their message loud and clear.

With men that I am friendly with, I make eye contact and jerk the head to one side like a milonguero. A warning to the men, sometimes when they do this same movement however, I am

daydreaming and can't figure what the hell they are doing? I assume it must be same for guys when I do it? I guess in our culture words are better understood."



This is difficult to do, but here is my attempt to put all of these wonderful comments into a little tango nutshell—

Ladies, by all means ask the men to dance, but be sensitive to their situation. It's good to be assertive, but

don't be aggressive. Gentlemen, when a lady asks you to dance, say yes! It won't do you irreparable harm ... and who knows, you may even enjoy it! If you only care to dance one tango, that's fine, just say "thank you". Everybody will improve their dancing and Club Milonga will remain "a friendly place to tango".

My sincerest appreciation to the thoughtful comments of: Kay and Clive Randewich, Ed Grandy, Joan Roberts, Terri Del-Pozo, Miguel Angel Pla and Nicolai Geilich.

See you on the dance floor!

TANGO IN THE CATSKILLS

By Mary Macchiusi

New York city has always been a city of dreams and a mecca for all the young talents of the entertainment world. The Argentine tango is no exception. All the great Tango stars from Argentina have been drawn there at one time or another and many of today's stars live and work there at least part-time.

Diego di Falco, Omar Vega, Pablo Pugliese (Jr), Walter Perez, Mariana Parma, Carolina Zokalski and Virginia Kelly (don't be fooled by the name...it's like Bryant and Nelson).



The recent renaissance of the Tango in New York and elsewhere owes much to two smash hit Broadway shows of the last decades — Tango Argentina and Forever Tango. From Broadway they toured the world including Toronto, inspiring a whole new generation of Tango dancers wherever they went. Needless to say, all of this has made the Tango scene in New York a vibrant and exciting one with Tango Clubs and Tango

Bars springing up everywhere.

Now what has all this to do with Tango in the Catskills? The Catskills are a small forested mountain range 40 minutes north of New York city which is just a small commute for Torontonians. And nestled in these mountains are a series of famous holiday resorts including Grossingers (where Dirty Dancing was filmed), Kutcher's, The Nevele Grande, The Swan, the Granite and just-renovated The Hudson.

These resorts draw their clients from the New York/New Jersey area with its twelve million people — only an hour away. They also draw on the vast New York talent pool for their entertainment. Stars like Danny Kaye, Jerry

Seinfeld, Bob Newhart, Alan King and many others got their start in stage shows at these famous resorts.

They also hold dance weekends, a non-stop boot camp for dancers of all abilities, with lessons every hour and dancing during every meal except breakfast. These dance weekends are organized under the auspices of Stardust Dance Club of New York City (www.stardustdance.com). The Stardust takes over all the facilities of these large resorts and a typical weekend will attract about 800 dancers — mostly not tango dancers. Dancers come from the area, but also from foreign countries. At their September weekend there were dancers from Japan, Argentina, England, Russia and a few from Canada (two of the dance hosts were from Fort Erie and from Montreal).

There are lots of dance classes to choose from, led by professional dancers and teachers many of whom were former Broadway stars...time has been kind to most of them. The dances range from waltz, fox trot, quick step, swing, Latin, Argentine Tango and the other traditional dances...all the way to performance dancing with "lifts and drops," mostly lifts we hope!



In the evening there are several ballrooms with live orchestras devoted to traditional ballroom, Latin Rhythms and our special favourite - the Tango Bar complete with a large dance floor, a live Argentine Tango musical group with a bandoneon and a typically plaintive Argentine singer. Marvelous. The Tango Bar remains open into the wee hours of the night.

The highlight of the weekend is the floor show which brings together incredibly talented and beautiful performance dancers from New York that are simply the best we have ever seen anywhere.

The Argentine Tango is not neglected in the floor show and over the years we have seen people like Di Falco, Pugliese, Parma, Perez, Zokalski, Kelly and others.

At the recent weekend, Angel Garcia and Rosa Callantes performed and they are two of the most spectacular stage tango dancers you will ever see. They even taught classes the next day, Though they are excellent teachers, they experience the same inevitable problems that can be a problem at our Tuesday night milongas. The few pack in around the teachers so that the majority can't see. It is clear that being a good teacher is one thing as most of you who teach know,

controlling the class is quite another. New York – Toronto – we all have the same problems.

But even an over-crowded lesson with Angel Garcia has its positive side. At the September weekend, Mike and Cheryl (from Cleveland) found a corner in the room to practice their steps and then worked with a couple of us on some interesting new moves, including an ending dip that's pretty special.

One thing we have learned from these dance experiences in New York is that tango teachers and performers in Toronto are just as good as most of those in New York, but there are just more of them there. One tango studio in Columbus Circle in the heart of Manhattan is four stories high with a glass front and dance studios on all floors. We have a way to go to catch up with that.

However for dance fanatics or just plain enthusiasts these dance weekends in the Catskills provide a little bit of dance heaven.

...All the dancing you could wish for, wonderfully elegant dinners, a spectacular fashion show (I mean the people attending the weekend) superb performance dancing – and a Tango Bar that goes on all night!

TODAY CUB MILONGA, TOMORROW THE WORLD!

By Savio Barros

The burgeoning activity of Club Milonga provides Torontonians a unique opportunity to learn and master Argentine Tango. I was introduced to the Club about two years ago when I took beginner lessons with Natalia and Bryant, then Teresa and Nelson. Since then, the Club has been blessed with great instructors from around the world, such as Miguel Pla and Pascal and Luis. But our local instructors are fabulous too: Nelson, Ruben, Fabian & Roxana and Gary & Sahori. These skillful instructors provide a great deal of inspiration--hundreds of students have come through Club Milonga's doors, eager to learn. Club Milonga also picked up after Sandra and Ruben's much needed break and now hosts Strictly Tango on the second Friday of every month.

With as many as fifteen or more places to learn and enjoy Tango, Toronto is becoming a first-class Tango city. But of course Montreal is still ahead of us with a much larger following.

The volunteer Executive Committee puts a great deal of time and effort into running the Club. When I first joined there was Kay and Clive at the helm doing a splendid

job. And now we have Jayne, Michael and her Executive Committee with the onerous task of improving the quality of the Club even more. It is impossible to mention all the Executive Members and countless volunteers who help at the door, in the kitchen and with the decorations. Our hats off to these great helpers!



Savio and Noris at Strictly Tango

As some of you know, Noris Collodo and I performed at Strictly Tango in July. A floor show is no easy task! It takes patience, determination, and hours and hours of practice. I was lucky to meet Noris who was enthusiastic to be my dance partner. After lessons with Gary for only a few months, she did admirably well in our first floor show,

although we were both nervous as beginners. Thank you NORIS and thank you Jayne and Ed for the coordination and helping to set up the music. And thanks also to Steve, Nabil and Felix for the photos.

Some of you may already know that I have taken early retirement as a manager in the Ministry of the Attorney General Ontario, Crown Law Office, after thirty years of dedicated service. Upon retiring, I took music lessons and now play the guitar. I've also been frequenting Ballroom venues. I was lucky to be selected to teach Ballroom dancing on a cruise line, sailing from Southampton, UK, and also to be a Gentleman Host while on the cruise, with all expenses paid. Of course, I had to go through dance tests in Toronto and Chicago, coupled with personal interviews.

I will miss Toronto and all my dancing friends. You will see me at the Club whenever I return from my trips on the high seas.

TANGO IN BONN, GERMANY

by Suzanne Miller

You may not think of Bonn, Germany as a hotbed of tango activity, but there is a lively tango scene there, with about eighty dancers at various levels. I spent two wonderful weeks in Bonn this August, with my tango dance partner Ercument.

We love to dance together and to improve our dancing, which led us to visit Europe this summer, during the month of August. Our trip began in Istanbul, two weeks of visiting and taking tango workshops in the city where Ercument spent most of his life before immigrating to Toronto in 1996. From Istanbul we flew to Frankfurt, then made our way to Bonn by train, a two-hour ride. The train route follows alongside the Rhine River, and the trip is a continuous stream of enchanting vistas. On the train, Ercument slept, but I fought sleep, forcing my eyes open to catch glimpses of the marvelous scenes unfolding before me.

The hills on either side of the Rhine are covered with perfect rows of green lines, even the most precarious inclines. I asked



a fellow passenger what they were, and she replied, "Grape vines, this is where all the wonderful German wines come from". Dotted along those rolling hills are silhouettes of castles, some in ruins. We passed through numerous small villages as well, with shuttered houses and steeped churches.

Finally we arrived in Bonn, at the Hauptbahnhof in the centre of town. We stayed nearby, and enjoyed walking all over town, in this former capital of Germany (from the 1950's to the 1990's, when it was moved back to Berlin). We especially liked quiet walks along the shores of the Rhine River. We also spent hours strolling through the interconnecting town squares, which are closed to vehicular traffic, and are paved with red tiles in circular patterns. Lined by historic buildings in pastel colours, including the beautiful Town Hall, the squares are dotted with clusters of outdoor café tables with coloured umbrellas, a perfect setting for long, leisurely talks over huge cups of delicious milch-café, espresso topped with foamed milk.

Now that you have had an introduction to Bonn, come along with us to a milonga. The first one we will visit is

Pauke, at a restaurant-bar. It is a large room, with a bar at one end, and a wooden dance floor surrounded by small tables with white cloths. The room is filled with people, sitting at the tables, standing at the bar, clustered in small groups around the room. The DeeJay plays international tango music, from Buenos Aires and Europe, and surprise, a Yiddish folk song!

The music begins and the dancers are choosing their partners. Ercument introduces me to his teachers, Harald and Gitta, who taught him tango in the winter and spring of 2002, when he was in Bonn learning German. They are friendly people and I love their dance style, open and free. Gitta is a relaxed, easy-going person, casually dressed. Her golden brown braids swing from side to side as they dance. Then Harald invites me to dance. Dark-haired, slight, with a warm smile, he is easy to follow, an excellent leader, very light and definite in his movements. I dance with a few others, including a man from Buenos Aires who teaches here. Many different styles and levels of dancing are evident, but closed, milonguero style predominates, and there are some couples that are dancing very well. It is somewhat

difficult to dance in this space, as there is a large rectangular off-centre pillar in the room, leading to some bunching as people try to manoeuvre around it

and still follow the line of dance. That said, there is a positive feeling in the room, and everyone seems to be having a good time.

At midnight, the milonga comes to an end, but a small circle of people is not quite ready to end the evening. We join them outside, and walk to a nearby bar, where we sit at dark wooden booths with high backs, enjoying the German beer and conversation.

The next milonga we will visit is held just once a month, on the third Saturday at the studio of Bernt, a photographer. After a half-hour bus ride through a lovely residential area, we walk along a laneway to a white-stuccoed one-story structure, which is straight ahead of us. Through the doors, there is a large, long empty room, with a dark wood floor and white walls decorated with Bernt's framed black and white photographs. In an inset area at the back of the room are long picnic tables and benches, with chequered tablecloths and flowers and candles, a comfortable place to sit and chat between tandas.

When we arrive, there are only a few people, and Ercument and I are practicing a move we just learned in

Istanbul, in which the woman seems to float above the dance floor. Bernt is intrigued and asks us to show him. We do, but he doesn't quite get it, as it is quite tricky. Then he invites me to dance, and I dance with him for a long time. He is a refined, elegant man, in his sixties, tall and sturdily built, with white hair and a tanned, craggy face, surprising blue eyes. An excellent dancer, his style is very different from that of the dance teacher, Harald. Harald dances in an open style, for the most part, but Bernt's style is mostly closed, opening up for some moves, which include several that I have not seen elsewhere. He has a unique style of dancing with strong milonguero influences, but his own way of interpreting them. I asked if he had been to Buenos Aires, he said no, but that he had learned from many teachers from B.A. who had come to Bonn.

Soon many others arrive and the dance floor is filled with dancers. What a lovely milonga this is! We have lots of space to dance, and we can follow in the line of dance with no obstacles to impede us. Nice people and beautiful music, which is mostly traditional but with some surprises. Harald has come with Gitta, and I am delighted to dance a long time with him, and of course, with my favourite partner, Ercument. We have a wonderful time, and stay till 3 am. Luckily, we get a lift home, as I don't think the buses were still running. Bonn closes down early, by 11 pm most of the lights are out.

Too quickly, our last milonga evening has arrived. It is an outdoor milonga, and we will walk there, crossing the Rhine River at the Kennedy Bridge. It is early evening, and the sun is starting to colour the sky and the water. As we cross the bridge, boats are moving slowly through the river, long barges and small tour boats. We watch them emerge from under the bridge as we stand at the railing. To the right, we can see the shore and the open space where we will dance tonight, at an open-air milonga at the side of the Rhine. We continue across the bridge. Now, on the other side, we are no longer in Bonn, but in the town of Beuel. We change directions, following a sidewalk parallel to the river. There are benches facing the water, and a few people are sitting on them, dark silhouettes against the orange-tinged water and sky.

Here we are at the site. It is 8 pm and we are just in time. Someone is setting up the CD player, and others are sitting on the low stone wall, changing their shoes. Nearer to the water, people are sitting on the wall, tightly bunched, waiting to watch the dancing. Then the music begins and the dancers quickly rise, eager to dance in this enchanting twilight setting.

The dance area is sectioned off with a semicircle of candles in coloured jars. People walking or rollerblading

by stop for a few minutes to watch the dancers. The dance surface is stone, in squares, not the best for dancing, but one can put up with this minor inconvenience for the pure pleasure of the setting and the perfect summer evening weather.

Gradually it grows darker, and the figures on the dance floor are now dark silhouettes, softly lit by the few overhanging park lights. But at 10 pm the music suddenly comes to a halt. Why are we stopping so soon, I inquire? The people in the surrounding apartments complained about the music, I am told, they go to bed early, so we must stop at 10 or the milonga will not be allowed to continue.

We change our shoes, sitting again on the low stone wall, and walk a short distance to the riverside restaurant and beer garden, called Bahnhofchen, a large wooden structure with a high ceiling and huge cross beams, which had a former life as a train station, hence the name. Many people are sitting inside, but we sit outside, at several long tables, reluctant to leave the warm night air, talking, laughing, drinking beer or café, the ravenous ones (us!) eating huge salads brimming with mushrooms and chunks of chicken.

What could be better, a great setting, good dancing, and friendly people. Truly a night to remember, a lovely ending to our visit to Bonn.

From Bonn we went to Berlin. But that is another story....

PSYCHOTHERAPY AND TANGO

By Doug Buck

Sometimes, seemingly very different activities can have much in common. Recently, after nine years of part-time study, I graduated from The Centre for Training in Psychotherapy. There were eight of us this year, and each graduate was asked to say a few words to attendees.

Along with my thank-you's, I offered some parallels between the art of psychotherapy and dancing the Argentinean tango. I thought club members might enjoy this different "take" on tango.

Each is a dance for two, with intentionality on both sides, the object being to work together to create



something new and beautiful. Both tango and psychotherapy require an awareness of self and the other, noticing small body gestures, and the developing of one's intuition. Both benefit from the observation of and reduction of tensions in order to move with as little effort as possible.

In both disciplines we can move forward, backward or sideways. Another similarity for me is that it's easy to get muddled, not to know what to do next. Also, beginning psychotherapists and tango dancers are liable to do too much, to try too hard. Awareness of the effort gets in the way of the dance.

And finally, because there are no rules about particular movements in either art form, both require time and patience to learn. Each psychotherapist and each tango dancer develops a style and a vocabulary that is uniquely his or her own.

TANGO SHOES, THE SEQUEL— for GUYS By Douglas Gilbertson

In the May 2003 issue of the newsletter, Michael Craig wrote about a survey he did on tango shoes for ladies. If you didn't read it, please do. It was good.

As I read it, a number of related points came to mind, which add some details, especially about shoes for men, which Michael did not cover.

Keep in mind that these are coming from an occasional small-time performer, having been doing some shows with Ruben and Sandra for three years. I am still far from perfect in my dancing, but have been in situations some others may not have encountered. I believe that any professional dancer would agree with what I say.

1. Soles



Michael mentioned Kay's claim that leather shoes are a requirement for tango. I agree. However, I might add a bit more resolution to this: Tango shoes, for most occasions, are best with

hard leather soles, something like unpolished street-sole leather. These are excellent for most normal floors, plywood stages, cobblestones, parking lot tarmac, carpet, and the like. They will even work on mowed and reasonably dried grass in the park. (Wet grass is dangerous – it is slippery and can rot your shoes.) Cobblestones are actually a surprisingly good

surface to dance on, with the right shoes. You will need to scuff the soles a bit, say by walking around the block in them, to get some roughness before using them.

Any hard soles are going to be very slippery on polished floors, especially on polished stone or concrete, but also on glossy-waxed ballroom floors. Or some laminate tile floors. (I know about these from experience.) For these floors, you will need the softer textured-leather ballroom soles, often called "cracked leather", "chrome" or "split leather" in the shoe catalogues. They resemble suede or naugahide and are the de-facto standard for ballroom shoes. They slip enough to let you turn, but also drag enough, because of the softness, to keep you from sliding around out of control. The downside of ballroom soles is that they can collect a lot of gunk on dirty or heavily-waxed floors, so they need to be scraped clean occasionally, using a wire brush or, in a pinch, a piece of coarse sandpaper or maybe a knife blade you don't mind re-sharpening afterward. They also grab without mercy and melt through like butter on a floor surface with any kind of roughness. And they give a wimpy, apologetically muffled thump sound when you try to stomp them for a good, sharp bang. So ballroom soles are not for every occasion. Such is the price of safety.

2. Heels:

Heels are another story. The norm for ballroom shoes made in Europe and North America is to have chrome leather for both the sole and the heel. When they make dance shoes with hard soles, the tendency is to also use the same hard leather for the heels.

In tango, the style of dance can vary from a graceful flow to a furious staccato, and sudden stops are quite common. It is also good to be able to plant yourself firmly for some things like lifts. So the Argentinean norm for men's tango shoes is to put thin rubber plates on the heels. Combination heels, being leather with partial inserts of rubber, are a good compromise. Women will also often have rubber pieces stuck onto their heel points, which are normally a hard plastic which tends to skid wildly.

Ballroom dancers see this feature as dangerous, since it can cause their feet to get stuck as they try to turn in a glide, which can lead to ankle or knee wrenching. Rubber can also leave big black streaks on meticulously cleaned ballroom floors if you skid the wrong way. These points are perfectly true. But then, in tango, you do your turning on the balls of your feet, so there should not be a problem if you know what you are doing. The trick is to make sure that the rubber is not thick and spongy enough to grab accidentally and allow your ankle to roll over.

Another characteristic of the heel is its style. Women know the near-infinite variety of heel styles available for them. But for the men, there are basically two styles: the standard, 1-inch heels like those you find on most dress shoes; and the Cuban and French heels, which are higher. For those not familiar with them, a Cuban heel is the sort you find on most western cowboy boots, normally 1-1/2 inches high but sometimes approaching 2 inches, tapering inward from the back. French heels are a slightly slimmer, more squarish version of the same thing, and are what you normally get on higher-heeled men's shoes made in Argentina. Standard heels offer the best lateral support, while French heels make you look lighter on your feet because of the larger air gap under the arches.

Finally, there is the choice of heel height. I actually had this suggested to me by my mother, and experience leads me to believe it. Higher heels can help with dancing posture. (Lord knows the help is good for me.) How? They do this by propping you forward, so you need to straighten your body upward a bit more than usual to keep your balance. The net effect is to both straighten your back and shoulders and force your balance forward onto the balls of your feet, which is precisely what we want for tango. The heels can be high enough to be scary, but so long as they are not outlandishly so, you will find yourself spending more of your time on the balls of your feet anyway, so the heels don't actually get much of the load and will in fact be off the ground much of the time. My shoes have 1-1/2 inch heels, and the difference between those and the old 1-inch shoes is amazing. For the ladies, higher heels also make it simpler for the men to get their toes under the woman's arch, which is something that we do for such things as bicycles and some lifts.

Just be careful not to have them too high, or your weight will be on your toe joints and you can get arthritis and other foot ailments by the ripe old age of 40. For men, anything 2 inches or over is generally too high because of their weight and how their bodies balance.

3. Shanks:



The issue of shanks is a big one. Shanks are extremely important. The people who made my tango shoes made them with the same shanks they usually put in motorcycle boots. Inadequate shanks can mean that a heel of any sort

of height can flop over and wrench your ankle, often causing serious injury. Even expensive, big-name dancing shoes can have flimsy shanks. Caveat emptor!



4. How many pairs do you need?

I have two pairs of shoes, one with hard soles and one with ballroom soles. If I am going to a new location, or for a show with Ruben, I will generally take both pairs and check the floor when I arrive. I can then use whichever shoes are best for that particular floor.

Other people, particularly the ladies, but also some men especially if they dance

professionally, probably end up with more pairs than that. They might need not only different soles, but also different heels. The men could have some 1-inch pairs and some with higher French or Cuban heels. The women may have some shoes with seriously lofty heels for shows, somewhat lower heels for regular dancing in the milongas, and some low or flat-soled shoes for practicing.

Someone who performs regularly may need to have duplicate shoes to use as spares in case a pair gets damaged and needs repairs. Particular dresses or period costumes for a variety of performance numbers may call for a selection of colours, styles and heel heights.

If you dance a lot, say every day or two, your shoes will also last much longer if you rotate them. No shoes should be worn all the time without a break, or they will rot. The leather must be allowed to "breathe".

So, how many pairs do you need? It depends. For some people, seven pairs of shoes would be a wasteful extravagance. For a serious dancer, especially a high-demand performer, seven pairs may not be enough.

5. The issue of sticky floor surfaces:

Sometimes a floor is a bit sticky, like at the studio where Ruben and Nelson hold their classes. A lot of people shuffle their shoes in talcum powder to compensate. Most of the people doing this seem to be wearing shoes with ballroom soles. If they were to use hard soles on that floor, they would not need as much talcum powder, and less of it would end up on people's clothes. Their shoes, and the floor, would probably last longer, as well.

6. Where to get shoes for men:

Michael's survey was geared toward women. What I say here will apply to the men. Tara Shoes now have three lines of shoes for men, all of which look good. Check their web site (www.taratangoshoes.com). If you search for "tango shoes" on the internet, you will find other dealers as well, although most of them carry almost exclusively women's shoes.

When I was looking for a new pair a couple of years ago, I spoke with Robin at Tara Shoes, and actually had an order in for her "Vega" shoes. This was her first men's offering, and the lasts for it were still being readied by their supplier in Uruguay. I finally had to cancel the order, partly because she wasn't sure if they would arrive before our performances started for that year, and partly because my feet are a bit odd (my toes are proportionally shorter than usual), and she couldn't tell me enough about the sizing for me to know whether they would actually fit. I have yet to find a mail-order supplier who can!



What I ended up doing was to print a copy of the "Vega" picture from her website (with Robin's permission), and take it down to Nick's, on Dupont around the corner from St. George. (See their website at www.nickscustomboots.com.) They made a beautiful set of shoes for me. The cost was comparable to that of getting shoes from Tara or from Argentina with the shipping included. And they could give me an actual delivery date.



When I first went to their store to get a price for dance shoes, the shoemaker asked, "What sort of dancing?" I said they were for tango. He said, "Oh. With hard soles?" I said yes. He then gave me a quote.

Having a shoemaker know exactly what you are talking about is very comforting. When I picked up the shoes three weeks later, he told me that, in order to get the right toe shape for the style I wanted (French toe with French wingtips and 1-1/2 inch Cuban heels), he had used a last that had been sitting around, ignored, since 1963.

Two years ago, the going rate for having men's shoes made to order was around \$250, which may or may not include taxes. It should not be much more today. For that price, what you get seems to vary, not so much in quality, but in detail. I tried Nick's, and am very pleased

with their work. For my ballroom shoes, I tried another fellow near my home who is the usual supplier of shoes to a local professional dancer. His shoes are good also, but more of a ballroom format with coarser stitching. Check around. There could be somebody right here in Toronto who can make shoes just the way you like them.

An alternative could be to actually wear regular street shoes. Men's dress shoes for street use are often fairly sturdy and rugged, which are good qualities for tango. If you go this route, make sure they have reasonably strong shanks (I have seen some with virtually no shanks at all!), leather soles, and either combination heels or rubber plates on leather heels. You don't want rubber heels that are too spongy, because of the danger of rolling an ankle. Stick to a nice, clean design which is fairly light in weight with small welts and reasonably thin soles, so it is easier to avoid kicking your partner's ankles and toes.

7. Honour and Respect for Your Shoes:

Your shoes are a vital part of your dancing kit. They are the only tools you actually have to help you in your dancing. Everything else comes down to skill, focus and inspiration. As such, your shoes deserve respect.

They also serve as your ambassadors to the world. They show the people around you how you see yourself and how you want to be seen. There is an old saying that you can tell a lot about a man by his shoes, and in spite of computers and other modern trinkets, it remains true. Your shoes are you. Show your pride in your shoes.

Select your shoes wisely and with flair. Keep them clean, polished and in good repair. Practice the craft of dancing with purpose so you can do justice to your choice of footwear. Take good care of your shoes, and your shoes will take good care of you.



Moonlight Ball – Hangin' out at Hart House

Tango Heartbeat

Volume 19, Fall 2003

ADVERTISING: Buy & Sell

For Sale By Club Milonga

Contact: Michael Craig - 416-533-3830
michael@focusproductions.net

Technics (Panasonic) amplifier/receiver \$100, or best higher offer SurroundSound, 100 watts per channel ideal 5-speaker setup for home theater 2-speaker setup for stereo

Purchased 2001 - cost \$288.

Tango Partner Please!

Looking for a lady tango partner who would like to develop the Buenos Aires milongas' close embrace style of tango to a high level of sophistication. **Contact:** Gustavo: www.elabrazo.ca, at tanguero@rogers.com or at 905-826-5520.

A Great Opportunity for the Tango Lovers!

Buy: Tango CD's - \$20/each; Videos - \$30/each; also, tapes, late Ian Winton's Famous Moonlight's Sunday Tango Teas - \$15/each; Shoes \$20/pair.

Contact: Myra Winton at 416 839-6972

Club Milonga Membership has its privileges!!

Before or after tango, be sure to drop in to the **Vive Restaurant and Cafe**

for a tasty snack or a meal and receive a 10% discount!!*.

It's right on the corner of Danforth and Bowden, steps from the Club entrance.

(*To be eligible for the discount, please show your card. Sorry, no discounts on alcoholic beverages)

Tango Heartbeat is published by Club Milonga

Editor: Nicolai Geilich

Design & layout: Michael Craig

Would You Like To Contribute Or Advertise?

Suggestions, contributions and ads for the next newsletter are welcome.



Club Information

Club Milonga meets every Tuesday at Danforth Baptist Church

(Corner of Bowden Ave. between Chester and Broadview subway stations)

Beginner lesson	7.30pm to 8.15pm
Intermediate lesson	8.15pm to 9.00pm
Dancing (practica)	9.00pm to 10.30pm

\$8. charge for non-members includes both lessons

Don't forget Strictly Tango!

Every Month, Second Friday
at Danforth Baptist Church
8:30 to 1:00 a.m.

\$10 price includes tasty snacks, prizes, a featured performance and loads of tango!

Dance til you drop, then drop into Cafe Angelitos!

For coffee, tea and conversation

Information please

Phone (416) 699-0875

Email the President, Jayne Patterson
president@tangotoronto.com

Keep up with Club Milonga and Toronto's vibrant tango scene – log on to

www.tangotoronto.com

Club Milonga's
Tango Heartbeat

