

A secret no more

Crimes and Whispers tells of Argentina's "Dirty Secret War"

They said so much without uttering a word. Their sadness, joy, anger, fear, and defiance expressed by way of raised eyebrows, grunts, smiles, puckered lips, tears, hugs, fist fights, pushing and shoving....

For three weekends, July 14–30 at the Jawaahir Dance Theater in Minneapolis, the cast of *Crimes and Whispers: a Tango of Despair and Defiance* brought the 1976–83 military dictatorship of Argentina to life. The dance and drama, born out of Twin Cities choreographer Gerry Girouard's interest in Argentine tango, tells of a time in a country's history when more than 9,000 people disappeared and 30,000 plus were tortured and killed. To this day, aging mothers and grandmothers march weekly by the president's palace as the "Mothers of Plaza de Mayo," carrying banners and chanting, "We will not be stopped. We will not be broken...."

Local Argentine tango teacher Florencia Taccetti performed and collaborated with Gerry on choreography, fusing modern dance and acrobatics with traditional tango. She also added valuable insight into that time, having lived through it as a teenager. Paul Herwig and Jennifer Ilse of Off-Leash Area theatre group were performers and collaborators as well.

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Photo by Marvin Rubin

First Heartland Tango Festival sizzles

If you're still dancing at 4:25 a.m.—after slipping on your dance shoes at noon earlier that day—then chances are you're having a very good time. The die-hard Argentine tango dancers were out way past bedtime on Saturday, Sept. 9, the second day of the Heartland Tango Festival and the first of two all-night milongas.

Yes, Argentine tango dancing hit an all-time high in the Twin Cities early this fall when 230 people attended the first-ever tango festival in downtown Minneapolis. Dancers came from all over Minnesota and across the United States—including Texas, New York, Colorado, Chicago, and Portland—as well as Canada, Mexico, and Korea, for

three days (Sept. 8–10) of classes, milongas, and practicas at the Millennium Hotel on Nicollet Mall. A host of non-dancers joined the mix, particularly on Saturday evening for the special dinner and tango show. (Two local men at my table had read about the event in the *Star Tribune* and decided it was a chance to learn about tango and the Argentine culture in preparation for their upcoming trip to Argentina. They left the event inspired and smiling.)

"We exhibited a strong united community that weekend," says Rebecca Abas, festival organizer and owner of Four Seasons Dance Studio. "I want to give my sincere thanks to the people who stepped up to make the festival run smoothly and

Festival, cont. on page 2

From the president

TSoM's goal is to promote Argentine tango in Minnesota. The board takes this goal very seriously.

We began the year with a magical evening at the Ordway, which included the show "Tangos" with Mandragora Tango Orchestra. We rolled out our new Web site, as phase one of our technology update. In September, we cosponsored our first-ever tango festival in the Twin Cities, which, by the way, was a huge success—it put us on the national map for Argentine tango. Our newsletter has an updated look, as you may have noticed. We held our milonga at Cinema Ballroom in July and August, and attendance jumped in those two months over last year.

Quite a year, huh? And guess what? It's not over yet.

There's still the TSoM December milonga, which will feature live music by Mandragora and a fund-raiser on Jan. 20, 2007, for Habitat for Humanity. We'll also be buying more equipment to improve the sound quality at our milongas and CDs to help in DJ training. Stay tuned for more!

In our next issue of *Tango Moments*, we will roll out our plan for the upcoming year with tentative goals for 2008.

TSoM will be 10 years old in 2008, so we'll want to celebrate! Any ideas for events and activities, let me know.
—Diane Hillbrant



Jaimes Friedgen and Cecilia Gonzales teaching a class. • Photo by Pauline Oo

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beautifully. The core group was Diane Hillbrant, Andrea Du Cane, Ranja Yusuf, Pauline Oo, and Sandra Uri. Then there were the helpers along the way and on the day of festival. You know who you all are, and you are all appreciated."

In addition to nightly dances with live and DJ music, the festival offered more than 30 hours of dance classes for beginners to advanced, teachers training and music classes. Festival participants were treated to an international line-up of instructors—Floencia Taccetti, Cecilia Gonzalez and Tomas Howlin of Buenos Aires, Argentina; Brigitta Winkler of Berlin; Alex Krebs from Portland, Oregon; and Jaimes Friedgen from Seattle—and nationally known Argentine tango DJs Dan Boccia from Anchorage, Alaska; Ramu Pyreddy from Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Robin Thomas from New York. Twin Cities tango orchestra Mandragora and a tango band from Portland, Oregon, Conjunto

Berretin, also had their share of fans. Both bands played on Saturday night and again on Sunday at Rossi's Blue Star in Minneapolis.

"[The Heartland Tango Festival had] good teachers, crowded classes, great milongas, fantastic staff, cheap price... I will come back," said Vance Rightmire, an Argentine tango teacher from Austin, TX. So would TSoM members Jean Ruona, who called her festival experience "pure pleasure," and Javier Zuniga who said, "it was the best three days of my life—an experience to look back on with a smile."

Class topics ran the gamut from body connection and balance to musicality and improvisation. Local instructors, like Lois Donnay, and local students volunteered as classroom attendants, making sure the classes began and ended on time without a hitch. The master teachers taught in pairs—Floencia and Alex, Brigitta and Tomas, Cecilia and Jaimes—and each of their classes drew between 30 and 50 people.

"In my 10 years of taking dance classes, ballroom and Argentine tango, the musicality class led by Alex Krebs, who was joined by a live five-piece band was the very best class I've ever taken," said TSoM member Dan Griggs. "Alex and the band broke down a piece of music in its different parts teaching how we could interpret or dance to its various parts, rhythm and melody. It was the coolest thing!"

Participants were generous with compliments, stopping volunteer



Tim Kramer gives festival organizer Rebecca Abas flowers. • Photo by Pauline Oo

staff to give feedback, and also completed the evaluation forms.

"The two most mentioned suggestions on the evaluation sheets were more space, either bigger floor or smaller classes, and rotating partners more often in the classes," says Rebecca. "I'm already considering remedies. Being the first festival, I had no way of knowing that we would have such a tremendous turn out. So, next time we will make sure these and some of the other good suggestions are addressed."

The second Heartland Tango Festival will be in May 2008. To ensure that tango lovers everywhere associate the month of May with a festival in Minneapolis, Rebecca and TSoM will cohost a festival-like event this coming May. TSoM, Federated Insurance and Wells Fargo cosponsored the inaugural event.

According to Rebecca's longtime friend and student, Bob Maddocks, who also served as festival business manager, "We achieved the objective we set out with, and that is to present something first class. The festival was an outstanding success. Attendance was impressive for a first-time festival." ■

Editor's note

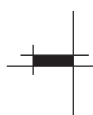
Tango is hot. Tango is cool. To capture that buzz, we're spicing up *Tango Moments!* As the new editor, I hope you enjoy the new look. With my volunteer staff (see list on back page), I plan to offer you more engaging content and better quality photos and ads. Each issue will be driven by a theme—in this one, the recent growth and popularity of tango in the Twin Cities. And, you'll always find a couple of feature stories and regular columns, like Miscellany (a.k.a community news) and Member Spotlight.

TSoM created a newsletter about eight years ago to keep Minnesota tango dancers informed about all things related to Argentine tango. We will certainly do our best to continue the tradition.

If you have story ideas or would like to help, e-mail me at tangomoments.org or call 612-624-7889. —Pauline Oo



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Heartland glitter and smiles

Three TSoM members offer insights on the special dinner and tango show on Saturday, Sept. 9, in which about 200 people feasted on a hearty meal, savored free-flowing Argentine wine, and danced the night away.

Florencia Taccetti: "I felt it was a very important night for our local community because they could see other very good dancers not only performing but also social dancing. Many of our best followers had the opportunity to interact with some of the good leaders who came to the festival and get good compliments from them, which always helps to lift the spirit and excitement for the dance."

Jim Dunn: "I enjoyed the night because people were dressed up, there were two live orchestras, and there was a nice variety of dancing styles among both the professionals and the amateurs."

Kim Kotila: "This was my eighth or ninth tango festival in the last year, and each one usually has a Saturday night event. This was by far the classiest. The flowers on the tables and the wine went a long way to making it a class act, and the food was excellent. The show was also top caliber. The dance floor was excellent—a good size. Believe it or not, that is not always the case. And I really want to acknowledge our guys for stepping up and asking different women to dance. They took chances on unknown out-of-towners." ■

Photos by Rodi, except top left photo by Pauline Oo





Photo by Sylvia Horwitz

Madres de la Plaza de Mayo

By Sylvia Horwitz

Since April 30, 1977, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo have held 1,500 "resistance marches" around the May Pyramid to demand justice and information about their missing children, "disappeared" between 1976 and 1983. During my last two visits to Buenos Aires, I have walked many Thursday afternoons with the *Madres*, spoken with leaders, including 92-year old Juana, treasurer and a spokesperson for the *Madres*, and photographed them at Plaza de Mayo. I will show this photography when I complete the work sometime next year, after the 30-year anniversary celebration at Plaza de Mayo. The exhibition of my photography will incorporate other media and performance relating to the mothers of the disappeared. And, of course, there will be a milonga. All suggestions for this endeavor are appreciated; e-mail shorwitz4@aol.com. ■

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Additionally, several TSoM members were invited to dance in an opening number and a later scene: Paul Cantrell, Michael Cordner, Andrea Du Cane, Lisa Erickson, Ellie Field, Doug Gregg, Dan Griggs, Ilya Grilikhes, Diane Hillbrant, Mark Jefferis, Eric Li, Kerri Norman, Pauline Oo, Steve Peters, Jason Saari, Sanae Storey, Sandra Uri, and Ranja Yusuf.

Simple props and metaphors complemented the multitude of facial expressions and body movements in the one-and-a-half hour show. For example, scarves doubled as cast-off clothes of the missing and "Death" was portrayed as a shutter-clicking tourist. Audience members also got a taste of this "living Greek tragedy," as Gerry called it, in several images, displayed in the theater's lobby by Twin Cities photographer and TSoM member Sylvia Horwitz (see article at right).

Crimes and Whispers offers a lesson in Argentine history. If you missed it, you're likely to get another

chance. Gerry is negotiating to re-stage it at the Southern Theatre this time next fall. Gerry won the 2006 Ivey Award for Outstanding Choreography for his efforts on *Crimes and Whispers*. (The awards, established in 2004, celebrate Twin Cities professional theater. Winners are chosen by hundreds of volunteer evaluators, theater representatives, and the general public.) ■



Some of the local tangueros who danced in *Crimes and Whispers*.

Miscellany

Share your news (new baby, wedding, death, etc.), tangomoments@hotmail.com.

From Michael and Suzanne Doyle:

"We would like to thank the entire tango community for all the thoughts, prayers, and support that our family received from you after our tragic loss of Katie. It's hard to express how much it meant to us during this time to read your cards, e-mail messages and to talk to so many of you at Katie's service and since then. Many of you have shared stories of loss and healing and your thoughts about the special woman Katie must have been. We can't thank you all enough—we are so glad that we joined this wonderful group of people. You've enriched our lives and helped us so much. Thanks for your embrace."

Bruce Abas, tango teacher and Four Seasons Dance Studio manager, re-

turned to his theatre roots Sept. 8–Oct. 1. He played the lead in *A View from the Bridge* by Arthur Miller at Mounds Theatre. Bruce gives a big thanks to all the tango dancers who saw the show.

Tango workshop with Hsueh-tze of Boston. Dec. 1–3, Four Seasons. All-levels class before the Fri. night milonga. Privates on Mon., Dec. 4. Organized by Andrea Du Cane.

Holiday tango fix—Since Christmas and New Year's Eves fall on Sundays, Mandragora won't play at the Loring. Catch them instead at Tap-

estry Folkdance Center (3748 S. Minnehaha), Fri., Dec. 29, \$9. For more information, e-mail info@mandragoratango.com.

Mandragora and TSoM will host a benefit for "Habitat for Humanity" Sat., Jan. 20, Mpls Eagles Aerie club (2507 E. 25th St.). Lesson at 8 p.m., followed by dancing to live and DJ music, demos, silent auction, and more 9 p.m.–12:30 a.m. \$20 suggested donation (no one will be turned away for lack of funds!) To volunteer or help plan, e-mail diane_hillbrant@yahoo.com. ■



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Lindsay Orr is a board member of the University of Minnesota Tango Club and the TSoM liaison for the club. She is one of a growing number of new faces in the Twin Cities tango scene.

What's new?

Music tips and advice on learn-
ing tango have recently been
added to the TSoM Web site.

Visit www.mntango.org.

Member spotlight

Name: Lindsay Orr

Profession: PhD student in
nutrition

How and when did you get into tango?

I was introduced to the American
tango in a ballroom class in col-
lege a few years ago and loved
it. After I began school at the
University of Minnesota, I hap-
pened upon some tango dancers
at the Manhattan Loft restaurant
who told me about TSoM and
the TSoM event calendar.

I started attending classes and
practicing regularly in March
of 2006 after I met my practice
partner, Craig.

How often do you dance?

Between two and seven nights
per week.

Describe an A-ha moment. (What you learned about tango or realized about it.)

Fun things can happen if I can
loosen up my legs!

Biggest challenge?

Getting over my height (I'm 5'12"
without heels, you know)...

What does tango mean to you? Describe it in 10 words or fewer.

Tango is my escape from flexing
my analytical brain all day...

Tango mantra?

Listen.