

Choosing to connect

By Mark Andersen

As I was barreling through the backroads one night on my way to a milonga with a dear friend of mine, she started to ask me some provocative tango questions. I had rapid responses for some and no answers for others.

And so, with Laila's permission, I'm sharing the first of her questions; my response follows.

"Why do you dance tango?"

Well, there are probably about 10 or 15 easy answers that come to mind, but I don't want to steal other people's thunder, so I'll focus on the most important one for me: tango allows me to meet and connect with great people.

I've made more friends through tango over the past two years than through anything else I've done...more than from work, soccer, skiing, tennis, salsa dancing, and travel combined. And I don't mean just acquaintances—I mean really awesome people.

It all starts with the close embrace, of course. I danced salsa for about seven years before moving over to tango. I love salsa, but almost all of the friends I made were through the performance team I was on—not from folks I met in salsa clubs. That's mainly because it's harder to get

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Photo by Alejandro Almanza; flickr.com/donocelotl.

"Even if you are dating somebody, he has to dance with different women and she has to dance with different men. This way you learn to dance."—Maria Nieves, tango legend

Friendships in the tango world

By Pauline Oo

I met Romeo in San Diego. Yes, seriously, that was his name. Romeo (I never did get his last name) came from the French-speaking side of Switzerland and was in California for a monthlong vacation. We started talking when I sat by him at a milonga on Dec. 30. Over the next four days, as the San Diego Tango Festival unfolded, we'd run into each other. Our usual greeting was a hug, then we'd either dance or sit and chat some more.

I haven't seen him since, but I know I will. Some day. A tango dancer visiting the Twin Cities once told me: "If you continue to dance, we'll see each other again."

In the past 12 months, I've visited six tango festivals and strapped on my Comme il Fauts in two other cities—that I was actually visiting for other reasons. At every place, I made at least three new tango friends and reconnected with at least three I had previously met.

My tango friends are scattered across North America, and one even lives in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. These are people I can tap for travel or tango advice. And with some, I'll always have a home to visit and spend a few nights in.

Oh, I also met Rommel in San Diego, not to be confused with Romeo. He lives in Phoenix, Arizona. ■

From the president

We wish to recognize the good work of our 2010 TSoM Nominations Committee led by Don Anderson—Thank You! We now have a fully staffed, highly qualified Board of Directors. This past year, the board focused its efforts around three basic elements referred to as “Gain, Grow, Retain.”

Retain—we re-engaged the TSoM membership. In 2009, with a new venue and incentives, we set participation records for April, May, and July. And today, we have achieved the highest level of membership in our 10-year history.

Grow—we added a new milonga in St. Paul known as 5th Saturday, TSoM Saint Paul, achieving the goal of creating a West and East metro club. Both TSoM venues, ERV Dance Studio of Hopkins and Downtowner Woodfire Grill of St. Paul, feature a quality experience for our members and guests to enjoy.

Gain—we launched a new incentive for friends to invite friends to a TSoM milonga. “Amigo invitó Amigo” features more than \$1,000 worth of Argentine tango lessons to be given away, with the crescendo on July 10 at the TSoM milonga. You can get your book of “Free Pass” cards at your next TSoM milonga.

Our focus in 2010? Accelerate gain, grow, and retain!

—Dan Griggs
dcgriggs55410@yahoo.com



Photo by Betsy Henderson.

Valentine dance brings couple together

By Janeen Whitchurch

On the cold wintery Valentine's Day in 2006, I limped my way into Frank Stone Gallery in north Minneapolis for Sylvia Horwitz's tango photography show and Lonely Hearts Milonga. I had not been dancing much of anything for about three years, and I missed the smiles and hugs of my tango friends.

As I enjoyed the warm conversations and Sylvia's engaging art, I was introduced to a new tango dancer named Paul Lohman, who I had not met before (I thought!). He asked me to dance and I mumbled something about not being able to dance.

But soon we were moving around the gallery dance floor—talking more than really dancing.

U of M music major? Chamber Singers? What year? In a dream-like

conversation, our separate universes overlapped and we discovered many amazing connections. We had been in the same small choral group and actually sang in an opera chorus! All of this adds up to hundreds of hours in the same rehearsal room in close proximity when we were both at the University of Minnesota!

Of course this was years ago, and oceans of life have passed between us since then. Now it's hard to believe this Valentine's Day will be the four-year anniversary of that first tango.

We find ourselves exploring a new ocean of life together, enjoying the delights of tango, travels, and the richness of wonderful friendships along the way. ■

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to know someone in a salsa club—it's louder, the norm is to dance one song with a woman and then rotate, and when you're dancing it's usually in an open embrace.

But in tango I find it easier to meet people because it's not too loud, the norm is to dance four songs in a tanda, and I usually dance in a close embrace. And then between songs we get to talk some, which makes the whole tango scene very social.

I've met some great guys, too, in classes and milongas. I can't even guess how many have helped me with technique, which is so helpful—especially since I haven't even been dancing for two years yet.

So, it's for these reasons—getting to meet and connect with so many wonderful people—that I dance tango. ■

Editor's note: Mark Andersen is a tango dancer in the San Francisco Bay Area. He posted this blog entry August 6, 2008.

According to the masses...

In July 2009, Clay Nelson and Beth Anne Osborn of Portland, Oregon, conducted a survey to find out why many people start Argentine tango, but only a few stay with it and remain passionate and committed.

The survey attracted 380 respondents. Among the questions were, "What originally prompted you to begin learning tango?" The top response: "Friend(s) suggested I try it."

In another survey, on tango and relationships, Nelson (organizer of the Portland tango festivals in February and October) asks: "As you get to know a tango dancer, rate the following on how important they are for you to become romantically attracted to them."

The top two "extremely important" responses from 406 people were: "How personable they are" and "How they smell."

How well someone danced was only "somewhat important." And how much money they had was "not important" to most people. (But eight did rank someone's wealth "extremely important" to them.)

When asked "is tango the ultimate goal [for you] or is having a relationship the ultimate goal and tango is only a means to that end?" Nearly 70 percent of the respondents picked: "No, tango is the ultimate goal." In the comment section, some people added the following: "I like tango for itself, but it's also part of a search pattern" and "a relationship would be a bonus."

Learn more about the surveys at claysdancestudio.com/surveys.shtml. ■

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R.I.P. Tete (1936–2010)

If you've spent any time in Buenos Aires, you would have seen him. Pedro "Tete" Rusconi had white hair and an ample belly, and he could dance circles—literally—around those much younger than him. He was one of the last milongueros of the great Golden

Age of tango. It's been said the genius of Tete was that he used so few steps; that his dance was located somewhere else.

Tete, who started dancing at 14 and who visited Minneapolis twice for workshops, died on January 7—two

days shy of his 74th birthday. Very soon after his death, the tango world lost another milonguero: Osvaldo Zotto. He was 46.

To honor them, *Tango Moments* is republishing a letter by Tete to all Argentine tango dancers. ■

Open Letter from Tete to Tango Dancers Around the World Buenos Aires, December 11, 1998

On the National Day of Tango December 11, I would like to address myself with all due respect and affection to those around the world who have in some way or other learned to love tango as much as we do. I would like you to dance better, for your own satisfaction but within the music that is so passionate.

The tango is a feeling. It is not difficult to learn. Nor is it easy. But it is not danced by figures and steps. It is danced to the music. I know of no dancer anywhere in the world who dances without music. You cannot be mistaken for so long. Dancing without music, you will never learn tango.

You choose your teachers and invite those from whom you want to learn. You deal with the issues of tango from another point of view, and I'm going to tell you why. Because tango is and always will be music and learning how to walk it, to listen to it, to feel it—because it becomes a part of you that you cannot detach. After that, each person, each dancer learns his or her own style. Men and women.

Enough of lies. Don't buy repetitive forms. If you want to buy tango, buy tango.

Why don't you enjoy the milongas of Buenos Aires much? Because the milongueros and milongueras really dance. They were the ones who taught the current generation how to dance.

However, the path you are on seems to be another, one with a different tango, a tango in disguise. For the sake of tango, and for the sake of all of us and with my heart in my hand I say to you: Dance the music. Because the music is the tango.

I take my leave of you with much love.

Dance well, have a good journey,

My companion and I,

Tete and Silvia



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A tango friend...

On January 4, *Tango Moments* conducted an informal survey via TSoM-Announce to find out how dancers would complete this sentence: "A tango friend..." Here are some responses.

- A tango friend does not step on my toes.
- A tango friend takes dance classes with me.
- A tango friend knows when to dance and when to talk.
- A tango friend likes me just the way I am—the good, the bad, the beautiful and the ugly!
- A tango friend is YOU—someone to make me smile.
- A tango friend is willing to share the cost of a hotel room and rental car.
- A tango friend is a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on when I'm struggling to learn something new.
- A tango friend is one who genuinely hugs and kisses me and tells me he/she missed me.
- A tango friend doesn't care how badly I dance and will dance with me anyway.
- A tango friend...is a tango friend...is a tango friend...is a tango friend! What more needs to be said?
- A tango friend is someone who, at least, has the courtesy to say "Hello, how are you?" at a milonga even though he/she may not dance with you. ■

A tango friend
(I don't think you were
ever just a 'friend,' darling)
can become a tango
partner for life...
and even relocate here!

TM asks: Have a friend, partner, or lover you made in tango?

David and I met when he wandered in to Babalu's during tango night. He saw me on the dance floor and asked someone nearby who I was. She answered, "Oh, that's just one of the teachers." As he likes to put it (and I never contradict) he fell in love instantly.

A tango friend
gives me a com
feel at one wi
dancing move
enjoyment, wi
shut out excep
inner action w

A
tango
friendship
transcends time.

Defining a “tango friend”

By Florencia Taccetti

A tango female friend, if you find one, is very precious, but there are very few who can be real friends and that you can trust.

A tango male friend in Buenos Aires, if you find one that you like a lot, is probably the one you are having an affair with.

A tango friendly “friend” is everybody at the milongas in Minnesota and, in general, all over the world.

A tango male friend in the U.S. is just a friendly “friend;” they don’t want to get too involved as the tango connection will naturally bring people together. And if they do, they try to ignore it. Of course, there are exceptions; I guess this is because of liability or because they don’t know how to deal with the situation.

An old milonguero friend from BsAs can be your father or your bodyguard, the most loyal friends.

An old milonguera friend from BsAs is the one that you have to be careful with, because when you turn around you may get stabbed in the back.

Everybody can be a good tango friend on the surface, but when you go deep inside you have to deal with emotions that are not too easy to deal with—but it’s right there where the real tango starts. ■

To love and lose

Anonymous

Having fallen in love twice with partners I met at TSoM milongas, I applaud the *Tango Moments* sentiment for Valentine’s Day on tango friendships.

It is truly a happy time to be in love with a tango partner. I am happy to see so many romantic partnerships in TSoM, which have survived years of dancing. But sadly, I also believe in the expression that tango keeps you single.

Jealousy or selfishness can come to play eventually, and the endings between tango couples can be hell. At worst, it spells the end of tango for one or both persons. I have quit tango for about a year after each tango relationship because of this.

In the first case, my former partner, quit too, and in the second case, the person is now enjoying a new lover/partner in the tango community. It is difficult to see them together each time I dance.

Romance quickly turns to drama unless I either ignore them completely or develop a sour grapes attitude, both of which are not positions I really want to take. ■

...d is someone who
...nnection where we
...th each other and our
...s to a higher level of
...th the surroundings
...ot the music and the
...with my partner.

Love at first embrace—it does take two to tango

By Charlie Brown

I was a tango novice attending a workshop with the sole goal of picking up any tango skill—when I met her.

In the typical rotation of partners, I stood before a stranger exchanging names and presenting our tango resumes. We had both been at it off and on for less than a year. When I inquired why in tango's perpetual beginner's circles I had never laid eyes on her, she replied that she drove four hours down to

the Cities on weekends when she wasn't working to attend milongas.

Having had only the courage to go to two milongas and hiding out in beginner's classes—punctuated with 10- to 15-minute drives—I thought she was crazy. I liked that.

The music starting was our cue to embrace. Though not giving the close embrace a thought, somehow, I was carried into tango heaven within a few walking steps. Later, in the workshop, in uncharacteristic

fashion, I dragged this poor follower to an instructor and blurted out, "I found my perfect tango partner."

Three days later, still giddy, I spotted a former junior high classmate near St. Anthony Falls and rushed over to share my experience. She was an experienced tango dancer who could empathize.

The words "I had my first tango moment" shot out of my lips. She gave me a big smile. She was happy for me and seemed to understand.

But, inside my whirlwind of delight, this perpetual beginner found that the formula behind that tango moment was love at first embrace.

Now, after less than two years of tango, the roads to milongas are traveled by two whose harmonies quench the fires of burning feet no matter the lead or follow. ■

Editor's note: Charlie and Jennifer were married on January 16, 2010.

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Feliz Dia Del Amigos

by Jenney Surelia

I was thinking about the friends I have in tango. The people who I have fun with, those who I met randomly and found we had common ground, those who made the effort to welcome me to their city, their milonga.

I love that I can go to a milonga and see friends, spend time talking and dancing with them. That it's not about collecting the number of dances to feed the fix, but enjoying the company, the music, the tango.

In the milonga, every day is *Dia del Amigos*. ■

Editor's note: Jenney Surelia is a tango teacher and dancer from London. She posted this blog 20 July 2009; tasteoftango.co.uk.

TOE TO TOE

By John MacFarlane

I went to tango class to learn the Argentine tango, but I came away with a few words of Spanish. I went to learn a dance and discovered that there is no end to it. I was confused and I was helped.

I traveled a few miles from home and found a reason to pack up and travel to a place I had never been before. I went to class alone and discovered a congenial place to be. I came away with modest abilities but which are now my entrée to many places around the world.

I graduated from a Cub shoe bag to one from Byerly's. People turn and stare when I practice my tango walk at Target. I stand on one foot a lot.

I went to a milonga on Saturday night, and on Monday morning I appeared exotic to my colleagues. I was pleased with myself and smiled enigmatically, confounding those who know me. Neighbors who used to comment on the sad state of my lawn now wonder just what I am up to.

I try to explain myself, but I just don't care anymore. I find it harder to be lonely as I see the same people several times a week.

I went to learn Argentine tango and met a bunch of interesting characters. And now they are my friends.

Someone said that tango changes you. Thank goodness.

I needed that. ■

You know you're a tango-junkie when...

Anonymous via e-mail

- You realize the milonga is where you see all your friends.
- You walk into new buildings and notice potential dance space to tango.
- You've remodeled your house mainly to maximize dance space.
- You go through withdrawal without at least one tango-high per week.
- You keep a pair of dance shoes in your car.
- You cross state lines to tango.
- You listen to tango music when not at a practica or milonga.
- You plan the rest of your social life so it doesn't conflict with tango nights.
- Ocho is more than a number.
- You have to work hard to maintain non-tango friendships (if you have any left).
- Your shopping cart often substitutes as your dance partner.
- Your computer passwords are always phrases related to tango.
- You've seen "The Tango Lesson" 14 times.
- Your ear has been trained to recognize the tango possibilities in all forms of music.
- You practice embellishments in public instead of just standing still.
- You have become nocturnal.
- You've gone to Buenos Aires more than once.
- You have developed a healthy fear of foot injuries.
- You dance tango in your mind.
- You have to dance. You have to dance. You have to dance.
- You always have breath mints.
- You have sworn to quit but are back at the next milonga.
- You sandwich feet far more often than you shake hands. ■

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Help for tango trance victims

By Elizabeth Brinton

For some reason, maybe the change in the season, tango bloggers are talking a lot about the “tango trance” these days. The bliss, that waking up at the end of a song and truly not knowing where you are. This gets to be a part of the tango, it happens or not, and we all seek it. We are all upset by it at some point, but we still seek it.

Being a better dancer helps, but people with tango hearts are a class in themselves, a layer of the parfait, a secret society, people who get it. Some of them are “advanced,” some are students, some haven’t even started dancing yet. Words can’t describe it.

As a woman, as your confidant, as a dancer, I have to say this:

DO NOT: Mistake tango trance for love, for a relationship beyond the floor, and do not quit your job, bail on your career, move away, leave your family, sell your house, change your party affiliation, or commit any crimes, in the pursuit of this bliss. (People who have fallen in love and moved away for that reason, you are exempt here). If you decide you just have to move to Buenos Aires, get some good advice from those who have.

Do not act like you are in high school, unless you are. The bliss is there for you, just trust it.

DO: Dance a lot, dance with everyone who is not a jackass, make some real friends in tango, travel if you can. Buy some smokin’ hot shoes, change up the wardrobe and

get a new hair cut. Tango is going to give you a lot of clues about who you really are and what your personal style really is. Don’t fight it.

Have your tango friends and a few strangers over to your house and dance, grill some *chorizos* and some steak, make some *chimichurri*, buy Malbec and champagne by the case, and tell stories and read your poems and buy each others paintings, books, and support each others business.

Integrate the bliss. Get drunk together, stay up way too late, and do not act your age. If you are a person who keeps a clean house, get over it. No one cares when the lights are dim.

Tango trance, cont. on page 11



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Why take chances?

Michael J. McGuire, Aflac, 651.330.8035

Tango trance, cont. from page 10

You want to take care of yourself, because the hours and the physical demands are pretty rigorous.

Keep your relationships clean and honest and remember who is going to be there for you in the long run. Learn Spanish. Definitely go to Argentina soon and often.

Not excited that this is the first day of fall? Not to worry, it is the first day of spring there. But please come home again. Bring it back here. Make it happen here. Please bring a kilo of *mate* and a gourd, and maybe your new Argentine friends. Start a milonga, and most of all, dance like you mean it.

Those are my ideas, maybe you have some more. ■

Editor's note: Elizabeth Brinton is an artist and tango dancer in Kirkland, WA. She wrote this blog entry September 22, 2008.

As long as I'm holding you so tight

By Molly Johanna Culligan

He: As long as I'm holding you so tight,
we might as well dance

We're now
tango filling you
you filling me

He: It's like making love

She: You're telling me?

She: You make it happen

He: No, my dear, you make it happen

There's only you and I
as long as you're holding me so tight
we might as well dance ■



Photo by Marianna Anderle

When I dance the waltz,
I feel like I'm flying. I dream
that I dance on the clouds...
and the planes stop to
look at me."—Tete, in the
documentary "A volar señores:
Un Vals Para Tete"

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TSoM in Saint Paul

Member spotlight

Name: Pierre-Gilles Henry

Profession: Researcher and neuroscientist

How did you get into tango?

It was about two years ago. I was already dancing salsa and swing, and I first heard about tango through my brother. I didn't think much of it. Then I took my first class and knew right away it would become a lifelong affair.

How often do you dance?

Several times a week, with a mix of classes, practicas, and milongas.

Describe an a-ha moment.

In Buenos Aires, I invited a woman I didn't know to dance. Within seconds, the whole world disappeared and we were completely

connected in the moment, being one with each other and with the music. This is the mystery of tango. Being with a complete stranger and feeling you have known her forever. Since then, I have had this experience a couple of times both in BA and in Minneapolis. It's pure magic!

Biggest challenge?

One challenge for me is the music. I wear hearing aids and I hear the music differently than other people. This has made me curious about how we, in fact, all hear the music differently. Ah, and did I mention my other challenge: being patient with myself?

Tango mantra?

Be in the moment, relax, and have fun!