

## Tango in the heart of the land

*By Pauline Oo*

So, what makes a good tango festival? In my opinion: dancers who are friendly and can dance at my level or better, great music, and teachers who know their stuff and, more importantly, know how to share the information in fun, nice, and creative ways. These elements, and more, are what you'll find at the third Heartland Tango Festival August 20–22, 2010, at The Woman's Club of Minneapolis.

If you haven't checked out the details—schedule, prices, green commitment, etc.—there's no better time than today to do so: [www.heartlandtangofestival.com](http://www.heartlandtangofestival.com). Early-bird specials will end on August 6.

Like past Heartland festivals, this year's promises first-class tango instruction, a delicious dinner and exciting dance show, and plenty of chances to meet experienced dancers and make new tango friends from another city.

"We're upping the notch this year with some new elements," says Rebecca Abas, owner of Four Seasons Dance Studio and producer of the 2006 and 2008 Heartland Tango Festivals. "For example, we're opening our one-hour Saturday show with a fun

*Heartland Fest, cont. on page 8*

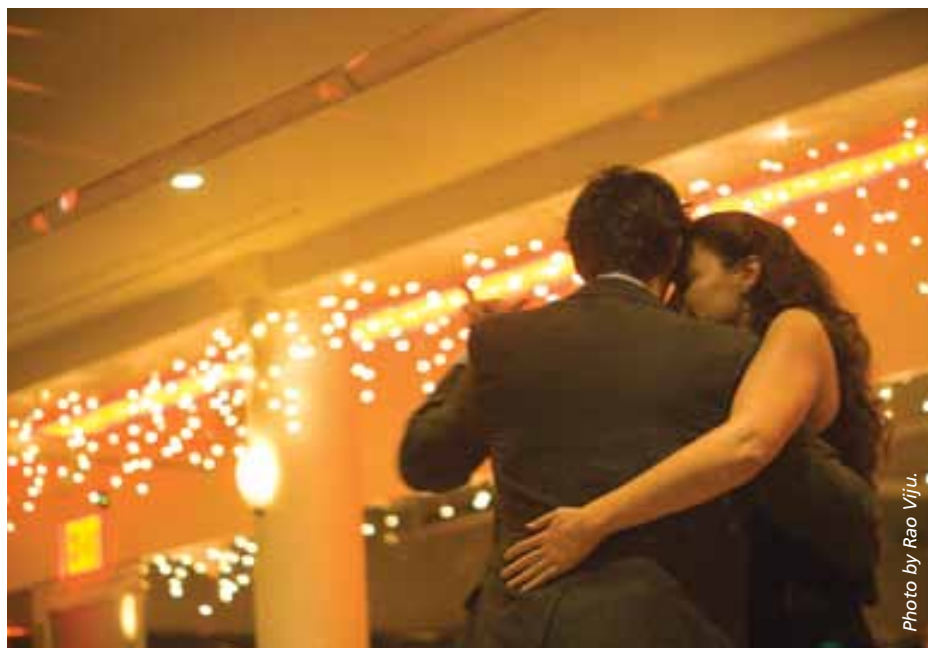


Photo by Rao Viju.

*"Movement never lies. It is a barometer telling the state of the soul's weather to all who can read it."—Martha Graham, dancer and choreographer*

## Wisdom of food & tango

*By Yuko Taniguchi*

Welcome to my kitchen! You already noticed the tango music in the background, but your nose is wondering about the sharp earthy scent from the pile of chopped onions and garlic. They are fresh, pulled out of the dirt by Mrs. Wu this morning. Her onions are the most piquant of all the onions sold at the farmers market. Mr. Wu jokingly said his wife's vegetables contain her opinions and soul. Perhaps this is why cutting Mrs. Wu's onions makes me cry more than other onions do. Throwing the onions and garlic onto the hot skillet with sesame oil, the aroma intensifies in the air. These vegetables provide the foundation. They will compli-

ment the shrimp that I am about to add. They establish the solid floor for those shrimp to dance on and slowly transform into vivid white and pink colors: a mini milonga in my skillet. But I must stop the heat before the onions are cooked away, before the sweet juice with enticing flavor disappears.

Both dancing and cooking entail a process. Once a month, delicious conversations about such a process occur among tango dancers at Son-te's tapas restaurant in downtown Rochester. The Tango Society of Rochester organizes a group dinner at Son-te's before the milonga.

*Wisdom, cont. on page 11*

## From the president

Community outreach is an essential part of our “Gain, Grow, Retain” focus. Illuminating the way is a national survey of 380 tango enthusiasts by Clay Nelson and Beth Anne Osborn of Portland, OR, that offered real nuggets of gold—findings that support what we do. For example, one of their survey questions: “What originally prompted you to begin learning Argentine tango?” The top response: “Friend(s) suggested I try it.”

Eureka! We successfully launched our “Amigo invitó Amigo” community outreach incentive earlier this year. By the July 10 TSoM Hopkins crescendo, you will have welcomed nearly 100 of your friends to a TSoM milonga.

The second highest response to the survey question was “I saw a demonstration of Argentine tango.”

Inspiration! We also launched our “Ambassador” outreach program—at Star of The North, MN Star Ball, and the Twin Cities Open. TSoM members will have performed Argentine tango before some 700 dance enthusiasts at these three events alone.

What’s the objective of our outreach incentives or programs? Simply, an invitation to your friends to come hear more, see more, learn more, and do more Argentine tango here in the Twin Cities.

—Dan Griggs  
dcgriggs55410@yahoo.com

## Minneapolis—a city of tango

By Peter Truran

This magnificent bronze sculpture of two dancers can be found in downtown Minneapolis. The monumental figures—nearly nine feet tall—were made by Fernando Botero, a Colombian known throughout the world as one of the greatest living artists of the 20th century. His sculptures and paintings are housed in museums around the world, as well as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Botero specializes in depictions of proportionally exaggerated or “fat” people both in his paintings and his sculpture. It turns out that CSM Corporation presented this sculpture, titled “The Dancers,” to

the City of Minneapolis in 2003.

Despite its name, and the fact that the figures are totally nude, these two are clearly—in their attitudes and embrace—dancing the Argentine tango!

I find it astonishing that such a fine example of his work is tucked away on an anonymous corner outside Harry’s Bar (on Washington Avenue and Fifth Street). It seems a shame that this joyous and humorous celebration of dance is not located more prominently in the city. A relocation outside Orchestra Hall or the Guthrie, or even in one of the city’s recreational parks would be much more appropriate.

Perhaps a campaign is in order! ■



## Tango enigmas visited

Preparing yourself for challenges in your tango life as you know it

By Niko Salgado

Many of you reach a point in your dancing growth that sometimes may potentially hinder you from dancing that extra tanda at the milonga, attending a milonga after a long set of workshops, or lasting the last couple hours of a tango festival. I have encountered the following myself and have information to share.

**“My feet have reached its limit, it hurts too much to keep dancing” or “My feet are done for the night”**

Your feet have muscles too, and the more you use your feet, the more attention you need to give to strengthening them. Your feet don’t get stronger just because you dance tango more hours in a day or week. In order to strengthen those muscles, pick up items with your feet—like coins, keys, clothes, and other things. (I could show you how!) Also, roll your feet on a small ball, marbles, or a tennis ball. You will get a good massage and stimulate the muscles, especially in your arch and close to your heel. If you do this regularly, your feet will get stronger.

**“I’m too tired” or “I’m sleepy”**

Some people know me notoriously for the little sleep I get daily. I don’t have to explain how that works, but what’s important is recognizing when your body needs to rest. Before heading out to a milonga, allow yourself to take a short nap and eat a small meal. When you’re at the milonga and need a pick-me-up, head to the refreshment table. The treats typically available at a milonga can offer a quick energy boost. (For some people, wine does the trick.) Or bring your own favorite snack.

If you don’t exercise outside of tango, you really should. Having a regular workout routine can build your endurance so you don’t get tired too fast at a milonga. Also, remember: You don’t need to have that dynamic tango dance, with tons of boleos and ganchos, every single time you dance. Enjoy some smaller, quiet internal tango dances once in a while.

**“I’m not feeling it tonight” or “I’m out of it”**

This usually comes with having a day that didn’t agree with you (or vice-versa). Typical reasons include a rough day at work, gloomy weather, personal stress or crisis and feeling sick. If you bring any of these reasons with you to classes, practicas, and milongas, you will likely experience being “out of it.” You can no longer call tango an escape from reality—for those of you who do—once you bring your “bad day” into the tango world, and you can do this simply by mentioning that you had a bad day or by going on and on about it.

So, when someone asks why you are feeling out of it, make an effort to go outside to talk about it or suggest that you get together to talk at a different time and place. If you don’t, you could ruin the tango time or evening for others in the space.

**“He never asks me to dance” or “She doesn’t seem to like (dancing with) me”**

All tango dancers have a list of people they would like to dance with. Similarly, they also have a list of people they definitely don’t

*Tango enigmas, cont. on page 4*

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*Tango enigmas, cont. from page 3*

want to dance with. Sometimes, no matter how good you are, you just don't dance well with some people. Other times, certain people just don't dance the way you dance. When you're at a milonga, you need to balance your guaranteed good dances with the ones that are not so good. Every three to five tandas, make sure you dance with at least one person you enjoy dancing with—even if you have to dance with the same person each time. Don't pile all the good ones up at once.

**"OUCH, that really hurts. Take it easy."**

Tango is a very sensitive dance to those very serious about it. There are tango dancers out there who need special attention—due to back pain or a recent hip replacement for instance. Be kind and understanding. Don't force them to do something they physically can't. These people really are trying to make the best of their problem, without getting further injured.

Regardless of a physical challenge, one bad dance (or a tanda's worth) could mess up your evening dramatically. The aggressive leaders and anticipating followers (I call them dancers with an agenda) and the opposite extreme, the hesitant leaders and collapsed/heavy connection followers (dancers with an unclear agenda), could also really hurt you. You should not dance with someone who you know has the potential to hurt you, especially if you cannot handle it.

If you find yourself dancing with someone you weren't sure could hurt you—but you discover he or she could after the first 20–30 seconds—either tell them they're

*Tango enigmas, cont. on page 10*

## Rules of the road

### Navigating the tango dance floor

Have you ever thought that dancing tango is a bit like maneuvering car? There are quite a number of similarities, and just as when we drive our cars, there are some "rules of the road" that apply.

**Collisions:** Obviously these are to be avoided, but just as with our cars there are reasons that collisions happen on the dance floor.

**Tailgating:** If we dance too close to the couple in front of us a number of bad things can happen. Sometimes our follower interprets a "lead" larger than intended. Sometimes a follower adds an embellishment—a leg swinging out or up. Sometimes the leader in front of us leads a *molinete*, and CRASH!

**Driving slower than the minimum speed.** On the freeway you can get a ticket for driving too slowly because traffic can back up behind you. A leader must be aware not only of the couple ahead, but also of the couples behind. We're dancing with the whole room after all.

**Changing lanes:** Yes, there are "lanes" on the dance floor, and staying in your lane is important. On the freeway, we expect cars to behave in a certain way; the same goes for tango. The other couples are counting on us. So, stay in your lane unless it's very clear you can move one over without incident.

**Passing:** While permissible (with caution) in our cars, you should really avoid this on the dance floor. Unlike cars, we don't have turn signals, and passing requires us to change lanes (see above). You can unknowingly move into another leader's blind spot... and CRASH!

**Passing on the right:** Bad on the freeway; bad on the dance floor. Often a leader's view to the right is blocked by the follower's head.

**Driving in the median:** Not possible with cars, but possible in tango. The center of the room is always chaotic, so dance there at your own risk and with full awareness of the couples who are dancing in the outside lanes. Otherwise... CRASH!

**Entering the freeway—yield:** An important concept for leaders and followers. We wouldn't think of entering a freeway without looking, nor would we try to force our car into moving traffic. Sometimes a leader sees an opening to do a larger move (he's been waiting all night for it), but just as he leads it, a couple jumps onto the floor. CRASH! Watch the really good leaders, they make eye contact (a nod or wink) with the other leaders before entering the dance floor. Space then magically appears for the new couple to enter safely.

**Existing conditions—driving in NYC or Montana:** Sometimes there is oodles of space on the dance floor; that's like driving in Montana. You get to try out all that neat stuff you learned from YouTube. More often though, it's like driving in New York City. Traffic seems to be at a standstill and everyone is really close. When it's congested, keep your feet on the floor. This isn't the time for grand embellishments. Followers must be aware of the surroundings and dance for existing conditions as much as their leaders.

So, catch an eye and don't tailgate. Follow these rules of the road, and everyone will have fun.

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## On eating, sleeping, and more...

In May, *Tango Moments* asked TSoM members via TSoM-Announce to send in their thoughts about eating and caring for their tango bodies. Here were some responses:

What do Argentine tango dancers do when they're not dancing tango?

- I do yoga.
- I dance everything else, travel, read, work out and watch TV or movies.
- I work. I enjoy my work as much as I enjoy tango—not more or not less, just differently.
- I just eat and sleep.
- I'm a peace and justice activist. I also write, perform, swim, read. And I coach speech, monologues, presentations, dance, etiquette, singing.
- I work at a desk most of the time—answering questions and asking questions about what someone likes or dislikes about a particular product that is being developed for dentists to use on their patients.
- I walk my dogs.

"I take a lot of supplements, including glucosamine, which I am absolutely sure keeps my joints supple. After taking it for a year or so and having good results, I stopped taking it for about a month and my joints got stiff, nearly arthritic. Also, yoga really helps my body, as does Alexander Technique posture. And, of course, there is always sticking the feet in a bucket of ice."

"Odwalla B Monster blueberry fruit smoothie helps."

"Before I go to a milonga, I'm usually already fed, showered, teeth brushed and, *hopefully*, dressed appropriately for the event."

"My favorite place to eat is *anywhere* with tapas—that could be a theme, tapas and tango!"

"I find that a Gatorade, or similar drink with electrolytes, and just water or tea sits well in the stomach for dancing."

After a class or milonga...

- I'll devour one fried egg, turkey bacon, and dark toast and honey. Because by then I need it!
- I'll snack on cookies with ice cream, because I have the munchies.
- I'll eat a banana or some almonds and raisins with yogurt.
- I'll snack on nothing because it makes it more difficult for me to fall asleep.

"Oranges, lemons, limes (vitamin C) are good for the connective tissues and will decrease some of the soreness you get in your feet and muscles."

Photo by Pauline Oo.



*Heartland Fest, cont. from page 1*

crime caper film by former Twin Cities tango dancer Bill Brown, who's now based in Portland. We're striving to be green by paying more attention to tapping local and using recyclables whenever we can."

Abas is coproducing the 2010 Heartland festival with tango instructor Sabine Ibes. Several other TSoM members are playing big roles in planning, promoting, and helping the festival run smoothly.

The six master teachers are Cecilia González (Buenos Aires), Evan Griffiths (Oregon/New York), Florencia Taccetti (Buenos Aires/Minneapolis), Somer Surgit (Turkey/Chicago), Tova and Carlos Moreno (Boston). Among the 11 guest instructors are Mitra Martin and Stefan Fabry (Los Angeles), Alejandro "Lucho" Lucero (Buenos Aires),

and Nina Tatarowicz (Milwaukee).

In addition to the 22 tango classes, the festival is offering six "alternative" classes. These include pilates-based strengthening, shiatsu, and contact improvisation. There will also be late-night milongas for the night owls and many inspiring performances by the master teachers.

"This is a festival for everyone," says Abas. "You can come with zero background in tango or dance, or years of tango under your belt."

Three visiting DJs—Andrew Dugas (Eugene/Houston), Jason Laughlin (North Carolina), and Lung-Kuei Lin (Taipei/New York)—will spin the tunes with local favorites: Dave Rost, Michael Cordner, Christopher Everett, and Paul Lohman.

Like to shop? Vendors will be selling tango shoes, jewelry, and tango-inspired art and clothing. ■



## HEARTLAND TANGO FESTIVAL

August 20–22, 2010  
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[heartlandtangofestival.com](http://heartlandtangofestival.com)

## Connection

by Sylvia Horwitz

The last time I was at an afternoon milonga in Buenos Aires, I made eye contact with an old man across the dance floor. It was already very crowded. I smiled; he tipped his head. I nodded once as a signal, part of the protocol, indicating that I wanted to dance the next tanda—a set of 3–4 dances. He walked towards me and I could see that he was short and frail and looked as if he had a slight limp. He came to the table where I was seated and I stood up, facing him.

We waited for the music to start and after a few measures he began the embrace, a firm hand with closed fingers bracing my back. He pulled me in until we connected in the mid-torso region of our bodies. With his left hand raising slowly, he invited my right hand and lifted it to shoulder level, our elbows slightly bent. My left arm reached around the back of his neck to rest on his left shoulder. I was aware of his breathing, as he gently rocked me, shifting my weight from one foot to the other in readiness. I could sense his intention, and then we began to dance as if on a track—moving counterclockwise on the floor.

The room full of people disappeared and my concentration rested on the connection with this old *milonguero*. He was steady and accomplished. There was no hesitation, no indication of shaky balance on his part. He was in complete control, and I felt secure and protected in his embrace.

This man was TANGO. He was all of Argentina and its history throughout his lifetime. I was dancing with him at all ages, his history, his memories of every passion and

every loss, every shattered dream. He was 20, 35, 50, whatever age he was at his last birthday. Perhaps 80, maybe more. He was my first lover, my first heartbreak, the man who left me before our final dance, the one whose heart I broke; and the promise of a new love. It was totally sensuous.

When the music ended he escorted me back to my table. We stood and looked at each other briefly. His eyes were beautiful. He touched my cheek with the edge of his hand and whispered "*preciosa*." I just smiled, and he walked away. ■

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# Hosting a visiting tango dancer

by Andrea DuCane and Pauline Oo

Anything you can offer—from a sleeping bag to an extra bedroom with rides—will be greatly appreciated by tangueros on a budget. And several will be headed here for the Heartland Tango Festival.

Offering your home to a visiting dancer has many rewards. They get to experience a local host and, hopefully, a more pleasant stay. You get to know someone from another dance community and perhaps you can stay with them when you visit their city. At the very least, you both make a new tango friend and maybe share some dances too!

Be as clear as possible with your expectations and limitations—what you can and cannot do for your guest—when you open your home. Ask yourself the following:

- Number of people you can accommodate?
- Bed, couch, or floor?
- Private room or living room?
- Can you give rides to and from the festival? If so, when? If not, is public transport convenient?

- Do you have pets?
- Do you smoke? Do you allow others to smoke in your home?
- Will your guest be able to use the kitchen for meals?
- Are there grocery stores or restaurants nearby?
- Will you provide food or meals?

If you're ready to host a visiting dancer this August 20–22, go to the Heartland Tango Festival Facebook page and look for the "Housing" topic under the "Discussion" tab.

Once you find a match there, work out all the details. Exchange contact info and talk to each other directly. (Heartland Tango Festival organizers are not responsible for any situations that may arise from the arrangement.)

Hosting a travelling tanguero/a is really a lot of fun. So, let's open our hearts and homes! You never know when you might be in a similar situation, on a budget and looking for a friendly, local host to offer you a place to sleep.

*Tango enigmas, cont. from page 4*

hurting you or protect yourself by ending the dance.

**"Yuck, he/she smells."**

Hygiene is a big deal to me. Don't wear something that will leave a mark or is smelly. (Too much cologne or perfume isn't good either—FYI, it will not cover up other smells.) Always wear clean clothes, take a shower, use deodorant, brush your teeth, and carry mints. If you are unsure about whether or not you pass the B.O. (body odor) test, check with a friend. I have no problem telling my friends if something's wrong. It's really embarrassing if you didn't know how badly you smelled and found out later.

**And to sum it up...**

A community notices the qualities of the individuals who fall under one, or all, of the categories mentioned above—no matter how connected or disconnected it is. Note which one(s) may apply to you and work on improving your experience of dancing tango—because if you do, you are helping to improve the overall community experience of dancing tango.

Getting through any of the above is no easy feat. If it were, I wouldn't be writing about them here. Let's keep supporting each other in practice and training. Our ultimate goal should be to build a very solid tango community that we can all be proud of. ■

"You have to love dancing to stick to it. It gives you nothing back, no manuscripts to store away, no paintings to show on walls... nothing but that single fleeting moment when you feel alive."

—Merce Cunningham

*Wisdom, cont. from page 1*

My partner, Jeremy, describes tango as "deceptively simple," and Sonte's tapas honors simplicity, which is rather complicated to achieve. One of the delicious tapas, Mushrooms in the Style of Spain, for instance, seems like a simple sauté of mushrooms with butter, garlic, and shallots. Yet the successful simplicity of that dish requires mastering the timing: when to stir, when to leave the mushrooms alone, when to add wine, when to turn off the heat because the mushrooms just transformed into the soft and moist form without losing their texture, form and flavor. Overcooking murders vegetables, but undercooking turns chewing into a miserable experience. Finding the right balance of not waiting too long but long enough, not adding too much but enough, remains a challenging task in the kitchen, on the dance floor, and in life.

**"I was in a relationship in which I was an onion who easily overcooked myself to the point of disappearing entirely for the sake of adding sweetness."**

Vegetables are smart, so I listen to them. Mrs. Wu's onion says never to forget the value of the various roles we take in creating something. Mushrooms at Sonte's shout that no matter what, don't lose your zesty form of being. I hear them loud and clear. For many years, I didn't know how to stand up for myself. I was in a relationship in which I was an onion who easily overcooked myself to the point of disappearing entirely for the sake of adding sweetness. But such a dish, made out of someone's sacrifice, turned out burned, bitter

and uneatable. When we let the cooking get to this point, there is no turning around; we must simply let it go.

When I started dancing, I learned to speak up. Through tango, I discovered that I, too, have a soul like Mrs. Wu's onion. When Jeremy and I practice, food terminologies have become a part of our dance language. For example, "your arms are a bit noodle," means my arms are disengaged and his lead cannot be communicated to my body. "It's time for ice cream," means our practice was difficult, our dancing wasn't working, and we need a break. And we literally turn to ice cream because ice cream is a reliable source of joy.

We grab two spoons, sit outside of our steps, open Ben & Jerry's ice cream (Cherry Garcia, Chubby Hubby, or Peach Cobbler), and dig

in. This delicious and sweet moment gives us a break; we take a breath, reset our mode, and then talk about our dancing with new vision.

This August, Jeremy and I will have a small wedding ceremony at Sonte's restaurant, a place where I have learned a great deal about building balanced relationships on the dance floor and within myself. For the lifelong journey of exploring my own wild soul while expanding my heart for my dance partner, I look forward to more dancing, cooking and eating a lot of great food and occasionally turning to ice cream. ■

Editor's note: Yuko Taniguchi and April Dahl started the Tango Society of Rochester (TSOR) in summer 2007. Yuko, who teaches writing courses at the University of Minnesota, Rochester, served as TSOR president until May 2010.

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*Tango Moments* is published seasonally by the Tango Society of Minnesota to help keep members informed about Argentine tango.

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*"Tango is a way for us to make a connection together to music we find meaningful and to a culture that is an important part of our family. Pita's father grew up in Buenos Aires (interestingly, dancing swing as the rejection of tango—the dance of his parent's generation)."*

### **Fifth Saturdays**

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**TSoM in Saint Paul**

### **Member spotlight**

**Name:** Michael Stiffman and Pita Adam

**Profession:** Family physicians. Pita is also the director of a family medicine residency program.

#### ***How did you get into tango?***

We've always danced as a couple. Before our wedding 16 years ago, we learned ballroom tango mistakenly thinking it was the Argentine dance. Through those classes, we were invited to a practice organized by Steve Lee. We didn't pursue tango again for about 10 years. We sought formal lessons before a family trip to Argentina a few years ago.

#### ***How often do you dance?***

Two to three times a month.

#### ***Describe an a-ha moment.***

We both find there are frequent a-ha moments followed by long periods of backsliding. We've been lucky enough to study with just about every teacher in town and each one has given us many different insights—many have to do with body mechanics. Most recently, Eric Li gave us the importance of stopping, pausing, listening, and waiting, rather than moving on every beat.

#### ***Biggest challenge?***

Finding enough time to practice and dance, with three kids and busy professional lives.

#### ***Tango mantra?***

Pita: Relax

Michael: Please god let me remember at least one step.