

Tango in the Heartland

By Sabine Ibes

Tango dancing has been a passion of mine for a couple of years now. As with any great passion, there is an urge to share it with as many people as possible. A creative way to share tango is by organizing a weekend festival. Festivals can help introduce new people to the dance, and provide an opportunity for both beginning and more seasoned dancers to explore tango while getting to know one another and the teachers better. Rebecca Abas and her team had a good thing going with the Heartland Festival, and I really wanted to be a part of that. It would be the third year that Heartland Festival would be celebrated.

As it turned out, Rebecca and I had similar ideas about how this year's festival should look and feel in the Twin Cities—and a partnership was born. Instead of a hotel we decided to look for a venue with more appeal, offer a wider variety of workshops, and create more welcoming approach to new dancers in our community.

Pauline Oo and Ranja Sem provided the wind beneath our wings. Pauline made sure we stayed on track, took care of promotion material, and communicating with the radio, newspapers, and other tango organizers. She also was our liaison to all the vendors at the Festival!

Heartland Fest, cont. on page 4



Geoff Anderson, Ginna Watson and Trish Hurd-Paczkowski of Abandonada

New tango band in town

Abandonada, a new tango group has formed in Minneapolis! The trio consists of Trish Hurd-Paczkowski on the piano, Geoff Anderson on cello and Ginna Watson on the violin. "Tango Moments" caught up with them to find out more.

TM: *How did you get started?*

Trish: As a piano teacher, I was fascinated by the idea of playing tango music on the piano, and had little fantasies about being in a tango band. When I was studying tango with Eli Leserowitz, he suggested starting one. The first time we met, we listened to recordings of different tango orchestras playing the same song. I was completely hooked. Eli Leserowitz got me listening to tango music in a new way—to the style, rhythms, and what gives it power instead of only the melodies. So I started to practice. To make a long story short, we started to rehearse with myself

on piano, Eli on guitar, a violinist and bass player. A few rehearsals later, Eli decided to leave town. We decided to continue anyway.

Geoff: Trish had some arrangements, so we got together and played some tango music, and before you knew it, I was in the band!

Trish: When Geoffrey plays, it IS tango! Ginna plays in many groups and teaches violin at Hamline University. Ginna is versatile, skilled, and plays absolutely beautifully.

TM: *Have you played in any other bands?*

Geoff: To be honest, I haven't played in a lot of bands exactly, although I've played for a lot of different groups for various freelance projects.

Trish: I played and sang in a folk music duo.

New band, cont. on page 8

From the president

Last year you responded to the “membership appreciation” incentive giving TSoM both record-breaking milonga participation and a big jump in membership.

This year you responded to the call, “Invite a Friend/Amigo invitó Amigo” incentive. You welcomed more friends to a TSoM milonga in six months than in the previous four years! Then we launched a targeted community outreach incentive asking you to put aside fears to be ambassadors of Argentine tango before three large crowds of ballroom dance spectators. Your enthusiastic engagement has made a real impact.

A true story: Recently Sanae and I were enjoying a Sunday night dinner at the Loring Pasta Bar when Maria Benson introduced us to a young man. He had come to watch people tango to Mandragora orchestra. His brother (a ballroom champion) had seen twelve TSoM members performing an Argentine tango at the July TCO event. His brother was so excited by the tango demonstration that both of them went to the August Heartland Tango Festival to learn more...

This young man, and stories like his, define the purpose of TSoM community outreach and our focus on Gain, Grow, Retain. Thank you for taking the challenge. Let's do more!

—Dan Griggs
daniel.c.griggs@gmail.com

Letter from the Editor

Dear TsoM members,

I am excited to be editing the “Tango Moments” newsletter. Pauline, Ranja and Sandra have all done a wonderful job and we are grateful to have had their leadership and talents on the team. Pauline guided Tango Moments for more than four years and has truly made it what it is today. Sandra Uri will continue on as the advertising manager and we wish Pauline and Ranja all the best as they move on to new endeavors.

I have always loved dance. I took ballet and tap classes as a child and simply fell in love with movement and the grace inherent in those styles. I loved watching partnered dances and was particularly entranced by the tango. When I saw a tango class offered at the University of Minnesota in my senior year, I was thrilled and signed up immediately. That elective has changed my life. Florencia Taccetti opened up a whole new world of dance to me that semester and taught me the foundations of walking, connection

and embrace that has held me in good stead throughout all my years of dancing. I credit my ability to follow decently with her first lessons of breathing with my leader, clear descriptions of how each step was made and how to be in sync with my partner. I still think back to Florencia's lessons when I find myself having trouble. I began attending milongas at the Four Seasons dance studio and found the tango community to be warm and welcoming.

In this issue we are looking back on a lovely summer of dancing and saying goodbye to Florencia Taccetti as she prepares to return to Argentina. We are also introducing a new tango band, Abandonada, which features the talented Trish Hurd-Paczkowshki, Geoff Anderson, and Ginna Watson. They recently played two shows at the Loring Pasta Bar while Mandragora was touring. Best wishes to them!

Happy dancing,
Jennifer Sellers

Capital tango

by Dan Griggs

This past summer my brother and I had our own “Ferris Bueller's Day Off”—a great adventure in Washington, D.C. I've worked throughout the U.S., but I had never once set foot in our nation's capital. The opportunity came for me and my brother to earn fellowships at the FDA Office of Device Evaluation, and we jumped at the chance. Two brothers took the District of Columbia by storm—working by day and partying by night—every night!

My brother and I rented a house in DuPont Circle, a neighborhood at the very heart of the district. It is

filled with row houses of masterful stone masonry, open air sidewalk cafes and bistros—people are everywhere, day and night. The beauty of the district is deep, and as a tango destination I found D.C. as beautiful as B.A. The west side of the district is anchored by the National Cathedral and Embassy row along Michigan Avenue. To the east are our nation's Capitol building and the National Landscape Arboretum with its miles of wide biking paths through wonderful monuments and topography.

Capital, cont. on page 6

Evita extended by popular demand

by Sandra Uri

Peter Rothstein's Latte Da's recent production of EVITA was extended through November 14th due to high interest and demand for tickets. No matter how many times you have seen a production of Evita, this one was not to be missed! A most exciting way to learn about one of Argentina's most political and dramatic eras. The stage set is magnificently clever and breathtaking; the vocalists artistically deliver the drama with lasting panache and the choreography was created by a master. Michael Matthew Farrell skillfully incorporates flavors of true Argentine tango into a show-stopping Broadway-styled spectacle! The tango dancers in the audience had fun recognizing all the familiar tango steps that they use on their own local milonga dance floor. ■



EVITA opening night tango demo — An exciting night for all!

Yuko Taniguchi, Jeremy Anderson, Sandra Uri, Steve Peters, Jesse Eustis, Ann Person, Rebecca Abas, and David Wolf

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Heartland Fest, cont. from page 1

Ranja created the look of Heartland with the logo, website, fliers, and tons of other material for the registration process. She also answered all the festival participants' questions, especially in steering the dancers in the right direction on the website and in the buildings. Together, the four of us had plenty of creativity, brain power, and structure to roll out the 2010 Heartland Festival.

Even before Rebecca and I started discussing plans for this year's festival, there were several people

who approached us to help out with Heartland. Our tango festival could never have happened without them. Sandra Uri has a wonderful sense of style and grace and added so much dignity to the dining rooms, stage, entrance hall, dance studios. She put together the fashion show, which set the stage for the approaching festival, and the "Tangodales" who provided the unexpected comic relief during the dance show. She has an eye for detail and she made our jobs so much easier.

Heartland Fest, cont. on page 5

Foundations in Tango and Beyond with Sabine Ibes and Eric Li

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Feedback

Overall, the feedback was positive. The biggest complaint we got was that the dance floor on Saturday evening after was too crowded. (Yes, we should have opened the ballroom downstairs.) We realize that we can always make things better and are very grateful that people took the time to tell us what they thought or how they felt about Heartland Festival.

Some people told us they loved the VIP treatment; others thought it was too elitist. Many people enjoyed the vendors and having tango-related items to buy.

A lot of people appreciated The Woman's Club, and asked us to have it here again. Unfortunately, there's a flip side. Some people expressed concerns that there was no wine served with dinner (without the VIP add-on) or that the dinner tickets were priced a little high. A gorgeous setting like the Woman's Club is not cheap. We had to make some compromises.

The same goes for the visiting instructors. If we invite teachers from Argentina, they have to fill out a lot of paperwork and need to be sponsored by an American. Their visa, air fares, and time for them to stay here and teach must all be paid for. We tried to bring in a group of instructors from different cities and with diverse backgrounds in teaching and tango. Our goal was to give you—the festival-goer—a taste of what's out there.

This has been an experience of a lifetime for me and Rebecca. We are happy to be part of a great group of tango people right here in the Heartland of America!



Soon the day came that Heartland was at my doorstep. I had many of the teachers staying at my home; I was ready to tango! We all left together, excited for the first big day.

When I attend a festival in another city, I make sure to get plenty of sleep before and during the festival. But it was a different story at Heartland for me and our team! Sleep? What's that? We were still able to enjoy it, though, while we worked. And we hope that everyone who attended had as wonderful a time as we did! ■

Heartland Fest, cont. from page 4

Rebecca and I also share another passion: keeping things simple and local. She immediately said yes to adding the "green" factor to the festival. Everything—from recycled paper to the potted flowers used as dinner table decorations—was bought locally. But even keeping something simple needs organization! Alix Dvorak and Diana Devi teamed up and went to local markets. They did the research and were there to remind us what did and did not fit in our green plan. They arrived early at milongas and worked behind the scenes to make sure our food tables were well stocked and looked fresh and clean.

The volunteers made this festival happen! We were lucky to have volunteers to chop vegetables, bake bread, get coffee for busy people, to host and drive our many out-of-town guests to where they needed to get to ... this list can go on and on! Eric Li coordinated all the volunteers, making a schedule with every minute accounted for: volunteers behind the desk, at the classrooms, setting up and breaking down, and refilling the water jugs. He also made sure the music systems were working, a vital aspect to every lesson and social dancing time!



"We took part in the tango lesson—I had been shy, but the teacher made it easy to join in. I knew it would not be an easy dance to pick up quickly, but I appreciated the opportunity to have a go at it. Now I have even more respect for it as an art form than I did before. It's like an amazing collaborative creation. It was interesting to see the milonga—many many of the couples had danced with eyes closed. The music was great too!"

QUOTES

"It was so wonderful. I loved the venue and thought the schedule of classes was great. I liked how each class had both some fundamental principles and steps. I wish in retrospect that I had signed up for the whole weekend."



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Living in the DuPont Circle neighborhood was perfect for hitting the tango scene. Walking from DuPont Circle to your next tango adventure will take you by many open air sidewalk cafes, highlighting the district's great urban lifestyle. Taxis are plentiful, surprisingly cheap, clean and friendly. The metro is a swift, inexpensive, easy way to get around town with several of the best milongas are near the stops.

Of the thirteen different venues I attended, I had five favorites. The 18th Street Lounge, a small intimate upstairs bar in DuPont Circle, was conveniently located. The Eastern Market milonga nestled in a fun neighborhood of sidewalk cafés east of the Capitol and just two blocks off the Blue/Orange line. The Wesley UMC west entry, offers the best wood floor and grip on Connecticut Avenue. The Chevy Chase Studio, off the Friendship Heights metro stop, had a very nice hostess and splendid refreshment table. The Freedom Plaza hosts a fantastic outdoor milonga every Sunday night, May–September on Pennsylvania Avenue, a magical sight line between the Capitol and the Willard hotel. See the “Capital Tangueros Calendar” for the very best of the district's tango scene.

As the weeks passed by I noticed a real phenomenon—more men than women. And not just the occasional extra guy! At one event after another I witnessed eight extra guys, eighteen extra, twenty extra men waiting to dance. The highest count was twenty-five extra guys. These men were not rough beginners either. My advice to all followers is: Ladies, rent a bus, load it up, and head east! These guys show up and know how to dance.

Nearly every community has its ves-

tal virgins of tango, seemingly off-limits to mere mortals. Yes, D.C. has more than its fair share. I would fall under their spell, admire them from afar, build some courage, close the gap and make my request, “would you like to dance?” Thank goodness I’m rather thickheaded as the answer of “no” is rather jarring and I had to get used to it.

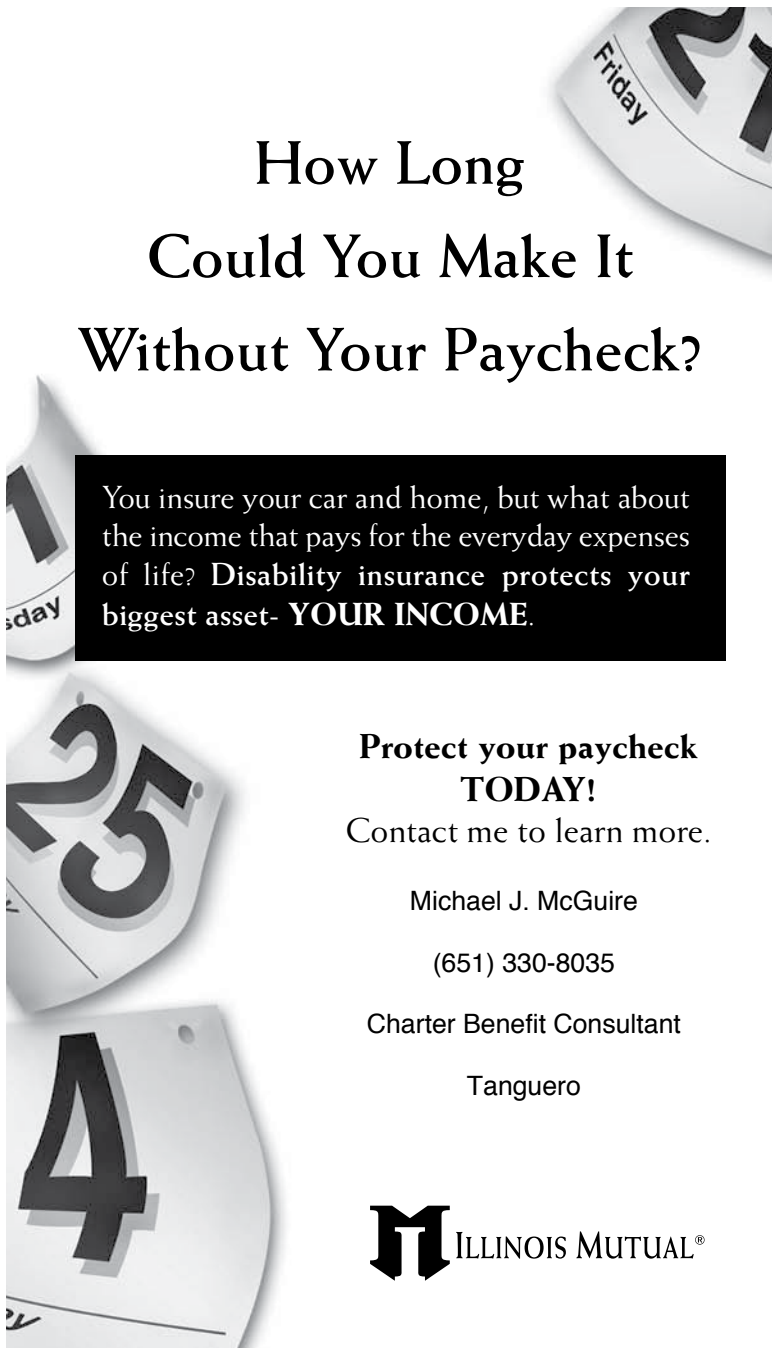
One particular Siren seductress comes to mind, as over the course of several weeks my requests to dance would be dashed four times.

If that wasn't enough, our paths would cross once more at the Baltimore festival where I would try a fifth time and boldly say to her, “We really should dance” to which she replied, “Yes, we should, but not tonight.” Ouch! Dashed on the rocks again.

Ahhh, hope still lingers. She did dance a delightful tango valz with my good friend who was visiting

from the Twin Cities. They danced and smiled at each other as they whirled around the floor of the Chevy Chase studio. Lesson learned, go ahead and ask again—a sixth time could be the charm.

Many ladies would steal my heart for that tango moment. The romance, beauty and vitality of D.C. worked on my soul and as I got deeper into the district I came away with this singular feeling—D.C. is a remarkably ‘humane’ city. The perfect place for an adventure. ■



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*Goodbye to a very
supportive tango
community*

*I just wanted to say
few words to the whole
community since I'll be
finally going home to visit
my family, close friends
and tango friends in Buenos
Aires. It has been almost
three years since I have
seen them. I specially
dedicate this trip to my
mother who is suffering
from a terminal disease. I
want to spend time with
her while she still alive.*



*This is a very difficult moment in my life since I have learned
to love Minnesota so much that I feel this is home as much
as I feel Buenos Aires is home too. This is the hard part,
when you start moving to new places you find out that you
belong to none and to all of them at the same time. Anyway,
this was a very difficult year for me, and still is. As you all
know, I'm not fully recovered yet, even if it looks that I am.*

*I want to thank you all for being so generous and for helping
me feel and know that I do have a family here in my time
of need, so thank you so much for your kindness and your
understanding in more than one situation when I was totally
overwhelmed by the challenges that life was presenting to me.*

*Thank you, thank you, thank you from the deepest part of my
heart.*

*I decided that I am not in the best condition to do big
moments right now, so I will be gone for six weeks and I plan
on coming back again on February 7, 2011. Unless there is any
change, I'm planning to be teaching my classes, both group and
privates as I have been doing until now. So you'll see me again,
but I don't know how long I will stay in town when I return.*

*This is my last month of classes and I'm leaving on December
21st, I hope to see you all often until then.*

*Wishing you all have a wonderful holiday and a new year to
come that can bring room for spiritual growth and a good
sense of fraternity to our always beloved tango community. I'll
be in touch by e-mail.*

with love, Florencia

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The editor reserves the right to alter contributions to reflect considerations of content, style, or space.

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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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New band, cont. from page 1

TM: Do you also dance tango?

Trish: I dance tango with all my heart. I try to include other things in my life, but it is difficult. Lois Donnay was my first teacher.

Geoff: I do tango! I haven't danced much recently, but I danced tango regularly for a couple years. My first teachers were Sabine and Eric.

TM: What drew you to the tango dance?

Geoff: I liked the subtlety and improvisational nature of the dance.

Trish: I brought a friend. I fell in love with the dance in minutes,

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TSoM in Saint Paul

probably during the first song.

TM: How did you get interested in Argentine tango music?

Geoff: I've had a long-standing interest in the music of Astor Piazzolla, but I hadn't listened to much other tango music until I started dancing tango. It is primarily through dancing that I grew to love Argentine tango music.

Trish: I became interested when I fell in love with Argentine tango.

TM: Tell us a little about Abandonada's music.

Trish: Our arrangements are all inspired by the golden age recordings. A lot are direct transcriptions. I go to Argentina soon for a long-dreamed about trip. I hope to study dancing, and also to learn as much as I can about the music.

TM: Favorite aspect of tango music?

Geoff: My favorite aspect is that it is full of contrasting moods and textures, even within a single song.

Trish: I love the unique way the instruments are used. The way the violin and piano can mimic the bandoneon. The way the sweet sounding violin can become gutsy and hyper-accentuated, almost to the point of grating or violent-sounding, then turn back to sweet again. Also the way a musical phrase can be smooth and lyrical, then in the next phrase every note is separated—short, biting, with surprising accents in unexpected places. I love the slow, rising punch to beat one in the bass. I love the astounding contrasts between different orchestras playing the same song, and the bitter-sweetness of the lyrics.

Come hear Abandonada play at Oddfellows on December 13, 2010 and January 29, 2011. ■