

The Tango Evolution

By Gretchen Larson

How tango has changed my life? I have been challenged physically, mentally, spiritually and socially. Tango has motivated me to: study dance pedagogy at the University of MN; develop a group of partners to collaborate with; read, think and write about how people learn and create; network in my own and other fields; teach and coach; take risks; volunteer; and think deeply about what I want in and from tango. It's forced me to do some hard things too: set priorities with my time and money, examine my motivation in relationships, and be vulnerable!

My desire to share tango has made me into a self-directed learner, given focus to my practice and confidence to seek out others I can learn from. Today I understand tango as a practice, like yoga. I can do yoga simply for physical benefits, I can use it to enrich my spiritual life, I can practice as a religious choice, I can participate and contribute to a community, or maybe make it my profession. Tango, like yoga, is so rich that it bears fruit from all levels of commitment.

Recently, I read "Ghost Map" by Steven Johnson. It is the tale of the 1854 London cholera epidemic and the hobbyists who eventually identified the source,

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Moulin Rouge in Dinkytown

TSoM partners with the Minnesota Opera on a film-inspired night

By Pauline Oo

Moulin Rouge!, the 2001 romantic musical starring Nicole Kidman and Ewan McGregor, was the first musical nominated for "Best Picture" at the Oscars in 22 years. On Friday, February 18, Tempo, Minnesota Opera's young professionals group, celebrated the film's 10th anniversary with an event that rivaled the razzle-dazzle fantasy and visual feast hit.

Spectacular! Spectacular! was held at the newly renovated Varsity Theatre in Dinkytown. The look and feel of the night was definitely that of a 19th century bohemian Parisian cabaret—straight out of the movie.

Café Accordion Orchestra got visitors in the mood with jazzy Parisian tunes. Lilli's Burlesque dancers—complete with fishnets,

feathers, and corsets—performed the eye-popping can-can. And 14 TSoM ambassadors brought the passion and some of the oh-so sultry moves from the film's famous "El Tango de Roxanne" scene to life on stage. "It was a great crowd of artsy folks and a cool venue," says tango dancer Janeen Whitchurch, who performed with Paul Lohman and the other couples: Pauline Oo and Eric Li, Dan Griggs and Sanae Storey, Sandra Uri and Steve Peters, Don Rowe and Parvin Dorostkar, Jesse Eustis and Ann Person, and Christopher Everett and Katie Thompson. The group danced to three tango songs, selected by majority vote a few days before.

Minnesota Opera had contacted TSoM president Dan Griggs back in

Moulin Rouge, cont. on page 6

From the president

TSoM continues to build a unique community. A key element is the TSoM second Saturday monthly milonga, featuring a rich diversity of our community's instructors and DJs; showcasing their love of teaching and passion for music, which is a real gift, all in a beautiful venue where we can be proud to invite friends to experience.

Excellence – Two of Minnesota's great centers of performing arts, The Minnesota Orchestra and The Minnesota Opera Society have recognized our tango community and TSoM for excellence, requesting our partnership in five onstage performances of Argentine tango.

Community – Outreach is an essential part of the TSoM mission. Taking on the challenge, more than twenty TSoM members participated in the Star of the North event as music arrangers, gate managers, connoisseurs, and, of course, as dancers. This continues from last year's MN Star Ball and Twin Cities Open events where you, acting as ambassadors of Argentine tango, stepped onto the dance floor before large crowds of dance enthusiasts—brave hearts!

It's a simple invitation. Come hear more, see more, learn more and do more Argentine tango—it's our brand, it's our mission, it's our purpose.

—Dan Griggs
daniel.c.griggs@gmail.com

Letter from the Editor

Dear TsoM members,

People often speak of life-changing events, and advertisers will sometimes promise that once you try their product, your life will be forever changed. Looking back, I can safely say that the vast majority of products I have tried or places I have been have not truly altered my life.

But Argentine tango has. The class I took on a whim has impacted many areas of my life. Tango has altered the way I move; it has caused me to practice ochoes or molinettes while I wait for a microwave to warm my food or when I find myself alone in an elevator. Sometimes, if no one is around, I walk, tango style, down a hallway. I often think about my posture and, when I twist around, think of contrabody movements and steps.

Tango has brought me a group of friends I truly adore, and introduced me to many interesting people who I hope to get to know

better. Tango has changed the way I relate to people, how comfortable I am in close quarters with strangers. In dance, I can feel comfortable practically hugging a perfect stranger for nearly ten minutes without feeling odd about it at all!

Tango has influenced the way I listen to music. When I hear a song now, I always wonder if I could tango to it and, if not, I try to pick out what dance style would work.

In this issue, several people in the tango community recount how tango has influenced their lives, what they have learned from the dance, or how they first got interested in tango. Pauline Oo also describes the exciting Spectacular! event. TSoM was invited to partner with the Minnesota Opera to perform Argentine tango at a special presentation of *Moulin Rouge* as they created buzz about the *La Traviata* opera.

Happy dancing,
Jennifer Sellers

The Circle of Life

by Sanae Storey

My father was a captain of a merchant ship out of the port city of Osaka; he collected music recordings (LPs) from around the world and brought them home to Nagasaki. He loved listening to Argentine tango music and dancing with me on the tatami floor at home. That was my first exposure to the music—as a very young child growing up in Japan.

He became a competitive ballroom dancer in foxtrot and waltz and I ended up following in his footsteps. Years later, after moving to Minnesota, I continued my

pursuit of dancing. I was a ballroom dancer. My friend, Steve Lee, encouraged me to consider learning Argentine tango, but I was totally into ballroom dancing: the competition, jazz music, and classical music captured my heart, and that's all I would listen to. It would be years before I would look seriously at doing anything else.

That time did come. I met Dan and he introduced me to Four Seasons Dance Studio and the tango community—to the milonga nights that lasted until one or two in the

Circle, cont. on page 4

In Pursuit of the Moment

by Eric Li

My tango life began at the end of my sophomore year in college. I was a part of the Ballroom Dance Club at the University of Minnesota while I studied to become a mechanical engineer. Steve Lee, our instructor, performed Argentine tango to a couple songs during class and that sparked my curiosity for this dance. Later that year, the members of the Ballroom Dance Club discovered that an Argentine tango class was offered at the University of Minnesota. It was an one-credit course, so we decided to give it a shot. Little did we know that the instructor of that tango class was a genuine tango teacher from Argentina, Florencia Taccetti.

When I first started tango, everyone I danced with asked if I was a ballroom dancer. This surprised me. I would always answer yes and ask how they could tell. The only response they had was that my dancing felt different, but nobody could really explain why or how it felt different. The way I danced was just different!

This upset me. I wanted to feel like a tango dancer, not a ballroom dancer who was dancing tango! I learned a lot during the first six years of my tango life. But the more I learned, the more questions I had, and the more I felt I didn't know. I took many workshops and private lessons from visiting instructors and at festivals. My dancing still didn't feel right to me. I felt that there was something missing in my dance, but I didn't know what it was. I still didn't know what tango was all about.

When I started tango, dancing in Buenos Aires never really crossed my mind, because it was such a distant goal. But after I started teaching tango, I realized it how helpful it would be to visit and learn about tango in Buenos Aires, the center of the dance. In January of 2010, I decided to leave my engineering job and head to Buenos Aires to study tango. It was a very quick decision. The only plan I made was to get my tickets and find a place to stay. I had no

expectations concerning what I would get out of the trip. I just felt that it was about time for me to see what I could find in Buenos Aires.

Since I didn't have any expectations about what Buenos Aires would offer, I gave every challenge my full attention during the trip. I didn't dismiss any information I received, and I also didn't try to look for any

Pursuit, cont. on page 7

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morning; and the TSoM second Saturday milonga and the beautiful ballroom in Hopkins...

With tango, the challenge of learning something entirely new, starting from scratch, was very appealing.

It was a slow progression for me at first as I was just learning the dance from Rebecca Abas and Steve Lee. The dance frame felt completely foreign to me, due to my ballroom training, and the music had a cadence equally foreign to me, but, over time, I slowly started to rediscover a feel for the music I first heard as a child. I began to develop an understanding the of music—and its romance.

Today, I'm nearly one hundred percent into Argentine tango—the emotion in the music touches me deeply. Michael Cordner, Christopher Everett, Nick Aguilar, and David Rost reintroduced me to the music my father brought home so long ago.

Now when I buy a new CD and play music at home it'll be Miguel Calo, Francisco Canaro, Carlos Di Sarli... And when I dance with a partner where the connection is just right and the music is great, it is a very satisfying moment for me. ■

accidentally founding the science of epidemiology. John Snow, a doctor/scientist working on anesthesia, and Henry Whitehead, a curate, researched the outbreak while living inside it, in real time. There was no grant money, government support, or computer models, just two guys working in their free time, with what they had, because they wanted to. We would describe this as a "hobby" but these two hobbyists changed the world.

You may not want to become a tango professional (or change the world), but that does not preclude you from making significant contributions. Our local tango community is brimming with intelligent, accomplished, thoughtful "hobbyists" who are not only practicing tango as a physical skill, but are applying their considerable skills and energy to engaging in this community. Examine yourself, set some goals and come join us! Who knows what you might contribute! ■

Florencia Taccetti Tango from Buenos Aires to Minneapolis...

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Gretchen Larson has taught tango in K-12 school settings for close to seven years. She began assisting her first instructor in local schools and now teaches workshops live locally and via video conferencing technology to schools across the country. In 2010, She has taught in Texas, New Jersey, New York and North Carolina, in addition

to Minnesota schools. She leads six to eight week-long tango research groups from time to time, is a tango Youtube junkie, travels to tango and has a "real" job too!

Learn more about Gretchen at her website <https://sites.google.com/site/gretchenlarsontangoresume>



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Moulin Rouge, cont. from page 1

the fall of 2010 about partnering at the event. He roped in former board member Pauline to organize the venture.

The sold-out event also served as a preview for the Opera's March 5-13 production of *La Traviata*. (Fun fact: Georgia Jarman, one of the lead singers, is Jesse Eustis' cousin!) The tragic Giuseppe Verdi tale of a courtesan's doomed love for a younger man inspired *Moulin Rouge*! "It was a pleasure for us to have you," says Joshua Dorothy, Tempo board chair. "I heard rave reviews all around for your tango dancers."

That evening, board member Lisa Thurstin was at the TSoM promotional table to answer questions and hand out free milonga passes. She estimates giving away 40 of these freebies; the tango dancers did their part in this department. Look out for some new faces at future milongas! Let's make them feel welcome.

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Pursuit, cont. from page 3

specific information. I danced with people from all over the world, and received many ideas that I had never heard before. I was paying attention to everything that was happening. I learned as if I was an infant, crawling around and touching everything. I would do it again if it felt good, and to not do it anymore if it didn't feel right. I would learn everything new by truly experiencing it.

When I was reflecting on what I learned after coming back from Buenos Aires, I realized that the best way to continuously improve my tango is to be present in the moment of the dance. I had been trying very hard to find the perfect tango, and was paying attention to whether I danced right or wrong. The knowledge I had about tango

ended up distracting me from being present and dancing with my body. I was constantly looking for something instead of being in the moment.

Now, instead of thinking about how to lead an ocho, I look for the feeling of an ocho. Instead of learning the method of how to lead a step, I look for the feeling of a step. Instead of learning how to dance tango, I seek to experience the feeling of tango. I learned how to be in the moment and feel the dance. From that point on, I stopped questioning and I stopped looking for an answer. Now I just dance. ■

Eric Li is a local Argentine tango instructor. Find out more about Eric on his new blog Tango Sense at tangosense.com.

Recent Survey Concerning The Tango Society of Minnesota

Thank you to everyone who responded to the recent survey concerning TSoM. This survey was created by a TSoM board member in hopes of determining areas and paths for improvement. The board greatly appreciated hearing everyone's views and especially the advice respondents had for improving TSoM, the website and *Tango Moments*. The comments, suggestions and ideas will be taken into consideration as TSoM works to serve the tango community. The results have been posted on TSoM's website where it may be viewed and read in its entirety.



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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 three times a year by the Tango Society of Minnesota to help keep members informed about Argentine tango.

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"Tango is like a game," says TSoM member Niko Salgado.

Fifth Saturdays

Check www.mntango.org for dates and location.

TSoM in Saint Paul

Member spotlight

Name: Niko Salgado

Profession: Local tango instructor and DJ, national salsa instructor, aikido and self-defense instructor

What drew you to tango?

I love games. Tango, like many dances, is like a game to me. It is like puppetry, you move a certain way, in tune with the music, and that movement causes your partner to move a certain way. I love finding ways to make my partner smile as she feels how the movement is in sync with the music. I love playing this game and it is fun to watch others play this game as well.

Where have you danced tango?

Chicago, Phoenix, San Francisco,

Seattle, Albuquerque, San Diego, New York and St. Louis. I have yet to go to Buenos Aires, but I am so glad people are interested in tango in so many different places!

What is the most useful personal skill you learned from tango?

Balance. You never stop learning how to better balance yourself in all different postures and positions. It has improved my general relationship to movement in daily life, as well as in tango.

Tango mantra?

Keep your personal life off the dance floor, but share tango on and off the dance floor.