

A dancer's weekend

By Michael Kane

Tango is always hot in July, but this year Alex Krebs came to town and fired up the thermostat: from simmer to smouldering — we almost had to call up the firehouse! Parvin Dorostkar and the Tango Desperados organized a fun weekend, kicking it off with a packed Friday class that flowed into a full milonga featuring Michael Cordner spinning the tunes. Dancing ran pleasantly late, with more than a few followers enjoying a tanda with Alex. Saturday offered a triplet of excellent classes, starting with Alex's remarkably clear and practical insights on musicality.

There were many highlights to the weekend. For this writer, the best was the huge turnout that filled our Saturday milonga at the Eagles. The energy was fabulous; helped by great food, artful decor, and the tasteful music of DJ Pablo. Thanks to the support and collaboration with Utango and Lois Donnay, the room was packed with enthusiastic Twin Cities and visiting dancers. After four hours of dancing we still had a full house.

On Sunday, Alex's classes spun the mind with infinite turns, structures and spirals. For pure tango pleasure Sunday's capstone was dancing to Abandonada, joined by Alex squeezing pure tango essence out of his bandoneon to the delight of a jammed dance



Photo provided by Michael Kane

floor. "Will we do it again next year?" you ask. Time will tell, but at least this is the kind of climate change you can hope for. Stay tuned. ■



Photo by Sabine Ibes

Reflections

By Sabine Ibes

I like to dream. Being a Pisces, I happen to have the tendency to romanticize the most banal things in life. This trait has brought me both bitter disappointment and great joy. When I first dreamt about Tango Teacher Co-op camp Minnesota (TTC), it was all spelled out in my head. Other people had a difficult time imagining what this TTC was suppose to be. They peppered me with questions. Was it only for teachers? Was there going to be any dancing? Why would we do this all the way in Lake Frontenac? And why in the world should anybody attend this camp?

Reflections, cont. on page 3

Letter from the president

It's been a fast-paced year for TSOM. Here are my reflections on the first year and thoughts for the future:

The first of my immediate goals is to reach out to the bigger community here in Minnesota and the upper Midwest. Our title Tango Society of Minnesota should mean just that and not just Tango Society of the Twin Cities. There are many small tango communities around the state that have either grown into their own entities, such as Tango Society of Rochester, or are small pockets of dancers in cities such as Duluth and St. Cloud, Fargo/Moorhead, etc. I'd like to develop interaction with these groups, and in the process make the Twin Cities the hub of tango dancing in the upper Midwest.

One thing we've proven in the last few years is the desire to raise the quality with our milongas. We've had a rocky road the last few years trying to find the right venue for TSOM, but something of a solution has been achieved. For the 2014 and 2015 seasons we are on what I've dubbed the "4-4-4 rotation" — in other words four milongas at each of two different locations for our second Saturday milonga and one location for our fifth Saturday milongas, plus four open months to be held at "special venues" that are big enough to hold a good sized crowd for live music, special guests to the community, etc. I'd like each of our milongas to be a special event. The other four of these months we would host truly top-notch events that will draw attendees to the Twin Cities. Ideally, I'd like to see a special event in the summer, either a collaboration with a festival like TTC (as we did this year), or a celebration of Argentine Independence Day in July to make sure we honor our roots and celebrate the all-too-short Minnesota summer.

Additionally, I would like TSoM to help create something of a "milonga season" in the wintertime. I envision a December Christmas, January New Year's and February Valentine's Day milonga, each complete with a live band, potentially a great visiting instructor and held at a wonderful venue. When I lived in Vienna, Austria, winter was the ballroom season. All the various guilds and dance groups held a special dance in beautiful chandelier and candlelight surroundings, and you literally had a blow by blow account in the newspapers following the dance, giving it the sort coverage America gives sports. I can't promise the local media will ever give us that kind of attention, but wouldn't it be incredible if, in time, the word in the tango world was, "You've got to be in the Twin Cities for at least part of the season!"

All of this means tapping into our local pool of organizing talent, growing the base of TSOM members and making sure our monetary resources are never over-stretched, while at the same time reaching for a higher level of milongas.

So let's enjoy all the great tango experiences here in Minnesota and those across the country, and reflect on how far TSOM has come in the last 15 years. And more important, let's make our mark on the tango scene and in the next few years create something special in the world of Argentine tango!

— Rueben Hansen

Letter from the editor

2014 has been an exciting year. Our community is blessed to have many excellent organizers who have arranged special events, including a wonderful festival, and hosted well-known artists. We'll hear first-hand accounts of these exciting tango opportunities in this issue. Also featured: Jim Dunn continues his delightful tango fiction and Lynn Behnke of TSoR recounts her trip to Buenos Aires, led by Lois Donnay. I hope you personally got to enjoy some of these events in our Fall newsletter and look forward to many more in the months to come.

Happy dancing,

Jennifer Sellers

Reflections, cont. from page 1

My vision was to give teachers of Argentine tango a place to go for concrete ideas of how to teach. And to be able to dance with tango students at the milongas and practicas. Dreaming about it was so much easier than explaining it!

Five years ago I approached Homer Ladas with this idea. He and Cristina were immediate fans. I also spoke with Tomas Howlin, who was in the planning stages with Brigitta Winkler for a teachers in training camp in Maui. We spoke about possibilities and about the fact that this had never been done here in the United States for Argentine tango. Which meant: it is a risky business. Ten years ago there were about 20 tango festivals in the United States per year, nowadays you can go to a festival every weekend! We knew that helping tango students know what to expect at TTC and how it was different from any other tango festival was going to be difficult. Our first TTC was a huge success.

Photo of Villa Maria by Sandra Uri



In June 2014 we had our second TTC tango camp Minnesota, and the enthusiasm has been overwhelming. Being the only festival of it's kind in the U.S., there will always be elements and details that we can refine, change or eliminate altogether. I am fully aware of the learning process, and am listening to all of the concerns that came in via the surveys, which were sent to attendees right after the festival.

But, I am pleased to tell you, that the overall feeling from students who attended, has been of gratitude and appreciation that TTC is different. That it has something to offer that no other festival has. That the learning environment at Villa Maria is so calming and charming, that eating together is so helpful in

getting to know one another on the dance floor. That the work the teachers put in shows their dedication to a successful event. That the food was very pleasant to look at, a treat to eat, and so very healthy to boot.

Reflections, cont. on page 4

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Reflections, cont. from page 3

All of these aspects were carefully considered before the arrival of all the students; to make sure that you learn well, you need to be well rested, and stress-free. It has been shown that when you eat healthily, your body reacts more easily to movement and you will be able to retain information better. Well-prepared teachers produce higher student achievement, and a carefully designed learning environment has a positive impact on the students: they are less anxious and more capable of receiving information. That is why we chose to go to Lake Frontenac.

I have organized workshops and other festivals where the main aspect is to learn how to dance and to maximize the "fun" factor. These are always a lot of work. But honestly, I have never worked so hard as when I organized the TTC tango camps. The amount of detail and preparation that went into hosting these camps were actually a bit over the top. My passion for this dance and making sure that dancers will have a safe place to learn from well-informed teachers is what keeps me going.

How does Minnesota benefit from having TTC? This question was first put to me by the State of Minnesota as we started to apply for grants. Grant language is pretty darn boring, but in short: The more well informed and capable tango teachers we have in Minnesota, the more tango students there will be for everyone to dance with. Argentine tango is a folklore art form and has been evolving over the past 100 years. First in Buenos Aires, then in Europe, and lastly all over the world. Minnesota is now a part of that tango evolution.

Plus the exposure of good tango dancers from all over the world to the existing tango dancers of Minnesota will inspire our local community to learn even more about this art form and help expose other Minnesota residents to the Argentine tango dance and music.

I truly wish there had been something like TTC out there when I first started teaching tango eight years ago.

I am thrilled that my dreams for TTC have materialized into a festival where new tango teachers and students alike can enjoy learning and dancing together. I look forward to what the future holds for TTC and invite you all to share in the journey in the years to come. ■



Charlie Brown, Joey Ray & Jennifer Wang, trying on berets at the "Milonga A La Seine" beret-bar!

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Minnesota tango: sounds good

By Margreet Markerink

Translation by Julia Robinson

Article originally written for *La Cadena*, a journal for Argentinian tango aficionados in the Netherlands.

The Trio Tangata tango orchestra with pianist Margreet Markerink, 2008 winner of the Choclo (the La Cadena composition competition for new tango dance music) was invited to play in Minnesota. After much bureaucratic hassle, it became clear the musicians' work visas would not be granted. So Margreet brought her prizewinning music to America all by herself.

Julia Robinson from Minnesota, a professor of architecture with a great passion for tango dancing, happened to be present in the Netherlands in 2008 when Trio Tangata were performing the music from the Choclo Prize. Julia took the Choclo Awards CD back to Minnesota. There she listened to the music and fell in love with it, especially the little waltz "Te quiero." Several years later, Julia asked me (Margreet) for a copy of the "Te Quiero song" music, and on a return trip to the Netherlands attended a Trio Tangata concert, which consolidated her interest in bringing the group to play in Minnesota. In 2010, I received an



Concert and milonga at St. Petersburg Restaurant. Photo provided by Margreet Markerink

email from Julia asking if I might be interested to take the group to Minnesota to perform at a tango festival. "What? America? Yahoo!"

Disreputable musicians?

Julia, a member of the Tango Society of Minnesota, spent several years organizing a tour for Trio Tangata with different tango organizations and performance halls in Minnesota and Chicago.

But obtaining visas proved to be an insurmountable obstacle. Obtaining a work visa for a foreign group to the United States is very complex, almost as if the request was for a

group of disreputable musicians with bombs in the bandoneon and violin cases. To our great disappointment, especially Julia, the Tango Society of Minnesota and Trio Tangata, the work visas were denied. Optimistic Julia, always seeking new alternatives, notified us saying "Margreet, Giving up is not an option! Perhaps you could come on a tourist visa."

And yes: At the invitation of the Tango Society of Minnesota I left on April 26 for Minnesota with a bag full of music in my backpack. I was a little uncertain, because if I were sent back after I arrived, what then? But everything went well, I was admitted into the U.S. and was there for almost three weeks as a tourist, enjoying many different events with the tango community, the dancers, the people, but also just enjoying being in Minnesota.

Relaxed Minneapolis

While St. Paul is the capital of Minnesota, Minneapolis is its modern heart. The Mississippi River



Concert at Julia Robinson's home. Photo provided by Margreet Markerink

MN Tango, cont. on page 6

flows through the city, and downtown you'll even find an impressive and powerful waterfall rumbling through the city. Minnesota is considered one of the most democratic states in the U.S., and its residents have an open and welcoming attitude. I have enjoyed walking and cycling, gazing at the colorful wooden houses with porches, and the vast lakes. But mostly I enjoyed the encounters and discussions with the residents of Minneapolis. What a nice, relaxed people.

Many people say the phrase "[it] sounds good," using it to respond to every question or request. For example, if I ask a waiter if he has a coaster to keep the table from wobbling he says, "sounds good." In another area of linguistic interest I learn that "minne" means water in the Dakota Indian language (Minnesota = land of water, Minneapolis = city of water), and that the flowing water makes the sound of laughter. Visiting a local waterfall I listen ... and sure enough; the splashes at the waterfall do laugh. Therefore, this is called the Minnehaha Falls.

Tango Society of Minnesota

After just one day, I met some of the Tango Society members at a milonga evening that included dinner at the Loring Pasta Bar in the center of town. The society turns out to have 150-200 members. It is a small community; mostly driven by very inspired people who spend their weekend evenings devoted to their passion. Above the Pasta Bar (formerly a drug store), Bob Dylan lived during his early student years. "Look Margaret! Over there under the roof he had a room and wrote his early songs."

The tango community might be small, but they run it in a professional way with impressive titles, such as a president who is elected every two years. At this time, Rueben holds this function. Next to me at the table is Marge, the treasurer and financial accountant. She is a blonde with a decidedly American accent and seems to have stepped out of a country movie. Wow, is she cute! She scatters sayings and proverbs everywhere. When I ask Rueben how he got the role of President of the Tango Society, Marge replies that this function had, "hard shoes to fill." She continues: "I hold his feet to the fire." I look at Rueben and wonder if his feet have been forced into the wrong size shoe while the soles are still burning.

My first tango lesson

In Minneapolis, I had great meetings with enthusiastic dance teachers. Lois for example, gives lessons in her own house because of the high cost of renting a studio. She was the one of the first tango dancers in Minnesota who began giving dance lessons. Two days after arriving in Minneapolis, I played the piano at her Tuesday tango party in her cottage on First Avenue. The small living room with fluorescent tube lights has an unusual tango atmosphere, but the dancers dance the night away in the intimate style it imparts. My first show that takes place there in Lois's living room is received very enthusiastically. I had planned to play just a few songs, but with such great feedback I forget my jetleg and play until the Minnesota stars fall from the sky.

As a thank you for my solo piano performance, Lois treats me to a

MN tango, cont. on page 7

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private dance lesson the following week. What a surprise to be able to experience my first private tango dance in a living room in Minneapolis, under Lois' inspiring leadership! She shows how to move to the phrases you hear in the music. How do you express what you sense through your breathing and dance in sympathy with your partner? With Lois's enthusiasm and her lesson, I dance after all these years, and finally own the ocho and other tango dance steps myself.

How to teach tango

After Lois, I briefly met Bruce. He dances many styles, including tango, and dances a mean Rock 'n' Roll with an American accent. He's very charming. He has certainly cut through the HiFi hairdresser behind the Four Season building where you can find Rock 'n' Roll records for sale.

Florencia is an Argentine tango dance teacher who has just returned from Argentina. It was hard for her to leave her sick mother. She has a tragic look in the eyes; I can feel her melancholy. She proposes a solo dance performance at the upcoming milonga, but in the end, due to her troubles, it did not take place.

Last but not least, I met Sabine. I hear people talk about her admiringly, which makes me very curious to meet her. At her own home, I meet this nice, inspiring Dutch woman, who has lived in Minneapolis for twenty years. What makes it special is that she has organized innovative workshops on how to teach tango lessons. These workshops take place at an international festival where tango teachers and dancers to explore

all aspects of teaching together. This year it will again provide such training. She has even managed to get economic support from a cultural fund in Minneapolis. I am impressed by her entrepreneurial spirit and her inspiring personality.

Playing with the local tango band

Minneapolis is the city where both Bob Dylan and Prince grew up. For its size it has almost as many theaters and jazz venues, music bars and music venues as New York. On streets and in cafes I find myself regularly talking with nice people, including several musicians. I express my enthusiasm about the fact that we happened to sit at a table with three musicians. But according to Steve, a young saxophonist, this is not accidental: "Here in Minneapolis, you can't throw a rock out of the window without hitting a musician."

Bob Barnes, the band leader of a tango band from Minnesota is the bandoneonist with whom I rehearsed this week to prepare for the tango dance performance on my last Saturday. Since Trio Tangata was unable to join me, this was a nice alternative. Bob has made up a band with Emy as violinist and bassist/cellist Greg. With his big, dark beard, Bob seems as if he is about to run off to be a sailor with Pirates of the Caribbean. However he is a computer programmer by day because in Minneapolis music does not always provide a living. This father of three teenagers

follows his passion: in the evenings he lives for music. He has devoted many years to the study and playing of Argentine tango music, and organizes bands to play numerous different arrangements for dance events.

Greg Byers, bassist/cellist/guitarist is the biggest surprise of all the musicians I play with in Minnesota. At only 27 years old he is already an all-round musician. Greg plays each piece you throw at him with great pleasure and a terrific sense of rhythm. We immediately click like good musicians. He has a sense of humor and playfulness that makes it great fun. We all play together the last night for the closing performance. Greg has lived and played in many states of America and assures me that Minneapolis is the best place to live and work. He never wants to leave. I can understand.

A Minnesota tango composition: sounds good!

In parting, I have promised Julia and my friends in Minneapolis that I will compose a Minnesota Tango. Hopefully I can return next time with Trio Tangata to Minnesota, to play our new Minnesota Tango and other new dance music. Even though I'm back in the Netherlands, now you can hear me regularly say "sounds good ..." ■



Margreet with Greg Byers. Photo provided by Margreet Markerink

Tango noir part two

by James Dunn

"So there you are, James. I was hoping you'd be here today. You haven't been avoiding me, have you?"

"Avoiding you, Carmen, can I avoid food, air, water, life itself?" I said, rising from my chair and kissing her on the cheek, retreating only to drown in the emerald fountains that were her eyes.

"Please sit down. I just ordered. Would you like something?"

"No James, devouring you on the dance floor will satisfy me. And later, something sweet perhaps? Muy dulce?"

I gulped and looked around for a door that wasn't there.

I'd met Carmen at the Confiteria a couple months back. She'd stood

alone at the bar so I walked over and asked if she was there to meet someone. "Maybe," she'd said.

"Well, I'm someone."

"Maybe," she repeated, sweeping her eyes over me like an airport scanner.

"To some people I'm someone, to others I'm a little less than that, I suppose. I've been in BA for three weeks reporting for the English Language Chronicle and the wire services. Friends told me I could learn tango here at the Confiteria."

"Well, it's as good a place as any, for a beginner," she said, with only a tiny dose of disdain.

"Your English..."

"Yeah, my father's American. I went to high school in California."

"Well, I've been taking some private tango lessons. You might

find me adequate."

"O.K., my dance partner's not here yet. Just remember, I walk on my feet, you don't."

"Si, claro," I said.

I suppose I've had more dramatic experiences than that first tango with Carmen. I just can't remember any. El abrazo, the embrace, was like pressing a mold of myself in warm jello, except you could breathe. And you weren't all sticky afterwards. The clumsiness I'd felt with other dancers disappeared with the first salida. She seemed to anticipate my moves, leading me as I led her. The tanda ended too soon. We held our embrace for a few seconds after the music died.

"O.K., Casanova, you can let me go now. My practice partner is here."

Striding toward us was the powerfully built Mr. Clean. ■



Monday evening practica

Every week, a "Tango Desperados" Monday Evening Practica is held at the Eagles Aerie, underwritten by TSoM. This practica provides a weeknight time to practice dancing in a comfortable, easygoing environment. Here, attendees can also learn about upcoming events (printed literature provided by the organizers and teachers). As at all TSoM events, tango teachers from the TSoM list of teachers are admitted free of charge.

The success of these practicas have made it possible to reinvest back into our tango community. Recent examples include sponsoring mini milongas, hosting visiting teachers Marina Kenny and Guillermo Cerneaz one evening at the practica for a mini lesson and guided practice in 2013, contributing funds to rent the double bass violin for the Ziegler Tango Quartet at the November 2013 TSoM milonga, and donating to TTC 2014. ■

A promotional graphic for Grand Jeté. It features a black and white photograph of a high-heeled tango shoe with a wide strap across the foot. The text "Grand Jeté" is at the top in a large, bold, serif font. Below it is the phone number "651-227-0331" and the website "www.grandjete.com". A large "10% OFF!" is prominently displayed, followed by "one pair of dance shoes" and "WITH THIS COUPON". At the bottom, the address "975 Grand Ave, St. Paul, 2 blks east of Lexington" and hours "Open M-Sa 10am-5:30pm, Tu 'til 8pm" are listed.

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Trip report: Buenos Aires 2013

By Lynn Behnke

Article originally appeared in the Winter 2013 issue of Tango Passion, a publication of the Tango Society of Rochester.

In November 2013, Barb Riley and I spent three weeks in Buenos Aires with Lois Donnay, an Argentine tango instructor in Minneapolis. Lois has been taking students to Buenos Aires for 14 years. She begins her own trip report with, "This is one of the best trips I have had." Barb and I can say the same. Following are a few reasons why.

Housing

"This is it," the driver said as he pulled over to the curb. "This doesn't look good," I thought.

Our 45-minute drive from the airport had started on clean pavement bordered with greenery. We continued past miles of high-rises into neighborhoods of littered streets, crumbling sidewalks, occasional abandoned buildings and flourishing graffiti. Our group's home the next three weeks would be somewhere in this three-story building that stood between a walled parking lot and an auto repair shop, both glaring with graffiti. It had no street-level windows.

The landlord, a professional singer and dancer, unlocked the barred, iron-front door and led me up a flight of winding marble stairs to a 20'x30' two-story room. A skylight flooded the room with sunlight. A table big enough to seat 12 stood in the center. One end of the room opened into a large kitchen. Just past the winding staircase was a laundry room and a rooftop patio furnished with plants, a shaded table and chairs and a clothesline. At the other end of the room were a mirrored room for dance lessons and an office with Wi-Fi. Both rooms had balconies overlooking the street. Our group's three bedrooms and shared bathroom and shower opened off the two sides of our dining room.

Settling into the house gave me a foretaste of what was to come. The deeper I got into the house, the more I found to appreciate. The same would prove true of Buenos Aires.

Excursions

A typical day: get up around 8 a.m. to meet friends for "café con leche y medialunas" down the street, or, rise about 10 to eat, dress and plan the day. Out of the house by noon to meet Buenos Aires, back by 5 p.m. for a nap, dinner and dance

lesson, off to a milonga around 8, return back home sometime between 1 and 3 a.m.

Collectively, our excursions ranged from noisy street



Lynn and companions at lunch with Cherie Magnus.

fairs to the quiet gravesite of Eva Peron and Carlos Gardel; from tony shops on Calle Florida to chaotic bazaars near the train station; from a side street bookstore to the National Library; from littered sidewalks along the 14 lanes of Avenida 9 de Julio to a carpet of jacaranda blossoms on the path to the botanical gardens.

We drank champagne after a tango show at Café de los Angelitas and nightcaps at the jazz bar Notorious; snacked on empanadas at a homey shop down the street and ate grilled steak, grilled provolone and spinach salad served to us at a linen-covered table by suited waiters; we admired collections at the National Museum of Fine Arts and grinned throughout the exhibit of 20th century art at the Museum of Latin American Art.

We observed and danced tango at a dozen milongas; Barb and Lois danced to a live band on a Calle Florida street corner; Lois and I danced briefly to a solo bandoneon in a subway station. All in concert with our quest for the best coffee and ice cream in Buenos Aires.

Selected Highlights

Of all our excursions, Barb, Lois and I consider some to be especially memorable. For example:

Trip, cont. on page 10



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Trip, cont. from page 9

- Lunching on homemade empanadas at the home of Cherie Magnus, an American dancer, instructor and writer living in Buenos Aires. She wrote "The Church of Tango."
- Hosting eight Americans and Argentines at our Thanksgiving dinner. Our Argentine friends loved cranberries, wild rice stuffing, regular bread stuffing, gravy, and Lois's pumpkin pie.
- Listening to Claudia Pannone sing in our dining room.
- Talking with a young staff member of the National Library about Argentina's "dirty war." His father worked for an "international corporation." He was promoted to replace a man who was murdered, apparently because the man worked for an "international corporation." Bodyguards accompanied his father to and from work.
- Attending a demonstration by the Madres of Plaza de Mayo. The Madres are mothers and family members of an estimated 30,000 people the government "disappeared" during its "dirty war" on opposition. The Madres have been demonstrating on the Plaza, the site of the President's offices, weekly for 35 years seeking help finding the remains of "disappeared" loved ones and reclaiming grandchildren.
- Having a stranger tap me on the shoulder at a milonga and hand me my wallet. Nothing was missing. Having Barb notice I almost left my wallet on the floor of our taxi.
- A day at Feria de Mataderos.

Milongas

The milongas we attended varied

on the surface. Settings varied from newly refurbished to harsh lighting, worn furniture, and sparse décor. Managers and staff varied from efficient and welcoming to indifferent. Broadly speaking, regulars at different milongas differ by average age, skill level and formality of attire and attitude. But the milongas of Buenos Aires also share a fundamental rule of operation, in my opinion: they are a man's world.

Women usually outnumber men at the milongas. Consequently, men are free to exercise their own standards to evaluate potential dance partners. Women who are young and pretty will be invited to dance, as will women who are older and beautiful. A rich woman of any age is likely to dance. A woman possessing two of the three characteristics will dance often. What distinguishes the process for selecting a dance partner from that of buying a used car is, women who are good dancers get extra credit.

I know I am subject to a similar evaluation by potential partners. But the numbers and culture are on my side...for the moment. We discovered that young women in Buenos Aires are busy teaching their friends how to lead. Be advised, gentlemen.

There is another factor that in my naiveté I had overlooked. An acquaintance and my driver confirmed its presence. We were scanning published schedules

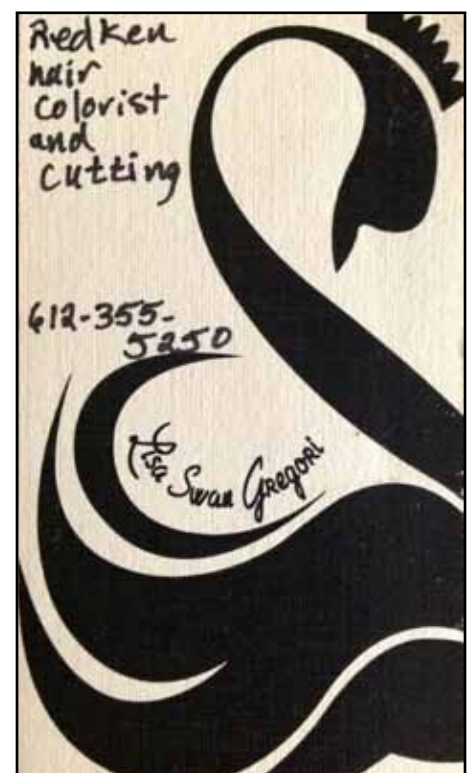


A Buenos Aires milonga

to pick our next milonga. An acquaintance pointed out one and said she rarely goes there anymore because she rarely gets dances there. I asked why. She said she was being punished, "Because I don't put out."

On my ride back to the airport to return home, my driver gave me an exit interview. He's been dancing tango for about 12 years, we occasionally saw each other at

Trip, cont. on page 11



Trip, cont. from page 10

milongas. He asked if I knew what he was doing at them. I said it looked like he was enjoying tango and making sure his partners did too. He said, "No. I'm there to pick up women." So much for "a conversation between two people about the music."

Connecting at Feria de Mataderos

Feria de Mataderos is a Sunday street fair established over 25 years ago in Mataderos, a neighborhood in southern Buenos Aires. Today the fair is an expansive block party featuring gaucho traditions of dress, dance, crafts and foods. Artisan's, farmers and food vendors line several blocks of streets offering products from all over Argentina: cheeses, sausages, candies, breads, preserves, and wines; leather accessories; handmade shawls, scarves, hats, and dresses; paintings and handcrafted silver jewelry.

Vendors of fresh squeezed juices, grilled chorizos and ice cream compete at the center intersection of the fair. Sounds of tango, milonga, traditional folk songs played on traditional instruments, and vocalists penetrate chatter and laughter.

The site of the fair was not always so pleasant. Mataderos means "slaughter house." Behind the elevated stage for featured entertainers is a large building in which livestock is marketed. We are near what were called the "killing grounds," approximately three square miles where cattle, horses and sheep were brought from all over the country to be slaughtered. Describing the grounds, one visitor wrote in 1918, "The blood so abundantly shed from day to day,

mixing with the dust, had formed a crust half a foot thick."

The blood has been spilled here is not only from livestock. In the 19th and early 20th century armies of Indians and gauchos recruited by warlords in the interior attacked southern Buenos Aires to "break the power and humble the pride of Buenos Aires." Blood of the "disappeared" might also lie here.

But on this sunny Sunday afternoon gauchos, descendants of European immigrants and colonists, and three North American visitors ate, drank and danced together.

We joined the dancing in a large dance hall on the fairgrounds. Families were welcome, dress was casual, protocol flexible and all present were high-spirited. Barb and Lois danced tango and practiced folk dances (chacarera and zamba). One older gentleman pledged his love to Barb. A younger man persisted in attempts to capture the affections of Lois.

Feria de Mataderos demonstrated once again what we were learning at the milongas: dancers can connect despite differences in culture and personal histories. Tango transcends them with a prolonged glance, a nod, and the eloquence of a close embrace.

"I hope there will always be una tanda mas for you and for me." (Cherie Magnus, "The Church of Tango.") ■

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

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www.mntango.org



P.O. Box 24044
Edina, MN 55424

Upcoming TSoM milongas

October 11 milonga

at Dance Life Ballroom, 6015 Lyndale Ave. S, Mpls

November 8 milonga, partnering with UTango MinneMadness

at Sokol Hall, 383 W. Michigan St., St. Paul

Fifth Saturday Nov. 29 milonga

at Virginia Street Church, 170 Virginia St., St. Paul

December 13 milonga, Location TBD

Check www.mntango.org for all the details.



The University of Minnesota UTango Club is proud to present the MinneMadness Tango Weekend Festival on Nov. 7 – 9th! Dancers Adam Hoopengardner and Ciko Tanik of New York and musicians Cuarteto Tanguero will teach classes and share their knowledge. Both teachers and musicians have taught at festivals and workshops all over the country. The festival will have many ways for participants can engage in tango, such as hearing local scholar Michael Scham share the poetic traditions of tango, enjoying live local music by the UTango orchestra Andre and the Giants, and attending a facilitated discussion with the weekend teachers. All milongas are open to the community regardless of attendance of the festival. Registration for the festival is open, both for a full pass or a day pass.

We are very excited to be collaborating with the Tango Society of Minnesota for part of the festival. The UTango Club and TSoM are jointly hosting the Grand Milonga of the festival on Nov. 8th. During this special event, Cuarteto Tanguero will play live music for the joy of dancers and to accompany a performance by guest teachers Adam and Ciko. Adam and Ciko will teach a one hour class before the milonga that can be paid for at the door, and this is open to all!

Early-bird registration closes Oct. 15th, so register today! Learn more at www.utango.umn.edu/minnemadness.

We look forward to dancing with you!

UTango Club