

TANGO TANGO MOMENTS

TANGO SOCIETY OF MINNESOTA

DEDICATED TO FOSTERING AND SUPPORTING ARGENTINE TANGO IN MINNESOTA

Winter 2008 • Volume 10, No. 1

Membership survey

Thanks for your feedback!

By Lindsay Orr, Pauline Oo, and Paul Stachour

If you were at the January TSoM milonga, you saw some of our dazzling membership graphs (thanks to Karen Martinsen and Rebecca Snyder, our “data models”). We conducted a member survey in August and September 2007—134 people took it, 70 percent current TSoM members. Several interesting patterns surfaced. For example: almost 70 percent of respondents joined TSoM for information or the newsletter, while 42 percent joined for a variety of reasons, including “to encourage more people to dance,” “to spend time with polite and well-dressed people,” and “to be an insider.”

The majority of respondents (60 percent) fell in the 50-plus age group, while the remaining 40 percent were split among the 21–29 group (10 percent), 30–39 (10 percent), and 40–49 (20 percent). Milonga and Web/e-mail scored “high priority” (4.3 each, on a scale of 0–5) in response to the statement: “I would like my TSoM membership fees to support.” Next on the list (above 3 points) were: festival, newsletter, visiting instructors, outreach, and national connections.

The membership committee has integrated some suggestions from

Survey results, cont. on page 7



Photo source: Tourism Portal, Sub-Secretary of Tourism of Buenos Aires City Government, www.bue.gov.ar.

Experience the universal appeal of tango

Tango is a cultural phenomenon that began during the 1880s in the *barrios* (neighborhoods) and *bordellos* of Buenos Aires and Montevideo, Uruguay, and, over the centuries, it has spread across the globe.

Argentine tango doesn't discriminate. You can be young or old; male or female; single or married; American, Russian, Finnish, French, or Canadian; and a window cleaner or doctor to dance the tango.

Two of the best places to experience the universal appeal of tango are at milongas in Buenos Aires and at some tango festivals in the United States. People from all walks of life, including those who are new to tango and those who

can't live without it, gather in these hot spots to dance and learn. If you want to see future tango teachers or performers who will knock your socks off, visit the *prácticas* in Buenos Aires or the tango classes offered by university tango clubs in, for example, Ann Arbor or New Haven.

Yes, if you haven't noticed, Argentine tango clubs have been sprouting across colleges in the United States since Stanford University hosted the first tango week/festival in 1990. Almost all the Ivy League colleges and Big 10 universities have one, even our very own U of M.

Why are so many drawn to tango? This issue of *Tango Moments* attempts to explore that question. ■

From the president

Hello, and thank you for another successful year!

In 2007, we set a goal of 160 for membership. We've met and exceeded that goal. We now have 170 members!

As part of our process to increase membership, we formed a committee to determine the needs of our members and the value of belonging to TSoM. Any organization that's not growing runs the risk of becoming obsolete. Our job is to make sure that doesn't happen. The TSoM membership committee—Pauline Oo, Lindsay Orr, and Paul Stachour—spent hours looking at what we should focus on. They developed a survey, evaluated membership and survey data, and studied trends over the years. (See *page 1 story*.)

Their valuable information and yours will be used to set TSoM goals for 2008 and beyond. We'll be establishing these goals at upcoming board meetings. So, please join us if you have ideas. Meeting dates, locations, and agendas are sent to TSoM-Announce. Sign up for free at www.mntango.org/signup.html.

—Diane Hillbrant
diane_hillbrant@yahoo.com

p.s. Based on member feedback, we bought a killer sound system and debuted it at the January milonga. Now we need a location for an outdoor milonga! Suggestions?



2008 TSoM board members (L to R): Pauline Oo, Lisa Thurstin, Diane Hillbrant, Lindsay Orr, Rebecca Gerber, and John McFarlane. (Bob Haselow was absent for photo.)

Newly elected TSoM board

Annual board elections are typically held at the January milonga. This year was no different. Results from the January 12 election:

Diane Hillbrant (re-elected as president), Rebecca Gerber (new to the board, at large), Lindsay Orr (current member, elected as treasurer), and Lisa Thurstin (current member, elected as secretary).

A big thanks to those retiring from the board: Lina Dajani (at large), Dan Griggs (treasurer), Sylvia Horwitz (at large), and Kim Kotila (secretary).

Board members in the middle of their two-year terms: Bob Haselow (vice president), Pauline Oo (editor and at large), and John MacFarlane (at large). ■

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After surgery, the dancing continues

By Susan Anderson

It was a hot August day in 2004. Sylvia Horwitz and I had decided to have lunch together after our school district fall workshop. Sylvia, also a tango dancer and TSoM member, watched me walk into Sydney's restaurant and exclaimed, "Susan, you are limping. What is wrong?"

After 10 years of pain that was steadily worsening, my problem could no longer be hidden. I had been diagnosed in 1995 with osteoarthritis in my left hip. I was told that although a hip replacement was the only solution, I was too young for the procedure and should wait until I was completely incapacitated. So, I took supplements and worked my way through daily life as best I could, forgoing long walks and strenuous activity.

In 2002 when I was in a good period, I began salsa dancing and found it was somehow easier on me than walking. Six months later I was drawn into the tango. It was the music that first caught me, and it is still the music. I love it.

But, the tango was a different story

for my dancing. Staying on my axis on my left side was nearly impossible. I always hurried to get my right foot on the floor. The cross (it was my left hip) was excruciating. I took Advil before and after dancing and sat on the floor during lessons. Being drawn by the music and then the dance, I could not let it go. I was told if I had a hip replacement that I could not cross and tango would not be an option. By the time I met Sylvia for lunch, I had not been dancing for months and could barely walk, but I did not want a hip replacement.

After telling Sylvia my story, she told me of her son who had undergone a new procedure called hip resurfacing. This was the beginning of my journey to being healed.

Through hours of research on the Internet, I learned this surgery was for younger, more active candidates and leg crossing was no problem. I decided this procedure was for me, and I chose Dr. Thomas Gross, the top resurfacing surgeon in the U.S. In June of '05 I flew to South Carolina with my "hippy helpers" and

fellow dancers Lynda Cannova and Danielle Dona.

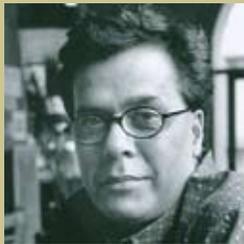
I woke from the surgery pain free.

By August, I was able to walk around Lake Harriet unaided, something I had not done in 10 years—a miracle. (If you have questions about the procedure or my surgeon, please contact me).

Dr. Gross gave me the go-ahead to salsa after six weeks and tango after six months. For the first time I could cross without pain. Because my brain had instinctively avoided the cross, I sometimes did not get the cross cue and was often told "that was a cross." I did not mind, I wanted to catch up and get it right.

I treated myself a trip to BA in March '06, three months after returning to tango. In BA, I took lessons from Mario, who had been a physical therapist, and he understood my problem. It was during those lessons that for the first time I began to actually "get the feel" of the tango. But I still had problems with a weak left side

After surgery, cont. on page 6



mumtaz anwar, associate AIA, a Cornell University graduate, has extensive experience in architecture and interior design. Known for minimalist designs that are functional and aesthetically pleasing, he pays attention to play of light and shadow and free-flowing spaces. His careful attention to detail, lighting, color scheme, and decor is evident in fellow dancer Mark Jefferis's loft, pictured at right. The furniture is designed and built by Mumtaz as well. Call Mumtaz for help with your design projects.



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Tango

By Robert Fulghum, aka Señor Don
Roberto Juan Carlos Señor Fuljumero

Remember the film, *Saturday Night Fever*? Remember the way John Travolta pranced down the street? Remember how he walked onto the dance floor? Electric, alive, a stud horse with flaring nostrils! The men stood back. The women breathed heavily, twitching with eager rhythm, drops of perspiration on their brows. The music cranked and the crowd went wild when John went into his disco moves. The man could dance!

Tango is not disco. But that's the feeling I'm after in taking up the Argentine tango challenge. It's the impression I want to make. I want attitude you can smell. When I walk into a club, and put on my shoes, I want people to stand back in awe and fear. He's here! *Señor Fuljumero!* The man can dance! Women will stand in line to be asked. Take a number.

Fat chance, you say. A white-haired, 70-year-old man whose potbelly shows no matter how hard he tries to suck it in. A murmur will go up from the crowd. "Ohmygod, why is he here again?" Men will smirk. Women will leave en masse for the ladies room. Bartenders will call 911.

Go ahead, mock me. *Señor Fuljumero, Classico Tangoista* is on the move.

Well, OK, so far I can flare my nostrils pretty well. And I have the suit, the shoes, even the hat. The lessons are coming along nicely. And nobody actually runs when I show up for an evening milonga. Looking like you might know what you're doing is essential, and I can at least look that way. Women have



Tango demo at Club Español, Buenos Aires. Photo by Pauline Oo

actually asked me to dance. Well, OK, one woman. The beauty-impaired, sequined-up old lady with toxic breath who seems to show up wherever I go to dance. Maybe I'm overdoing the nostril flaring.

Tango is not for wimps. Tango training requires stamina, fitness, and the ability to make quick, graceful moves without falling down. The dancing doesn't start until eleven at night and goes to three in the morning. Shifting to being a night owl is a new zone. Like having musical jetlag.

My children are embarrassed by my activities. They don't talk to me about how I'm spending my time. They know. But they are all middle-aged. They can only imagine, and they never ask for details.

"What's your old man doing this summer?"

"Well, he's obsessed with the crows in his yard and tango dancing, and he's out on the town until three in the morning four nights a week."

"Wigged out? Senile?"

"We're not sure, but something's loose."

So? So? What's wrong with being loose? Loose is not immoral or illegal.

So they have to come and get me in Buenos Aires because things got so loose some of my parts came unhinged? Or so what if I die some humid night dancing in a basement waterfront dive with a smoldering Latina wrapped around my body like an anaconda. So?

Read this:

Tango: The vertical expression of horizontal desire.

Born as an expression of longing, lust, passion, loneliness, and conflict.

It lives on as a dance that arises at the center of the soul to meet the dancing soul of another.

Often referred to as a three-minute love affair, tango is an exchange of

mutual pleasure and sensual, without intimacy. And it's forever true: it takes two to tango.

In tango we dance our emotions rather than speak them. The dance floor becomes a canvas, and our hearts become palettes. Feet and bodies paint sensuous emotions in sweeping strokes. With a dab of desire here and a shading of sorrow there, the tango comes to life. We dance tango because we have secrets.

Got it? This is not stamp collecting or golf. It does not describe life in a nursing home, either.

A longtime friend asked me if my tango-mania wasn't a little over the top.

"Tango? At your age? You must be out of your mind." Perhaps. Silly to some. Comedy to others. Serious to me.

The blustery macho noises I make about tango disguise a fearfulness. I fear the shrinking of life that goes with aging. I fear the boredom that comes with not learning, not taking chances, not getting out on a limb of some kind, where the fruit is. I fear traveling around as a senior spectator just looking at stuff without being involved in it. I fear the dying that goes on inside when you get up from the game to sit in the waiting room for the final checkout line. No.

I want the sharp pleasure of the anxious edge that comes from beginning something new that calls on all my resources and challenges my ego. I long for the excitement that comes from being able to say to a dancer, "I admire that. I want that. I do not know—teach me. I've come to learn."

A dear friend died last week.

Died, as we say, peacefully in his sleep after a long life and a quiet retirement. His files were organized, his basement and garage clean, and all his dues paid up. A tidy end.

Not for me. My goal now is to dance. All the dances. As long as I can.

And then to sit down contented in a chair after the last elegant tango some sweet night and pass on because there just wasn't another dance left in me. ■

Fulghum is author of seven best-selling books, including All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten. He wrote this essay on July 17, 2007. In October, he began his three-month tango study in BA. "The adventure was meant to be a gift to myself in honor of my 70th birthday," he said. And he went "to the well of tango armed mostly with the tools of enthusiasm and an open mind."



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The gift of dancing tango

By Colleen TwoFeathers

Backwards in three-inch heels? Never. Carlos Di Sarli; who? Close embrace with a stranger. I don't think so!

But one night last June I found myself taking a chance, joining my 20-some-year-old daughter Alix after her salsa class for the "Intro to Argentine Tango"—a half hour crash course at Four Seasons before the Friday night milonga. I had no idea what to expect and no previous social dance experience. Secretly, I thought that perhaps my age might be against me in this venture.

Alix was my first partner as we tried to walk each other across the floor. (Only four others showed up for the lesson and they happened to be couples). The music started, we took our first tentative steps and both felt the tango like a "bolt" electrify us. With those beginning steps I felt the power, thrill, and profound beauty that is the tango.

The journey has been phenomenal ever since.

It's really difficult to express what a gift dancing tango is for me. My background includes sexual abuse, so the embodiment, close connection, and trust that tango absolutely requires have had its challenges at times. It's a dance on the knife-edge that mirrors our deepest joys and fears simultaneously. But all is released when I surrender to the dance. This is where I feel that maturity/age is helpful. Patience and self-forgiveness come easier when one has experienced more life.

I don't think we can really feel this dance without riding on the shoulders of its history. It's recalled at a cellular level through the

music. The music is the manifestation of the tango's history; it is the common bond we share with our partners on the dance floor, past and present. This again, is where age and experience give the older dancer a definite advantage. Alix, on the other hand, has the physical stamina and flexibility that someone younger brings to just about anything they do.

Attending practices, workshops, and milongas with my daughter is quite marvelous. We have become each other's coaches, sounding boards, and cheering sections. When she's struggling I'm there for her, and, conversely, when I want to give up because I keep repeating the same mistakes, she helps me find the balance and fun once again. When the tango pushes our buttons, we talk it over. And our age difference brings a diversity of views to this process.

Though at times I feel bittersweet that I've come to this dance at mid life, the fact is, only now could I have received what the tango is inviting me into. It's something that I NEVER expected to happen to me. While on the dance floor I am unburdened by labels, roles, and false personal limitations. When it



Colleen TwoFeathers and her daughter Alix.

all comes together, when I'm present to the moment and make the heart connection with my partner, the dance transports me to a place of beauty and mystery. Tango is full embodiment, emotional depth, and spiritually transforming. For me, it is both sacred and sensual. What a gift!

Everyone who attempts tango no matter their age or circumstances deserves kudos. For she's not an easy companion to give your self over to. She'll challenge you to exasperation and then on a turn of your three-inch heels, drop ultimate joy in your lap! You realize she's a continual temptress, seductively beckoning with, "*Un baile mas por favor!*" Just one more dance please. One more. ■

After surgery, cont. from page 3
after favoring it for ten years.

Therefore, for the past year, I have been working on an exercise program called Body Flow. It incorporates tai chi, yoga, and pilates. It has helped me improve my strength and balance. I will continue working on strengthening my legs and taking lessons from the

talented teachers in Minnesota to improve my tango.

Sometimes I may not pick up on the cross, sometimes I may go blank on the lead, sometimes I may not keep my axis, but I keep improving and I have no pain. At a milonga, I try to follow Mario's advice: Think about none of the above, *just listen to the music.* ■



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Survey results, cont. from page 1

survey comments into immediate goals. This year, we'll focus on three priorities:

- Increase friendliness and inclusiveness at TSoM events (i.e., create a "Big Brothers and Sisters" program for new leaders

and followers, help dancers find practice partners, and host non-dancing social events).

- Increase cost effectiveness/value of TSoM membership (i.e., provide more discounted events and increase the experiential value of TSoM events).
- Harness the support of TSoM volunteers (i.e., establish a volunteer database).

Note: Weble-mail issues are being addressed by another committee.

Please continue to share your opinions, or better yet, share some time and energy. Help make this tango community one you are proud of.

E-mail Lindsay, membership committee chair (orrx058@umn.edu), to join our committee or to be added to the TSoM volunteer list. (Ideas: host a visiting dancer or bring snacks to a milonga.) ■

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

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When not dancing tango, Paul sells pipe organs to churches and schools in nine Midwest states and composes choral music for anyone who will buy and sing it. In his spare time, he also fly-fishes and travels.

TSoM hotline

For current information on milongas and other tango events in the Twin Cities.

763-576-3349

Member spotlight

Name: Paul Lohman

Profession: Sells pipe organs, composer

How did you get into tango?

Tango has been a two-phased endeavor. I took beginning classes for about a year starting in 2001 and then set it aside for almost four years.

I came back to tango [thanks to Mary Garvin] two years ago, and there's no going back now.

How often do you dance?

Once or twice a week, plus weekly lessons and practice.

Describe an a-ha moment.

Tango seems to be one "a-ha" moment after another. I've learned that tango is always new, and how much fun is that!?

Biggest challenge?

It used to be *not quitting*. Now it is *patience*—enjoying the whole journey [every step!] of learning this dance.

What does tango mean to you?

Expression. The joy of creating [improvising] a beautiful dance with another spirit/body.

Tango mantra?

"Paul, stand up straight!" and also, "Be here, now."