

A male take on the female dress

By Don Rowe

Women have come to a night of tango wearing some fabulous attire. I often comment and compliment, genuinely, when this occurs. It really adds to the pleasure of the dance and the evening. Of course, I have not noted in detail what it was in each instance that I admired. So now I must rely on memory for that which created those delightful moments. But, being a visually trained person (I'm an architect), I am observant of all that pleases or disappoints my eye.

So, let me start with this: Dress for the occasion. Several women may show up looking quite attractive, but they may as well be going to work or church instead of to dance. Dress for the dance. Not a swing dance or a salsa dance; dress for the tango. It has its own vocabulary, its own vernacular. It has its unique demands on the dancer.

I don't have a preference for either dresses or pants on a woman. I don't like skirts, though—even short ones. They restrict leg movement—theirs and mine. No *ganchos* with skirts. Nor *sacadas*. Even a basic walk is difficult because I can't plant my foot where it should be when the follower moves down the line of dance.

Male take on dress, cont. on page 5



Photo by Pauline Oo.

Tango dress

By Betsy Henderson

There is a stereotypical image of a woman dressed for tango. The female form is evident in the tight red dress, with movement allowed by leg slits and asymmetrical openings, wearing black fishnet stockings, and some black lace added to complete the look. Is this tango attire we all aspire to or should this remain the clichéd look of the street performer in La Boca?

My doctoral research examined dress as a form of communication. I wondered what messages could be extracted from dress worn for tango. I had a preconception as to what tango clothes should be or what styling elements women dancers need and want. We dress up for the night out in clothes

to express who we are. We wear clothes that allow movement (his and yours), that are comfortable, and that increase our self-confidence. Personally, I choose to wear fabrics and styles that accentuate the movement of the dance, while having some element of sexiness. But what about the other women in town? How do Twin Cities *tangueras* present themselves at their favorite *milongas*?

I sent five multiple-choice questions through the TSoM-Announce list. I received 23 responses: some gave detailed answers to the open-ended questions; others wanted to extend the conversation and spoke with me personally in a very passionate dialogue. The following is from the additional information supplied as well as the questions.

Tango dress, cont. on page 4

From the president

This is my last address as TSoM president. I have enjoyed my tenure—the past three years have been exciting and full of changes. Some highlights: The Web site was updated with a new elegant look; *Tango Moments* evolved from an amateur newsletter to a glossy publication that nearly pays for itself; TSoM worked with the Ordway and the University of Minnesota to promote tango shows and host milongas and master classes. TSoM provided the U-tango club with a grant to host a visiting instructor.

It has been my goal since the beginning to make TSoM more than just a monthly milonga. I strived to make our organization one that was inviting to all types of people and open to all ways of dancing tango. In my conversations with leaders of other tango communities, I have learned that those two qualities are key for a community to grow and be vibrant.

I hope I have succeeded in making TSoM better; if not, I hope I have planted a seed for greater things to happen. You will have the chance to nominate a new president on January 10, 2009. Do you have someone in mind right now? Please let me know.

Thanks for your support and encouragement. See you on the dance floor!

—Diane Hillbrant
diane_hillbrant@yahoo.com

One foot in BA

This is a regular column on the sights and sounds of Buenos Aires.

Palacio Barolo, on 1370 Avenida de Mayo, was built in 1923 by Italian-born businessman Luis Barolo. The building is 100 meters high, with a lighthouse that has the power of 300,000 spark plugs, making it visible from Uruguay.

Although the average pedestrian may see nothing more than a striking skyscraper, those who enter it will find innumerable references to *The Divine Comedy*, an epic poem

by Italian poet Dante Alighieri. For example:

- The building's height represents the 100 cantos of the poem.
- Its three distinct sections *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* correspond to the three books of the poem.
- Each floor has either 11 or 22 offices—most of the poem's cantos have 11 or 22 stanzas.

In 1997, Palacio Barolo was declared a National Historic Monument. In 2002, it was entirely

Foundations in Tango and Beyond with Sabine Ibes

CLASSES + PRACTICA, WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

- 7–8 p.m., foundations 1&2
- 8:15–9:15 p.m., int/adv
- 9:15–10:15 p.m., practica

PRACTICA, SATURDAY MORNINGS

- 11–12:30 p.m., practica

TANGO FUSION MILONGA

- 8 p.m., EVERY 4TH SATURDAY

SABINE IBES AND
NIKO SALGADO
612-501-7956
612-600-1288

www.socialdancestudio.com

SOCIAL DANCE STUDIO
3742–23RD AVE S, MPLS



restored following the original plans. To get there, take Line A to the Sáenz Peña station. ■

Editor's note: TSoM member Vessela Kouneva wrote a story about visiting Palacio Barolo. Due to limited space, we couldn't publish it. Please ask her about the building or her story at a milonga.

Appoint your officers!

A nominating committee to identify the TSoM board members for 2009 is forming. Paul Stachour has been appointed chairperson. More details soon on TSoM-Announce. Call Paul at 952-884-5977 with questions or suggestions for board nominees or committee members.



Photo source: www.bue.gov.ar

Grand Jeté
651-227-0331
www.grandjete.com

10% OFF!
one pair of dance shoes
WITH THIS COUPON

975 Grand Ave, St. Paul, 2 blks east of Lexington
Open M-Sa 10am-5:30pm, Tu 'til 8pm

Editor's goodbye

It has been two years since Ranja and I took over as designer and editor, respectively, of *Tango Moments*. We wanted to reinvent the newsletter, to make it something we could all be proud of and that was always a worthwhile read. I hope we succeeded.

Working on the newsletter has been satisfying and fun, but now it's time to pass on the creative torch. Maybe to YOU? To you and a friend? Sandra Uri will stay on as advertising manager, so that's one less task to worry about.

Questions or want details about taking over, e-mail pauline@umn.edu.



Florencia Taccetti...

as Argentine as tango
and as universal as dance.

Ongoing classes, all year long

Intermediate-Advanced level (By invitation only)
Wednesdays ■ 8-9:45 p.m.

Fundamentals for all levels (Beginners welcome)
Thursdays ■ 8-9:45 p.m.

Shows, events, private lessons

Four Seasons Dance Studio ■ 1637 Hennepin Ave S. ■ Mpls
E-mail: tango@florenciataccetti.com ■ Phone: 612-871-9651
See www.florenciataccetti.com for prices, details, and map.

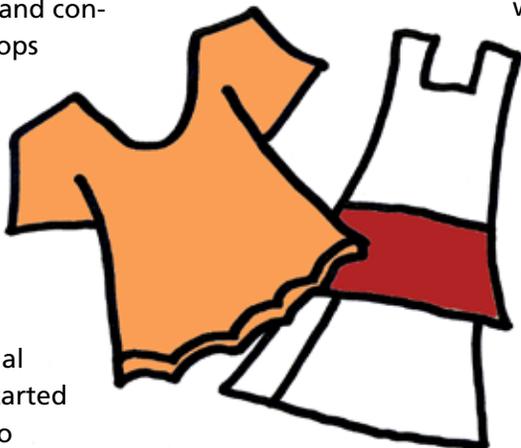
Tango dress, cont. from page 1

When asked how they would describe their favorite tango outfit, the top responses, in ascending order were: knee or calf-length skirt in drapey or flowy fabric with coordinating top, fitted pants and coordinating top individualized with a favorite accessory, and (the first choice) a short skirt, fitted dress, or fitted skirt and top. To obtain their outfits, most shopped at thrift stores and consignment shops and prided themselves in not spending much money.

The additional comments started to group into three different reasons for clothing selection. The first is the functional aspect or how clothes interact with your partner and with dancing. Pants, skirts with slits, or short skirts allow for those "El Pulpo" moves, while hemlines that grab your heel can stop you dead in your tracks. There's no *secada* if the straight skirt doesn't let you. The man doesn't want to be bouncing off a trampoline. There are various considerations when selecting a top, as so aptly described by one woman: "Tango clothes have to be 'sturdy' enough not to be pulled sideways by a leader's too-tough embrace." Women also described the tactile considerations for men—being sensitive to the smoothness of the fabric they are wearing, the waxy feel of polyester, sequins, or rhinestones.

A second criteria was economics. One question asking if

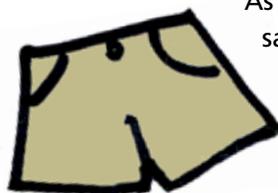
there were complaints about tango clothes, drew this response: "When I've been to tango stores, I usually notice these issues: Clothing is poorly made, so will not last many months on the dance floor. Or, clothing is made from expensive materials and I have to pay extra money to dry clean them.... This is one reason why I typically wear 'everyday' clothes to milongas. I can pop them in the washing machine when I get home."



The last area was presentation of self and the desire to look attractive. Dancers repeatedly mentioned getting more dances based on what they were wearing. "I think a slinky dress on the dance floor, even

if you haven't got a perfect bod, is sexy and fun, and the guys seem to like it." Others want to break from the traditional sexy connotations of tango dress, expressing a desire for classy, colorful clothes, specifically mentioning a wish to escape from too much black.

Given all the criteria above, when asked to name their greatest complaint about tango clothes, half the respondents had no complaints. This would indicate respondents generally rejected the stereotypical tango dress, for the more functional, economical aspects or for individualized clothing choices.



As dance is a conversation with our partner, our clothing choices communicate our

Tango dress, cont. on page 6

I like natural fibers over synthetics (satin or nylon may look great but may have a Teflon effect when it comes to the connection). Once, I danced this great tanda with one of my favorite partners who was wearing a gorgeously elaborate dress. After the music ended, our close embrace remained embarrassingly close when two or three sequins on her dress got tangled with my knit shirt at nipple and navel levels. It took us longer than the cortina to disengage.

—Bruce Eckhardt

I like it when dancers wear clothes that are truly comfortable for them. I want to dance with a partner who is going to enjoy the dance! Who can enjoy it if they aren't relaxed and comfortable? And who can relax and be comfortable in uncomfortable clothes?

Please don't ever force yourself to wear something that doesn't fit your body or your personality because you think we men will like it!

—Paul Cantrell

Personally I like flannel (soft). Do you think we could start a lumberjack tango trend?

—Anonymous local dancer



Call me a cranky old grump, but guys in T-shirts and jeans at a milonga put me off. Slacks on women are fine, but—since you asked—I do prefer skirts and dresses. A bit of jewelry and a touch of makeup doesn't hurt either. Nobody has to go all out for a regular Friday night, but a little care makes a big difference.

—Conan the Grammarian

These days people wear blue jeans to weddings and funerals; it's just too informal. So to me it's not so much what they wear as seeing that they put some time and care into their appearance.

—Christopher Everett



I like smooth fabrics for the top that allow easy changes in the embrace. I don't care for rhinestones or other decorations that can snag my shirt. And I appreciate when the apparel reflects respect for classic tango. Torn, frayed or stained clothing is not appropriate for Argentine tango; perhaps for a different dance.

—Mike Doyle

More quotes, cont. on page 6

Male take on dress, cont. from page 1

Long (ankle-length) dresses are also problematic. They may be gorgeous, but the tango must be danced conservatively when dancing with a gown or slender, long evening wear. Tight, little cocktail dresses may be cute and very sexy, but they don't work that great for the tango, either.

The best is a dress that drapes loosely to mid thigh or knee length, flatters the wearer regardless of body shape (mostly) and allows freedom of movement (of the legs). An embellished hem adds to the effect—and to the dance, amplifying movement. A dress that gathers in at the waist both flatters the female form and allows for a comfortable embrace, keeping a bundle of fabric or accessories from getting in the way.

Cotton and silk (I'm guessing), along with synthetic blends for color and texture effect, are probably my favorites.

Print fabrics can be a delight too, while lace decoration can attract my eye and speak so favorably of femininity.

That is not to say that I dislike pants and their variants. Again, loosely draped, gathered at the waist, flattering the body. It all works for her and for the dance. ■



Illustrations
by Pauline Oo.

Q & A with Don

TSoM member Don Rowe was one of several men who answered an informal e-mail survey about the clothing women wear for tango. Below are our questions and his replies.

TM: Does fabric make a difference? Or do you prefer to dance with a woman wearing a certain type of fabric?

DR: Let me say what I don't like: fuzzy sweaters (leave lint on my jacket); wool blend skirts; open knit tops, vests, or shawls (they snag).

TM: If you could get rid of one clothing item or trend forever, what would it be?

DR: Hip-hugger pants revealing mid-drifts that (shall we say) have seen better (mostly younger) times. These pants can be worn by a few, but very few. Most people, especially as they age, even while trim and in good health, are still just a little flabby. Me too; so, I don't wear muscle tops. I dress my age and I look better for doing so. Show off skin in other places: shoulders, legs, neck, cleavage. (You've got a lot going for you, ladies.)

TM: Other thoughts (caveats):

DR: I may be critical here of women and what they wear, but that was the question. (Don't even get me going on the men.)

The bottom line is if a woman wears something that's not my favorite, or if her tummy's hanging out, it doesn't mean I won't have a memorable dance. It just doesn't hang on my favorite tactile or visual experience. ■

Learn Argentine tango with **Lois Donnay**

- Lessons from beginner to advanced
- Private lessons
- Workshops including musicality, floorcraft and embellishments
- Tango milongas, parties and events
- Tango demonstrations
- Trips to Buenos Aires

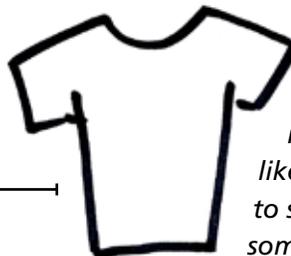
More information
www.mndance.com
612-822-8436



Tango dress, cont. from page 5

values to them and others. We should expect there to be a vast amount of individualism, with as many clothing conversations as there are embellishments dancers can choose to exhibit. ■

Betsy owns Soft Chocolates, a clothing line for women; view her collection at www.betsyhendersondesigns.com.



On what they'd get rid of:

When asked to name one item of female clothing or trend they would get rid of, men replied:

- Strong perfume. It makes me sneeze.
- Skirts and dresses that get in the way of my knee.
- Pant legs that catch on heels.
- Belly button rings.
- Anything too shiny.
- Anything too revealing.

On hair:

Tame the frizz and curls, ladies. When a partner's hair finds his cornea, Bruce Eckhardt, a TSoM member in Albuquerque, is "forced to dance with only one eye or politely retreat to [an open embrace.]" ■

More quotes, cont. from page 5

For me, it depends on the milonga. If it's a relaxed environment among friends I really don't care about her clothes as long as they don't get in the way of the dancing.

If it's a more formal event (a monthly milonga like TSoM or a milonga at a festival), I like dressing up. And I like to see the women showing some of themselves in their clothes.

If they feel playful, they should dress accordingly; if they feel traditional and formal they should again dress accordingly. I think this is important because it gives me a feeling of what I am getting into when I ask this person to dance. It tells me something about her, and the more information I have the better I will be able to make the dance enjoyable for us.

On the other hand, if you're wearing a long face or have on your antisocial attitude, then it doesn't matter how cute your outfit is. I probably won't ask you to dance.

—Javier Zuniga

Powerful new coverage for a precious asset: you.

Maximum DifferenceSM, Aflac's newest cancer/specified-disease insurance policy, is available now.



To find out how it may help you and your loved ones, talk to your Aflac insurance agent during the upcoming enrollment period.

Michael J. McGuire, (651) 330-8035

Toe to toe

A column by John MacFarlane

"Tango is an urban dance, not a folk dance, and so it has no 'costume.'" (Christine Denniston, *The Meaning of Tango*) This is the corollary of the dictum that there are no steps in tango. I take comfort in this, as most guys are clueless when it comes to dressing for a tango event. Style is not our game, and we gladly leave this to the ladies.

A few men do appear in suits and even tuxedos. But they are probably related to European royalty. For most of us, this is beyond our reach. So I suggest the following procedure for the clueless male as it works for me.

First, if your clothes are piled up like a compost heap, hang them up for easy access. Now, step into your closet and close the door. Turn off the light, because we need to eliminate your flawed style sense from the proceedings. Grope around in the dark until you find a pair of pants and put them on. Find a shirt, put it on and button it up.

Now turn on the light, stand in front of a full-length mirror, and

ask yourself in all honesty, "Do I look like a rodeo clown?" If so, repeat the closet procedure until you can say "no." We may well dance like rodeo clowns but looking like one scares them off before we even get a chance.

Now check yourself over. Are your shirttails even? I have had women point out my poor buttoning technique. So make sure you check and avoid the pain.

Now, what about your pants? Make sure they aren't the ones with the rip in the knee from the night you were crawling around on the roof at 1 a.m. for reasons we need not go into here. And don't wear the pair from the fishing opener, which smell like walleye.

You may well be concerned that such a random approach to dress-

ing could result in poor color choices. Well, lights are low at tango events and women usually don't wear glasses and, thus, can't see you very well. Let this work for you.

Avoid those shoes with springs in the heels, because you will walk like a kangaroo. Also stay away from the one with lights in the heels. We don't want to call attention to our feet, as they will frequently be doing the wrong thing.

This approach produces a rich and exciting panoply of male garb, eliminating the boring sameness that results from a craving to be "in style."

As my close personal friend Gerard Manley Hopkins said to me just the other day, "Thank God for pied beauty." Amen, brother. ■

Sanae Storey

"We thought it would take several months if not a year to receive an offer on our house.... However, with your assistance and your diligent work, we accomplished this challenging task in less than a month. This shows your extensive knowledge and expertise in the...Minneapolis/St. Paul area."

—Claudia Carranza and Carlos Carranza-Torres

651-690-8564, 651-338-8889, SStorey@cbburnet.com, www.cbburnet.com/sanaestorey

COLDWELL BANKER
BURNET
SUPER AGENT

*** FEEL WONDERFUL WHEN YOU WAKE UP IN THE MORNING ***
KNOWING YOU HELPED END WORLD POVERTY

HUMANITY UNITES BRILLIANCE (HUB) is a new global organization **dedicated to ending world poverty in 10 years.** HUB has attracted the participation of the largest collection of philanthropists and entrepreneurs in the world, including Jack Canfield, Rev. Michael Beckwith, Marianne Williamson, John Gray, Mark Victor Hansen, Jean Houston, and **Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus of the Grameen Bank**, among many others.

HUB's approach to ending poverty: **Food + Water + Self-Empowerment Education + Microcredit Loans = SUSTAINABILITY**

Help people all over the world move from survival to self-empowerment to sustained abundance. You can choose a \$33 or \$99/month membership, and you can even invest as a HUB Founding Angel (Founding Angel benefits include 10,000 equity shares currently valued at 50¢/share; free lifetime admission to all HUB educational events for you and any 3 others, valued at more than \$10,000, and more. NOTE: An extremely limited number of HUB Founding Angel equity memberships remain available for \$5,495).

For more information, email Vika Miller at hub@joyfuladventure.com, or (612) 483-1822. **YES, WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.**

Tango Moments staff

Editor: Pauline Oo
Designer: Ranja Yusuf
Ad manager: Sandra Uri
Contributors: Betsy Henderson,
John MacFarlane, Don Rowe

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

E-mail pauline@umn.edu or call 612-669-7995 to comment or contribute stories and photos.

E-mail sandrauri1@aol.com for ads.

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

2008 TSoM board

Diane Hillbrant, President
Robert Haselow, Vice president
Karen Martinsen, Treasurer
Lisa Thurstin, Secretary
Rebecca Gerber, Member at large
John MacFarlane, Member at large
Pauline Oo, Member at large
Lindsay Orr, Member at large

www.mntango.org



P.O. Box 24044
Edina, MN 55424

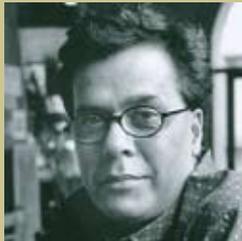
Stephen Peters

Editor/Writing Coach

(612) 872-6288 ■ storymaker@aol.com

Like party planning?

TSoM needs your help to plan a 10th anniversary party! E-mail Karen.Martinsen@spps.org.



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.



montage design, inc.
architecture + interior design

innovative design response to unique challenges with an artistic touch

mumtazanwar
612.964.7576
www.mdzinc.com