



The Tango Experience!

Come, Join the dance...



Seductive and mystifying the Argentine tango has been in Malta for some years. **Deborah Marshall-Warren** an enthusiastic beginner, introduces us to a milonga
Photos: Bernard Bonnici

Here's a riddle for you to ponder...What has elegance; style; sophistication; and caché? A designer label? Well, many may agree, but we are not talking designer at all... So here's another clue...What has connection; presence; listens; and communes to music? People praying? Well yes, but neither am I talking of prayer.

Perhaps you too are curious as to how this piece could possibly be talking Tango, when we seem to be thinking of everything but Tango. You may also wonder how a dance form can possibly embrace such a bouquet of evocative vocabulary when historically the story of the dance has aroused ridicule, marginalization and revolution as the dance has even been banned?

The saying goes "it takes two to tango" but really it takes a community to build a tango family. Here on our island there is a family of beginners, like myself, improvers and incredibles! When I mention incredibles I am imagining Charlotte and Sinan, who gifted the dance to our shores, and of Aldo who continued the dance instruction, and of Nathalie and Gordon who continue to sweep students off their

feet with their Argentinian-inspired instruction; and of Claudia who both dances and administrates the continuity of the dance and the visiting instructors who come to add to the menu.

Let me begin, for I stepped out as a *complete* beginner. I was nervous, especially as I went to my first class alone. Naturally something experienced for the first time can attract nervousness as a counterpart. My clients often tell me how nervous they are embarking on their first hypnotherapy session, and realize fairly quickly that there is nothing to be nervous about at all! You wonder whether you will be able to do it, and whether it will work for you, and for sure I felt exactly this way as I stepped out to Tango.

There is a distinct sense of ritual in preparing to step out. First there is a change into your chosen shoes from your working shoes and into strappy supportive high heels.

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Our class begins with measured walking around the danceroom at Il-Forn in Birgu, where we receive an initiation into the intricacies of the core step – the walk. Nathalie reminds us time and again of the importance of 'presence', and about 'listening' and 'sensing'. I find myself amazed and intrigued because the very vocabulary employed to describe the communication in Tango is the very same vocabulary I employ to describe the experience of hypnotherapy. Listening goes with my therapeutic territory so this was positive news.

In Tango the steps are not fixed patterns but improvised by the leader as the music unfolds. So how does the follower know what is going on? The leader transmits his intention to the follower through the subtle shift of movement in the torso area, with the follower leaning into the movement. Such it is for the follower to listen to those subtle shifts through being present, and by giving if you like the 'present of presence' to her partner. And it is the follower who enriches the expression of the steps through embellishments, be it a decorative flick of the foot, or a slow circle made on the floor, moves which decorate the path.

The process prompts you to examine the ways in which you learn to communicate with others, and teaches you as much about yourself as it does about tango. Sending and receiving, speaking and listening. These are universal forces we employ in all of our relationships, in all areas of our lives. There is a sense of communion and a silent communication that teaches you inner as well as outer developmental steps. Here is a form of dance that offers personal development as well as the spirit of the dance! Internally I am aware of being in a different state – quiet and grounded inside. There is a sincere warmth and connection in the group and a healthy sense of discovery and play. Was this I wondered a form of spiritual dance?

Following the class, you are invited to stay and to practice at the Milonga (the name given to the social form of the dance). Forget the extreme sport of competitive tango which is as far from social tango as stage hypnosis is from therapeutic hypnotherapy. Social tango is a dance that involves



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navigation of often small floor spaces. So, shortly after 9pm our beginners group is joined by the improvers and as I mentioned earlier 'the incredibles'!

Before me couples take to the floor seemingly involved in a private sensual dance that conveys elegance, style,

sophistication, connection, real presence and passion. I watch with awe and humility, and find myself really rather moved. Everytime the musical mood changes, couples dissolve back into individuals, only to re-form into new couples.

There are the experienced dancers who dance fluidly, shifting their weight in a way that makes it easy and obvious to follow, and there are the beginners who reveal themselves in their expressions of intense presence reaching forward into the step. I see clearly that this is a dance that engages the participants with acceptance of each others learning curve. Moreover the dance builds trust. A tango follower trusts the invitations given by the subtle shifts of movement in the dance. I have joined a dance of soaring souls – at one with each other and at one in their love of the dance.

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Another wonder of tango is that it brings out the leader's and follower's male and female energies. For those female readers who are apt to get stuck in their male energy – tango can help you gain more balance to step back into your female and to celebrate the feminine stance. And for those male readers, tango can bring out the assertiveness that goes along with the dance through the physical communication with your partner.

Come and discover what you can create by exploring your different energies in Argentine Tango. 🇲🇹

• **A Beginners' Course** will commence in early October. For more information email: tangomalta@gmail.com or call Nathalie on 7928 7755. You can also check the blog www.tangomalta.org for the weekly Milonga and latest information.

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