

# TANGO AUSTRALIS

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### Performance of Piazzolla's 'Tango Ballet'



(Photo: Zephyr Quartet performing at Tango on the Hill, September 2012)

Tango on the Hill was an event truly worth the drive to windswept Willunga hill, bringing together divine live music, spectacular tango performance, creatively fun social dancing, and the tasty food and wines of the Fleurieu region.

A friendly welcome greeted beautifully dressed guests as they escaped into the rosy warmth of 'Our Place at Willunga Hill' and were transported to a tango salon of elegance merged with real country hospitality. A glass of Minko sparkling wine in hand, guests were treated to chef Andrew Clappis's menu of delicious *Farinata* (a specialty of the Italian Riviera), *Pizza Napolitana*, *Salmone con rye*, and *Calamari fritti*, followed by luscious *Cannelloni di Ricotta* and *Risotto di Asparagi*, featuring that perfectly crisp asparagus sourced from South Australia's Riverland.

When Adelaide's brilliant Zephyr Quartet took to the stage performing Astor Piazzolla's 'Tango Ballet', a complex work in several movements, Hilary Kleinig encouraged the audience to discover their own personal tango journey through the music. There was almost a palpable change of atmosphere in the room as 'Tango Ballet' evolved through Zephyr's gloriously rich strings. Classic tango works by Enrique Francini and Mariano Mores followed, and the dance-floor quickly filled with couples moving with grace and respect for both the evocative live music and the couples around them. It was a subtle and breathtakingly beautiful sight to see.

With more hearty fare to follow, guests were treated to *Arrosto di Maiale* (roast pork to die for), seasonal vegetables, a crisp Spring salad and Andy's famous bread.

Show time arrived and with lighting quick legs and fringed gown, Adrienne Gill burst onto the stage with Andrew Gill in hot pursuit, cheekily performing a feisty 'La Trampera' milonga to open the tango performances. Shifting to casino royale with cat-suit diamante bling & dinner suits, Southern Cross Tango ensemble dancers David Wheaton, Michelle Evans, Shaun McClelland and Kylie Clifford smoldered through their dangerous & spectacular James Bond choreography. The mood then intensified with 'Primavera Portena', a dynamic group choreography performed with excellent synchronicity & power by ensemble dancers Ed Lomax, Sarah Fletcher, Anne Rodgers, Aaron Charlton, with Andrew and Adrienne Gill. Finally, Richard Galliano's mesmerizing 'La Vals a Margaux' was performed by the elegant Andrew and Adrienne Gill, with inspiring lithe lifts, flowing colgadas and a joyful connection.



(Photos: Tango on the Hill performers Kylie, Anne, Michelle, Sarah & Adrienne; Ed, Shaun & Aaron)

Andrew Clappis's SBS Feast Magazine 2012 Award Winning '*Cannoli alla Siciliana*' – fresh pastry tubes filled with ricotta, candied fruits and chocolate, followed by their delicious *Amarettus* biscuits and espresso coffee, topped off the evening as the social dancing continued under the full moon.



(Photos: Guests enjoying Tango on the Hill at Our Place at Willunga Hill)

Organisers Andrew and Adrienne Gill presented a well planned event and rehearsed tango show with quality performers, and Adelaide's brilliant Zephyr Quartet, recently

returned from a season at the Edinburgh International Arts Festival where they performed with acclaimed SA company Leigh Warren & Dancers, played with passion and sophistication. But it was to a disappointingly small audience. It wasn't all that long ago that a big promoter pulled the plug on a widely advertised Australian tour of a top Argentine tango production. Poor advance ticket sales suggested the tour would result in substantial financial losses. Cancelling the Willunga show was an option considered by the organizers, but rejected out of respect for the artists involved and the loyal tango supporters who bought tickets.

This is a sad state of affairs. The likely result is that these efficient organizers, who have been generous providers of quality tango entertainment, with a record of putting up their own money (in the absence of government or corporate sponsors) to enthusiastically support Australian tango artists of all kinds, will think long and hard about the risks involved in attempting and investing in future events – and the losers, ultimately, will be tango in Australia. The dream of growing viable audiences for Australian tango artists is, sadly, fading. The performances were filmed so that those who would have loved to be there, but could not, may one day be able to see what they missed.

Tango communities can become diffused by many competing low cost events, satisfying the needs of some dancers, but do little to grow the popularity of tango outside its existing small circle. With a reliance on recorded music & djs, this can be a limiting factor to the possibilities of further developing Australia's performing arts & artists.

What is the answer? Are we content for tango in Australia to be just lessons and a never-ending round of milongas with only recorded music, with an occasional jaunt to Buenos Aires for a further tango fix? Do we want the only live tango shows to be those imported 'spectaculars' with overseas performers, designed to appeal to an uncritical, poorly informed (about tango) mass entertainment market?

The real market for good tango music and artistic performance may not be tango dancers at all, but rather classical music and dance lovers – people who buy tickets for recitals in concert halls, attend Arts Festivals and boutique Arts events, and for whom the fine food offered as part of the Willunga night package would be icing on a very good entertainment cake.

In Buenos Aires and Europe there are two distinct local markets for tango – the dancers who frequent the milongas, and the music lovers who go to the classical tango recitals and concerts at theatres like the Colon. In Australia, the first wave of tango dancers was made up of people who were music lovers and concertgoers too. Tango dancing was added on to their regular cultural pursuits. Perhaps this has changed. Time will tell.

## **Toast to the Coast**

Tango will be part of the Geelong region's celebration of food, wine and local culture. 30 vineyards in Geelong, the Moorabool Valley, Surf Coast and Bellarine regions are participating over the weekend of 3 - 4<sup>th</sup> November. Southern Cross Tango and Community Tango in Geelong will be presenting a tango show and getting people up

and dancing during the Spanish Fiesta at del Rios Winery Restaurant at 2290 Ballan Road, Mt Anakie on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> November. Community Tango in Geelong dancers have booked a table for lunch. Additional reservations for lunch must be made with the winery – tasting and activities will be from 10.30am – 5.30pm on Saturday & Sunday. Google Toast to the Coast Geelong 2012 for details of all the events, transport arrangements and weekend passes.



## Melbourne Cup Afternoon Tea Milonga

Dress in race finery and enjoy tango with a delicious champagne afternoon tea on Cup Day, Tuesday 6 November, 1 – 5 pm. With sweeps and a Best Hat Prize, you can watch the Melbourne Cup race on a big screen – Sidewalk Tango, 327 Swan Street, Richmond.

## Recipes for Tango

Cookbooks preserve culinary heritage. Recipes are historic records, and food customs are as relevant to a cultural historian as dance history. For thousands of years, women cooked what was hunted, foraged and gathered. Productive grains were cultivated, and local animals domesticated. People ate raw foodstuffs that were readily available, and learned to cook to make other substances digestible and more palatable.

Your tango correspondent is exploring cultural roots, from Viking Scandinavia, to Russia and Eastern Europe, to Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, England and Ireland. To see – and taste - what has been created from sugar, flour, eggs, and butter, regionally, is inspiring. The past is enshrined in traditional dishes – breads and pastries, cakes, puddings and pies. A traditional pastry parcel of meat and vegetables is a *pastie* in Cornwall and an *empanada* in Argentina. Scones served with strawberry jam and clotted cream is known as a ‘cream tea’ in Devon, and a ‘Devonshire tea’ elsewhere.

Supermarket globalization (or the Tesco effect) seems to be balanced in rural Dorset, Devon and Cornwall by intense pride (and marketability) of farm-grown and regional produce. Restaurants list food suppliers. Market towns like Tavistock have old-fashioned butchers and fishmongers who know their stuff and proudly display and sell local produce. Farm gate shops are popular in rural England, but not yet so in Ireland.

Other old customs and rituals are kept too – youth and beauty are celebrated with flower and bunting bedecked mid-Summer poles in Scandinavia, and May Poles in the UK. Harvest Festivals gave thanks for the plentiful fruits of summer and autumn, and modern food & wine festivals carry on the tradition. Immigrants to the New World took their customs with them. In Argentina on the first day of spring, women are given flowers. In Canberra, there will be flowers and dancing at Tango In The Spring, and there will be a

Spring Tango Festival in Melbourne.

The winner of the inaugural Australian Tango Poetry Competition, Charles D'Anastasi, made a poignant association between dance and food when he wrote in *The Emigrants* of a South American couple, surprised at work in a bakery shop,

*'ghostly faces covered in flour,  
powdered white hair, white fingernails:  
the apparitions' finest hour  
baking beautiful cakes,  
tears streaming down their cheeks  
as if stranded in their own self-portrait'*

Tango is not unlike cooking. The techniques and elements are straightforward. Master these and you can do anything. With tango, the basics – music, man, woman, embrace, steps, and pivots (ingredients) are combined (method) to create an infinite number of variations. A good teacher trains students to recognize tango's basic elements and empowers dancers to use these to create their own tango. Other social dances are like this too – people learn the basics and then they can dance. As with baking, simple components are combined to make dynamic, different and satisfying things.

But not everybody learns to dance for the pleasure of the social experience. We have met Americans who employ personal dance 'coaches' to accompany them on overseas trips to dance festivals. One man employed a woman for twelve months (full time) to teach and partner him in the seven different dance styles he wanted to master. Was he learning to dance – or learning to dance with his teacher? We never saw him partner anybody else.

Dance has been part of human life since earliest times. Cave paintings depict primitive man dancing, probably in imitation of animals to propitiate gods and animal spirits, to guarantee successful hunting and food supply. Men were hunters; women gathered and most probably did the cooking too. Women's early dance seems to have been directed to female deities and matters relating to fertility and childbirth.

Corroborees and tribal ceremonies incorporate dance and feasting. Before winter set in, Aborigines feasted on Bogong moths that were rich in fat, at High Country gatherings and along the Murray River. You can be pretty sure they danced too.

Many cultures have kept traditions of dance – in Spain, Italy, Greece and Turkey, and Pacific island communities, dance is a part of life. Eastern and northern Europeans have maintained dance and food traditions, even in exile. Food and dance are part of Philippine social life, at home and abroad. Columbians are known for their joyous dancing at social occasions where food is relished too. Immigrants from various African and Middle Eastern nations get together to eat and dance. Certain foods have religious significance in Cuba, where dance is an integral feature of life too.

In rural Australia, from the early days, people got together to dance and eat. In the tiny town of Cooraclare in Ireland, just a few days ago, we were invited to a barn dance, arranged by 7 blokes to celebrate their 30<sup>th</sup> birthdays. Everybody in the district was going.

Once Australian kids learned folk dances in school. However, in big cities, today, most people rarely dance – which is a pity. Think how summer life would be enhanced if we had a tradition of playing music and dancing at picnics and outdoor BBQs ... Wouldn't it be fun if people danced in the marquees at the Melbourne Cup?

At the tango tea dances, held in fashionable hotels after the end of the First World War, dainty afternoon tea dishes of delicate sandwiches and little cakes were served between dance brackets. Recipe books of the era can be sourced to discover how the foods were prepared. Tango lyrics offer fewer clues than food books to an era, but the 1925 tango '*A media luz*' places the song in historic social context, with its reference to a phonograph and to Sunday tea dances.

Food fashions come and go, like tango styles. New replaces old – but things are rarely completely new, even if technology brings change, old things are always being revived. When Corning launched Pyrex tempered borosilicate glass in 1915, oven-baked casseroles were suddenly the rage. The tools of molecular gastronomy and sous-vide cooking, aerators and blast chillers, have made new dishes possible in restaurant, if not domestic, kitchens.

Radio and the commercial availability of Thomas Edison's invention (1877) of the phonograph changed the way tango was experienced, and affordable recordings facilitated tango's international popularity.

Modern technology has made possible a daintier dance shoe that permits female dancers to perform moves that were not possible with older heavier, more constricting shoes. With elegant new 'well-tempered' tango shoes, women claim more attention for their moves on the dance floor. *Adornos* have become the icing on the tango cake.

During the Great Depression and the war years, eggs, sugar and dairy products were rationed – but cooks adjusted and managed to keep baking cakes and biscuits with whatever they could lay their hands on. Cakes with dried or bottled fruits and cold tea as liquid components date from this era. (Note: these recipes could be resurrected for today's low fat diets.)

Argentina was largely cushioned from the global effects of the Great Depression, but we wonder whether dance styles and steps popular in the 1930s, as with prepared foods, reflected the austerity of those times in places like Australia, the USA and Europe.

Anzac biscuits are being baked commercially today and sold for prices that belie the cost of the humble ingredients. Past generations would have scoffed at the thought of buying these biscuits in a shop, when cooks knew how to quickly and cheaply make them at home. Cupcakes are fashionable, and we've seen honey joys (cornflakes & honey/golden syrup) and rice crackles (rice bubbles, capha & cocoa) presented in designer patty pans in a café – for adults. Once we made them ourselves – or with our kids.

Many recipes have never been written down, just passed from mother to daughter by demonstration and practice – from one generation to the next, from boom times to eras of hardship, like the traditional transmission of tango dance steps. As with the 'whispers'

game played in childhood, small variations occur with each transmission, and so what is practiced now will be quite different from what was done several generations ago.

A lovely anecdote tells of a mother, suffering from serious dementia, and her daughters who have hand-written copies of a favourite family cake recipe. Two daughters are good cooks themselves, and the third daughter doesn't cook much at all. Each daughter was asked to bake the cake. The third daughter went to her mother's home to watch how the old lady, now working purely from distant retained memory, baked her cake. The daughter carefully wrote down everything the mother did, and then baked her cake accordingly. It was the third daughter's cake that most closely resembled the mother's excellent version. Some things might be forgotten, but they are not lost.

## **Fashion news from Europe's catwalks**

London Fashion Week's strongest emergent trend is flat shoes – news that will delight *Tangueras* who can save the killer heels for the dance floor, and look for something flat and comfortable for non-tango occasions. One designer showed short (but not too short) girlie, retro shift dresses, and straight skirts in pretty prints in aqua, pink, cream and apricot, with matching espadrilles. Jasper Conran's models wore long patchwork print dresses and had bare feet. Ribeiro teemed what looked like black jelly-bean sandals with floral shorts, and Victoria Beckham sent her models out wearing flat gladiator sandals.

## **Going with the flow and finding tango unexpectedly**

In Stockholm we took a cab to the listed address for tango that night, only to find a darkened and very closed-up restaurant. Things looked more promising for our day in Amsterdam when we found reference to a festival happening at the time we were visiting, with an afternoon milonga in a Spiegeltent, followed by an outdoor milonga at a nearby hotel. 'Bingo', we thought. Then we discovered that the festival was not in Amsterdam but in a city 20k away, and we didn't have transport and feared not getting back in time for our ship's departure.

Who'd have thought that two Australian dancers, with their hair and clothes perfumed with peat smoke, would finally find tango in a small seaside town in Co Clare in Ireland?

The smoke aroma was from the heater in a tiny little stone cottage where we spent a few days, on a farm on the outskirts of Cooraclare. Peat is hard to ignite and doesn't burn with much heat, but it certainly smokes. Before potato blight and the famine of 1845 – 1849, mass starvation, evictions of the cottiers (tenant farmers) by local landlords, and resultant emigration, Cooraclare had been a thriving community. Today it is a quiet village, with a much smaller population than it had in the 1800s. There are no shops, but there are still three pubs, that are well patronized after football (Gaelic) and rugby training sessions.

We arrived on Saturday evening, with no provisions. We dined at a hotel in Doonbeg, recommended by the Gaelic footballer. We sat at a table next to two Englishwomen who

had lived in the town since purchasing the grandmother's old cottage. They were mother and daughter, celebrating the mother's 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday, and warmly chatty, telling us about places we should visit. Loop Head, the mouth of the Shannon River into the Atlantic, and the Bridges of Ross were absolute 'musts', far more beautiful and wild than the Cliffs of Moher, they advised (how right they were!). And we would be able to get breakfast in the town of Kilkee, on the way.



*(Photo: Stella Maris hotel, Kilkee)*

Sunday morning dawned with weak Irish sunshine. As we approached Kilkee, the standout building was the brightly painted Stella Maris Hotel, further embellished with two purple beribboned wedding cars parked out the front. They couldn't serve us breakfast, (because of the wedding party – not sure if it was post or pre) but recommended a place down the road. And so we went to Myles Bar, walking in the door at 9am to be greeted by the unforgettable sight of a row of men, sitting at the bar, drinking glasses of beer. We had a choice of 'full Irish' or scrambled egg and toast. We sat at a table near a group of guys, who turned out to be holidaying from Dublin. They were tucking into a mountain of toast and large plates (the full Irish) of fried eggs, bacon, black and white pudding slices, and tomatoes. They suggested that we should go to Liscannor, further north, where they had happened upon a matchmakers' festival the day before – the place was buzzing with hundreds of hopeful singles. Surreal, the blokes said. We did go there, but found no merry-making or matchmaking. No wonder, we subsequently learned that we had the wrong town. We should have gone to Lisdoonavarna (the Irish accent can be hard to decipher).

If this seems a long-winded tale about tango, forgive me, but after a week in Ireland talking and listening to the fascinating locals, you realize the art of storytelling is alive and well in the emerald Isle – and this way of connecting is delightfully contagious.

The Myles Bar's scrambled eggs were surprisingly good, and as we wandered back through the town we spied a poster in the window of another bar – a large poster of a posed couple, with the words 'Tango Monday 8pm – Stella Maris Hotel'.



*(Photo: Myles Bar at 9am, Kilkee)*

To put this in context, Kilkee is a small and old seaside resort town, with a bay beach and a row of single story cottages - some restored to charming B & Bs, along the

waterfront, where there is also an impressive old hotel, The Strand. We took photographs. From a small stand on the road a young woman was selling the days' periwinkles and bags of dried seaweed (it's very good for you, an old man told us). Looking back around the bay we remarked on an image of Che Guevara painted on a sea wall.



*(Photo: Che image on sea wall, Kilkee)*

Of course we returned to the Stella Maris at Kilkee at 8pm the next night with our tango shoes, and followed the familiar sound of tango music to a back room where we found Neville Gawley of Limerick Tango, and partner Deidre Martin, whose family owns the pub where we'd seen the poster. They have been teaching a small new group of dancers in the town, for a few months, and they were delighted that experienced dancers (us) had turned up to partner their students. This class night was to prepare their (very nervous) students for their first milonga, which was to take place the very next weekend. We were delighted to help and loved dancing with the group, who turned out to be most of the local traders. Things got even more interesting when discussion turned to the forthcoming weekend Latin American Festival (not just a milonga), and one of the group unfurled a large banner with the familiar image of Che.



*(Photo: The interior of the Stella Maris Hotel; Che Latin American Festival banner)*

It turned out that the hero of the Cuban revolution, Argentina's Che, had visited Kilkee in 1961 and stayed in The Strand Hotel. Irish artist, Jim Fitzpatrick had painted Che's

portrait, the famous black and red image. Last year, in commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Che's visit, the town had held its first Latin American Festival. Last year a salsa dance was part of the festivities. This year there would be tango for the first time. Che's daughter who has published a book about her famous father and is also a doctor, is coming for the festival, and Neville and Dee have persuaded an Argentine band who were performing in Germany to come on to Ireland for the weekend. They hope the festival will become an annual event.



(Photos: Finding tango in Kilkee;; The Limerick Tango group in Killee)

We'll keep in touch and let readers know. Might be nice to co-ordinate a visit to Ireland. They're not into recreating Buenos Aires milongas, but, like us, are putting tango into local social and intellectual life. A tango dinner dance is planned, and apparently the Stella Maris has a beautiful large downstairs room.

## Hot tango topics

### What has gone wrong with tango in Buenos Aires?

FLACSO - Argentina is running an on-line post-graduate course of 8 classes on the social and political history of tango. Topics include the relationship between tango lyrics and the birth of the bourgeois family, why women's desire is an issue for tango, is there a relationship between the end of Peronism and Piazzolla's music, and **why has tango stopped being popular in less than ten years?**

This last topic is of particular interest, for the time span of ten years coincides with what we consider to be the spoiling of tango in Buenos Aires. Put simply, we believe they killed the goose that laid the golden egg.

Here are a few thoughts on the issue...

The milongas that we first experienced were the equivalent of our local community dances. They weren't widely publicized – You had to know someone in tango to find out where to go. When you got to one milonga, somebody would invite you to another the next night, or the night after. If a famous dancer was going to do a performance at a milonga, or if there was a special night for charity (usually to raise money for some or other dancer down on their luck) you might be invited. If you were modest, well behaved, suitably humble about your dance abilities and respectful of local customs, you were welcomed into the circle. People were flattered that you were interested in their culture. There were very few tango visitors to Buenos Aires then, but we were regularly invited to

dance at the milongas, and partnered by some very good dancers.

There was one tango shoe shop – and here professional dancers had their shoes made too. Most visitors were siphoned off to expensive and flashy tango dinner shows that employed the best of the stage dancers and tango musicians, who then changed their clothes and went to the local milongas. This was convenient because it relieved cashed-up visitors of their money, and kept the milonga scene under the surface for the local people. There were many of these dinner shows – too many. The market became saturated with too much of the same.

At that time, the closest most local *portenos* in Buenos Aires got to tango, apart from singing along with favourite songs, was when they, too, went to see one of these dinner shows for a special occasion, or went to the Teatro Colon for a concert. The two crazy Aussies who came to learn about tango from the custodians were something of an oddity. We introduced some of our *porteno* friends to their first milonga. People at a certain level of society did not frequent milongas. Many of my dance partners drove taxis at night, to make ends meet, when they weren't dancing tango. Our friends were astounded that we went to shabby tango establishments to dance with taxi drivers.

Argentina's peso was set free from the US dollar and its value plummeted. Buenos Aires became an affordable destination to budget travelers. Young back-packers were drawn to Argentina and the romance of tango – they came and they stayed, socializing in packs. New Yorkers found they could work at home for 6 months, earning enough money to live in BsAs (and dance tango) for the rest of the year. They bought houses and apartments when the economy went bad, and property prices fell and people were desperate to sell. Outsiders bought up old buildings and bits of old buildings and shipped them in containers to the USA and Australia, where they ended up in architect's showrooms and restaurant fit-outs.

The milonga scene was changing fast, with groups of tango tourists arriving to dance and upsetting the fragile balance of things. The traditional dancers tried to hold on to their customs, but the invasion was underway.

Decisions were made at high level to capitalize on tourist interest in tango. The World Tango Festival and the Tango Congress were established to lure more tango tourists to Buenos Aires. Tango tourists came in droves, and traditional local dancers retreated from this new onslaught.

A tango competition was established to reassert Argentine domination and control over what was happening with tango in other countries. Rigid rules set out how tango should be danced. When overseas dancers came for these competitions and proved to be better than the locals, it was not liked. Argentine teachers were traveling the world, many teaching the same steps and figures everywhere they went – many of these complicated figures belonged on the stage, but the new generation of dance students overseas wanted to dance these figures – and they began to do so at the milongas of Buenos Aires.

Tango shoe shops popped up like mushrooms, including one that positioned itself at the top end of the market and employed salesgirls who were unwilling to produce attractive

shoes for customers who did not fit their desired image.

Tango tourists came, at first to take private lessons with established teachers. Teachers got greedy and kept charging in \$\$US, even when the peso was low. The reasoning seemed to be that anybody who came from overseas to learn tango in Buenos Aires must be wealthy. Soon, the younger, worldlier (and less affluent) tango tourists took to just doing group classes, as the locals had started to do (because they recognized that there was money to be earned from tango).

Where there were once a few respected tango teachers, increasingly there were masses of ordinary ones, many with less experience than the overseas tango tourists, trawling the milongas and presenting their business cards to susceptible new arrivals. Many such 'teachers' were poorly trained opportunists, but vulnerable tango visitors were not to know this.

### **Lessons to be learned for growing and marketing tango**

How can tango businesses effectively grow a market for the product they offer, without having a detrimental impact on the viability and fragile balance of existing tango groups?

A pattern has emerged with tango in Australia's cities. A single pioneer tango teacher, or several, begins classes, trains dancers and nurtures a group, establishing regular milongas or events to provide for social dancing. As interest in tango is generated, other teachers, often from other cities, are attracted to set up their own operations where the action is. Sometimes these teachers cross over to tango from less popular dance genres or overly competitive other tango arenas. In time, some tango students begin to feel that they, too, can play a role in the tango scene, beyond being merely a student or a social dancer. New groups are formed, organizing their own activities: milongas, practicas, tango social groups, collectives, tango clubs and events.

It is healthy for tango to grow in a way that develops a range of viable and enjoyable regular milongas where people can dance socially on different nights. But the scene must also keep standards high by sustaining a professional body of tango teachers, trained in dance education and tango, and governed by Australian Health and Safety regulations and ethical standards that have been established to protect the public.

It is not good if things get out of balance. Overall, the circle of continuing tango dancers is quite small, so when new operators encourage defections from an existing circle to theirs, rather than attracting new people to tango, the original group and its activities become unsustainable – and in time, the overall effect is a reduction in the number of people dancing tango.

Dance fashions come and go, and the tango circle is comparatively small. Latin and salsa dancing have been strong. Swing made a big splash and continually reinvents its scene with revivals of styles. Zumba is everywhere. Rock and Roll has strong local followings. Ballroom has developed a new market on the back of the TV reality shows and uses the incentives of competitions and levels to motivate students.

Advertisements for tango classes or events in high circulation daily newspapers (or their weekly supplements) are expensive and they rarely yield rewarding results. People might note a tango ad, but they rarely follow it up, at the time. A certain cumulative effect can apply - if you can afford to advertise every week, then eventually your brand and product will become familiar and people might be tempted to try. Mostly, however the results do not justify the expense.

Occasionally, when a big budget tango spectacular is coming to town, local operators can benefit from a flow-on effect from the advertising and hype that is created around the spectacular. At such times it might be worth trying a little 'piggy-back' advertising.

Weekly local suburban newspapers stay around the home longer than the dailies— and a surprising number of people read them. So, if tango teachers can cultivate a good relationship with advertising and editorial managers they will have more chance of getting exposure at a reasonable cost, especially if they are savvy enough to spend time thinking about how their product connects with local needs.

The television dance competition reality shows do very little for our kind of tango, except make us cringe. A few students might come to tango as a result of these shows, but really they are geared to boosting the market for ballroom dance and directing students to these studios, and not places that specialize in the genuine Argentine tango.

Anecdotal evidence suggest leaflet distribution or letterbox drops have minimal effect in getting people to classes, although a good looking leaflet with a strong image to promote a forthcoming event can be effective locally.

Word-of-mouth is the most effective means of bringing new people in to tango. Somebody experiencing the joy of tango can be a great ambassador, although, as dancers are aware, timing is everything. The early throes of tango passion are contagious – but then, we fall a bit out of love, and things are not so rosy when we discover that tango is more difficult than we thought and recognize that hard work is needed to achieve a satisfactory result. We tend to not be quite so ambassadorial during the times when we plateau and our tango journey slows and becomes more challenging.

Most tango marketing is directed towards people already in tango. It is cheaper and easier to poach somebody else's student or milonga supporter than to bring a new person from outside the circle to tango. Tango will only survive, as a living art (as opposed to a museum piece) if new people and influences keep coming, and the tango arts are fostered locally.

The tango scene was moribund in Argentina, a sputtering flame tended by a reducing number of elderly aficionados, when Astor Piazzolla, playing with jazz musicians, shook things up by creating an utterly different kind of music that appealed to a different market. This sector was younger, multi lingual and not necessarily Spanish-speaking, and in Europe and North America. The seminal 'Zero Hour' was recorded in one impassioned session at a studio in New York, not Buenos Aires. Argentina may be proud of Piazzolla's legacy today, but when he began to drastically change things, he was reviled in traditional tango circles, on one occasion even booed off a stage. The traditionalists struggled to understand what was happening to their music – they wrongly felt they

owned tango and were locked into what they believed tango to be. They were unprepared to embrace what tango was becoming.

There is room for real growth in tango in Australia, growth that does not just redistribute those already dancing or weaken existing groups. Creative targeted marketing could be useful in growing tango. We need local tango heroes. Don't forget that tango's early popularity was fuelled by idols of the silver screen and the new radio & recording industry. Modern technology and good marketing took tango to the world. In 1905 sailors took thousands of copies of the sheet music of a song popular in Argentina and distributed them in their ports of call.

Many Australian city suburbs have no tango, but they do have facilities, access to transport, and need. Tango could be an effective and useful way to enhance lives.

In a regional city, a Salvation Army Outpost serves food and drinks to the needy during the day. Mostly men, but some women too, come. This is their life. They cluster in little pockets of sunshine that invade a bleak urban street. They are in all our cities, a largely invisible underclass – people we rarely acknowledge who inhabit shabby boarding houses and rooms you probably wouldn't want to enter. Dance would enhance their lives.

If facilities in low-income neighborhoods can be made available at affordable rates for classes and social gatherings, then more people can be encouraged to learn tango. Sponsorship to subsidize lessons with suitable teachers might be an idea to pursue. It is worth talking to community leaders, service organizations, agencies, churches and schools about the social benefits of tango, and asking for help in promoting a pilot tango activity. Perhaps teachers from different schools and those from tango clubs and networks could work together on projects like this. Tango needs people with money to pay for lessons, but it could also be made available to those without the money.

Tango might also learn from the '*Gatorade*' story. Tango needs to find out who is dancing, who is falling by the way, and why. Then the issue of how others can be brought to tango can be addressed. *Gatorade* had lost its way in the marketplace, was competing with every other 'sports drink', and sales were diving when Sarah Robb O'Hagan, who'd cut her teeth as general manager at *Nike*, took over the *Gatorade* brand at PepsiCo Beverages. Maternity leave gave time for serious thinking and research. Brand advertising had been directed to men aged 18 – 49, yet it turned out that high-school athletes made up 15% of a loyal market, and marathoners and weekend warriors made up another 7%. So 22% of the market was responsible for 46% of the sales.

The drop-out rate from school sport coincides with the time when kids stop playing for fun and start competing. Coaches were targeted – the brand sponsored summer camps for kids and sports events (to help them learn to compete), and local training groups for the older serious athletes, stressing the connection between nutrition and performance. The company is unveiling a new system by which athletes can track their performance and compare it with others. The product line has been diversified and clarified, with a focus on what the athletes need, and the company has become a hub of fitness expertise. Product sales are climbing steadily.

## Melbourne Tango Photography Competition

Rod & Belinda from Project NFT and Sidewalk Tango are hosting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Tango Photo Competition at 327 Swan Street, Richmond (upstairs). All work will be displayed for viewing on Wednesday 31 October. You can register a vote for a 'People's Choice Award'. The Awards night is on Friday 2 November. For competition rules and information contact Rod Hemphill at [rjh@keypoint.com.au](mailto:rjh@keypoint.com.au)

## Australian Tango Poetry & Tango Short Story Competitions

Entries can now be submitted for the **2012-13 Australian Tango Poetry Competition** & the **Australian Tango Short Story Competition**. There is \$500 prize money in each competition and opportunity for submitted works to be published in Tango Australis, with an Australia-wide and international readership.

For further information, contact The Convenor: Australian Tango Poetry & Short Story Competitions, PO Box 3024, BAREENA, Newtown, Victoria, 3220. Telephone: 041 753 1619. Email [richardandpam@mac.com](mailto:richardandpam@mac.com) (put 'Australian Tango Poetry 2012-2013' or 'Australian Tango Short Story 2012-2013' in the header).

### Tango Festivals & special events

#### **SYDNEY TANGO SALON FESTIVAL**, September 27 – Oct 2

Workshops, milongas, performances & immersion courses with international tango artists Roberto Herrera & Lorena Goldestein, Gabriel Misse & Analia Centurion, Sebastien Misse & Andrea Reyero, Pancho Martinez & Lorena Ermocida. [www.stsfestival.com](http://www.stsfestival.com)

#### **TANGO IN THE SPRING**, Canberra, October 5 – 8

A social celebration of Argentine Tango – Milongas & special events  
[www.tangoonthespring.org.au](http://www.tangoonthespring.org.au)

#### **OCTOBER TANGO BOOT CAMP + events**, Hobart, October 12 – 14

Tango Milonguero's 4<sup>th</sup> birthday events in conjunction with Fabian & Karina Conca's workshops  
[www.tangomilonguerotasmania.com](http://www.tangomilonguerotasmania.com)

#### **SPRING TANGO FESTIVAL** in Melbourne, October 25 – 28, 2012

Workshops, milonga & performances <https://sites.google.com/site/solotangoaustralia/home>

**Melbourne Cup Afternoon Tea Milonga** @ Sidewalk Tango, November 6, 1 – 5pm

**MPG TANGO RETREAT**, Marysville, 9 – 11 November [www.melbournepractica.org](http://www.melbournepractica.org)

**BASH**, Bundanoon in Southern Highlands NSW, 23 – 25 November

Social tango weekend <http://bundanoon.weebly.com>

**TANGO ESCAPE** @ Daylesford, 7 – 9 December

Social tango weekend [www.tangoescapes.com.au](http://www.tangoescapes.com.au)

**MPG Twilight Milonga** @ Old Mechanics Institute Oakleigh, January 27, 2013

[www.melbournepractica.org](http://www.melbournepractica.org)

## **DARWIN TANGO**

Northern Tango in Darwin contact Kelly (0448 664 593), Belinda (0402 244 483) or Carol (0435 531 599) [northerntango@gmail.com](mailto:northerntango@gmail.com) or <http://sites.google.com/site/northerntango>

## **MELBOURNE TANGO**

**Sidewalk Tango, David Backler @ 327 Swan Street, Richmond. Regular schedule:** Wed classes & practicas, 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday **Tango Noir Milonga** 9 till late. Tiki Bar on Fri, Sat & Sun nights. Open Practica 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of month. [www.sidewalktango.com.au/melbourne-tango-events](http://www.sidewalktango.com.au/melbourne-tango-events)

**Solo Tango.** Alberto & Natalia's milonga, last Saturday of each month at 154 Liardet St, Port Melbourne. For class details [albertocortez@bigpond.com](mailto:albertocortez@bigpond.com) Ph: 0411 665 454

**Tango Bajo.** Bill 0416 015 327 & Leigh 0410 257 855. Events, Milongas every Sat (except last of the month) You can BYOG. Class, 8pm, social dancing 9pm-midnight. 1st Mon of month special workshops. Wed classes, 7 – 8.15 Beginners; 8.15-9.30 Inter & Advanced @ St Albans Church, cnr Orrong & Wynnstay Rds, Prahran. Email [leighis@fastmail.fm](mailto:leighis@fastmail.fm). Tango Bajo Milongas @ St Albans

**Tango Tambien.** Tues, 8.15 – 9.15pm Beginner – pre Inter, Richmond Uniting Church. Thu, Beg – Improvers 7 - 8pm, Intermediate 8.15 – 9.30pm @ St Catherine's Church, 406 Kooyong Rd, Caulfield South. Fri, 6.30 – 7.30pm General level at Unitedstyles Dance Studio, corner Chapel St & Brighton Rd, East St Kilda. Ph: Leigh 0410 257 855 or [www.tangotambien.com](http://www.tangotambien.com)

**Chris Corby** – Tue classes & Fri Practica @ St Albans, & Mon class @ Essendon. Ph: 0423 388 799

**Tango Butterfly.** Dana Parker 0403 192 867 –[info@tangobutterfly.com.au](mailto:info@tangobutterfly.com.au). Mon, Tues, Thurs (with practica), & Sat Classes, practicas & Monday La Milonga de las Mariposas, 1543 High St, Glen Iris. [www.tangobutterfly.com.au](http://www.tangobutterfly.com.au) Contact [dana@tangobutterfly.com.au](mailto:dana@tangobutterfly.com.au) to register for classes

**Viva.** Christian Drogo's Tango Bar Milonga on last Fri of month. 1/241 Smith St, Fitzroy. Doors open 7.30, open class from 8pm, then social dancing till late. Classes @ Studio 241 & Milonga Workshops on Thursdays at Hit the Floor, Level 1, 245 Glenferrie Rd, Malvern (entry from Stanhope [info@vivadance.com.au](mailto:info@vivadance.com.au) [www.melbournetangohotspot.wordpress.com](http://www.melbournetangohotspot.wordpress.com). 03 9415 8166.

**Melbourne Tango** hosts milongas @ Czech House, 497 Queensberry St, North Melbourne on the second Sun of each month – class @ 6.30, milonga from 7.30 pm.

**Project NFT (Neo Fusion Tango).** [rjh@keypoint.com.au](mailto:rjh@keypoint.com.au)

**TangoMelbourne** – [reneefleck84@gmail.com](mailto:reneefleck84@gmail.com) or [info@tangomelbourne.com.au](mailto:info@tangomelbourne.com.au)

Classes, practicas, pop-up milongas

**Melbourne Practica Group Inc** is a non-aligned community organisation running open & structured practicas and other events that promote social tango at J Studios, 100 Barkly St, North Fitzroy. [www.melbournepractica.org](http://www.melbournepractica.org)

Well worth a visit is informative, well-researched tango site [www.verytango.com](http://www.verytango.com) Go to the contact page on the website to advertise a coming event.

**COMMUNITY TANGO IN GEELONG:** Learn & practise simple tango for social dancing with experienced teachers. No previous dance experience or partner needed. First Monday of each month, 7.30 - 9.30pm: Class & social night with supper: third Wednesday, 8 – 9.30pm @ Christ Church hall, corner Moorabool & McKillop Streets. \$3. Contact: [richardandpam@mac.com](mailto:richardandpam@mac.com) Phone 041 753 1619.

Go to [www.southerncrosstango.com.au](http://www.southerncrosstango.com.au) for links with other Australian & overseas tango groups

## **ADELAIDE TANGO**

**TANGO ADELAIDE CLUB** – Milongas & Practicas. **Club Milonga (1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month), Saturday 6 October, 8pm – late** at Druid Hall, 2 Cassie St, Collingswood. \$10/7. [www.tangoadelaide.org](http://www.tangoadelaide.org)

**TANGO SALON** – Classes & Milongas. **Comme il Faut Milonga (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday each month) – Celebrating it's 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday on Sunday 21 October, 4pm – 8pm** at Mt Osmond Golf Club. \$10. [www.tangosalonadelaide.blogspot.com](http://www.tangosalonadelaide.blogspot.com)

**SIEMPRE TANGO** – Classes, Practicas & Milongas. **Milonga at Dom Polski Centre – Friday 26 October, 8pm – late** at 232 Angas St, Adelaide. \$10/8. [www.siempretango.net.au](http://www.siempretango.net.au)

**SOUTHERN CROSS TANGO** – Classes, Practicas & Milongas. **Tango By the Sea Milonga (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month) – Sunday 14 October 4 – 8 pm** at Henley Sailing Club, 1 Esplanade, West Beach. \$12/10. **Tango Luz Milonga – Saturday 27 October, 8-11pm** at Restless Dance Theatre Studio, 234a Sturt St, Adelaide (enter via Arthur St). \$12/10. [www.southerncrosstango.com.au](http://www.southerncrosstango.com.au)

## **SOUTHERN CROSS TANGO**

### South Australian Schedule

#### **TUESDAYS**

**8 Wk Course: Tuesday 4 September – 23 October 2012**

Beginner 7-8pm; Intermediate 8-9pm

(\*No classes 30 October, then final 5 Week Course: Tuesday 6 November – 4 December 2012)

@ Hilton RSL, 147 Sir Donald Bradman Drive, **HILTON**

#### **WEDNESDAYS**

**8 Wk Course: Wednesday 5 September – 24 October 2012**

Beginner 7-8pm; Intermediate 8-9pm; Advanced 9-10pm

(Final 6 Wk Course: Wednesday 31 October – 5 December 2012)

@ Deaf Cando, 262 South Tce, **ADELAIDE**

#### **THURSDAYS – WEEKLY PRACTICAS**

**Thursdays 7-9pm @ Deaf Cando, 262 South Tce, ADELAIDE**

#### **SATURDAYS**

**Tango Training for Women**

**3 Wk Course: Saturday 13 – 27 October, 9am -10am**

(\*No class 3 November, then 4 Wk Course: 10 November – 1 December)

@ Southern Cross Tango Studio, 50 Kauri Parade, **SEACLIFF**

#### **MONDAY – SATURDAYS**

**Private Tuition:** Variable times available @ Southern Cross Tango Studio, 50 Kauri Pde, **SEACLIFF**

### Victorian Schedule

#### **COMMUNITY TANGO IN GEELONG**

**First Monday of the month:** Tango Group Class & Social with supper, 7.30-9.30pm

**Third Wednesday of the month:** Group class & supervised Practica, 8.00-9.30pm

Vic Teachers: Pamela & Richard Jarvis - Ph: 0417 531 619 [richardandpam@mac.com](mailto:richardandpam@mac.com)

@ Christ Church Hall, cnr Moorabool & McKillop St, **GEELONG**

**Southern Cross Tango  
Andrew & Adrienne Gill**

**Ph: 0419 309 439**

[sctango@bigpond.com](mailto:sctango@bigpond.com)

[www.southerncrosstango.com.au](http://www.southerncrosstango.com.au)