

TANGO AUSTRALIS

AN AUSTRALIAN TANGO JOURNAL

June 2011

Published by SOUTHERN CROSS TANGO - 50 Kauri Parade, Seacliff, South Australia 5049
Email: sctango@bigpond.com Website: <http://www.southerncrosstango.com.au>

The emigrant - immigrant experience and Tango

The emigrant is one who leaves his place of abode. The immigrant comes to a country for the purpose of permanent residence.

Tango evolved in a rapidly growing, changing city. Buenos Aires was a society in transition. A colonial outpost that had languished on a muddy river estuary for hundreds of years was being transformed into a vibrant federal capital city with a national soul. Life was hard, and there were 100,000 more men than women. The telegraph, barbed wire fences and railways had changed the rural and social landscape. Foreign investment, mechanized agriculture and refrigeration propelled Argentina to great wealth. Ships sailed from the port of Buenos Aires laden with meat and agricultural products to feed a hungry Europe. They returned with human cargoes: shiploads of immigrants from Spain and Italy, with lesser numbers from Portugal, Greece, France, Germany, Wales, Switzerland, Sweden and other nations.

Paintings by Argentine artist Benito Quinquela Martín evoke the life of the docks and **La Boca** (the mouth of the river), famous today for soccer and as one (not the only) early homes of Tango. The brightly painted facades of the modest residences reflect a Genoese immigrant ancestry. Here you will find the outdoor street artist tango 'museum', frequented by hopeful tango buskers and touts. You can still buy frozen goods at one of the refrigeration plants that played such an important role in the export and meatpacking industries.



Photos of La Boca, Buenos Aires

Benito Quinquela Martín was born in 1890, abandoned on a convent doorstep as a baby, and adopted by an immigrant family. He took a Hispanic version of their name (de Chinchella) as his own, in tribute and gratitude. He worked in the family coalmine initially, studying drawing at night school. By 1910 he was already exhibiting work. He achieved international success, and is one of Argentina's best-loved painters. He lived above a school in *La Boca*, where a museum of his work is today. Go and see the paintings, if you are visiting Buenos Aires to get a flavour of the social conditions that gave birth to Tango. The artist was buried in a colourful

coffin decorated with a painting of his beloved *La Boca*, in *La Chacarita* cemetery, the last resting place of tango idol, Carlos Gardel.

Migration built modern Australia too and has been a catalyst for social change and new cultural expressions, a factor recognized in the awarding of the Inaugural Australian Tango Poetry Competition Prize (2009) to '*The emigrants*' by Charles D'Anastasi. The complete poem was published in *Tango Australis* in January 2010, and opens with these lines:

*Eyes haunted by a strange fatigue,
a sense of uncertainty – their hands –
no their whole bodies, asking, asking*

With haunted eyes and memories of loss or trauma or sadness, bravely the emigrants travel to an uncertain future in an unknown, perhaps unknowable, land. This pain and questioning, sometimes tinged with hope, is to be seen in old images that document the ongoing story of Australian immigration. A well-known painting at the NGV shows early settlers on a sailing ship. You might find postcards of migrating Italian men at a second-hand dealer, or see photographs of refugees, who survived the Holocaust arriving at Port Melbourne in the late 1940s, in books or at a museum.

An exhibition entitled '*Many Stories – One Heart*' by photographic artist Lindi Huntsman, at the Sofitel on Collins in Melbourne, displayed in the lobby and on the 35th floor until the 29th July, shows respectful images of a current immigrant experience. The stunning portraits of Ethiopian immigrants are luminous. The sitters' eyes radiate hope. The pictures demonstrate how deeply trusted and involved with this community, this photographer must be. There are photographs taken at school and church, and at parties and community celebrations. Traditional dance is depicted too. To gain greater understanding of the richness and life of this vibrant, relatively recently arrived immigrant community in Australia, try to see this exhibition.

Those privileged to be international travellers, today, know the fatigue of travelling long distances from home. We know how tiring it is not to understand language or local customs. Yet this is a temporary state, chosen in the interest of pursuing Tango, adventure, pleasure, commerce or education. We have homes to return to. Most of us do not know the pain of being forced to pull up roots and leave a familiar homeland to resettle in a foreign country.

It is a good thing to be reminded of this occasionally, when intolerance of difference rears its ugly head. Put yourself into the shoes of the new arrival or the outsider when they come to your country, your class or your milonga. Smile a welcome with your eyes. Recognise a different kind of beauty. Dance with a newcomer.



Photo: *Confiteria Ideal Milonga, Buenos Aires*

Aussie-Argentine Tango: where country meets city

Could there have been a better place than Geelong to unite rural and urban streams of our evolving Tango, and bring together Argentine and Aussie Tango lovers? On one magical night in May, it seemed the only place to be. Visitors from Adelaide and Melbourne, including friends from Tango's early days, joined dancers from Geelong and rural and coastal regions at the Christ Church hall. This tango venue is also home to a daily community meals program that has been running on volunteer labour and private donations for 20 years, and is about to serve its 500,000th free meal to the homeless and needy. It's a special place!

What Geelong dished up was not just a milonga – but friendly neighbourhood tango with a traditionally cooked and served *asado*, eaten in the time-honoured tradition of rural Argentina and Australia, with friends, old and new, seated together at long tables. Artist David Seery's colourful tango banner glowed from the stage, and flowers, candlelight and sparkling glasses added to the scene. Willing helpers made it all beautiful and possible, transporting goods, setting & cleaning up, and bringing delicious salads, breads, desserts and wines. Jack donated smart black all-in-one plastic catering plates (with hands-free holder for wine glass + cutlery). So practical & they look good. [To source them, contact Amanda on 0409 262 632.]

The fledgling Geelong tango group has lots of special members (actually they all are), but one local gentleman is, amongst many other things, a *porteño*: a native of Buenos Aires. Long-time Australian resident, Eddie Leoni has been an enthusiastic supporter of the local group since he visited their table at last year's Blokes' Day Out – and ascertained that the organiser loved traditional tango music as much as he did.

Eddie's offer to 'cook *asado* some time' opened the door for Australians to enjoy one of the great imported Argentine social traditions, usually reserved for family and friends. It is an honour to be invited to *asado* at the homes of Argentine friends here, or Argentine friends in Buenos Aires and the provinces.

Asado is to Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile and Brazil, what the BBQ is to the USA and Australia: a cultural celebration that pays tribute to the foundations of former New World countries that were settled as strategic outreaches of European colonial empires. The Americas offered Spanish and Portuguese *conquistadores* the promise of the fabled '*El Dorado*': Terra Australis was a convenient dumping ground for England's unwanted felons.

In time, the colonies were able to earn real wealth from the earth: beef, wool, wheat, and useful minerals. Meat from animals grazed on open ranges in the early days, and later on ranches and farms was a readily available element of rural diets. Then it became a food for the affluent. Argentina and Australia pride themselves today on the quality meat they produce.

Eddie laboured fast and hard and the meat he cooked was fantastic and so delicious! – Many of the 70 or so guests did what people do in Argentina at similar events – ate too much!! Rarely has tango been fuelled by such happily full tummies. Eddie presented traditional cuts of meat, as well as *chorizos*, *morcillas*, the customary organs and tasty chicken, with his own red chimichurri sauce, the essential accompaniment. The few remaining bones that were not picked whistle-clean were taken home for lucky pets.

Guests learned of Argentina's foundation and the fusion of cultures that produced the urban Tango, in a prologue to an informal 'little show'. This 'show' was a traditional offering, as done in the neighbourhood milongas of Buenos Aires when respected local dancers and visitors are invited to take the floor for an improvised demonstration for other dancers.

Group founders Pam & Richard demonstrated milonga, a dance that developed in the 1880s. Chef-extraordinaire Eddie and Averil made their debut dancing *canyengue*, a style popular around 1900, displaying elements of the roots of Tango. Then, it was the turn of Melbourne

friends, milonguero Bill and the supremely elegant Jill to dance a sensitive salon interpretation of Francisco Canaro's beautiful 'Poema' from the 1920s, and Zaman and Argentine Hilda, who danced a lovely (and cheeky) milonga from the period of its popular revival.

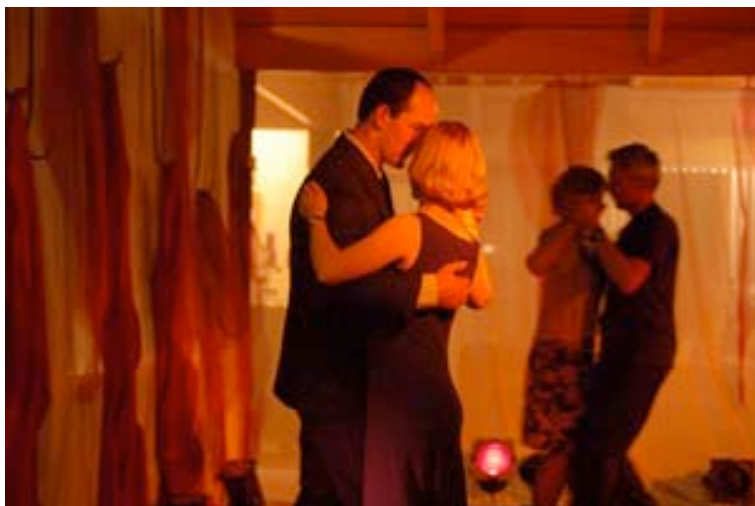
David Seery presented Eddie with a colourful portrait he'd painted, as a 'thank you' and reminder of this memorable night. Next morning, after too little sleep, Paul (who'd come from Adelaide just for the night) and Roger & Ingrid (who began their tango in Adelaide with Ady many years ago), chatted over breakfast about the ingredients of a magical tango night – warmth, friendliness, beauty, tasty food, good wine and music, with the generous spirit of Tango at large. This night had it all. A suggestion that it become an annual event was put on hold until the workers recover.

The art and craft of Tango

A recent regional gallery exhibition led to pondering the nature of Art and Craft, and the relevance of inspiration, purpose, function and design. From there, it was just a quick double-time step to considering the Art and Craft of Tango.

'An Object Gallery' is a touring exhibition by Australian Gold & Silversmith, Robert Baines, head of this department at RMIT. His objects demonstrate expertise in different areas of jewellery making and metalwork. Granulation, a technique perfected by the Etruscans, features prominently, and notions of sources, authentication, and replication are toyed with. An iced 'vo vo' biscuit provided inspiration. Many objects seemed to be made from coloured wire, but were actually made from gold, powder coated to look like coloured wire. Why do that? We asked, then and afterwards over dinner. Why go to all the trouble, apply all the training and skill, and use rare precious materials to create such objects? – Because it is possible? Is it a comment on fashion and modern trends? We looked for evidence of soul, spirit or beauty in what had been made. We sought emotional or intellectual engagement with the objects viewed. Looking was all we could do. One work, inspired by a postcard of an ancient gold bracelet, demonstrated the difference between the beautiful functional design of an ancient wearable object and a modern version. The original object was beautiful, with timeless appeal – the other showed marvellous skill but was somehow ugly. They were worlds apart in intention.

Beauty in Art and in Tango is a source of perennial fascination. Beauty is timeless. It is a positive and powerful quality. Humans desire the beauty of connection and utter harmony, and, when we get even the faintest taste of it, we pursue it like the fleeting shadow of a disappearing love, or the last rays of a setting sun.



(Photo: Simon & Mango Parker at Tango on the Hill)

We seek confirmation of the beautiful security felt in a mother's embrace in adult romance. Tango dancers learn they can recover this memory in the unconditional, caring embrace of a sensitive partner. This is the beauty of the milonga and the source of its lasting appeal. It is why Tango has not died. Tango acknowledges what lies within.

(Photo: *Tango Embrace, Buenos Aires at the Beach Summer Tango Festival*)

Music plays its part. Dancers respond to music that is beautiful to them - music that gives scope for continuing enjoyment and incentive to create and reinvent the dance each time with each partner – or music that reminds of something beautiful in the past – or music that evokes a particular pleasurable state of mind.



In Buenos Aires at a special milonga to commemorate Osvaldo Pugliese, an old gentleman, with a red rose in the buttonhole of his fine jacket, invited me to dance. The tango was beautiful, but more beautiful still was what he told me at the end of our dance. 'This was my wife's favourite tango,' he said. 'She died years ago, and I have never danced it with anybody else.' We both had tears in our eyes as he escorted me back to my seat.

Francisco Canaro's 1925, *Poema* is a beautiful tango to dance to. Google *Poema* to find a slideshow with Valentino photographs accompanying the music. In a video component of a recent GOTAN Project concert, a contemporary dancer reclined in a nest of feathers, an erotic allusion to the seduction of Leda by Zeus, who disguised himself as a swan, a subject often depicted in classical art. Then the video dancer became an angel, with felted strips of wings and a robe that parted to reveal a naked body. After all these years, I still adore Piazzolla's *Milonga del Angel* as the last dance of my tango night.

Do you know the myth of the legless birds of paradise, ethereal creatures of exquisite beauty that could never land and flew continuously in the highest sky, drinking the dew of heaven? In reality, New Guinea natives cut off the birds' legs and dried the skin over a fire. Islamic traders took the first legless specimens to Europe in the 16th Century, inspiring the legend.

Performance puts the beauty of Tango (or its absence) in the spotlight. Many dancers are competent, some proficient, and some technically very good. Yet, beauty is becoming increasingly rare. You know it when you see it. It transports you.

Technical skills form the foundation of the Craft of Tango. To aspire to the Art of Tango one must explore the domain of the imagination, heart and soul.

Resources for music lovers and cultural historians

The US Library of Congress and Sony have launched a website (loc.gov/jukebox/) that allows listeners to stream a vast archive of more than 10,000 pre-1925 recordings of music, speeches, poetry and comedy. Much of it has not been widely available since World War 1.

On the site is the first jazz release, *Livery Stable Blues* by the Original Dixieland Jass (yes, it was spelt that way, the 'zz' came later)) Band, Enrico Caruso singing opera, and Irving Berlin and George Gershwin.

We haven't yet checked for forgotten tango gems, but Argentine and Uruguayan tango musicians made recordings in France and Germany. Perhaps they did so in New York too, where Vernon & Irene Castles were teaching the Tango they had learned in Paris. Look for Villoldo, Alfredo & Flora de Gobbi, Vicente Greco, Juan Maglio, Genaro Sposito, Domingo Santa Cruz, Arturo Bernstein, Antonio Gutman, Jose Martinez, Samuel Castriota, Vicente Loduca, Augusto Berto, and Roberto Firpo, Francisco Canaro, and Augustin Bardi. Record labels including Victor, Nacional, Columbia and Atlanta were granted trademarks. Let's know if you find some lost tangos.

Another recommended site for music and Arts-related things is Opus Arte.

Art and sole... shoe update for the mildly obsessive



Coco Chanel said, *'A woman with good shoes is never ugly'*. My Dad never let us go out wearing dirty shoes. Cricket boots were cleaned for every match, and tennis shoes scrubbed and pristine white. 'Nugget' and spittle polished dress shoes to a glow, just as he'd done with his army boots in the War. An 'old school gentleman' and child of the Great Depression, he was a kid of a rural Australian town on the Murray River, who regularly walked home from school to the family bakery with his shoes tied by the laces round his neck, so as not to wear them out. Leather shoes that fitted were precious objects.

Aperlai is a new luxury fashion (not tango) footwear brand created by Alessandra Lanvin and named after a town in Turkey. A shoe is *'the signature of a woman's allure. It expresses her inner self. That's why it's so important to have shoes that fit perfectly... Shoes need to be worn; that's when they come to life'*.

The brand's point of difference is comfort, but a 'google' search brought up great designs. The shoes are said to be deceptively sturdy, strong but not bulky, with a carefully curved arch, broader width, and jelly insole. Heeled lace-ups, and instep strapped styles might even work for tango. You'd have to try them on to see if you can walk as well backwards in them as you can in *Comme il Fauts*. Victoria Beckham loves them. Let's hope that she gets the right size and learns to walk in heels, not teeter, as in the past.

Have you sniggered at the sight of UGG boots strutting the streets on elegant long-limbed young things? Don't. The look was high fashion in Paris, Rome and Barcelona last winter – teamed with textured tights, neat little skirts or dresses, and vests with knitted, leather or feather trims to tie the look together. A Jimmy Choo shop window was dedicated to UGGs with animal prints. Aussie UGGs are also perfect après-tango wear for damaged and arthritic feet. The sheepskin lining maintains constant warmth and massages gently as you move. Christian Louboutin (of red sole fame) is popular with fashionistas. David Jones stocks some, and Vogue ran a story called 'The Shoemaker'. His passion for shoe design was ignited by

exposure, as a child in Paris, to musicals and cabarets. *'Showgirls, basically,'* he said, *'have no costumes: it's almost like a naked woman looking like an exotic bird with a pair of shoes'.* He loves every woman who wears his shoes *'because they play with them differently'.*

Dancers, male and female should note the following insight from Monsieur Louboutin:

'The power of the high heel has nothing to do with fashion. When you have been wearing very high heels for a long time, it shapes your environment, your relationship with people. A lot of women feel a certain power and a certain attitude that they would never have in a mid heel.'

Be brave, if you're a modest mid-heel lady. Try going up a centimetre or two, and see what a difference it makes to your world. Counter any pain afterwards by wearing your comfortable UGGs home from the milonga.

And, so the blokes don't complain about being overlooked again, *'Blue Suede'* in Geelong has smart, tango-ish men's shoes. Check the soles, however – some are rubberised (which you don't want). Go for the alternate smoother material (better for pivots and knees). To complete your sartorial masculine splendour, *Blue Suede* and the shop next door to it in Highton both have a good range of hats for Senor Tango.

Tango insight

Seek and you may not find. An open or multi-directional research method can generate free flowing thoughts that result in unexpected insights. Computer technology makes it possible to have a number of files open at the same time, and to move as easily from one to another as *La Mariposa* does from partner to partner at the milonga. Current projects include researching and writing 'Tango Australis' articles, preparation for a film-illustrated lecture on Tango, and lesson plans for a secondary school course.

A lesson plan led to musing about an effective way to address the relationship between Tango partners, something to encompass more than 'lead' and 'follow', embrace more than 'propose' and 'dispose'. How to include the aspect of 'dance logic' in good Tango? How to explain that nothing happens in the dance unless there is reason for it.

Before a totally improbable performance in *'The Tango Lesson'* movie, Pablo Veron told Sally Potter to *'do nothing'*, and was furious afterwards because she did not heed the instruction. This is a pivotal scene in understanding the plot.

From this memory came the idea of 'cause' and 'effect'. What the leader does in creating openings, spaces in which to move, direction, dynamic and all the rest is the 'cause', and what the follower does as a logical result of this is the 'effect'. - Until there is an opportunity for the follower to decorate or respond creatively - in a space, or 'sneak' a little something in to tantalise without impacting on what the leader is doing. What the follower then does becomes the 'cause', and what the leader does in response is the 'effect'.

Carlos Gardel tribute night in Melbourne

Sidewalk Tango & Tango Noir presents a tribute Milonga to the 'King of Tango' Carlos Gardel on Friday 17th June at the Tiki Bar, 327 Swan Street, Richmond. When the originator of the romantic tango song, singer, composer and movie idol, died on 24th June 1935 in a plane crash, millions mourned. He is still revered today. Fresh flowers are always on his tomb and a cigarette burns between the fingers of his statue in Chacarita Cemetery in Buenos Aires.

8pm: Open Class. 9pm–1am: Milonga. \$10.

Dress: 1930s costume, Gardel & the compadritos

Australian Tango writing packs a punch

A new poem for this month

Victorian Surf Coast based writer, Julie Maclean wrote this month's poem, '*river of tears dance of sorrow*'. Another of her poems, '*Love live long*', featured in the January edition of 'Tango Australis' as joint winner of the 2010 Australian Tango Poetry Competition. '*River of tears dance of sorrow*' also made the judges' short-list. This poem is in the genre of critical, uncomfortable, tango lyrics. Julie, like Enrique Santos Discepolo (*Cambalache*), found a way to tell 'things' as they are, through tango. Water under the bridge, secrets still hidden in the mud of the Rio de la Plata, the suffering of the marginalised everywhere, questionable social values, the onward march of what we think of as civilisation... Read this poem, and think.

Julie has been writing for 15 years, with works of poetry, fiction, memoir and non-fiction published in journals, anthologies and magazines. Pieces of memoir have been broadcast on ABC Radio National, and she has won an LA Times award and the Melbourne Shakespeare Society's Soliloquy Competition. One of her poems was selected for Best Australian Poetry (UQP) and a poetry manuscript was short-listed for the Whitmore Press Poetry Competition.

river of tears

dance of sorrow

water is water why look for a metaphor
when it's there *now* clear murky fast
slow dancing the salsa maybe the tango
doing it rough doing it smooth weird stuff
making its way

jumping to conclusions putting its foot down
throwing a tantrum glassing a girl in a nightclub
debating the Afghan war the dead in Iraq
the plaque on the wall making you famous
a bet on a horse race buying a US dollar
buying a new mascara getting the joke

holding back
 keeping still
 waiting for action

waiting for lunch rushing to an ocean
putting your foot in the joke jumping over the
dead in Iraq making your way in spite
of everything

by Julie Maclean

Sponsorship for new Australian Tango Arts Project

A Tango Dance Fusion Choreographic Opportunity

Tango's support group, the *Friends of Buenos Aires at the Beach Incorporated*, is to sponsor an exciting new tango fusion project, a companion project to the Australian Poetry Competition. The intention is to marry Australian tango dance artistry with tango literature and take this to new audiences, here and overseas. The project will foster a different experience of tango, spotlighting the talents of award-winning tango poets, choreographer-dancers, and a photographer. Choreographers and dancers will take their inspiration from two tango poems and present the results at a public performance in November 2011.

Expressions of interest are called for, from Australian amateur or professional tango dancers, who feel capable of taking on the challenge of choreographing and performing an original new or 'Nuevo' tango dance work inspired by an edgy poem with a thoroughly contemporary voice.

It is envisaged that the completed work will fuse – in a creative way - poetry with dance. This may be by incorporating spoken lines with the dance, or having a recitation of the poem at the beginning or during the dance, or by other visual means of presenting the poetry during the dance performance. The public premiere performance will be filmed for posterity, and displayed on the Friends new dedicated website to showcase the talent of Australian tango writers, choreographers and dancers to the world.

The intention is to support original, modern Australian expressions of Tango. If it excites you, please email your expression of interest to the Special Projects Committee, Friends of Buenos Aires at the Beach Inc., c/- richardandpam@mac.com or post to 'Friends' Convenor, PO Box 3024, Bareena, Newtown, Vic, 3220.

Professional dancer-choreographers should include CV information; amateur dancers should include words about their tango experience and passion. Organisers will then forward a copy of the poem from which to take inspiration in the development of choreographic ideas.

The final decision on the awarding of this commission will be made after viewing a 30-second video sample (at work-in-progress stage) of proposed pieces, that applicants will submit, accompanied by written support material. The winner of the commission will then be notified, and materials submitted by unsuccessful candidates will be returned to them. A fee will be paid to the winner of the commission, to cover the choreography of a new work and its November public performance. Organisers will have the right to put film of that performance onto the Friends of Buenos Aires at the Beach Inc. website. Subsequent live performances would be negotiated by arrangement with the poets who retain copyright in their work, and the choreographer-dancers. Profiles of poets, dancers and choreographers will be on the website.

A further opportunity - for a video photographer

Expressions of interest are also invited from photographers wanting to be part of the above project. The task will be to film the performance of the two new works for the purpose of posting them onto the Friends website, a site designed to showcase Australian Tango artists and promote their work. A profile of the photographer who has filmed this new work will also be included on the website.

If you are interested in being considered for this commission (for which a fee will be paid) please forward your CV and samples of your work to the Special Projects Committee, Friends of Buenos Aires at the Beach Inc, c/- richardandpam@mac.com or post to 'Friends Convenor', PO Box 3024, Bareena, Newtown, Vic, 3220. Your samples will not be used for any purpose other than in the selection process for the commission.

MORE AUSTRALIAN TANGO WRITING

'Tango Macabre', a racy mystery crime story – Any takers for a tango cruise?

This short story received a Commendation in the Inaugural Australian Tango Short Story Competition. Southern Cross Tango sponsors its publication for your enjoyment.

The author, Goldie Alexander has 65 books published here and overseas for readers of all ages, plus many prize-winning short stories and articles. Her books for adults include: 'Body and Soul', 'Unjust desserts', 'Unkind Cut' and 'Mentoring Your Memoir'. Her best-known book for children is: 'My Australian Story: Surviving Sydney Cove, now in its 10th edition. Her latest fiction for children include: 'Gallipoli Medals', 'Space Footy and Other Stories', 'The Youngest Cameleer' and 'eSide: a contemporary fantasy'. Her website is www.goldiealexander.com

TANGO MACABRE by Goldie Alexander

After killing Eddie Tolsen, I returned to my cabin and fell into a dreamless sleep. Murder had turned out to be astonishingly easy. I'd lured him to the tenth deck of the 'Clytemnestra' with a plea of wanting to speak in private.

He turned up late. 'Make a scene,' he scowled, 'and I'm out of here.'

'Just wanted a quiet chat.' I slid the rope out of my pocket and peered into the wake. 'Look! Flying fish.'

As he bent over the rail, I looped the rope round his neck and tugged. I'd hoped he'd fall forwards so I could heave him over the side. Instead he dropped to his knees with a soft gasp as I kept pulling. While I hung on, he struggled and hit out, choked and fought back until finally, finally he lay still.

I crouched beside him, my heart ready to leap out of my chest. Had anyone seen this? I'd planned his death for before first light when this deck was deserted. But our struggle had been noisy. I waited, heart pounding in my ears. Then, my only witness a yellow moon half hidden by blood-clouds; I shoved him over the rail. Watching him slowly topple and fall, I was relieved I'd managed this so deftly.

For a long moment the sea rose and enfolded him. Then there was only the frothing wake and the faint strains of a tango echoing into the night.

+++

Back when I was still sensible Lynda Gravitt, though Eddie and I worked for the same multi-nationals we hardly knew each other. Things might have stayed that way if an order didn't turn up from Argentina. Then Eddie in marketing, myself in accountancy, each decided to learn the tango.

I'd already tackled salsa and rumba and knew I had a good sense of rhythm and was light on my feet. But with never enough men to go round, I'd always danced with another woman. Still, having too often experienced that discouraging, dismissive glance, when Eddie strolled into the hall, I half hoped he wouldn't notice me. Yet to my astonishment, when told to choose a partner he headed my way.

When the lesson was over, he asked if I'd come again? 'Yes,' I replied. 'Me too,' he said before disappearing into the crowd. In my high heels, his head fitted neatly under my chin. Next time, I told myself, he'll go for a younger, prettier woman. I might have curly fair hair, healthy skin and clear blue eyes, but I was in my late forties and weighed one hundred and twenty kilo. Perhaps I should mention that Eddie was no Adonis either, though with a teasing smile I found strangely seductive.

Our next few lessons Eddie seemed happy to continue partnering me. 'Don't feel you have to,' I murmured as he slid one hand around my waist.

He paused before saying, 'I've just had my fingers burnt. I don't need another broken heart.' No mistaking he ran no such risk with me... not with Lynda Gravitt.

+++

Five lessons later I inveigled him back to my flat and into my bed. Perhaps there are gentler ways of making love. But as he kneaded my breasts, pummelled my thighs, and laid his fists into me, he managed to enslave me. Yet he kept insisting that our relationship be kept secret. Foolishly, I agreed. Thoroughly besotted, I told him everything, how when I was twenty I'd had those murderous thoughts and spent some months in a psychiatric ward. Looking back that was when he first started drawing away.

The only person I could confide in was Maddie in the next cubicle. She said, 'Lynda, he's probably got a wife and six kids. If you don't watch out you'll get hurt.'

'Course not,' I said, trying not to let that old panic overwhelm me. "Haven't I checked out his tax files?' Yet sometimes dancing with Eddie my mind felt bleached away to nothing. Hadn't I exchanged my mermaid's tail for legs and didn't I live with the pain?

Even so, if Eddie met me in the lift or by the drinking fountain, he kept to a brief nod and we only came together in our classes and then back to my flat. I should have suspected something was wrong as it was always my place, never his. If I teased him saying 'Must be your lousy housekeeping...'

'Lynda...' he'd reply. 'Let's face it... given your size, your bed's more solid than mine.'

Meanwhile I learnt more about the tango. A fusion of European, South American and African harmonies and rhythms, it evolved in the late Nineteenth Century when young men ended up trapped in the slums of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. The dance evokes passion, yet behind its limpid harmonies and syncopated rhythm a dark seam reality hints at profound sadness and loss.

Three months into our dancing classes, I came across an ad for a thirteen day 'tango cruise' to the South Pacific. I was owed a fortnight's leave and so was Eddie. I had to wait to get through his usual 'Lynda, you mustn't contact me at work...'

And then, 'How do you know we'll get enough tango practice?'

'It wouldn't be called a 'tango cruise' if we didn't, would it?'

At least that shut him up.

The next few weeks nothing changed. We went on partnering each other on tango nights and then, though far less often, going back to my flat. During dance breaks he spent too much time chatting up other women. One lunch break I mentioned my doubts to Maddie. She said, 'Lynda, you grew up in a small country town. How much do you know about men?'

'You telling me to give Eddie up?'

'Not really.' But her face said quite the opposite. 'Just see it as a bit of fun.'

Yet for a few months I thought Eddie loved me. When you love someone with all your heart and he doesn't love you back and you give up all hope that he ever, ever will, you think you might die. So the idea of death began to haunt me. And then I started to wonder; if I didn't die, maybe the other person should? And how... how might this happen?

+++

The night before leaving, I packed my scarlet ruffled dress, elbow length gloves and black patent stilettos. If my original idea had been for us to share a cabin, Eddie quickly set me right. 'Lynda, you know how much space you take up. 'Anyway,' as if he wasn't always a scrooge, 'I don't mind paying for a single cabin.'

Well, I certainly did. And when I found myself stranded just above the waterline I wished I'd been more extravagant. But by then I didn't give a damn because the cruise was such a disaster.

+++

The ship's dance hall was a prehistoric cave with greenish lights where everyone looked like zombies. When not dancing, people sat gloomily around, sometimes throwing in a half-hearted clap, more often a disparaging comment. The tango stars, a couple in their mid-sixties, only taught ballroom where I'd hoped to venture into the 'Argentinean' style.

Our other passengers were mostly elderly couples and single women. Of course Eddie went for any female who sent him languorous looks. In those eleven nights of opportunity to become better Tangueros, he only danced with me once.

I went back to partnering the other women.

Off the floor things were no better. Sometimes I overheard '... she's always watching him... Eddie says she's had one nervo... bet she's due for another...'

What kind of man repeats something told to him in total confidence?

Before sailing Eddie and I had arranged to eat together. Our second night, he moved to a table with nine other women. I heard their laughter from the other end of the room. It didn't help that the elderly couples at my table kept saying, 'How lucky you are to have such a popular friend.'

This, with death in my heart I waited for the ship to call into Dravini Island, this no more than an atoll with a hilly jungle in the centre. As other passengers poured onto the beach, I quietly followed Eddie. Keeping well behind, I scrambled up a muddy track behind him. On the other side of the island I hoped to find some opportunity for murder.

I watched him disappear around a bend. Following, I found him peering into rock pools. Only when I was sure we were alone did I pull a knife out of my pocket and go to plunge it into his neck. I pictured blood spurting out like a geyser. I'd expect him to fall forward and as he half turned see a look of regret, or maybe it was respect on his face. I'd watch him collapse across the rocks, his blood turning the seawater crimson.

Yet in the end I stopped myself. There surely would be other opportunities for murder.

+++

In my pleasanter reveries I went back to our earliest days when we danced and melded as one. Then he might have loved me just a little. But in the end I'd played the prostitute in the dance-macabre, the tango. My payback was to make his time as unpleasant as he made mine. Whenever he came off the dance floor, I'd wait to catch his eye and signal a double 'thumbs down'. When I ran into him in a corridor, I'd whisper 'You're making a fool of yourself.'

Meanwhile other passengers continued to make merry, forcing as much food as they could into their distended stomachs and flopping onto the decks like so much seal blubber. Surely the 'Clytemnestra' should have changed her name to 'Dionysus' or 'Bacchus'. The days might be hot and clear, the nights fragrant with the scent of the sea, the elderly passengers playing at being children, but pacing the ship's corridors, I prowled the hellish aisles of the damned. Obsessed with Eddie as if was a cancer no therapy could cure, I tracked him through the ship.

Sometimes I heard Maddie's voice in a gust of wind or liquid in the waves calling 'Lynda, give it up. The only one being hurt is yourself. It's a no win situation.'

'Murder is always a no win situation,' I coldly replied. But I knew my life was over. I suppose I should have felt some remorse at the thought of his death. Hadn't I been sane far too long? It was only through Eddie's death that I could force him to understand how much pain he'd caused me and thus reduce my own.

Yet always at the back of my mind was the thought that if only he could see the error of his ways... that maybe he'd come back to me.

++++

Our final port was Noumea. I watched Eddie catch a tourist bus that promised stops along the way. Though the idea was to step off at any point and catch the next bus until the island was explored. I kept on missing him until I reached the Tjibaou Cultural Centre. It was late. The 'Clytemnestra' was due to sail in less than two hours.

Dropped at the entrance, I headed along the path that led to the complex. The interior is filled with ancient Melanesian and Polynesian spears and axes. One axe sat on a table. The edge was as sharp as if hewn yesterday. I picked it up and strode along the Kanak path.

My luck was in. No one else was about. I could do with him whatever I liked.

I felt the strength, symmetry and balance in the wooden handle. Though I tried to be as quiet as possible, Eddie sensed my presence and turned. I saw a flash of fear, or was it respect? On his face.

This time I didn't hesitate. I raised the axe and brought it down so hard I heard his skull crack open, then watched him sink to the floor as blood spilt over his face and hair.

Melbourne Tango

Sidewalk Tango. David Backler has classes, Wednesday practicas & fortnightly 1st & 3rd Friday Tango Noir Milonga at 327 Swan Street, Richmond. The Tiki Bar is open on Friday, Saturday & Sunday nights – a very cool place for a drink. Check **Melbourne Tango Club** at www.sidewalktango.com.au/melbourne-tango-events Organisers can email event details to david@sidewalktango.com.au La Practica (hosted by Francesco (Frank & Carolin) is held at **Sidewalktango** on the 2nd & 4th Sundays. 3 – 6pm. \$5.

Solo Tango. Alberto & Natalia host a milonga on the last Saturday of each month at 154 Liardet St, Port Melbourne. For class details albertocortez@bigpond.com Ph: 0411 665 454

Tango Bajo. (Bill Jarman – 0416 015 327 & Leigh Rogan – 0410 257 855) have events, milongas every Saturday (except the last of the month), practicas & classes @ St Albans Church, corner of Orrong & Wynnstay Rds, Prahran. Chris Corby & Alessio teaching too. Email leighis@fastmail.fm or get on the Monthly Calendar mailing list (or send event details) by emailing jerry@highgatebeauty.com

Viva. Christian Drogo and Melbourne's original Tango Bar now at Hit the Floor, Level 1, 245 Glenferrie Rd, Malvern (enter from Stanhope) last Sunday of month. Doors open 7pm, class 8pm. \$15. info@vivadance.com.au www.melbournetangohotspot.wordpress.com 03 9415 8166.

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

Project NFT (Neo Fusion Tango) – In Winter recess - Practilonga will resume 4 October. Rod & Belinda rjh@keypoint.com.au

Another Melbourne tango calendar/events & unique information site is www.verytango.com To advertise a coming event go to the contact page on the website.

Community Tango in Geelong - Enjoy the beauty of simple tango social dancing - no experience or partner needed. All welcome, always @ Christ Church hall, corner Moorabool & McKillop Streets in Geelong. Good wooden floor. Tango class & social night: 1st Monday of the month, 7.30 - 9.30pm. Supervised Practica 3rd Wednesday, 8 – 9.30pm (Regular nights \$3 with Pam & Richard). Information: richardandpam@mac.com or telephone 041 753 1619.

ADELAIDE TANGO:

Tango Salon – Classes & Milongas. **Comme il Faut Milonga – Sunday 19 June 4pm – 8pm** at Mt Osmond Golf Club. www.tangosalonadelaide.blogspot.com

Tango Adelaide Club – Milongas & Practicas. **Club Milonga – Saturday 4 June, 8pm – late**, Druid Hall, 2 Cassie St Collingswood. \$10/\$7. **Trad – Underground Milonga – Saturday 18 June, 8pm – 12**, Don Pyatt Hall, George St, Norwood. \$10/\$7. Coming up: Tango Musicality Workshops with Joaquin Amenabar, 29-31 July. www.tangoadelaide.org

Siempre Tango – Classes, Practicas & Milongas. **Dom Polski Milonga – Friday 24 June, 8pm – 12** at Dom Polski Centre, 232 Angas St, Adelaide. \$10/8. www.siempretango.net.au

Tango Tierra – Classes, Practicas & Milongas. <http://tangotierra.com.au>

Southern Cross Tango – Classes, Practicas & Milongas. **Tango by the Sea Milonga – Sunday 12 June, 4-8pm, romantic tango** at the Henley Sailing Club, 1 Esplanade, West Beach. \$12/10. Children (under 16 yrs, free). All welcome. You can bring a plate of afternoon tea or supper to share, drinks available from the bar. **Winter Milonga** – date & details coming soon. **FLASH TANGO Choreography Workshop (Part 2) – Wednesday 29 June, 8-10pm** @ Deaf Cando, 262 South Tce, Adelaide. \$25/45 couple. www.southerncrosstango.com.au

SOUTHERN CROSS TANGO - South Australian Schedule:

MONDAY - SATURDAYS

Private Tuition by appointment. (4 Wk Course \$240 or Casual \$80)
@ Seacliff Studio, 50 Kauri Parade. **SEACLIFF**

TUESDAYS

8 Wk Tango Course: Tuesday 10 May – 28 June 2011

NEW 8 Wk Tango Course: Tuesday 5 July – 23 August 2011

Beginners 7-8pm; Intermediate 8-9pm (Course \$110pp, Casual \$16.50/\$13)

@ Kensington Centre, Hill St, **KENSINGTON**

WEDNESDAYS

8 Wk Tango Course: Wednesday 4 May – 22 June 2011

NEW 8 Wk Tango Course: Wednesday 6 July – 24 August 2011 (Course \$110pp, Casual \$16.50/\$13)

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

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

THEMED WORKSHOPS - Wednesday 29 June 2011

MILONGA for Beginners 7-8pm (\$16.50pp / \$13ppconc);

FLASH TANGO Workshop Part 2 (Inter & Adv) *8- 10pm (\$25pp, \$45 couple)

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

THURSDAYS – WEEKLY PRACTICAS

Supervised Practica every Thursday from 7-9pm (\$7pp)

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

SATURDAYS

Tango Training for Women

4 Wk Course: Saturday 4-25 June 2011, 10-11am. (Course \$55pp. Bookings now open)

Tango Choreography Course

8 Wk Course: Saturday 7 May – 18 June 2011 (*last class to be scheduled) 11am -12.30pm.

Inter/Advanced Level (Bookings closed)

NEW PRACTICA Y for Leaders

4 Wk Course: Saturday 9 – 30 July: 10am – 11am (Course \$55pp. Bookings now open)

NEW VOLCADAS & CLOSE EMBRACE

Semi Private 4 Wk Course: Saturday 9 – 30 July: 11am – 12 noon.

Intermediate Level. Max 5 couples only. (Course \$110 per couple. Bookings now open)

Private Tuition (Saturdays & Weekdays)

@ Seacliff Studio, 50 Kauri Pde, **SEACLIFF**



SOUTHERN CROSS TANGO

Ph: 0419 309 439

sctango@bigpond.com

www.southerncrosstango.com.au

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:

Supervised Practica, 7.30-9.30pm

@ Christ Church Hall, cnr Moorabool & McKillop St, Geelong

Ph: 0417 531 619 richardandpam@mac.com