

12 | *Encuentros Milongueros: Europe's Twenty-First-Century Tango Dance Practice*

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Imagine: it's Friday evening, and you're looking forward to a weekend filled with dancing *tango argentino*.¹ You walk toward a spacious building and hear soft tango music wavering in and out of the entrance door and windows. You recognize the tune; it's Ricardo Tanturi's 1942 recording of "Así se baila el tango" ("This Is How the Tango Is Danced"). This is a classic first song for the DJ to play, and you smile in anticipation of entering the room of fellow dancers. You quickly go to the registration desk and get your bracelet for the weekend. Then, you rush to the wardrobe area, exchange your street shoes for your dancing shoes, and give a last look in the mirror to check your clothes, which are fancy yet comfortable to wear for dancing. On your way to the dance hall, you enthusiastically greet numerous friends – some of whom you haven't seen in months, others whose names you don't remember, and even some whose language you don't speak. But the warm embrace of dancing with these friends is vivid in your memory. Finally, you enter a large hall with high ceilings, a spacious dance floor, and festive lighting. You find a place to put your things on one of the chairs, grouped in rows around the dance floor's perimeter. On one side of the room, you notice a slightly raised table where the DJ sits. Tonight's DJ is well known and experienced. Good, you think; there will be no musical surprises, and the mood is guaranteed to have just the right amount of energy. The next *tanda* (song set) is about to start. You excitedly look around the room to make eye contact with a dance partner. Then, across the empty floor, you spot one of your favorite dancers. Your eyes meet, the music starts, and both of you grin and nod in this mutual invitation to dance. Along with fellow dancers, you meet this partner on the dance floor and gently entangle your bodies into a close embrace. You feel your partner's touch, respiration, and heartbeat. You listen to the music – the marking accompanimental rhythm and the entrancing melodic line of the bandoneón. Then after some moments, you and your partner take your first steps to embody the music. This will be the first of many dances during the weekend dedicated to dancing tango with like-minded enthusiasts. It will be a weekend devoted to experiencing pure tango bliss together.

The above scene, while fictitious, is a typical example of an *encuentro milonguero* – a gathering of tango social dancers to experience *tango*



Figure 12.1 Afternoon milonga at an *encuentro milonguero*.

argentino. In this chapter, I shed light on the rather short history of the *encuentro milonguero* as a cultural phenomenon of tango social dance in Europe (Figure 12.1). I focus on the social, musical, and dance aspects that define and distinguish *encuentros milongueros* from other practices of *tango argentino*. I compare the diametric perspectives of enthusiastic participants and organizers who are convinced that an *encuentro milonguero* is the best way to dance tango in Europe with those perspectives of dancers who are not part of *encuentro milonguero* networks and criticize the practice for its elitist and exclusive qualities. Regardless of the *encuentro milonguero*'s controversial status, I argue that these events demonstrate how *tango argentino* has been adapted to a European translocal tango practice. I show how European dancers have conceptualized the *encuentro milonguero* as a copy of *tango argentino* dance practice from Buenos Aires, while at the same time developing a separate, European *tango argentino* practice.

Introduction to *Tango Argentino* as a Social Dance

Born at the turn of the twentieth century in the Río de la Plata region of Argentina and Uruguay, the tango art form includes music, dance, and lyrics. As a music-dance-poetic genre, it migrated to other countries and

continents in the first decade of the twentieth century and took root in Paris and other European cities.² In its distinct form back home, *tango argentino* reached its height during its Golden Age from the mid-1930s to early 1950s. The 1980s saw a revival of the art form on both sides of the Atlantic, and since then, the dance practice has gained a growing membership.

Tango dance-movement repertory has developed far from its beginnings, and now dancers practice a wide variety of social tango styles.³ While these social tango dance styles may possess different movement aesthetics, they all share the most important tango principle: joint movement improvisation. Based on trained embodied movement,⁴ one dancer takes on the leader role, initiating the movement, while the other follows, interpreting the leader's movement. The challenge with dancing in such a joint improvisation – in addition to adjusting to different partners' movements and signals – is to dance not only to, but with the music. Many practitioners consider interpreting tango music in this embodied way to be the epiphany of tango dancing. They engage in a never-ending learning endeavor to master the technique, connect with their partner, listen to and creatively interpret the music, and last but not least, navigate the floor and the shared space with other couples safely.

Private and professional dance teachers, along with a wide variety of local and international event organizers, serve the needs and tastes of tango dancers. A dancer trained in *tango argentino* can dance at a milonga (tango dance event) anywhere in the world and be able to find a partner with whom sharing dances is possible. They will know the same basic tango steps and have an idea of how to interpret the music. Tango social dancing in Europe is translocal because it is practiced in many locations that are mutually connected through social media and travel.⁵ Because of Europe's scattered tango community, the more experienced dancers are more likely to travel internationally to dance, and this travel may include attending *encuentros milongueros*.

The *Encuentro Milonguero* as a European Tango Tradition

An *encuentro milonguero* is a meeting of experienced tango dancers over the course of one weekend (Friday through Sunday) with up to ten hours of dancing per day. While the Spanish word “*encuentro*” translates quite straightforwardly as “meeting,” the term “*milonguero*” warrants explanation. The adjective *milonguero* comes from the term “*milonga*,” which has

two meanings. First, the term refers to the Argentine dance-music genre that evolved from the Cuban *habanera* and retained the characteristic dotted accompanimental rhythm. Second, milonga refers to any social tango dance event. The adjective *milonguero*, then, generally describes anything related to traditional tango dance. Additionally, the word can function as a noun, where *milonguero* (male) and *milonguera* (female) are people who dance tango at a traditional milonga. Opinions, however, differ on what traditional tango dance encompasses and what being a *milonguero* or *milonguera* means, and all these terms are subject to philosophic, political, and economic discussions and interpretations.⁶ In this chapter, I use and define the term *milonguero* as *encuentro* dancers use it. For them, the term *milonguero* represents a way to engage with tango dance and music as a historical practice flourishing today. This practice includes social rules on and off the dance floor that they consider essential for *milonguero* dancing. Although these rules are adopted from historical tango practices in Buenos Aires, *encuentros milongueros* construct and shape an essentially European tradition as they form a significant part of the practice of the European translocal tango community.

History of Encuentros Milongueros

Probably the first *encuentro milonguero* occurred in Italy in 2005. Organized by Tango Firenze, the *encuentro* called Raduno Milonguero took place in Impruneta, a town close to Florence. Thereafter, similar events began to occur throughout Europe, notably Les Cigales in Sainte Colombe, France (2009); Yo Soy Milonguero in Crema, Italy (2008); the Experiencia Milonguera in Pradamano, Italy (2009); the Festivalito con Amigos in Saarbrücken, Germany (2011); and Abrazos de Corazón in Moosburg, Austria (2012).⁷ These events were a huge success, and dancers who had experienced them started organizing similar events in their own local surroundings. In a recent interview, tango DJ Paola Nocitango described how this process began in 2011:

There were only festivals at the beginning, you know? Then arrived the *encuentros*. And when you dance the first time in an *encuentro* you fall in love. . . . You cannot . . . [*sic*] this long year waiting for the other edition . . . I remember that we went to Impruneta, it was end of October, and in May, we went to Les Cigales, and I said, "Oh my God, we have to wait until October." And it was too much. You could not resist. So, with some friends we . . . said, "Why don't we try to do it, to do it in our town?" And so, we did.⁸

With such enthusiasm, Nocitango started in Noci, Italy, in 2012.⁹ In the beginning, the difference between a regular tango festival, which includes live music, classes, and demonstrations, and an *encuentro milonguero* was blurred, but the distinction became clear within the first few years. Whereas a tango festival is open to everyone, an *encuentro milonguero* is an exclusive event for experienced dancers. *Encuentros milongueros* have become so popular that nowadays there is one almost every weekend somewhere in Europe.¹⁰ Most major cities have their own annual *encuentro milonguero*, and some organizers even host more than one regular event per year. They are mostly privately organized by enthusiasts who want to bring the possibility of dancing for a whole weekend in *milonguero* style to their own locale. Organizers focus on providing a valuable tango experience to the participants rather than making a profit. In an interview, Liljana and Sabine, organizers of the Abrazos de Corazón, explain:

It came from the wish to have this great tango feeling which we had in Buenos Aires, and this feeling of being socially accepted as in Buenos Aires here as well. And not only for one milonga, but for a whole weekend.¹¹

Since their beginnings, *encuentros milongueros* have featured an important element of travel. Participants enjoy the thrill of a tango journey and the opportunity to meet and dance with people from different regions and backgrounds who share the same passion for dancing tango in *milonguero* style. Martin, a tango blogger, describes the *encuentro milonguero* experience on his website:

I love the concept of *Encuentros*: close embrace, gender balanced, excellent Tango DJs and the best of all, seeing all the lovely places and cities in Europe and meet[ing] people from all over the world [who] have the same interest . . . *Tango Argentino*. So, I have travelled from the north of Europe (Norway) to the south (Sicily, Italy), [and] from the east (Poland) to the west (Portugal), to meet people with the same passion.¹²

Music, Dance, and Social Aspects of an Encuentro Milonguero

Organizers of *encuentros milongueros* in Europe have a clear idea of the music, dance, and social aspects they want to provide at their event. They often add one or two sentences to their online promotional pages to clarify what kind of tango experience a participant can expect. Not every *encuentro milonguero* mentions all the following distinct features in their advertisement. However, they all include several of them, and in

combination they clearly describe not only what *encuentros milongueros* are like in Europe, but also provide insights into what they encompass culturally. These features include participation by invitation; balanced number of leaders and followers; employed *códigos milongueros* (milonga codes) to ask for dances; rules on the dance floor; dancing in close embrace; good (wooden) dance floor; Golden Age tango music; structure of the music played; and a selection of international tango DJs.¹³

Participation by Invitation

Encuentros milongueros restrict access from the beginning of the registration process. Anyone interested in the event must first register to be considered as a participant. Registration usually starts several months before the event, and about 90 percent of interested dancers register within the first two days. From this pool of registrants, organizers select as many participants as they can accommodate, typically between 100 and 250 dancers depending on the size of the dance floor. Each organizer has their own rules and criteria for selecting participants. While this may be, for example, to include a wide variety of dancers from different regions, in general, organizers choose dancers they know and who are integrated into the *encuentro milonguero* community.¹⁴ Beginner dancers are not allowed to participate, as well as those who are known to dance in a way that does not fit with the *milonguero* ethos. While dancers of all levels and styles are welcome at other types of tango events, like local milongas or international weekend festivals, *encuentro milonguero* organizers want to ensure that the level of dancing is high and homogenous at their events. They want to avoid situations that may occur at other tango events, where dancers of all levels mingle and create a hierarchy. Namely, the more advanced a dancer is, the pickier they are about selecting their partners. This causes less dancing for everyone and frustration if the “wrong” partner is selected (because they were unaware of the other’s skill level). *Encuentro milonguero* organizers seek to avoid such situations, thereby guaranteeing a good dance experience for everyone involved. In turn, many interested registrants are rejected – not only those of a lower skill level, but also those who are just among the too many or unknown applicants. This pre-selection of dancers is probably one of the most obvious and fundamental differences between *encuentros milongueros* and all other forms of tango dance events.¹⁵

Balanced Number of Leaders and Followers

At many regular milongas, tango followers considerably outnumber leaders,¹⁶ which in turn creates an imbalance of dancing opportunities. In this case, leaders have many opportunities to select their partners over the entire evening, but followers must wait for dances and, therefore, may sit more than they actually dance. Many followers complain about such situations; likewise, leaders feel equally uncomfortable. Leaders sometimes perceive having to dance as a “pressure to perform” more than they might if there were an equal number of leaders and followers. A pre-selected balance in leader and follower numbers ensures that all dancers have mathematically the same possibilities to dance. This balance, in turn, relaxes the atmosphere of the event. It removes feelings of pressure and disappointment, along with competition among followers, which is ever-present at events with an imbalanced leader-follower ratio.

Mirada and Cabeceo

In *tango argentino*, the *mirada* (gaze) and the *cabeceo* (nod) signify an invitation to dance.¹⁷ Instead of the leader approaching the follower and asking directly for a dance as in some social dance forms, *milongueros* employ subtle communication from a distance. First, both leader and follower look around the dance space as they aim to make eye contact with a potential dance partner. If their gazes lock, the leader, and then the follower, nod slightly, and only then does the leader approach the follower. If a dancer meets someone’s eye and is not interested in dancing with them, they may simply avert their eyes from the other person’s gaze. This advantageous way of asking for dances offers followers an escape route without having to decline verbally and avoids pressure from someone standing in front of them with an extended hand. It also reduces the disgrace leaders might feel if visibly rejected and forced to walk away from a person publicly. However, the game of *mirada* and *cabeceo* has to be learned and mastered, and it is not without problems and miscommunications. Self-consciousness, shyness, or bad eyesight can limit successful communication and an invitation to dance. *Mirada* and *cabeceo* are possibly the most important tango *códigos milongueros* that encompass the rules for social behavior off the dance floor. Their inclusion at *encuentros milongueros* has two reasons. First, it is a pragmatic way to ask for dances, giving both partners the same agency to ask and decline. Second, as a ritual stemming from the

historical tango dance practice in Buenos Aires,¹⁸ it adds to the historicity and perceived authenticity of the *tango argentino* event.

Respectful Dancing in the Ronda

The *ronda* (circle) refers to the flow of dancing couples at a milonga, where they move counterclockwise around the dance floor. If the dance floor is crowded, they form several lanes in concentric circles. To respect the flowing *ronda*, the dancing couple neither pushes the couple in front nor blocks the couple behind them. In addition, their movements do not risk hurting themselves or others, and they stay in their lane. The leader generally guides the couple's navigation, yet the follower might help, depending on their mutual preferences for dancing and communicating with their partner. The more crowded the dance floor, the harder it is to navigate in the *ronda*. Tango movements that consume space or bring the heels up are dangerous in such environments. Some *encuentro* organizers explicitly state that they expect dancers to "keep their heels on the floor" or have the ability to "dance in small spaces." Most issue more general statements that they expect dancers not to dance in a space-consuming or imperiling way by using the phrase "respectful dancing in the *ronda*."

Dancing in a Close Embrace

In *tango argentino*, a couple dances in an asymmetric hold. On one side, the partners hold hands; on the other, they embrace with the follower's arm over the leader's arm. Several variants of this hold in tango social dance are mainly differentiated by the distance between the two dancers. In an open embrace, the dancers maintain bodily contact only with their arms; in a semi-open embrace, their arms hold each other's bodies, resting on their partners' back; and in a close embrace, they wrap their embracing arms around their partner as far as they can reach, while maintaining close contact between their torsos from the sternum down to above the hipline. Furthermore, in a close embrace, the partners align their torsos slightly to the left, enabling them to hold their heads side-by-side and even connect with their right temples. A close embrace is the preferred – mainly the only – way of dancing at an *encuentro milonguero*. On a pragmatic level, the couple consumes less space in this hold, even as it limits their movements. It thereby fits ideally with the respectful dancing in the *ronda* and accommodates the limited space available for each couple.

In addition to these practical features, a close embrace facilitates other priorities in dancing, especially how *milongueros* value the intense connection with their partners and the intimate expression of the music together. For them, it is more important that the dancing feels good rather than looks good, and a close embrace enhances the feeling of connection with their partner. Finally, most dancers perceive dancing in a close embrace to be more traditional than any other tango dance style, adding to the felt authenticity and codes expected at an *encuentro milonguero*.¹⁹

Good (Wooden) Dance Floor

Milongueros prefer dance floors made of wood, which lessens the strain on the body and joints. Dancing for four hours straight at each milonga can cause considerable pain in the feet, legs, and back, especially for women wearing stiletto high-heeled dance shoes.²⁰ Additionally, the average *milonguero* is of advanced age compared to the average at festivals and marathons. Ideally, they like to dance on a sprung wooden dance floor, which is neither too slippery nor too sticky, to enable easy and safe stepping and pivoting.

Golden Age Tango Music

Dancers within the *tango argentino* practice understand that “traditional” tango music describes music played at milongas in Buenos Aires during the Golden Age.²¹ At that time, many *orquestas típicas* (tango orchestras) regularly played live music for a dancing crowd, and they disseminated their 78 RPM recordings (78s) to the public and aired them on Argentine radio stations.²² As tango declined after 1955, *tango argentino* practice entered a dormant period during which tango music developed into a concert form for a listening, not a dancing, audience.

This division between music and dance practice continued until the 1980s, when the revival of tango dancing in Argentina and Europe started. As a critical number of people began to practice tango music and dance actively, many dancers considered contemporary tango music to be undanceable, while some musicians felt limited in their musical expressions if they had to play for dancers.²³ Therefore, most dancers – particularly those who dance at *encuentros milongueros* – prefer the recorded Golden Age tango music in dance contexts. Additionally, the sounds of these recordings sonically revive the historical time and place in Buenos Aires that *milongueros* see as the cradle and origin of their dancing.²⁴ Moreover, as they are

well acquainted with these recordings, *milongueros* cherish the music they can predict and recognize.

Selected International DJs

Tango DJ'ing is the youngest of all *tango argentino* disciplines and the last to reach Europe. The establishment of professional DJs marks an important element of the European *tango argentino* culture, and it only dates to the 1990s when it was imported directly from Buenos Aires. Although during the Golden Age, recorded dance music on 78s circulated to the public and amplification was strong enough to cover a room when played for a dancing crowd, the art and profession of a tango DJ as a celebrated music expert is a rather recent phenomenon and part of the tango dance revival.

While international tango festivals may include live music played for dancing and exhibitions by the invited tango dance teachers, tango DJs are the only advertised highlights at *encuentros milongueros*. None of the European tango DJs are professional, instead, all have day jobs. Nevertheless, if well established, they can be very busy traveling each weekend to a different event by invitation. Tango DJs come from all European countries, and organizers usually ensure that the DJs at their events are among those known for a good performance, which means primarily serving the crowd well.²⁵ In the last decade, tango DJs have started specializing in DJ'ing at marathons, festivals, or *encuentros milongueros* – though, of course, many do provide their services at all kinds of events. Being an *encuentro milonguero* DJ means having a thorough knowledge of Golden-age tango music,²⁶ being well-versed in combining tracks and orchestras into a coherent flow, and having a sense of the dancers' mood.²⁷ Ultimately, they provide a selection of music that will make the whole room dance continuously and offer something for every taste. Advertising their “selected *encuentro* DJs” helps organizers to lure dancers to an *encuentro milonguero*, because they know they can expect expert Golden Age DJ'ing.

Tandas and Cortinas

Typically, DJs organize a *tanda* in groups of four pieces in a row at an *encuentro milonguero*. A *tanda* is comprised of pieces by the same orchestra – often also of the same recording year – and conveys a unified mood or feeling to the dancers. Each *tanda* is followed by a *cortina* (curtain), a piece

of music with a fundamentally different character from tango most importantly, which does not inspire tango dancing. With this clear sonic break, the *cortina* signals the end of one *tanda* and the beginning of a new one. In addition to these sets, the DJ imposes a meta-structure on top of the *tanda-cortina* alteration that embraces the three distinct rhythms of the tango genre: tango in 4/4 meter, *vals* (waltz) in 3/4, and *milonga* in 2/4. After two sets of tango *tandas*, the DJ will play a *milonga tanda*, followed by two more tango *tandas*, and then a *vals tanda*.²⁸

Several different theories trace the origins of the *tanda-cortina* structure, including the way tango orchestras were broadcasted in fifteen-minute sets on the radio,²⁹ the duration of dances men paid for with employed ladies at dance houses,³⁰ and the number of 78s that could be played in a row (four, counting the front and back sides of two records).³¹ Although similar structures of the *tanda-cortina* concept date back to the late 1920s, *tandas*, as used today, most likely originated in the 1960s in Buenos Aires.³² In Europe, the *tanda-cortina* way of DJ'ing started in the late 1990s and became established at milongas in the first decade of the twenty-first century. This approach to DJ'ing is now seen as the most "traditional" and conventional way to play music at a milonga.³³

In an interview with Horacio Godoy, the famed tango DJ from Buenos Aires, he conveyed his main reasons for playing tango music in *tandas* with *cortinas*, namely, to ensure diversity in musical styles throughout one evening, to satisfy tango enthusiasts with different tastes, and to enable a transition between different orchestras and their musical styles.³⁴ These musical reasons closely connect to one important social rule of *milonguero códigos*, which is to change partners regularly. Tango DJ and author Michael Lavocah states that "in a traditional milonga, everyone changes partners when the *cortina* comes, so the length of the *tanda* is social as well as musical – it is the length of time that the couple spends together."³⁵ Therefore, if *encuentro* organizers advertise that the music will be played in *tandas* and *cortinas* at their events, it conveys information to dancers about how the music will be grouped and how the social norm of changing partners regularly and simultaneously will be applied.

Conclusion: A Matter of (European) Perspective

Many European tango dancers engage in blogs and social media discussion groups around the pros and cons of the *encuentro milonguero*.³⁶ Critics of the *encuentro milonguero* concept oppose its elitist and exclusive

atmosphere. They see the selection of participants and the rather strict application of *códigos milongueros* regarding social, music, and dance aspects as negative factors. They believe that *encuentros milongueros* foster a single way of dancing and practicing tango; therefore, these events diminish alternative dance styles, ways to interact at a milonga, and music choices. In addition, critics view *encuentros milongueros* as a reason why local milongas might decline. Good dancers may stop dancing locally, and less experienced dancers might be cut off in their development because they cannot mingle with experienced dancers at milongas.

Encuentro milonguero organizers and dancers are aware of such criticism and admit to the problems that might derive from their practice. Liljana and Sabine, for instance, see a danger in more experienced dancers not dancing locally anymore, which hinders beginner and intermediate dancers from learning from experienced dancers at local *prácticas* (tango practice sessions) and milongas and might disconnect them from established *milonguero* networks.³⁷ However, while some tango dancers who regularly attend *encuentros milongueros* have indeed stopped or reduced dancing in their home tango environment, many dancers still practice locally. They may even bring new, promising dancers into *encuentro milonguero* networks by recommending them to organizers for acceptance. In addition, some organizers accept a certain percentage of less experienced dancers to avoid separation between tango dance communities. Some organize open-to-the-public milongas before and after the *encuentro milonguero*, where visitors and local dancers mingle.

While the *encuentro milonguero* practice remains exclusive – and is criticized for it – those who are a part of the *encuentro milonguero* community in Europe consider it to be welcoming and liberating. They appreciate the predictability at *encuentros milongueros*, including the music, the people, the style of dancing, the level of dance experience, and the *códigos*. Such rules offer a structure to navigate socially and aesthetically a milonga without having to experiment or be disappointed. Another liberating aspect discussed by *milonguero* dancers is that they are watched less on the dancefloor at *encuentros milongueros*. Paola believes, “Because . . . [at a festival or regular milonga] it’s like an exam. I don’t dance relaxed, I am watched, and I’m judged, and I don’t want to be. I want to be relaxed and dance. I feel that in the *encuentro*; you can do it.”³⁸ Additionally, tango dancers who regularly travel and dance at *encuentros milongueros* know each other well and look forward to meeting again. While the main reason for them to meet is to dance, regardless of whether they speak the same language or remember each other’s names, sometimes

friendships develop out of tango acquaintances. Of course, dancers at *encuentros milongueros* also dance with others they do not know yet, because part of tango's thrill is to dance with someone unknown and come to know them through embodied communication.

Such differences of perspective between the elitist demeanor and exclusivity, on the one hand, and the relaxed and liberating atmosphere, on the other, naturally depend on whether a dancer is an *encuentro milonguero* dancer or not. The *encuentro milonguero* is either judged as an elitist development in the wrong direction or viewed as a way to connect to like-minded and abled dancers in a nonhierarchical setting. Regardless of what social tango dancers judge it to be, the *encuentro milonguero* tradition has become an important fixture of European *tango argentino* practice in the early twenty-first century. It was conceptualized to bring experienced *milonguero* dancers together who are otherwise scattered in many places all over Europe. Thus, *encuentros milongueros* significantly support the translocal networks of *tango argentino* social dancing in Europe. Through its conceptualization, the *encuentro milonguero* nurtures *tango argentino* dance and music from the Golden Age and Buenos Aires, yet over the years, it has turned into a contemporary and distinctly European tradition. In doing so, the *encuentro milonguero* remains closely connected to Argentine tango practice while expanding the translocal dimension of *tango argentino*.

Notes

1. My own experiences as a tango dancer for two decades, deeply embedded in the central European *tango argentino* dance community, inform my understanding of the phenomena described in this chapter. I want to thank my fellow dancers for their time and enthusiasm, and for sharing their insights, stories, and tango with me. Editors' note: *tango argentino* broadly refers to the traditional tango dance from Argentina.
2. For more information, see Ramón Pelinski, *El tango nomade. Ensayos sobre la diáspora del tango* (Corregidor: Buenos Aires, 2000); and Jo Baim, *Tango: Creation of a Cultural Icon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 52–86.
3. For the development of social dance styles, see Gustavo Benzecry Sabá, *The Quest for the Embrace: The History of Tango Argentino* (Stuttgart: Abrazos, 2010) and Laura Falcoff, "El Baile del Tango Ayer, Hoy y Mañana," in *El Tango Ayer y Hoy*, ed. Coriún Aharonián (Montevideo: Banda Oriental, 2014), 40–42.

4. Movement researchers generally use the term “embodied movement” to refer to knowledge on a physical level. Here, I refer to how dancers do not think about the interpretation, but rather react physically in response to the music. Such improvisation in dance is based on embodied knowledge that has been acquired with experience and transferred into muscle memory as well as through the trained ability to react physically to outside influences like partner, space, and music. Thus, the movement knowledge necessary to carry out joint improvisation has been “embodied.” For more information, see Michael Kimmel, “A Cognitive Theory of Joint Improvisation: The Case of Tango Argentino,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Improvisation in Dance*, ed. Vida L. Middelton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).
5. See Kendra Stepputat, “Tango Journeys: Going on a Pilgrimage to Buenos Aires,” in *Dance. Senses. Urban Contexts*, ed. Kendra Stepputat (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2017); and Kendra Stepputat and Elina Djebbari, “The Separation of Music and Dance in Translocal Contexts,” *the world of music (new series)* 9, no. 2 (2020): 5–9.
6. For more information, see María Julia Carrozzi, *Aquí se baila el tango: Una etnografía de las milongas porteñas* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2015), 160–164; Christine Denniston, *The Meaning of Tango: The Story of the Argentine Tango* (London: Portico Books, 2007), 200; Carolyn Merritt, *Tango Nuevo* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 75; Elia Petridou, “Experiencing Tango as It Goes Global,” in *Tango in Translation*, ed. Gabriele Klein (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2009), 62; Ana C. Cara, “Entangled Tangos: Passionate Displays, Intimate Dialogues,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 122, no. 486 (Fall 2009): 440.
7. For related links, see *Tango Florido*, www.scuolatangofirenze.it; *Milongueando France*, www.milongueandofrance.com; *BibleTango*, www.bibletango.com/tangoatlas/tgatlas_detail/detatlas_06/milongueando_france_06_detatlas.htm; and *Tangokombinat*, www.tangokombinat.de.
8. Interview with Paola di Venezia aka Paola Nocitango, Bad Gleichenberg, Austria, August 2019.
9. See *Nocitango*, www.nocitango.it/italiano/eventi-passati/1-raduno-milonguero-6-9dicembre2012.
10. In 2020 and 2021, *encuentros* were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As vaccination rates have risen since this writing, people have dared to travel and dance in close embrace again.
11. Video interview with Sabine Oberscheider and Lilijana Maric, July 19, 2021, “Entstanden ist es einfach aus dem Wunsch dass wir dieses tolle tango Gefühl was wir in Buenos Aires gehabt haben, und dieses sich sozial so akzeptiert fühlen [. . .] wie in Buenos Aires, uns hergewünscht haben. Und das halt nicht nur für eine milonga, sondern ein ganzes Wochenende.”
12. See *Tango-International*, www.tango-international.eu/info.html.

13. While most *encuentros* advertise their event via Facebook, a few have a public website with statements as mentioned above. Examples include La Colmena in Copenhagen (Denmark), La Colmena, www.anem.dk/lacolmena/milonguero-codes; Pequeña in Saarbrücken (Germany), Tangokominat, www.tangokombinat.de; Noches de Invierno in Bad Reichenau (Austria), Noches de Invierno, www.nochesdeinvierno.com; Noche de Pasión in Regensburg (Germany), Noche de Pasión, www.nochedepasion.net; Días de Juventud in Ljubljana (Slovenia), Tango.si, www.tango.si/dias-de-juventud; and Boca in Antwerp (Belgium), Encuentro Boca Antwerp, sites.google.com/view/encuentro-boca-antwerp.
14. For more information, see Kendra Stepputat, Wolfgang Kienreich, and Christopher Dick, "Digital Methods in Intangible Cultural Heritage Research: A Case Study in Tango Argentino," *ACM Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage* 12, no. 2 (June 2019): 1–22.
15. A tango marathon also has restricted access. The differentiation between a tango marathon and *encuentro milonguero* is blurry; adding to the indistinctness, one could say that an *encuentro* is more "milonguero."
16. For discussions of gender roles, see Kathy Davis, *Dancing Tango: Passionate Encounters in a Globalizing World* (New York: New York University Press, 2015); Jeffrey Tobin, "Models of Machismo: The Troublesome Masculinity of Argentine Male Tango Dancers," in *Tango in Translation*, ed. Gabriele Klein (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2009); and Mercedes Liska, "The Geopolitics of Queer Tango: From Buenos Aires to a Community of Translocal Practice," in *Made in Latin America: Studies in Popular Music*, edited by Julio Mendivil and Christian Spencer Espinosa (New York: Routledge, 2016), 125–134. Though the vast majority at *encuentros milongueros* are male leaders and female followers, a certain percentage does break with the norm. Dancing the opposite role or interchanging roles is welcomed and integrated without hesitation.
17. Gustavo Benzecry Sabá, *New Glossary of Tango Dance: Key Tango Argentino Dance Terms* (Stuttgart: Abrazos, 2010), 20.
18. Merritt, *Tango Nuevo*, 75.
19. Close-embrace tango today is quite different from *tango argentino* during the Golden Age. For insights into the close embrace, "estilo milonguero," and its perceived authenticity, see Petridou, *Experiencing Tango*, 63–64; Janine Krüger, *¿Cuál es tu tango? Musikalische Lesarten der argentinischen Tangotradition* (Münster: Waxmann Verlag GmbH, 2012), 189; and Carozzi, *Aquí se baila el tango*, 139.
20. Interestingly, none of the *códigos* at *encuentros milongueros* concern clothing. For insights into tango fashion, aesthetics, and meaning, see Elia Petridou, "Dancing in High Heels: A Material Culture Approach to Argentine Tango," in *Social Matter(s): Recent Approaches to Materiality*, ed. Tryfon Bampilis and Pieter ter Keurs (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2014), 91–116.

21. For an introduction to tango music and its Golden Age, see Kacey Link and Kristin Wendland, *Tracing Tangueros: Argentine Tango Instrumental Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).
22. See Matthew B. Karush, *Culture of Class: Radio and Cinema in the Making of a Divided Argentina, 1920–1946* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 45–52.
23. For a thorough analysis of the separation and reconnection of tango music and dance in the second half of the twentieth century, see Kendra Stepputat, “Tango Musicality and Tango Danceability: Reconnecting Strategies in Current Cosmopolitan Tango Argentino Practice,” *the world of music (new series)* 9, no. 2 (2020): 51–68.
24. See also Stepputat, *Tango Journeys*, for an introduction to the phenomenon of the tango pilgrimage to Buenos Aires. For a critical account of the “sacralization” of the Golden Age music, see Carozzi, *Aquí se baila el tango*, 107–113.
25. Over the last ten years, I have conducted more than twenty interviews with DJs in Europe, in some cases following their development from their first milonga gigs to international fame. One important topic in this ongoing research is how they negotiate their role and position as service provider, performer, and educator. In a recent publication, I also investigate the mechanics of how tango DJs influence the translocal tango networks in Europe concerning taste in music, through the selection of the music they play at a milonga (see Stepputat, *Digital Methods*).
26. Elia Petridou, *Experiencing Tango*, 64.
27. See also Csongor Kicsi, “The Impact of the Golden Age Period on the World of the Argentine Tango Community,” *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov Series VIII: Performing Arts*, 13 (62) no. 1 (2020): 109, doi: <https://doi.org/10.31926/but.pa.2020.13.62.1.12>.
28. The abbreviation used often to communicate about the structure a DJ plays is “T-T-M-T-T-V.”
29. “The Birth of the Tanda: A ‘Radial’ View (Part 1),” *Tango Decoder*, <https://tangodecoder.wordpress.com/2015/10/06/the-birth-of-the-tanda/>.
30. “A Note on the Origin of Tandas,” *Tango Decoder*, <https://tangodecoder.wordpress.com/2015/10/02/a-note-on-the-origin-of-tandas/>.
31. See blog “Tango en el Espejo,” which delves into tango lyrics about the origins of *tandas* and *cortinas*, <https://elespejero.wordpress.com/2015/07/09/tango-stories-la-victrolera-and-danza-maligna>.
32. The question “on the origin of *tandas*” by member Olli Eyding in the “Tango DJ Forum” Facebook group (posted May 4, 2019) led to detailed expert discussions among DJs. It featured personal insights and theories as well as pointing to additional material and paraphrasing dancers and DJs who experienced the Golden Age and post-Golden Age milongas.
33. Also see Merritt, *Tango Nuevo*, 75.

34. Interview with Horacio Godoy, Vienna, Austria, May 2014.
35. Michael Lavocah, "Tango DJing – Part 1: Music for dancing," *Todotango*, www.todotango.com/english/history/chronicle/481/Tango-DJing-Part-1:-Music-for-dancing.
36. Since such discussions take place in the safe space of closed groups, I will neither explicitly reference any of these discussions here nor highlight selected personal opinions of individuals that could be perceived as offensive.
37. Video interview with Sabine and Liljana, July 19, 2021.
38. Interview with Paola di Venezia, Bad Gleichenberg, Austria, August 2019.

Further Reading

- Benzekry Sabá, Gustavo. 2015. *The Quest for the Embrace: The History of Tango Dance 1800–1983*. Urquillo: Editorial Abrazos.
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- Stepputat, Kendra, and Elina Djebbari. "The Separation of Music and Dance in Translocal Contexts." *world of music (new series)* 9, no. 2 (2020): 5–30.