

Tango Argentino – A fresh look at an old friend

When you mention Argentine Tango, you instantly know you are entering in to a semi-secret world – one full of passion, excitement, dark corners and intense feeling. In many ways, the same can be said of our Ballroom and Latin world, but creatures of Argentinian Tango are more hidden than most. This was the initial driving force behind the National Association of Teachers of Dancing's project to bring this amazing dance form into focus for dance teachers all over the country. The first move was to bring it back to its proper and original name – where it all started from – “Tango Argentino”.

The NATD Alternative Rhythms chairman, Phil Meacham explains - “In the U.K. people love to dance, but the old British “Stiff Upper Lip” often seems to make people inhibited to try something new. Dance teachers are as guilty, if not more so, than most. The problem often is that styles we are not used to get neglected on the basis people are too scared to go and explore different ideas. Add this to the slight secrecy of this intoxicating dance style, and many people are missing out on the passion and effervescence this style delivers”

It was down to the NATD Alternative Rhythms Committee to plug the gap. A totally fresh look at the technique was created, based firmly on the same language that all qualified dance teachers from all associations would quickly recognise and feel comfortable with. Another unique approach adopted has been to make the syllabus a “living and evolving” plan which will be fully reviewed and where necessary updated and developed every 18 months, rather than a technique that just gathers dust. Phil Meacham goes on to explain “the thing about life, music and dance is that things change. Nothing ever stands still. It is vital that we keep moving forward whilst retaining and maintaining the deep foundations from the past. I am grateful to the NATD for giving my committee a totally free hand and remit to do what we feel is right, without constraints or interference. It proves the Association's forward thinking approach. In addition, I have been lucky enough to work with such a great committee who have been totally top-notch and professional at all times, and I am immensely proud of them.”

Finally, this inspirational committed turned to the question of delivery, and the NATD Tango Argentino Roadshow was born!

The aim of the Roadshow is not just to deliver the step patterns, but to really train participants in the amazing phenomenon- right from the grass roots up. Not just to show people how to dance it, but how to teach it and understand it's unique ways – and importantly to become immersed in the style, and genuinely understand Tango Argentino. This was a new way of thinking.

The first Roadshow was held in the garden of England, Kent, on 29 April, with an enthusiastic turn out of dance teachers who undertook this six-hour immersion into the very depth of the passion, and ultimately being able to dance up to Gold Medal standard, but with a deep knowledge and understanding of how it all works in its various guises and its eccentricities.

Committee member and Tango consultant Anthony Bazin explains with his unmistakable French accent “It was great to be able to help these people develop their existing dancing skills to be broadened by sharing my deep knowledge. It was a pleasure to watch them develop so quickly to such a high standard. It is really exciting that the NATD have taken this style seriously, rather than just paying lip-service. I was really pleased and proud to be asked by Phil to be part of his, as he calls it, “Alternative Rhythms Dream Team”, and very excited about the other projects currently being worked on both here and overseas”

Tango Argentino Roadshows are already arranged and open for bookings in Northamptonshire, Birmingham, North Yorkshire and Berkshire. More dates are currently being arranged in the North East, South West and the Scottish Highlands. If you would like to host a roadshow in your venue, please contact Phil Meacham on 01635 800 007.

For further information or to book call the NATD Head Office on 01635 868 888 or visit www.natd.org.uk to be a part of it.